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The Ottoman and Turkish centralisation-decentralisation debate: a static revolution

ABSTRACT: The essay analyses the evolution of central, provincial and municipal administration in the Ottoman Empire and in the Republic of Turkey, highlighting the structural and ideological continuum between the two. Indeed, the current basic legal framework regulating Turkish public administration still holds those power imbalances that have shaped the relation between central and local institutions during Ottoman rule. In addition, the approach towards reforms has shown recurring patterns and second agendas that undermined the development of a solid and clear administrative structure.

KEY WORDS: Ottoman Empire, Turkey, Public Administration, Local Governments, Centralisation, Decentralisation, Poly-centralisation.

1. Introduction

Since the end of WWII, local authorities in Europe and, in general, in the Western World, have increasingly gained political and legal recognition in national and international law. The European institutional framework came forth as standard-bearer of local democracy: first the Council of Europe and then the European Union have given fundamental importance to decentralisation, codifying the principle of subsidiarity at international level. Furthermore, through the integration process and the accession procedures, European principles have spilled over to neighbouring countries, triggering reforms at social, political and administrative level.

In this context, Turkey has become prime example of how administrative reforms are shaped by historical, political and social factors of national or international origin. In fact, Anatolia has always been a bridge not only between two continents but also between two cultures: from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic, its political history has been tied both to that of the neighbouring Muslim countries and to Western Europe. For this reason, Huntington classified modern Turkey as a "torn country", that is, "a society which was Muslim in its religion, heritage, customs, and institutions but with a ruling elite determined to make it modern, Western, and at one with the West"[1]. As it will be seen, Turkish administrative history has been marked by

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[1] S. P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remarking of World Order*, New York 1996, p. 74.

'westernisation' since, at least, the nineteenth century, first influenced by the French system and more recently by European principles. Consequently, most of Turkish local institutions are shaped on the model of their European counterparts.

However, it would be reductive to consider Turkish local governance as a pure 'imitation game'. The centralisation-decentralisation debate in Turkey is indeed deeply rooted in the national history and in the legacy of the Ottoman Empire.

2. Historical Developments

A comprehensive analysis of local governance in Turkey must trace back to the early Ottoman Empire. Although much of the relevant local reforms were adopted during the nineteenth Century, almost at the sunset of Ottoman power and mainly because of the relentless fragmentation of the Empire, older and newer administrative systems still show many features of the first local divisions implemented back in the fourteenth century. Furthermore and more importantly, most of Turkish political debate surrounding decentralisation efforts and its general aversion towards localism originated directly from Ottoman patrimonialism, prompting an enduring imbalance between centre and periphery. As will be seen, this 'core and edge' dichotomy has always been a recurrent trend in, first Ottoman, and then Turkish internal power dynamics not only at state level, but also in the various local territorial configurations emerged over the centuries.

2.1. Classical Ottoman Period

Given the longevity and complexity of Ottoman organisation, it is hard to depict in simple concepts such a diverse and changing system. Although in very broad terms, its administration has been however commonly divided into a military and a civil dimension: "over time a dual system of military – Central System – and civil administration – Provincial Governing – developed a kind of separation of powers with higher executive functions carried out by the military authorities and judicial and basic administration duties carried out by civil authorities"[2].

2.1.1. Central Administration

Head of the Empire and embodiment of its government was the sultan, *Padishah*, who also claimed the title of Roman Emperor (after the fall of Constantinople) as well as that of Caliph (since the sixteenth century), the highest religious position in Islam[3]: "primary goal of the government was the security of Muslims around the world, particularly the security of the Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca"[4]. However, the sultan did not exercise complete control over the government, which was in reality run by a large bureaucracy led by the *Divan* (Imperial Council), cabinet of the sultan and highest governmental body of the Empire. Its composition changed over time from tribe

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[2] N. Kapucu, H. Palabiyik, *Turkish Public Administration: From Tradition to the Modern Age*, Ankara 2008, p.79.

[3] C. Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, New York 2002, p. 125.

[4] N. Kapucu, H. Palabiyik, *Turkish Public Administration*, cit., p. 78.

elders in the early days of the Ottoman state, that is, when it was still a *Beylik* (petty kingdom), to a ruling class (*askeri*) composed by noblemen, court officials, military officers and clergymen (*ulema*). The *Grand Vizier* was the most powerful among these members and oversaw all the executive functions of the government, in a role that resembles much a modern prime minister. Finally, Ottoman central administration also comprised ministers (*Nazir)* with generally far less influence over the sultan than the *viziers* of the *Divan*, except for the minister of Justice (*Adliye Naziri*), "whose ministry included the civil judges – *Kadis* – and the military judges – *Kadiaskers* or *Kaziaskers* – who were the highest judicial authority of the Empire after the *Seyhulislam*, the supreme religious leader of the *ulema*"[5].

2.1.2. Provincial Administration

Even in the first years of the Empire, that is, during the reigns of Osman (… – 1326) and his son Orhan (1326 – 1362), some elements of provincial governance started to emerge. Some territories were granted as appanage to ruler's sons or other family members in return of an obligation to perform military services. However, a formal provincial organisation was adopted only during Bayezid's reign (1389 – 1402), when the Empire was firstly divided into Rumelia (*Rumeli),* comprising those lands conquered in Europe, and Anatolia (*Anadolu*), consisting of territories in Asia Minor. By the early seventeenth century there were thirty-two provinces spreading from Europe to Northern Africa and from the Mediterranean Sea to the Persian Gulf. This number further increased after years of provincial reorganisation. Once the Empire reached its greatest expansion, new territorial units were created for strategic or military purposes, as well as to reward standout military leaders with new civil ranks: for instance, in 1580 "Bosnia, previously a district of Rumelia, became a province on its own right, presumably in view of its strategically important position on the border with the Habsburgs"; instead, "when Süleyman I appointed Hayreddin Barbarossa Admiral in 1533, he received the post with the rank of Governor-General of the Islands, a province which the Sultan had created specially for Hayreddin, by detaching districts from the shores and islands of the Aegean which had previously been part of the provinces of Rumelia and Anatolia, and uniting them as an independent province"[6]. Therefore, Ottoman provinces were created either through reorganisation or through conquest. However, not every territorial gain encompassed the annexation of a new administrative unit: in many cases, the Ottoman court preferred to keep in place existing ruling traditions (*Beyliks*) and absorb them under the Empire as vassal principalities, whose status was not indeed so different from that of formal provinces, although their control was far less secure. For this reason, Sultans soon began to prefer appointed Ottoman governors over conquered dynasties and by mid-sixteenth century local lords (*Beys*) survived only in the principalities north of the Danube. However, old ruling elites still served the Ottoman system as provincial governors, away from their dynastic lands. In fact, "the term *Bey* came to be applied not only to these former rulers but also to new governors appointed were the local leadership had

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[5] Ivi, p. 80.

[6] C. Imber, *The Ottoman Empire,* cit., p. 179.

been eliminated"[7]. Governors-general (*beylerbey*, 'lord of lords') could be removed or transferred at the will of the sultan and served for a limited time with no hereditary rights over their province (*beylerbeylik* or *eyalet*). Their role consisted in allocating fiefs, maintaining order in their territory, as well as commanding their troops in times of war.

Most of Ottoman provinces were further divided into *sanjaks*, ruled by a *sanjakbey*; these units exhibited some continuity with previous orders: representatives of older regimes often maintain their fiefs in the territory, although Ottoman rulers tried to counterbalance their influence by also awarding fiefs to men from other areas of the Empire. This process was meant to entail a gradual loss of identity from the conquered territory:

> Immediately after the conquest, therefore, an Ottoman sanjak would often retain the boundaries of a pre-Ottoman lordship, and usually have a fief-holding elite composed of survivors from the old regime and new settlers and deportees. Within a generation, the survivors and their descendants would often have lost their non-Ottoman identity, notably through the conversion of Christians to Islam. With their assimilation, an area which had been an independent principality, or part of one, would become a standard Ottoman sanjak. The passage of time could also bring changes in sanjak boundaries[8].

On a smaller scale, *sanjak*-governors had similar duties as governors-general, that is, maintaining order and justice, as well as no hereditary right over their administered area; in most cases, they also lacked any kind of familiar or identity connection with the territory. They performed, as they superiors, military services, gathering fief-holders under their 'flag' (literally '*sanjak*') and joining with other neighbouring *sanjaks* the provincial army under the command of the *beylerbey,* thus strictly connecting the administrative to the military hierarchy.

Not all the territory of a *sanjak* was assigned as fief to cavalrymen, but there were lands where the *sanjak*-governor had no right of entry.

> Lands within a sanjak fell usually into three categories. First, there was land that was privately owned. Second, there was land that formed part of a trust and, third, there was land that was at the disposal of the sultan. Private lands were relatively few, since the sultans aimed to keep as much land as possible under their own control, but also because Muslim inheritance laws would insist on the division of the property among the heirs on the death of the owner. Families preferred, therefore, not to keep landed property in this form. Trust land, on the other hand, was extensive throughout the Empire. This was land or property whose revenues went to support the cause which the founder had nominated in the trust deed, typically a mosque, hospice, bridge or fountain. The revenues could also, however, go to support the founder, his or her family and descendants and, since trusts were made in perpetuity and their properties were indivisible, this was the legal form in which families often preferred to hold their lands. The most extensive category of land within most Ottoman sanjaks was, however, *beglik* or *miri*. Both these words have the sense simply of 'pertaining to', or 'at the disposal of the ruler', and it was these lands the sultan allocated as fiefs[9].

Fiefs took on different names based on their size: smaller fiefs were called *timar* and were the most common throughout the Empire; larger fiefs could be named

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[7] N. Kapucu, H. Palabiyik, *Turkish Public Administration*, cit., p. 79.

[8] C. Imber, *The Ottoman Empire,* cit., p. 186.

[9] Ivi, p. 193.

subashilik (or *zeamet*); finally, fiefs with a value of over 100 000 *akçe* were referred to as *hass*. *Timars* could be inherited or awarded by the Imperial Council from a list of candidates drawn by the *sanjak*-governor or the governor-general. Peasants of a *timar* had the duty to cultivate their land or pay compensation if they failed to do so: this provision was meant to guarantee the strength of sultan's army through a stable revenue for its (then tactically fundamental) cavalrymen. However, this system was not homogeneously applied throughout the Empire: some areas were administered with a mixed system of fiefs and tax-farming[10] called *salyane*.

> Mosul alone was subjected to the *timar* system, in which cavalry officers were given the right to collect and keep the tax on certain agricultural lands in return for military service in times of need; Baghdad and Basra were administrated as *salyane* provinces, in which the tax revenues were not distributed as *timars*, but farmed out to the provincial governors, who delivered fixed annual sums, known as *salyane*, to the central treasury[11].

Sanjaks were further divided into *kazas*, headed by *kadis* (judges), who represented the legal authority of the sultan. Their role was strictly linked with that of governors: "the *bey* could not make punishment without the judgement of the *kadi*; on the other hand, the *kadi* was unable to carry out, on his own, an execution in his own district (*kaza*)"[12]. They were not only the highest jurisdictional authority but also representatives of the people, since they could bring complaints to the *Divan* about oppressions by timar-holders. *Kazas* were made up of *nahiyes* (districts), whose governors were called *mütesellims*.

However, this well-adjusted system began to collapse in the mid-sixteenth century. Following a period of financial difficulties as well as of military defeats, *timar* importance entered into decline: the increasing role of firearms, and therefore of Janissary corps, over cavalry, as well as the growing habit to award fiefs to office holders and their servants, untied provincial administration form military hierarchies; furthermore, since Janissaries (and in general infantrymen) were paid through the General Treasury, their mounting number meant a rampant demand for cash and, therefore, many *timars* were converted into tax-farms (*iltizam*), whose revenues were transferred directly to Istanbul.

Main changes happened also at provincial level. Upon appointment, a governor-general received a *praebenda* "consisting of a defined parcel of revenues, raised within the boundaries of his province"; however, this grant was "dependent on the appointment and, unless he was wealthy in his own right, a governor would have no income when he was out of office"[13]. In any case, there was a high competition for this office, which further increased with the aforementioned decision to include also appointees from the Palace in the list of candidates. This resulted in a reduction of the

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[10] J. E. Mandaville, *The Ottoman Province of al-Hasā in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, in "Journal of the American Oriental Society", XC III (1970), pp. 486-513, pp. 504-505, as cited by S. Özbaran, *Some Notes on the Salyane System in the Ottoman Empire as Organized in Arabia in the Sixteenth Century*, in "The Journal of Ottoman Studies", VI (1986), pp. 39-45, p. 41.

[11] G. Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq, 1890-1908*, New York 2006, p. 4.

[12] N. Göyünç, *Provincial Organization of the Ottoman Empire in pre-Tanzimat Period*, in "The Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilisation, Philosophy, Science and Institutions", III, Ankara 2000, pp. 519-532, p. 519.

[13] C. Imber, *The Ottoman Empire*, cit., p. 182.

period of service: by the mid-seventeenth century, over half of the governors-general served for less than a year. Being their income tied to their appointment, it was soon obvious that the Sultan had to make lifetime grants of revenue to maintain dismissed governors while they were out of service.

Although conceived to re-stabilise a trembling system, these measures further contributed to the growth of power imbalances throughout the Empire.

> After 1696, some state farms (*mukataa*) were given to some persons, with a condition that their fees were received in advance (the so-called *iltizam usülü*, *mültezim*). The new owners (*mültezim*) kept these lands at their hand during their life (*malikane*). As a result of that, the state comes under the heavy pressure of the influential persons called *ayan* in various regions[14].

These provincial notables "usurped much of the authority of the central government in the provinces", although "Ottomans […] quite willingly and intentionally cultivated a local elite to share in government"[15]. However, the constantly increasing power of the *ayan* eventually led to a series of re-centralisation attempts, within an Empire that was soon struggling to keep itself together.

2.1.3. Municipal Administration

Ottoman cities were founded on a standing collaboration between civil institutions and residents themselves: if public buildings were erected by the will of the sultans, other religious, cultural, or socio-economic spaces were built by individuals. In fact, most of the residents were part of *loncas* (guilds) and actively participated in the supply of services such as water, cleaning, illumination or repairing of public places according to their professional organisation.

The basic unit of settlement was the *mahalle*, whose centre was a place of worship and whose community was in charge of the maintenance of order and security in their urban area, as well as of those basic public services listed above. More peculiarly, *mahalles* enjoyed a great level of financial autonomy, since "the expenses for such works were covered by money collected from the neighbourhood residents under the conduct of religious leaders like *imam*, priest and *rabbi*"[16], thus avoiding the direct intervention of the central government. *Mahalles* were administrative local reflections of the *millet* ('nation') system, which divided Empire's population into religious groups. People were able to deal with the Ruling Class only through this system, which therefore constituted the prerequisite for an active social and political life.

A third important administrative institution in Ottoman cities was the *waqf*, a property (building, piece of land or even cash) donated as a religious endowment for charitable purposes. *Waqfs* fulfilled important tasks in urban socio-economic life:

> These buildings were generally in a complex called *külliye*. These complexes varied in size and generally contained mosque, hospital, bazaar, *madrasa*, soup kitchen and bath. Also

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[14] N. Göyünç, *Provincial Organization of the Ottoman Empire in pre-Tanzimat Period,* cit., p. 530.

[15] H. Gerber, *State, Society and Law in Islam: Ottoman Law in Comparative Perspective,*New York 1994, p.142.

[16] Ö Ergenç, *Osmanlı Şehirlerinde Esnaf Örgütlerinin Fizik Yapıya Etkileri*, in V. Akyüz et. al. (Eds.), *İslam Geleneğinden Günümüze Şehir ve Yerel Yönetimler,* I. Istanbul 1996, p. 49, as cited by H. Gündoğdu, *The Problem of Financial Resource in Turkish Local Administration from a Historical Point of View*, in "European Journal of Economic and Political Studies", V I (2012), pp. 103-115, p. 109.

some large scale urban utilities such as water system, store-houses for provisions and slaughter houses were among the ones carried out through the *waqf* system[17]. The *waqfs* made a great contribution to their surrounding areas since they also undertook the repair and cleaning of pavements and streets and the construction of water conduits and sewage systems. The financial source and funding necessary for these services and the maintenance of complexes were provided from the rental fees from shops under their property and donations of the wealthy persons. Hence, the *waqf* system was self-sufficient as far as the economy of the state in general did not go very bad[18].

Although enjoying therefore visible executive and financial autonomy, *loncas*, *mahalles* and *waqfs* were subject to the authority of the *kadi*, who, as already seen, was the judicial authority of the *kaza*. His municipal duties included supervising guilds and markets, supplying missing goods, regulating prices and cleaning the main streets along with *Janissary* corps. Several officials then depended on the authority of the *kadi*: among others, the *şehir emini* (city prefect), the *mimar başi* (chief architect), the *su nazırı* (water inspector), etc. Finally, *muhtesips* supervised and regulated industry, trade and commerce, as well as collected taxes imposed in the markets[19].

However, also this level of administration entered into a financial, as well as social crisis, at the beginning of the seventeenth century. *Waqfs* and *loncas* began to lose power and were not able to meet their duties any more. At the same time, these basic civil institutions were starting to be perceived as inefficient and outdated by an increasingly Europeanised political elite.

2.2. Tanzimat Period

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, sultan Ahmed III (1703-1730) and his Grand Vizier Nevşehirli Damat Ibrahim Pasha initiated a period of stable peace called Tulip Era (1718-1730). At the same time, Ottomans developed an interest in Western culture and society, orienting themselves in particular towards France: a special envoy, Yirmisekiz Mehmet Çelebi, was sent to the court of Louis XIV in 1720. As Berkes noted (1998, p. 4, as cited in Necmettin, 2006, p. 25), "in addition to his diplomatic mission, which was to seek an alliance with France, he was instructed by the Sadrazam İbrahim Pasha to visit the fortress, factories, and the works of French civilization generally and report on the modern French institutions, which might be applicable in Turkey"[20]. This was the beginning of a new Ottoman awakening that would be put into effect a century later in the Tanzimat period.

2.2.1. Central Administration

With regard to the first reformation attempts, the main objective was that of

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[17] H. Inalcik, H., *Istanbul: An Islamic City*, in "Journal of Islamic Studies", I (1990), pp. 1-23, p. 8.

[18] H. Gündoğdu, *The Problem of Financial Resource in Turkish Local Administration from a Historical Point of View*, cit., p. 110.

[19] S. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey. Volume I: Empire of the Gazis: The Rise and Decline of the Ottoman Empire, 1280-1808*, New York 1976, p. 160.

[20] N. Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*. London 1998, p. 94, as cited by D. Necmettin, *The Origins of Liberalism and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire (1908-1914): A Sociological Perspective*. Saarbrücken 2006, p. 25.

modernising military schools and equipment to reverse the trend of defeats that accompanied Ottoman military campaigns since the end of the seventeenth century. However, reforms were not met with enthusiasm by every level of government. For instance, when Selim III (1789-1807) established a new army, called *Nizam i-Cedid* and inspired by its European counterparts, he was dethroned and killed: "Selim's desire to create a regular army under his direct command threatened, on the one hand, the Janissaries' dominant position in the state, and on the other, that of the notables *(ayan)*"[21]. In any case, Selim's successor, Mahmud II (1808-1839), was not worried by internal opposition and carried on the reform movement, earning the epithet of 'Peter the Great of Turkey'. In 1826, he dismantled the rioting Janissary corps and replaced them with the Mansure army, a new *ocak* (literally 'heart') of the Ottoman military apparatus. He went on reforming also the central government. Over time, the Grand Vizier had started to gain power at the expenses of the Divan: in 1654, its prominence had been formalised with the building of a dedicated residence and office (later to be known as Sublime Porte), where also Divan's bureaucracy was gradually transferred. By the early nineteenth century, the term 'Porte' had come to indicate the whole central government of the Empire, clearly recognising the great power achieved by the Grand Vizier. Again, sultan's inspiration came from the European tradition:

> In response to the need for specialized knowledge and efficiency in administration, Mahmut began the process by which the central government was divided by function into departments and ministries and, eventually, by which the executive and legislative functions were separated […]. Finally, with the grand vezir now being less the absolute lieutenant of the sultan that he had been in earlier times and more a coordinator of the activities of the ministers, his title was changed officially (though usually not in usage) to prime minister *(baş vekil)*. Theirs were changed from supervisor *(nazir* or vezir) to minister *(vekil),* even though they were individually appointed by and responsible to the sultan rather than to the prime minister. Within these limitations, a cabinet - variously called *Meclis-i Hass-ı Vükelâ* (the Sultan's Council of Ministers), *Meclis-i Hass* (the Sultan's Council), or *Meclis-i Vükelâ* (Council of Ministers) - was created under the chairmanship of the prime minister to coordinate the executive activities of the ministries and, thus, form the policy of "the government" and also, and in the Ottoman context much more important, to pass on legislative proposals and submit them to the sultan[22].

After the death of Mahmud II, his son Abdülmecid I carried out those reforms first initiated by his predecessor. In 1839 he launched a period of re-organisation of the Empire with the Tanzimat (literally 're-organisation) Edict (*Gülhane Hatt-ı Şerif* or *Tanzimât Fermânı*) at the behest of Grand Vizier Mustafa Reşid Pasha. Further enhancing the division of power made by Mahmud II, various councils with different duties were soon established, finally supplanting the old Imperial Council. In 1856, a second edict, the Imperial Reform Edict (*Islâhat Fermânı*), established equality of treatment throughout the Empire regardless of creed. Eventually, Abdülaziz I, son of Abdülmecid I, focused mainly on the reorganisation of the Ottoman Navy.

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[21] D. Necmettin, *The Origins of Liberalism and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire (1908-1914): A Sociological Perspective*. Saarbrücken 2006, p. 27.

[22] S. J. Shaw, E. K. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey. Volume II: Reform, Revolution, and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey, 1808-1975*, New York 1977, pp. 36-37.

2.2.2. Provincial Administration

The reformist agenda did not overlook the provincial level, although it was mainly a financial reform at first. The first reorganisation of the old tax system came in 1840:

> Thus, when İstanbul tried to abolish the iltizam system of tax-farming, this initially led them into an attempt to have taxes collected not by the mültezims, who were a kind of contractor, but the officials in each sancak, who would be helped in this regard by the local people. A decree ordered so-called councils of muhassils (or collection councils) to be set up, composed of an appointed muhassil (tax-collector) and his deputies as well as the local judge, müftü, top military commander and religious leaders plus six local notables elected by the said notables themselves from among their own ranks[23].

The main drive behind these and later reforms was however, and above all, of political kind. As mentioned above, local notables had increasingly gained power since the mid-sixteenth century, enjoying extensive autonomy in provincial governance as long as they were able to meet their duties, i.e. send money to Istanbul. The Tanzimat period was therefore a sequence of administrative adjustments towards a re-centralisation of power and rationalisation of the provincial system. The first steps along this path were made in 1842 with a rather complex re-organisation (and re-naming) of existing territorial administrative divisions. Changes were made to establish equal units of governance in terms of population and wealth:

> Where the Tanzimat reforms were introduced, each *sancak* was headed by a *muhassil,* and while waiting for the extension of the reforms in the districts still under the old system, *kaymakams* were named by the governors. The *sancaks* in turn were subdivided into counties, given the name that also applied to the conterminous judicial districts, *kaza,* and were headed by administrators *(müdürs).* These consisted of subdistricts *(nahiye),* each usually containing at least one important town or village. The latter were directed by mayors *(muhtars),* officials originally assigned by Mahmut II to represent the central government in the towns as well as in individual quarters of Istanbul and the other major cities[24].

More importantly, governors at every level had to cooperate with newly established local councils, which represented the ruling class as well as popular representatives of the local territory, mainly local notables and members of guilds. For the first time and long before similar arrangements at central level, Ottomans allowed direct participation of local subjects in local decision-making bodies.

It is important to remark that reforms at this stage were not spatially and temporally homogeneous. Older and newer provincial systems coexisted in different regions of the Empire and arrangements were introduced often as local experiments in view of a consequent general implementation. Furthermore, the main attitude was that of 'adjusting along the way': different systems were improved with continuous revisions, which increased the complexity of the provincial framework, but also proved efficient in eliminating power frictions. Eventually, the Ottoman Porte envisioned a stable arrangement to spread bureaucratic efficiency in all the territories of the Empire.

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[23] İ. Ortaylı, *From the Ottoman Experiment in Local Government to the First Constitutional Parliament of 1876-77,* in "The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations", XXI (1982), pp. 17-24, p. 18.

[24] S. J. Shaw, E. K. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey,* cit., p. 84.

In 1864, Grand Vizier Fuad Pasha promulgated the Provincial Reform Law or *Vilayet* Law, whose aim was to set a territorial hierarchy and harmonise pre-existing divisions. Started as an experiment in the Danube province (*Tuna vilayet*), the system was then implemented in other areas and, following various amendments until 1871, was operational throughout the Empire. The system was rationalised through a 'copy paste' approach, replicating the same institutions at different levels of governance:

> The old *eyalet*s were to be replaced by larger *vilayet*s (provinces), each governed by a vali (governor-general) with extensive powers. [...] The *vilayet* was divided into *sancak*s, the *sancak* into *kaza*s, the *kaza* into *nahiye*s and villages. Under the authority of the vali, the *sancak* was administrated by a *mutasarrıf* who was appointed by the Sultan, the *kaza* by a *kaymakam* who was appointed by the Ministry of the Interior, the *nahiye* by a *müdür*, the village by an elected *muhtar*. At *vilayet*, *sancak*, and *kaza* levels, there were to be administrative councils, formed, in the case of *vilayet* councils, by the governor-general, the chief judge, the chief finance officer, and the chief secretary, together with four representatives of the population (two Muslim and two non-Muslim), and the religious heads of the Muslim and non-Muslim communities. The council was to meet under the presidency of the Vali[25].

In the end, Tanzimat reforms shaped the mould of a two-tier system, in which the provincial level became both an extension of central government and an autonomous decentralised administrative unit. Eventually, this framework would be developed in the following years, staying in place until the end of Ottoman rule and even surviving the Empire itself.

2.2.3. Municipal Administration

As already seen, municipal government in Ottoman cities had enjoyed a high degree of autonomy thanks to religious institutions and guilds. Once again, the aim of reformists was to re-centralise and rationalise the bureaucratic system; and once again, they draw their inspiration from Western urban organisation, in particular from French municipal institutions.

However, first reforms under Mahmud II came as a readjustment for sultan's reorganisations at central level. With the dismantlement of Janissary corps, their duties were partly handed over to the *Mansure* army and partly to a newly established police force: in Istanbul, it consisted of "150 professional policemen *(kavas)* and 500 irregulars *(seymen)* stationed at headquarters *(tomruk)* in the main quarters of the city, which served not only to house the men and officers but also the police courts, where violators of the law were judged and fined by sergeants"[26]. The old figure of the *muhtesip* was renamed *ihitisap ağasi* and transformed from a mere market regulator into a real tax officer. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, mayors (*muhtars*) were then appointed in every *mahalle*: they undertook those duties until then assigned to religious leaders, meaning "a step towards the secularisation of the local authorities"[27]. As for the case of provincial reforms, the new system was not immediately homogeneous and

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[25] G. Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq, 1890-1908*, cit., p. 8.

[26] S. J. Shaw, E. K. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, cit., p. 46.

[27] I. N. Demirakın, *A Study of Ottoman Modernisation on the City: The Sixth Municipal District of Istanbul (1856-1877)*, Ankara 2006, p. 100.

was at first conceived as an experiment: in Istanbul, "the *şehir emini* as such was abolished, with those of his duties that had a bearing on the construction of government buildings and regulation of private buildings being turned over to the sultan's chief architect *(mimar başı),* who was given the new title director of imperial buildings *(ebniye-i hassa müdürü),* thus leaving the *ihtisap ağası* and his assistants in the quarters as the principal city-wide municipal officials of government in Istanbul and the other main cities of the empire"[28]. Although in 1854 the *ihtisap ağası* was replaced by a mayor (bearing the old title of şehir emini) and a City Council (*Şehir Meclisi*), their role was still underdeveloped to meet the needs of a huge metropolis.

Moved by the renewed urban plan of Paris, Ottoman reformers started to issue regulations "that aimed at changing the urban fabric of cities"[29]: these rules concerned street width, elimination of dead ends, building materials, replacing the complicated medieval urban plan. Following the Crimean war (1853-1856), Istanbul saw an increase in foreign residents, in particular in the Galata and Beyoğlu districts, further boosting the already ongoing 'administrative Europeanisation': "when Istanbul turned into a centre of trade and distribution, there appeared the need to establish a municipality in order to cope with the chaos"[30].

In 1855, the first quasi-municipal organisation was established in Istanbul: called *Şehremaneti*, it was headed by a *Şehremini* and a *Şehremaneti Meclisi* (council). However, its powers were not so different from those of its predecessors, resulting again in a failure to properly fulfil its duties.

Once again, a new system was developed through a pilot project. In 1858, Istanbul was divided into 14 municipal districts, but only the Sixth District (Galata, Pera, Taksim, Pangaltı, Kurtuluş, Kasimpaşa and Tophane) was legally constituted: chaired by a *müdür*, it was directed by a council of seven members appointed by the Grand Vizier. Being an imitation of the *sixième arrondissement* of Paris, French was selected, along with Turkish, as the official language of the district. The chosen area itself was the most Europeanised part of Istanbul: "since it was in this district that European settlers, bankers and merchants were located, as well as European embassies, […] the Ottoman Empire, being a new member of the Concert of Europe, wished to demonstrate its ability to implement European models of administration"[31]. Recognising the success of this first experiment, the Ottoman government decided to extend this municipal framework to the whole city and a new regulation (*Dersaadet dâre-i Belediye Nizamnâmesi* – Regulation for the Municipal Administration of Istanbul) legally constituted the other thirteen districts: "the capital was then supposed to be governed by a two-tier system, with the *Şehremaneti* having an additional council made up of the mayors and three representatives of each district"[32]. At first, this model was not really executed due to a lack of financial resources but it then proceeded to full implementation. Although slightly modified in the later constitutional period, the

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[28] S. J. Shaw, E. K. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, cit., p. 47.

[29] I. N. Demirakın, *A Study of Ottoman Modernisation on the City,* cit., p. 26.

[30] F. Toksöz (ed.), *Good Governance: Improving Quality of Life*. Istanbul 2008, p. 27.

[31] M. Gül, *The Emergence of Modern Istanbul: Transformation and Modernisation of a City*. London 2009,p.45.

[32] R. Keleş, *Yerinden yönetim ve siyaset*. Istanbul 2000, p. 126, as cited by U. Bayraktar, É. Massicard, *Decentralisation in Turkey*, in "Focales", VII (2012), p. 12.

system experimented in Istanbul would be taken as basis for the structure of urban government developed by the Turkish Republic decades later.

2.3. From Constitution to Dissolution

As marked above, Tanzimat aim was twofold: on the one hand, Ottoman reformers pushed for a modernisation of the administrative apparatus, enhancing public participation on the model of European local institutions; on the other hand, they were well aware of the implications of a structured and functional provincial governance, thus retaining real decision-making power in the central administration. However, the die was already cast: a fault line had been opened and the Empire would soon be tore apart by increasing nationalism and excessive centralism.

2.3.1. Central Administration

Some parts of Ottoman society were still dissatisfied by Tanzimat reforms. A secret society in particular, call Young Ottomans, pushed for a further modernisation of the Empire along the European tradition: they began to draft a Constitution in the mid-1860s drawing inspiration from 1863 Armenian National Constitution[33]. However, Sultan Abdülaziz I was concerned with other issues: a financial crisis had triggered revolts in the Balkans, undermining Ottoman rule in the region to the advantage of European powers. For this reason and due to his careless expenditures on the Ottoman navy and new palaces, he was deposed on May 30, 1876, and then found dead a few days later in what was regarded as a suicide. His nephew Murad V reigned for only 93 days, due to a supposed mental illness. Eventually, his brother Abdul Hamid II ascended the throne on August 31, 1876.

Pressed by Midhat Pasha, a former Grand Vizier much interested in constitutionalism, Sultan Abdul Hamid II approved the Constitution, which was proclaimed on December 23, 1876. However, the Sultan swapped its approval for a royal prerogative "allowing him to exile anyone whom he considered dangerous for the safety of the state [...] and to appoint, dismiss and thus control individual ministries"[34]. The major innovation of the Constitution regarded the establishment of a Western style Parliament, first attempt of representative democracy at central level. It was divided into two houses: the Chamber of Deputies *(Meclis-i Mebusan),* whose members where elected in their district of residence by restricted male suffrage (subjects of good reputation aged 25 or over who were not convicts or bankrupts), and a Chamber of Notables *(Meclis-i Âyân),* appointed directly by the sultan.

The parliamentary experiment was however short lived. Following revolts in the Balkans and the military defeat in the Russo-Turkish war, some deputies criticised Abdul Hamid II for his conduct, claiming that he should have consulted the Parliament before the disaster. In February 1878, the Sultan dissolved the Chambers, implementing all his powers to establish an autocracy that would mark Ottoman central administration until the first decade of the twentieth century.

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[33] R. H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire: 1856-1876,* Princeton 1963, p. 134.

[34] Ibid.

After the Treaty of Berlin and the new European balance of power, the Ottoman Empire began to suffer foreign interferences in its internal affairs as well as nationalist revolts throughout its territory. Abdul Hamid II responded by further increasing its absolute control and concentrating power in the Palace. Many protest groups gradually organised themselves in a liberal coalition called 'the Young Turks' and finally forced the Sultan to restore the 1876 Constitution and the Parliament.

Years of autocracy had however polarised Ottoman society. On April 13, 1909, students of religion and soldiers of the First Army of Istanbul marched towards the Parliament assaulting its buildings and restoring Sultan's power. At this point, the Third Army, core of the military forces that had supported Young Turks' Revolution, took the lead to restore order. A young lieutenant called Mustafa Kemal organised an Operation Army under the command of Hüseyin Hüsnü, who consequently moved to Istanbul to defend the Constitution. Abdul Hamid II was deposed and his half-brother Mehmed V began his nine-year reign in a period of mounting dissolution.

While the Empire was suffering major territorial losses in the Italo-Turkish war and in the First Balkan war, Ottoman politics were dominated by physical and political clashes between the two major political parties: the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) and the Freedom and Accord Party. On January 23, 1913, a new *coup d'état* was organised by members of the CUP; they succeeded in taking control of the Porte and later in establishing a dictatorial triumvirate, called the 'Three Pashas'. As set out in CUP congress declarations, they sought to enhance the division of power that had been initiated during the Tanzimat period.

2.3.2. Provincial Administration

The 1876 Constitution incorporated the *Vilayet* provincial system of 1864, marking in particular the role of provincial, district and county representative councils. As underlined before, the *Vilayet* Law thus became a standard in Ottoman provincial administration also during the reign of Abdul Hamid II, although he eventually strengthened its autocratic control through direct channels of communication between the Palace and governors. He also developed a training system for aspiring bureaucrats composed of different Civil Service Schools depending on the chosen specialisation (i.e., law or finance) with the aim of rationalising and institutionalising civil careers. More importantly, the new Constitution adopted the decentralising approach of previous reforms, declaring in Art. 108 that "the administration of provinces shall be based on the principle of decentralization".

Following the Young Turks' Revolution, new provincial regulations were passed from 1913 and throughout wartime. They were meant to strengthened governors' power and to definitely secularise the role of the *kadi* in a much wider effort to place all members of the *ulema* under direct government control. A particular accent was put on the concept of decentralisation, as provided for in article 108 of the Constitution and as reasserted in the 1913 Law on the General Administration of the Provinces. The latter has been considered one of the most important legal innovations of the Young Turks' period and an effect of their orientation toward service, control and accountability.

The law was divided into two parts (*kısım*), the first pertaining to the general

administration of the province (*idāre-i 'umūmiye-i vilāyet*) and the second to its "special" or "particular" administration (*idāre-i huṣuṣiye*). This distinction of "general" and "particular", and the Ottoman terms associated with it, had appeared in some respect in the law of 1871, the title of which designated it – like the law of 1913 – as a law on general provincial administration. Yet the meaning of the terminological opposition was not really clear in the earlier text. In that of 1913, the discussion of the province, first as an element of the "general" administrative system, and then in terms of its own "particular" administration, reflected both the new emphasis on decentralisation and an important legal innovation[35].

Although not implemented extensively throughout the Empire, the 1913 Provincial Law would be taken as reference law for local administration also under the soon to be established Turkish Republic.

2.3.3. Municipal Administration

As highlighted before, the 1876 Constitution put emphasis on democratic decision-making through various representative bodies. Each *millet* was therefore "bound to organize its own elected lay council on the central and local levels to care for internal affairs as well as the relations of its community with the government and the administrative councils"[36].

The 1877 Law on Provincial Municipalities (*Vilayetler Belediye Kananu*) then "introduced a municipal council of six to twelve members, depending on the size of the town"[37]. Members of municipal councils were to be elected by the public and, among them, a mayor should be chosen by the government. The aim, again, was that of putting under strict control local institutions and centralising power in the Palace.

When the Constitution was re-established in 1908, Ottoman government failed to further develop this system. Instead, the 1913 "law on the administration of the provinces promulgated by the Committee of Union and Progress abolished the Tanzimat regulations and as a result the *muhtarlik*"[38]: *mahalles* continued however to function *de facto* with the tolerance of the central government. In fact, the main flaw in 1913 Law was that "the new text had scarcely anything to say about the lowest administrative echelons"[39].

The main improvement was made in Istanbul, where district municipalities where transformed into branches of the *Şehremaneti*[40]: a new City Council (*Şehir Emaneti Encümeni*) helped the mayor in its municipal duties along with councils of law, health, accounting, and police. These came to be the last legal innovations made before the collapse of the Empire. In fact, the disaster of World War I blocked further reforms in

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[35] C. V. Findley, *The Evolution of the System of Provincial Administration as Viewed from the Center*, in D. Kushner (Ed.), *Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period: Poitical Social and Economic Transformation*, Leiden 1986, pp. 3-29, p. 16.

[36] S. J. Shaw, E. K. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, cit., p. 178.

[37] F. Toksöz (ed.), *Good Governance: Improving Quality of Life*, cit., p. 12.

[38] É. Massicard, *The Incomplete Civil Servant? The Figure of the Neighbourhood Headman (Muhtar)*, in M. Aymes, B. Gourisse, É. Massicard (Eds.), *Order and Compromise: Government Practices in Turkey from the Late Ottoman Empire to Early 21st Century*, Leiden 2015, pp. 256 -290, p. 262.

[39] C. V. Findley, *The Evolution of the System of Provincial Administration as Viewed from the Center*, cit., p. 17.

[40] see Y. Demirkaya (Ed.), *New Public Management in Turkey: Local Government Reform*, London 2016.

a rising nationalist climate.

2.4 Early Republican Period

The disastrous defeat of the Ottoman Empire in WWI exposed the internal disintegration of Ottoman institutions. National division tore apart what had been left of one of the greatest empires in the history of mankind: 5 years of war resulted in an huge territorial loss of almost five thousand square miles. Allied occupation and consequent political dissatisfaction eventually led to the founding of modern Turkey. However, the process was not institutionally smooth: in fact, different administrative approaches coexisted in a prolonged aftershock period, which perfectly depicts the strong historical link between the Empire and the Republic.

2.4.1. Central Administration

After the death of his brother, Mehmed VI became the last sultan of the Ottoman Empire in June 1918. Following the Armistice of Mudros and the consequent Allied occupation, the CUP was consequently disbanded and, in its place, the Liberal Union Party was revived. The Parliament was however once again divided between conservatives and nationalists with the latter soon beginning to focus their attention on opposing peace settlements and external occupation. The sultan reacted dissolving the Parliament in December 1918, conscious that nationalists were striking the right note in a public opinion that still supported the former political force. The CUP had indeed risen "as a liberal party and had pushed through a number of basic economic and social reforms during the war"[41], which had been "systematically disbanded"[42] as the government had started to cooperate with the occupying powers. Thus, politics and society were once again divided into diametrical positions: the cooperative government in Istanbul was opposed by former CUP supporters who wanted to enforce the right of self-determination for Turkish people, as it was happening for other ethnic groups throughout the dissolving Empire.

As it had been during the Young Turks period, Mustafa Kemal, who in the meantime had become a national hero, held again a central role in the defence of secularism and national unity. In May 1919 he was given command not only over the Ninth Army, which encompassed much of the eastern and northern-central Anatolia, but also over the whole civil administration of the area. The official aim was that of restoring order in central Anatolia, where a resistance force under the command of former Ottoman military commanders, Ali Fuat Cebesoy and Kâzim Karabekir, had organised itself and fought against enemy rule. However, Kemal's extensive power seemed to imply a hidden agenda:

> It has been suggested that the appointment simply was an accident; that the Allies and the government were anxious to get him out of Istanbul because of his vociferous opposition to the armistice and that this assignment was chosen because it was vacant at the time. Others suggest that his opponents arranged the assignment on the assumption that he would fail and his reputation would be ruined. In fact, however, it seems clear

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[41] Ivi, p. 333.

[42] Ibid.

that he was sent because his superiors in the Ministry of War, and possibly the grand vezir and sultan, fully expected him to organize resistance[43].

His appointment came just before the Greek invasion of Anatolia, an event that had the effect of only reinforcing Turkish nationalism and its struggle against foreign domination. In June 1919 Mustafa Kemal signed the Amasya Protocol with other soon to be leaders of the Turkish national movement. In the following months the Erzum and Sivas Congresses established the Society to Defend the Rights and Interests of the Provinces of Anatolia and Rumeli and a Representative Committee, which had to work to establish national unity. Kemal soon gathered a series political victories: an American investigating committee, known as the Harold Commission, recommended an American mandate but also proposed to end direct foreign control; a second Amasya Protocol was then signed (though not ratified) with the minister of navy to assure Turkish sovereignty and to end enemies' domination. In the end, many nationalists, besides Kemal himself, were elected in the new Chamber of deputies, although they obviously preferred to stay in Anatolia, conscious that the Allies would not respect their parliamentary immunity. Eventually, the last Ottoman Parliament decided to side with the national movement and accepted the declaration of the Sivas Congress. British response was hard and quick: the Parliament was dissolved, Istanbul was put under martial law and nationalists were condemned to death *in absentia*. Mustafa Kemal reacted declaring the Representative Committee in Ankara the sole lawful government, thus initiating a full-fledged civil war. On 19 March, 1920, he established a new Parliament in Ankara called Grand National Assembly (*Büyük Millet Meclisi*), which consisted of those deputies that were able to escape from Istanbul. Kemal was elected as its first president, while a parliamentary commission was given the task of drafting a new constitution.

The first constitution of the Turkish nation was passed as the Law of Fundamental Organisation (*Teşkilât-ı Esasiye Kanunu*) in January, 1921: the Grand National Assembly and its government were to run the state of Turkey; Kemal was appointed *ex-officio* as President of the Council of Ministers. Every international treaty, including the vindictive Treaty of Sevrès, was declared invalid, while its signatories were condemned as traitors of the Turkish nation. In March, 1921, the government in Ankara broke its diplomatic isolation and signed the Turkish-Soviet Treaty of Friendship. Following some victories against Greek forces and an increased international weight, Turkish nationalists final offensive, known as the Great Offensive (*Büyük Taarruz*), came in the summer of 1922 and succeeded in clearing Anatolia from foreign domination.

An armistice was consequently signed in Mundaya in preparation for new talks in Lausanne. However, there were still two governments in Turkey and Kemal had to take a decision on the future of the sultanate. On 1 November, 1922, the Grand National Assembly abolished the sultanate and Mehmed VI fled Istanbul on a British destroyer, writing the epilogue of Ottoman history. In the summer of 1923, the Treaty of Lausanne secured Turkish boundaries, thus establishing the birth of a new State. In October, the Grand National Assembly passed a new constitution and the capital was moved from Istanbul to Ankara. Soon after the caliphate was abolished, thus cutting any remaining institutional link with the Ottoman Empire.

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[43] S. J. Shaw, E. K. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, cit., p. 342.

The Turkish Republic was proclaimed on 29 October, 1923, led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (literally, 'Father of the Turks') and his Republican People's Party – RPP (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* – CHP). However, "Atatürk was, himself, a product of the Ottoman reform era, and much of the legislation adopted during his presidency had its origins in the preceding decades"[44].

After his presidency was confirmed for life, Kemal became increasingly autocratic, suppressing every instance of opposition. However, he quickly fell ill due to alcohol abuse and died in 1938. His successor, Ismet Inönü, had immediately to face major issues as WWII worsened an already ongoing economic crisis. If he succeed in maintaining Turkey outside the conflict as a neutral country, the economic situation deteriorated quickly and persisted after the end of the war. Simultaneously, the growing military threat embodied by the Soviet Union was deeply concerning Turkish political elite. Eventually, Turkey joined the Western block and was admitted in the OEEC in 1948 and in the NATO in 1958, thus accessing to military and economic aid. A new wind of liberalism blow throughout Turkey, giving strength to opposition parties and in particular to the Democratic Party, which would initiate a new phase in Turkish politics.

2.4.2. Provincial Administration

With regard to provincial organisation, the transition process was much smoother. The influence of the Tanzimat period persisted during the first years of the Republic and Ottoman arrangements were slowly updated as central politics became more stable. However, changes seemed huge at first.

Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the beginning of the war of independence, many local notables joined the national resistance. Their influence was reflected in the 1921 Constitution, where 14 out of the total 23 articles were on decentralised governance. Local governments were given the highest degree of autonomy and, "for the first time, the two-fold status of the provinces was reflected in a clear separation: the governor, appointed by the central level, was responsible only for matters connected with the national government, while the local government took the form of elected assemblies that enjoyed considerable administrative autonomy and appointed their presidents and executive bodies from among their members"[45]. However, the outburst of the civil war undermined the implementation of the constitution; furthermore, such a broad local autonomy was considered a "reason of vulnerability" and was consequently revised in following arrangements[46].

Indeed, the 1924 Constitution was poles apart from that of 1921. If provincial regulations had been previously included under the Executive Function, they were consequently relegated under the title of "Miscellaneous Provisions". Furthermore, although it retained much of the Tanzimat administrative divisions, the new Constitution however cut the size of the large Ottoman vilayets, establishing 63 smaller and weaker provinces. Their relation with the central government was

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[44] W. L. Cleveland, M. Bunton, *A history of the modern Middle East*, Boulder 2009, p. 180.

[45] U. Bayraktar, É. Massicard, *Decentralisation in Turkey*, cit., p. 15.

[46] M. A. Çukurçayır, *Development of Citizens' Political Participation in Local Administration System*, in "European Integration-Realities and Prospectives (EIRP) Proceedings",XI I (2016),pp.141-148, p.143.

regulated by the subsequent #1426 Provincial Administration Law, which was issued in 1929: it established that "governors were both representatives of central administration (provincial general administration) and the head of provincial local administration (provincial special administration)"[47], a twofold pattern that had been already laid out in the 1913 Law on General Administration and that, once again, depicted the constant debate between central and local power. However, following interpretations of the law and successive legislation effectively nullified the decentralisation process, bringing back over-centralisation. No other attempt to reform provincial administration was made during Kemal's rule and up until the end of WWII crisis.

After siding with the Western block, Turkey underwent a transition process towards a more liberal system. Once again, the Ministry of the Interior changed its attitude towards a more decentralised framework and passed a new Provincial Administration Law (#5442) in 1949. Still in force as reference law for general administration of provinces, it defines duties, powers, structures and hierarchies at provincial level.

2.4.3. Municipal Administration

Conversely, municipal administration saw the highest degree of innovation right after the transition from the Empire to the Republic.

In 1924, the Grand Assembly passed Village Law #442, still in force as the reference law regulating villages. For the first time in Turkish history, villages were given legal entity and had to follow administrative, social and health standards[48]. This provision hugely affected rural life, which had been quite overlooked by regulators and reformers until then: with an almost revolutionary development, the new law included "a comprehensive programme of 37 points on what the villages were to do and another 32 points on what they might do in order to improve rural living conditions"[49].

The 1930 Municipality Law (#1580) marked a second step on the modernisation path and became reference law regulating municipalities for more than 70 years. Once again, legislation developed through an 'experimental approach':

> With the Constitution of 1924, Ankara had become the capital city. This started to create serious problems in Ankara. In order to bring solutions to these problems, certain laws specific to Ankara were enacted. With the law on the municipality of Ankara, the principle which limited the right to vote to property ownership in council elections was abandoned and universal suffrage was accepted for men. Ankara functioned as a laboratory for the municipal management concept that emerged after 1930 and the new

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[47] H. Karagel, D. Üçeçam Karagel, *Geographical Analysis of Administrative Organization Process In Turkey (1923-2013)*, in "European Journal of Research on Education", II (2014), pp. 10-32, p. 20.

[48] J. Starr, *Islam and the Struggle over State Law in Turkey*, in D. H. Dwyer (ed.), *Law and Islam in the Middle East*, New York 1990, pp. 77-98, p. 81.

[49] A. K. Sertel, U. Planck, *Rural Community Studies in Turkey*, in J.-L. Durand-Drouhin, L.-M. Szwengrub (eds.), I. Mihailescu (coll.), *Rural Community Studies in Europe: Trends, Selected and Annotated Bibliographies, Analyses*, I, Oxford 1981, pp. 149-190, p. 151.

legislation was prepared according to the experience obtained from Ankara[50].

Article 1 of the Law on Municipalities defined municipality as "a legal personality responsible for the organisation and delivery of services to meet the local needs of the town and its inhabitants". Although vested with different responsibilities in many fields, municipalities were organised according with the Kemalist principles of populism and statism, thus disguising centralism behind an illusory local empowerment. Municipalities were put under strict control by the central government and would constantly suffer from an underdeveloped financial capacity. This was partly conceived "to prevent the articulation of alternative political projects and resistance to the central one", as well as "showcase of the new regime"[51].

With regard to neighbourhood administration, Municipality Law #1580 also regulated the formation of *mahalles*, recognising their function after 17 years of legal uncertainty: in fact, regulations regarding neighbourhoods had been abolished in 1913 during the Young Turks period and never reformulated. However, Law #2295 of 1933 revoked this short-lived recognition once again and transferred neighbourhoods' duties to municipalities or other local units. This triggered a period of instability at the lowest level of local administration, since municipalities were unable to provide all alone such a comprehensive public service. Central administration became soon aware of these deficiencies and therefore reintroduced neighbourhood units with Law #4541 of 1944, cementing once and for all their role in the Turkish administrative system.

2.5. Early Multi-party Period

A liberal wind started to blow throughout Turkey at the beginning of 1950s. With the transition to a multi-party regime, the Republic apparently switch to more democratic politics. However, the political and administrative picture of those years is far more complex. Financial imbalances, political repressions and central-local clashes rapidly led to a centralist drift that would exacerbate internal power relations.

2.5.1. Central Administration

In the 1950 elections, the Democratic Party (*Demokrat Parti*) became the first opposition party to rise to power, as well as the first right-wing political force in Turkey. Abiding by his electoral promises, the new government pushed Turkey towards a liberalisation programme aimed at boosting investments and, consequently, production. Turkish economy indeed grew rapidly but this came at the expenses of central budget: public debt rose dramatically, while a persisting current account deficit triggered a period of strong inflation. Poor economic results were hidden behind urbanisation projects that included, for the first time since the establishment of the Republic, the reparation of religious buildings. In fact, the most conservative factions of the DP were very critic towards Kemalist Secularism. Aware of these growing forces, Menderes extended religious instruction to all schools, thus honouring once

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[50] F. Toksöz (ed.), *Good Governance: Improving Quality of Life*, cit., p. 39.

[51] U. Bayraktar, *Decentralisation, poly-centralisation, and re-centralisation of Turkish politics: A matrix of central-local relationships*, in K. Göymen, O. Sazak (Eds.), *Centralization Decentralization Debate Revisited*, Istanbul 2014, pp. 321-346, p. 325.

again his electoral programme. However, the same liberal attitude was not addressed towards political pluralism. Indeed, the democratic tradition in Turkey was still very recent and the DP inherited the repressive behaviour of its predecessors.

Following the bloody suppression of political demonstrations at the Istanbul University, the government closed all universities and most newspapers, while the Investigation Committee continued with its political inquisition. Eventually, students of the War College and the Faculty of Political Science planned a revolution that resembled much that of the Young Turks. In May, 1960, General Cemal Gürsel led a group of officers and their strategic units to seize power and arrest Menderes as well as its cabinet. Consequently, a military junta of thirty-eight officers organised itself into the National Unity Committee – NUC (*Milli Birlik Komitesi*), assuming legal powers. Eventually, a new constitution was drafted in 1960 by a Constitutional Assembly that included members of the surviving political parties as well as NUC officials and representative of professional, craft and business groups. After a deeply divided national referendum, the new Constitution was passed on July 9, 1961. The new text strongly differed from that of 1924, introducing "important structural changes to Turkish society and government"[52].

> It established a bicameral legislature. The upper chamber, or Senate, was directly elected for terms of six years, but members of the NUC and former presidents of the Republic became lifetime senators, and fifteen others were appointed by the president. The lower chamber was popularly elected by a system of proportional representation. Laws were required to pass both chambers, but the lower chamber alone had power to initiate legislation. [...] Another major innovation was the establishment of a Constitutional Court of fifteen members drawn from the judiciary, parliament, university law faculties, and presidential appointments. The Constitutional Court reviewed laws and orders of parliament at the request of specific persons or groups, including political parties. The president of the Republic would now be elected by parliament, from among its members, for a single term of seven years. He was to be a neutral political figure, to "represent the Turkish Republic and the integrity of the Turkish Nation," and his office maintained a certain independence from the legislature. The president appointed the prime minister, who chose the other cabinet ministers[53].

Furthermore, the 1961 Constitution also highlighted certain social and economic rights not included in that of 1924: it guaranteed freedom of thought, expression, association and publication; it safeguarded property rights and assigned to the State the duty to regulate the job market "with the objective of assuring for everyone a standard of living befitting human dignity" (Article 41). In addition, Article 111 created a National Security Council (*Milli Güvenlik Kurulu*): chaired by the President of the Republic, it included the chief of the general staff, heads of the service branches, the prime minister and other relevant ministers; its function was to assist the cabinet "in the making of decisions related to national security and coordination".

The outset of the Second Republic was poisoned by the trial and execution of hundreds of DP members, among which former Prime Minister Menderes, who was hanged on September 17, 1961. In October, Inönü's RPP won the majority of a polarised Parliament, where former Democrats (now under the flag of the Justice Party – *Adalet Partisi* and of the New Turkey Party – *Yeni Türkiye Partisi*) maintained

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[52] D.A. Howard, *The History of Turkey*, London 2001, p. 136.

[53] Ibid.

almost half of the seats. In such a divided political atmosphere, the following years were marked by an unstable succession of short-lived coalition governments. Gürsel, new President of the Republic, spent five years mediating between old and new parties and trying to give Turkey a stable government without former Democratic contribution. However, the Cyprus issue and the consequent worsening of the diplomatic relations with Washington definitely put an end to Inönü's years. General elections in 1965 saw the rise of Süleyman Demirel, chairman of the Justice Party (JP) and first of a new generation of Turkish politicians:

> A peasant's son with a degree in engineering from Istanbul University, […] he was a common man and a skilled orator who spoke the language of the ordinary people. He had technical training and experience working with the Americans, having lived in the United States for short periods before entering government service in the 1950s. He was religiously observant and conservative, but a secularist. Though inexperienced, he was a congenial man and an able negotiator, and he unified the right by rebuilding the coalition of industrialists, big landowners, small merchants, and artisans and peasants reminiscent of the DP of the early 1950s[54].

However, international factors marked again Turkish political course. Towards the end of the 1960s anti-Americanism became a huge issue of internal stability: from the US siding with Athens during the Cyprus crisis to the Vietnam war, Turkish public opinion grew a sentiment of intolerance towards Americans and American interests. Demirel became a symbol of modern capitalism, an "American stooge"[55], the main link with the United States. He was caught in the middle of an internal fire coming from the left against his economic views and international ties and from the religious right against his outspoken secularism. Demirel started to lose the traditional support of lower-middle class, which therefore began to organise itself politically. The new president Cevdet Sunay was at least able to maintain a stable government, asking Demirel to overcome the political crisis under way. However, the social climate was also deteriorating very quickly. Street riots and strikes became common in the biggest cities and went so far as to turn into proper anarchy.

In such and uncontrolled situation, the highest officials of the military sent an ultimatum to Demirel, demanding the restoration of internal order and the implementation of the Constitution. Demirel had however no residual power and therefore no choice but to resign.

For the second time in just a little more than a decade Turkish military seized control of the state in what would become known as 'coup by memorandum'. Its first concern was that of restoring order: it therefore eliminated the political left and all leftist organisations that ideologically fed the strikes and political clashes of the previous years. Demirel was replaced by a Nihat Erim, "a member of the right wing of the RPP and a close associate of İnönü's for many years"[56]. The only political party that opposed Erim was the old RPP. Its new leader, Bülent Ecevit, succeeded in steering the party towards social democracy, after the 'collaborationist years' of Inönü. In October 1973, Turkey surprisingly shifted again into the hands of the RPP. However, Ecevit was short of a clear majority and had to form a coalition with the

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[54] D.A. Howard, *The History of Turkey*, cit., p. 139.

[55] Ivi, p. 145.

[56] E. J. Zürcher, *Turkey: a modern history*, cit., p. 258.

religious oriented National Salvation Party, led by Necmettin Erbakan. This unusual political alliance lasted only a few months but had a great impact in Turkey's foreign relations due to its decision to invade Cyprus in July 1974. Ecevit suddenly became a national hero and was therefore convinced of having the numbers to win an early election on his own. He therefore resigned in September 1974. However, this turned to be a huge miscalculation. After a caretaker cabinet under Sadi Irmak, opposition parties organised themselves in what became known as 'Nationalist Front'. Demirel led this coalition for the next two years, a period in which political violence returned to rise.

The following elections took place in June 1977. The RPP was confirmed as Turkey's first party but was once again unable to gain absolute majority. Ecevit tried to form a minority government but did not pass the vote of confidence. Thus, Demirel led a second 'Nationalist Front' until the end of the year, when a group of JP Deputies voted against the government "because of the ongoing violence and oppression against the Kurds in the south-east"[57]. In January 1978, Ecevit formed a new cabinet with the support of JP defectors. With this new government, Turkey reached the highest degree of political weakness, thus reawakening its hidden forces: "the military leadership grew increasingly disillusioned with what it saw as Ecevit's 'soft' attitude to terrorism and Kurdish separatism, and there are strong indications that the army top brass decided in the summer of 1979 to start preparations for a coup, which it now regarded as inevitable"[58].

Turkey slipped again towards anarchy. Political violence became indiscriminate and thousands of people died between 1978 and 1980.

2.5.2. Provincial Administration

The transition to multi-party regime did not alter the traditional centralism of Turkish administration. Although DP first endorsed peripheral forces, Menderes' years were marked by increasing state control. If the early republican period saw the attempted codification of Special Provincial Administrations, in the following years, "the significant tasks of the SPAs were transferred to the central government"[59]. On the one hand, "thanks to these transfers of functions to the central government, the financial burden of local governments was lightened"[60]. On the other hand, local governments were considered simply as branches of central administration: for example, the establishment of the Bank of Municipalities (*Belediyeler Bankası*) in 1933 and its upgrading to Bank of Departments (*İller Bankası – İlbank*) in 1945 were mainly conceived as steps towards the centralisation of planning and funding of local public works.

As mentioned above, the 1960 coup produced the most liberal Constitution of the Turkish Republic. However, such innovations were not accompanied by amendments at local level. The Constitution did bring clarity to local governments, establishing that

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[57] F. Ahmad, *Politics and Political Parties in Republican Turkey*, cit., p. 253.

[58] E. J. Zürcher, *Turkey: a modern history*, cit., p. 262.

[59] Z. Önez Çetin, *The Transformation of Special Provincial Administration System in Turkey*, in "Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences", III VI (2015), pp. 138-149, p. 149.

[60] U. Bayraktar, *Decentralisation, poly-centralisation, and re-centralisation of Turkish politics*, cit., p. 328.

"the organisation and functions of the administration are based both on the principles of centralisation and decentralisation" (Art. 112): "in terms of central administrative organisation, Turkey is divided into provinces based on geographical and economic factors and on the requirements of public service, and provinces are further divided into smaller administrative districts" (Art. 115); in terms of local administration, "local administrative bodies are public corporate entities created to meet the common local needs of the citizens of provinces, municipal districts, villages, whose policy-making organs are elected by the people" (Art. 116). Furthermore, the constitutional text did also restrict control and supervision of local governments to judicial courts (Art. 116), abiding by its democratic vocation. Overall, provincial administration remained however underdeveloped; indeed, "it is also noticeable that the presence of SPAs and their necessity within the Turkish administrative system have been started to be discussed since the 1960s"[61].

During the following decades, provincial administration underwent a stagnant period and was caught in the middle of a clash between centre and periphery.

2.5.3. Municipal Administration

As marked before, the new multi-party regime changed the social composition of political representation, giving much prominence to local forces. This, along with an increased share of local governments in the national budget, considerably empowered the lowest administrative level, "since municipalities composed of elected actors were considered more autonomous than the provincial governments presided by an appointed prefect no matter that their councillors were also elected"[62]. However, mono-partitism still dominated centre-local relations and municipal autonomy was tolerated only providing that local policies followed central pressures: "even in those exceptional cases where the ruling Democrat Party (DP) lost the municipality, democratic principles were degenerated in order to secure the influence of central government over local governments"[63]. In the end, municipalities were still viewed as local organisations of central government.

The 1961 Constitution brought some democratic innovations: along the aforementioned restrictions to central supervision, it also established the direct election of mayors, leading to the amendment of the Municipality Law in 1963. However, these minor changes did not improve the financial and political problems of the municipalities: "for instance, the share of local governments in the total public revenues decreased from 16.35% in 1960 to 5.67% in 1972 representing a reduction of 42% in the municipal service production per capita"[64]. The government continued to transfer competencies from local to central administration. The transition to a planned economy and the creation of the SPO only boosted this tendency. At the same time,

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[61] Z. Önez Çetin, *The Transformation of Special Provincial Administration System in Turkey*, cit., p. 140.

[62] U. Bayraktar, *Decentralisation, poly-centralisation, and re-centralisation of Turkish politics*, cit., p. 328.

[63] U. Bayraktar, *Turkish Municipalities: Reconsidering local democracy beyond administrative theory*, in "European Journal of Turkish Studies", (2007), §21.

[64] Ö Altaban, *1960-1973 dönemi belediyeciliğine genel bakış (A general overview of municipalism between 1960-1973)*, in "Türk belediyeciliğinde 60 yıl bildiri metinleri (60 years in Turkish municipalism conference proceedings)", (1990), pp. 317-325, p. 319, as cited by U. Bayraktar, *Turkish Municipalities*, cit., §28.

municipalities had to face the threat of rapid urbanisation. Industrialisation in the cities and mechanisation in the countryside drove a wave of residents from rural to urban areas. Systemically weakened, municipal governance was unable to respond to the rapid growth of its population. New inhabitants therefore started to develop their *ad hoc* measures, building *gecekondu* (illegal houses on public land) and relying on "informal, interpersonal and inter-communitarian solidarity networks"[65]. Eventually, most of Turkish big cities started to show this dual nature, becoming a cauldron of social and political unrest.

After the 1970 military intervention and the 1973 elections, RPP won all the major Turkish municipalities, clashing with the rightist coalition in power. For the first time in Turkish history, 'dissident' cities "appeared with their proper political agendas and emblematic leaders that did not abstain from directly opposing central politicians when pursuing their own projects"[66]. When the government responded restricting their financial autonomy and abusing its right of administrative tutelage, mayors reacted with the creation of a national municipal movement called 'New Municipalism', which identified itself as "democratic and participatory, productive, fund-raiser, advisor, organizer, and unionist"[67]. Following the new 'social path' of Ecevit's RPP, municipal management also implemented a 'revolutionist approach' toward citizens' participation:

> A two-way tactic was used in the revolutionist approach. The first objective had been to get the direct public support in municipal services and activities. For this purpose, steps had been taken at the mahalle (neighborhood) level. Coffee house meetings were held with the public, the municipal objectives were explained in these meetings and the government was directly criticized. […] The second tactic used in the revolutionist approach was to establish close cooperation with civil society organizations. In that period, the term "democratic mass organization" was used instead of civil society organization. Most of these organizations were leftist and some of them were radical. By cooperating with these organizations, the first application of participatory municipal management was realized; assemblies and councils were convened[68].

Furthermore, municipalities had finally the political power to implement some provision that had been envisaged decades before but also constantly opposed by a centralist attitude. For instance, Law #1580 included a right for municipalities to form unions:

> By forming unions, the municipalities would be able to carry out services that they could not deliver on their own. With the leadership of İstanbul Municipality, the municipalities in the Marmara Region had established the Union of Municipalities of the Marmara and its Straits (MBBB) towards the end of 1974. The union was established with the objectives of bringing solutions to the common problems caused by rapid urbanization, supporting the autonomous municipality movement and improving the cooperation and solidarity among municipalities. […] This union is the first institution that brought environmental problems into the agenda. It started to question the pollution of the

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[65] T. Şengül, *Kentsel Çelişki ve Siyaset*. İstanbul 2001, pp. 78-79, as cited by U. Bayraktar, *Decentralisation, poly-centralisation, and re-centralisation of Turkish politics*, cit., p.329.

[66] U. Bayraktar, *Decentralisation, poly-centralisation, and re-centralisation of Turkish politics*, cit., p.332.

[67] U. Bayraktar, *Turkish Municipalities*, cit., §29.

[68] F. Toksöz (ed.), *Good Governance: Improving Quality of Life*, cit., pp. 52-53

Marmara Sea and worked as a leader for research in this field[69].

In the end, notwithstanding government's efforts to control municipalities and dictate their political agenda, the 1970s can be regarded as the first real de-centralising period of Turkish administrative history. However, political and social violence took the stage at the end of the decade, prompting another phase in Turkish politics.

2.6. Towards Modern Turkey

The social and political instability of the 1960s and 1970s left a deep wound in Turkish electorate. The current administrative landscape is built on the historical developments that changed Turkish polity since the 1980s: in its various reforms coexisted the aims of a plurality of actors, showing once again the constant debate between centre and periphery.

2.6.1. Central Administration

On September 12, 1980, tanks invaded the street of Ankara, Istanbul and other major Turkish cities. At 4.30 hours a communiqué by General Kenan Evren, chief of the general staff and leader of the coup, "announced that the armed forces had taken over political power because the state organs had stopped functioning"[70]. The leaders of the major political parties were arrested and placed under protection while the chambers were dissolved and parliamentary immunities lifted. Also in this case, the military would have returned the nation to a democratic system, but this time its aim was that of enforcing radical changes in the political system. The impact of the coup was much deeper than that of its predecessors: the generals decided to dismiss not only members of the parliament and their parties, but also all mayors and municipal councils. All power was in the hands of the National Security Council and Evren was nominated president. The NSC formed a technocratic cabinet led by retired admiral Bülent Ulusu, although its role was that of a mere executor of the generals' decisions. Furthermore, regional and local commanders were given wide-ranging powers under martial law and essentially controlled every aspect of the socio-political sphere, from education to trade unions. In its aim to restore order, the regime went so far as to destroy the past:

> In June 1981 all public discussion of political matters was prohibited. In 1982, an NSC decree forbade the old politicians, in almost Orwellian fashion, to discuss publicly the past, the present or the future. The old parties, which had been suspended after the coup, were officially dissolved on 16 October and their possessions were confiscated. In their zeal to enforce a radical break with the past, the generals even tried to destroy that past itself: the archives of the parties, including those of the Republican People's Party of the last 30 years (the earlier parts had already been confiscated by the Democrat Party government in the 1950s and their whereabouts are unknown) disappeared and were probably destroyed[71].

With regard to its legal reforms, coup leaders followed their 1960 predecessors,

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[69] Ivi, p. 55

[70] E. J. Zürcher, *Turkey: a modern history*, cit., p. 278

[71] Ivi, p. 279

naming a consultative assembly of 160 members, appointed directly or indirectly by the NSC, to draft a new constitution. It was soon clear, which path the assembly intended to follow: fundamentally blaming the previous constitution for the fragmentation and polarisation of Turkish society as well as for the weakness of its central institutions, the new text increased the power of the government, the president and the NSC, while limiting civil liberties on the ground of national interests; it also abolished the bicameral legislature and strengthened the cabinet over the parliament. On November 7, 1982, the constitution was approved by 91.4% of the population – voting was compulsory on penalty of a fine and the loss of the right to vote for five years – and General Evren became president for a seven-year term.

In the spring of 1983, the NSC promulgated a new Law on Political Parties, banning old politicians for ten years and restricting parties' approval to the NSC itself. Eventually, the military allowed three parties to take part in the 1983 elections:

> The *Milliyetçi Demokrasi Partisi* (Party of Nationalist Democracy), a party closely identified with and supported by the generals and led by retired general Turgut Sunalp;
> The *Halkçı Partisi* (Populist Party), led by Necdet Calp, the party that came closest to the traditional Kemalist wing of the RPP; and
> The *Anavatan Partisi* (Motherland Party), led by Turgut Özal, the man behind the economic reform programme launched in 1979–80, who had served also as 'super minister' in charge of the economy under the military regime until he was forced out of office as a result of financial scandals[72].

If Evren did not hide its dislike for the Motherland Party and for its leader, Özal was able to take advantage of these tensions, catalysing public's aversion for the regime. MP won the election with 45% of the vote and the absolute majority in the new assembly. Engineer by training and graduate in economics, the new prime minister dominated Turkish politics for a decade and incarnated that strong vocation to leadership that started with Inönü and always marked Turkish multi-party politics. However, his "authoritarian management style"[73] began to attract criticism by the end of the dacade. This became clear in the local elections of 1989, when the MP became third party after the Social Democratic Populist Party (*Sosyaldemokrat Halçi Parti* – SHP), led by Erdal Inönü, son of the old RPP leader, and Demirel's Right Path Party (*Doğru Yol Partisi* – DYP). Still maintaining a majority in the Parliament, Özal managed to be elected as President after Evren's term in November 1989.

In the 1991 general elections, the MP came second behind Demirel but surprisingly ahead of the SHP; the growing importance of the Muslim middle class was also reflected in the election of members of Erbakan's Welfare Party – WP (*Refah Partisi*). In 1993, the much criticised but yet beloved President Özal, suffered and heart attack and died on April 17. He was succeeded by Demirel, who therefore left his previous institutional roles. Between May 16 and June 25 Erdal Inönü acted as prime minister before handing the place to former Minister of State for the economy and new DYP's leader, Tansu Çiller, first and only female politician to become head of the cabinet. Although guided by Demirel, she shared many views with the defunct President Özal, ranging from pro-Americanism to a blind faith in capitalism. This attitude eroded much of DYP's support and exposed Çiller to Demirel's resentment.

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[72] E. J. Zürcher, *Turkey: a modern history*, cit., p. 282

[73] D.A. Howard, *The History of Turkey*, cit., p. 168

In the municipal elections of 1994, it became clear that the Islamist WP was quickly gaining ground. Erbakan was able to take control of major Turkish cities, including Istanbul and Ankara. Çiller had soon a problem also on the left side of the Parliament. In 1995, leftist parties reunited under RPP's revived banner. The elections of December 1995 confirmed that Erbakan's WP had gained the first spot. Overall, Turkish secularist circles did not show particular signs of panic; however, "the fact that supposedly secular Turkey was now ruled by an Islamist prime minister [...] sent shock waves through the Western world"[74]. In addition, relations between the government and the army were deteriorating rapidly, soon resulting in an open confrontation.

> In February 1997, things came to a end when a Welfare Party mayor [in Sincan] organised a 'Jerusalem Day' demonstration and called for the liberation of the city from Israel. [...] The army responded by sending tanks through the Sincan township, arresting the mayor, declaring the Iranian ambassador, who had spoken at the demonstration, *persona non grata*, and launching an investigation against the Welfare Party. Moreover, on 28 February the generals, describing political Islam as more dangerous than Kurdish nationalism, forced Erbakan to accept a twenty-point programme designed to undermine the influence of political Islam. Its supporters were to be purged from the state apparatus along with schools for prayer leaders and preachers, the expansion of which the generals had legislated after September 1980 in order to counter the influence of 'leftist ideologies'[75].

Erbakan resigned in June 1997, leaving his place to Yılmaz. The Constitutional Court consequently closed the Welfare Party and banned its chairman from political leadership for a five-year term. Some WP members, among which the mayor of Istanbul, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, were tried and imprisoned for some months. Former WP deputies founded the Virtue Party (*Fazilet Partisi*), which became the largest group in parliament. Meanwhile, the new government was caught in a corruption scandal and its prime minister resigned in November 1998. Old political leader Bülent Ecevit, now head of the Democratic Left Party (*Demokratik Sol Party* – DSP) formed a minority government to lead the country to general elections. However, he also found itself in the right place at the right time, when PKK's leader Abdullah Öcalan was captured in February 1999, giving him and his party immense prestige.

The first elections after what has been called a 'post-modern coup' confirmed the new prominence of the DSP, which had reinvented itself as a nationalist party. Ecevit formed a coalition government with Yılmaz' MP and the far-right Nationalist Movement Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi* – MHP), founded by the defunct colonel Alparslan Türkeş and led by Devlet Bahçeli. The new cabinet worked in a transitional period for Turkish political history: stuck in economic stagnation and hit by a strong earthquake, the country was slowly shifting in the hands of a new generation. Judge Necdet Sezer, 51 years-old, became President in May 2000 and new elections were scheduled for November 2002.

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[74] E. J. Zürcher, *Turkey: a modern history*, cit., p. 299

[75] F. Ahmad, *Politics and Political Parties in Republican Turkey*, cit., p. 259

2.6.2. Provincial Administration

The provincial level had already gone through a period of decline, eclipsed by the growing politicisation of the lower level and its constant clash with central governments. It also suffered from an uneven internal development[76]. As marked in the previous paragraphs, Turkish provincial administration had been constitutionally defined as a two-tier system: on the one hand, provinces are extension of the central government (general administration); on the other hand, they are autonomous local institutions (special administration). However, if the former had been extensively developed during the early Republican period and had found its final codification in the Provincial Administration Law #5442 of 1949, the latter was still depending on the 1913 Temporary Law, which was indeed the real last act of the Tanzimat reorganisation. For this reason, the new political elite of the 1980s felt the need to update the whole system.

As the previous text, the 1982 Constitution established that "the organisation and functions of the administration are based on the principles of centralisation and decentralisation" (Art. 123); it also reprised the divisions of the 1961 Constitution, but highlighted that "the [central] administration of the provinces is based on the principle of devolution of powers" (Art. 126). Finally, Art. 127(4) codified the supervision power of central administration over local institutions: "the central administration has the power of administrative tutelage over the local administrations in the framework of principles and procedures set forth by law with the objective of ensuring the functioning of local services in conformity with the principle of the integrity of the administration, securing uniform public service, safeguarding the public interest and meeting local needs properly". Being the provincial and district governors extensions of the central government under general provincial administration, they received some authority to oversee lower autonomous local communities.

In 1987, the Provincial Administration Law #1426 of 1929 was amended and renamed Special Administration Law #3360. The new law readjusted incomes and expenditures of provincial local administrations; it also established that provincial budgets had to be ratified by the Ministry of Interior. Furthermore, although significant responsibilities were given to SPAs "such as education, health, agriculture and animal husbandry […], those listed services [were] undertaken by the central government", leading "to authority conflict between central and local governments" and turning local authorities into "dysfunctional and ineffective institutions"[77].

2.6.3. Municipal Administration

The constant weakening of the medium level of governance resulted in an even larger power polarisation between the central and lower level. Municipalities became the focus of administrative reforms and their financial capabilities increased noteworthy, enabling them to fully meet their duties. Right after the coup, the junta

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[76] B. Parlak, M. Z. Sobaci, M. Ökmen, *The Evaluation of Restructured Local Governments in Turkey within the Context of The European Charter on Local Self-Government*, in "Ankara Law Review", V I (2008), pp. 23-52, p. 37.

[77] Z. Önez Çetin, *The Transformation of Special Provincial Administration System in Turkey*, cit., p. 142

indeed "published two laws (n°2380 and 2464) increasing the financial resources of local governments that were presided by appointed mayors"[78]. In the following years, the neo-liberal orientation of Özal's MP would have even a greater impact on municipal administration:

> Local implications of this neo-liberal orientation were immediate and could be followed through three main trends: decentralisation, de-socialisation and privatisation. Firstly, *decentralisation* implied changing the power and resource distribution scheme between the central government and municipalities in favour of the latter. With numerous laws passed by post-1980 governments, the financial resources of local governments were considerably improved [...]. Secondly, the functional transformation of municipalities was also to be seen in the nature of the municipal services provided. In harmony with the neo-liberal trend, social and cultural services in areas such as health, education, housing, nutrition and heating, already very poor, were totally disregarded in order to *de-socialize* municipal duties. [...] The most neo-liberal aspect of the municipal transformation was the privatisation of some municipal services. To put it bluntly, the resources withdrawn from social areas and saved from operational costs were channelled to the private sector. So instead of providing the service itself, municipalities started purchasing the services from private companies or leaving the field wholly to private initiatives. Municipal services such as public transportation, urban hygiene, construction of infrastructure, parking, were thus henceforth handled by or in corporation with the private sector. Moreover, the structural incorporation of municipalities into free markets was also pursued by the multiplication of municipal enterprises. Founded as private companies, and hence free from the restrictions of administrative legal control, these municipal enterprises also sidestepped any kind of public control. In fact, even market forces were unable to influence these bodies since they generally enjoyed a monopoly position in their field[79].

This (at least apparent) 'ideological shift' towards decentralisation and local empowerment came mostly because of the structural problems experienced during the previous decade and caused by rapid urbanisation in the biggest cities. Therefore, reforms aimed at both finding the optimal size of municipalities and the right amount of services they could adequately carry out. The first steps along this path were taken in 1981 with Law #2561 on the "Inclusion of Residential Areas in the Close Vicinity of Metropolises to Main Municipalities", enabling "municipalities and villages in the vicinity of cities with populations exceeding 300.000 to join these new municipalities"[80]. Art. 127 of the 1982 Constitution reaffirmed that "special administrative arrangements may be introduced by law for larger urban centres".

However, the main innovation of the period was undoubtedly the introduction of a metropolitan municipality system. In 1984, Decree Law #195 and consequently Law #3030 on "Amending and Adopting the Decree Law on the Administration of Metropolitan Municipalities" established a new system in those cities composed of more than one district municipality (i.e. Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir). In the following years, new districts were created in the biggest cities in order to grant them metropolitan status (i.e. in Adana, Bursa, Gaziantep, Konya and Kayseri). In 1988, the district rule was changed due to the alleged costs of creating new districts; therefore,

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[78] U. Bayraktar, *Turkish Municipalities*, cit., §32

[79] U. Bayraktar, *Turkish Municipalities*, cit., §33-38

[80] H. Karagel, D. Üçeçam Karagel, *Geographical Analysis of Administrative Organization Process In Turkey (1923-2013)*, in "European Journal of Research on Education", II (2014), pp. 10-32, p. 25

these lower-level municipalities were not built in the newly established metropolitan municipalities (i.e. Antalya, Diyarbakır, Erzurum, Eskişehir, Mersin, Koaceli, Samsun in 1993 and Sakarya in 1999), although new administrative units, similar to metropolitan district municipalities, were then framed in those contexts[81].

It would be easy to say that the 1980s put an end to the over-centralising approach of Turkish institutions. However, it would be also incorrect. With the creation of the two-tiered metropolitan system, district municipalities lost resources and power, further weakening local democracy[82]. Furthermore, new regulations did not solve power imbalances between the centre and the periphery: indeed, metropolitan municipalities replicated in a smaller scale and to the extreme the same centralising pattern:

> Metropolitan municipalities are organized similar to a federative structure that are composed of the municipalities within the metropolitan area. Mayor of the metropolitan municipality is directly elected by the public and the metropolitan municipal council is composed of the representatives from lower tier municipalities. In that way, a type of dependence is formed among the lower-tier municipalities in the decision-making processes of metropolitan cities. On the other hand, the mayor of the metropolitan municipality is granted a veto power that is even stronger than the veto power of the President. According to that, the mayor of the metropolitan municipality has a right to change the council decisions before accepting them. This antidemocratic structure caused serious damages to the historical fabric of cities, especially during the land development activities in İstanbul[83].

Bayraktar has rightly ascribed this evolution in Turkish administration to the wider phenomenon of poly-centralisation, meaning that different centres of power enjoyed a hegemonic control in their respective areas.

> One of the ex-mayors of Çanakkale, a mid-sized city in the southern Marmara region, İsmail Ozbay (2002) admits very frankly this strengthened position of mayors: "*I have been a mayor for 13 years; that means I am a democratic professional… In fact, being a local executive in Turkey is being a democratic sultan. If you do not control yourself, you enjoy extraordinary powers. The principles of control are defined by the mayor himself. Of course, there are means of control, but those are tools of tutelage. There is no serious control in local governments. I believe that the present system of local governments resembles rather a system of democratic sultanate*"[84].

In the end, Turkey started the new millennium with a deeply reformed local administration, which however still needed to find its internal equilibrium.

2.7 New Men, Old Narratives

At the beginning of the new millennium, Turkey was once again undergoing a political change. The previous two decades had seen a differentiation and multiplication of political forces, many of which had been slowly let loose by Turkish hidden forces, what someone called 'the deep state' (*derin devlet*). Eventually, the

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[81] P. Savaş-Yavuzçehre, *The Effects Of The Law No. 6360 On Metropolitan Municipality System In Turkey*, in "European Scientific Journal", August 2016 Special Edition, pp. 291-303, p. 295.

[82] U. Bayraktar, *Turkish Municipalities*, cit., §39.

[83] F. Toksöz (ed.), *Good Governance: Improving Quality of Life*, cit., p. 57.

[84] U. Bayraktar, *Decentralisation, poly-centralisation, and re-centralisation of Turkish politics*, cit., p. 337.

relatively new men of the Justice and Development (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* – AKP), had managed to control (and in the end probably defeat) the periodical 're-kemalisation' of the state.

2.7.1. Central Administration

Before the 2002 elections, polls had already predicted that the modernist wing of the Islamist movements, Erdoğan's AKP, would be the main winner.

> Voters were prepared to follow anyone who could offer hope. There the figure of Tayyip Erdoğan was crucially important. Not only was he a charismatic leader with a working class background who could appeal to the masses, but he had also proved himself to be a very successful and popular mayor of the Istanbul metropolitan area in the years from 1994 to 1998. So in 2002 he was 'outside the system' [...] and at the same time he had credibility as an administrator[85].

However, Erdoğan could not serve as prime minister, since he had been previously convicted and banned from politics. Co-founder of the AKP, Abdullah Gül therefore took his place and prepared legislation allowing AKP's leader return to politics. In March 2003, Erdoğan consequently formed a new cabinet.

The major political issue was, at that time, the election of Sezer's successor. Oppositions became alarmed by Erdoğan's intention to elect an AKP member as new President of the Republic: "on 10 April 2007, President Sezer, presiding over his last NSC meeting, warned his audience that religious fundamentalism had reached alarming proportions and Turkey's only guarantee against this threat was its secular order, hinting that a military intervention was still on the cards if the governing party persisted in electing an 'Islamist' president"[86]. In the end, the parliament could not agree on the nomination of Gül and therefore Turkey went to the polls a couple of months before scheduled. The AKP was confirmed as first party, followed by the RPP and the ultra-nationalist MHP. Erdoğan chose again Gül as candidate, who was this time elected in August 2007. The much feared Islamist party then controlled the three principal levers of power – the executive, the legislature and the presidency.

The election of Gül was a breakthrough not only because it considerably helped AKP's 'political takeover', but also because it showed the declining power of secularism and, in particular, of the military. On April 2007, Turkish Armed Forces published on their website a statement, later called 'e-memorandum', declaring their concern for the election of the new President, their loyalty to secularism and their right to intervene in case of a threat to the "unchangeable characteristics of the Republic of Turkey". Furthermore, the Constitutional Court opened a case against the AKP for an alleged violation of the Turkish Constitution. However, the executive had never been so strong since Atatürk's years and, although the Chief of General Staff himself denied it was a coup attempt, the military failed to steer Turkish politics for the first time.

However, Turkish society was undergoing a process of polarisation and Erdoğan was increasingly viewed not only as an Islamist threat, but also as a not so disguised autocrat: despite the improvements of the 2010 referendum, AKP's leader started

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[85] Ibid.

[86] F. Ahmad, *Politics and Political Parties in Republican Turkey*, cit., p. 264.

indeed to increase restrictions on the freedom of speech and on the freedom of press[87].

Eventually, secularist unrest exploded in 2013. In May, "environmentalists"[88] gathered in Taksim Square to protest against the demolition plan of the nearby Gezi Park; they were quickly joined by AKP opponents and the sit-in turned into an anti-government demonstration. Other protests were then organised throughout Turkey with an estimated participation of at least 3.5 million people[89]. By end of the summer, when protesters gradually left the square, at least 3 people were directly killed and more than 8,000 injured by the police[90], although the final death toll reached 11 according to other sources[91]. In the end, the wave of protests achieved nothing more than a brief delay of the original plan[92] and a handful of flawed trials against police officers[93]. Indeed, Gezi Park demonstrations only boosted social polarisation and Erdoğan's autocratic drift: the violence demonstrated by the police caused a great stir in Europe and irremediably deteriorated Turkish relations with the EU; furthermore, the government passed new laws to increase its control over the Internet and to expand police power.

In August 2014, Erdoğan succeeded Gül as President of the Republic, winning the first Turkish presidential elections, although the political opposition criticised the result, which, in their view, had been influenced by a media bias and corruption cases. Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ahmet Davutoğlu, consequently replaced Erdoğan in his role as prime minister and AKP's leader.

Turkey was slowly sliding towards a new mono-partitism in what seemed a 1950s revival. Indeed, some sectors of Turkish bureaucracy were aware of these changes as they were in DP's years and probably wanted Erdoğan to become a '21st century Menderes'.

On July 15, 2016, a new coup was attempted against state institutions but failed after a lighting quick civil war between the population and pro-coup soldiers. It is still unclear who ordered the military intervention and why it was so poorly organised. It is however clear that, in the end, it remarkably strengthened Erdoğan's power and government's control over Turkish society, whose future is now completely uncertain.

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[87] see T. Vogel, *Inching away from democracy?,* in "Politico", January 2012.

[88] T. Erkoc, *Taksim Gezi Park Protests: Birth and Backlash of a Political Sphere*, in B. Gökay, I. Xypolia, (Eds.), *Reflections on Taksim – Gezi Park Protests in Turkey*, Keele 2013, pp. 43-46.

[89] C. de Bellaigue, *Turkey: "Surreal, Menacing...Pompous"*, in "The New York Review of Books", December 2013.

[90] see Amnesty International, *Gezi Park Protests: Brutal Denial of the Right to Peaceful Assembly in Turkey*, London 2013.

[91] see for istance H. A. Elbeleidy, *"Lifting dead soil out off our bodies": Reclaiming Public Space in Gezi Park through Resistance,* Master's dissertation, Pennsylvania State University 2015.

[92] see *Erdoğan vows to 'rebuild' Ottoman military barracks in Istanbul's Gezi Park*, in "Hürriyet Daily News" (June 18, 2016).

[93] see E. Sinclair-Webb, *Dispatches: One Year After Turkey's Gezi Protests, Activists on trial*, in "Human Rights Watch", June 2014.

2.7.2. Provincial Administration

AKP's attitude towards the reform of local governance has been deeply different from that of its predecessors: "instead of making improvements to the old legislation, a radical method was preferred by the annulment of the old laws and the enactment of new legislation"[94]. This seems to have been done partly because of the influence of the EU and the European Charter of Local-Self Government: however, the only reform directly and clearly linked to EU demands has been the adoption of the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS) system in 2002 and the creation of two-pilot Regional Development Agencies in 2006:

> According to its organic law (Law No.5449), RDAs consist of a decision-making body, which is composed of representatives of local administrations in each province (provincial assemblies and municipalities) and chambers of commerce and/or industry, and headed by provincial governors. In the metropolitan regions, such as İstanbul, İzmir and Ankara, the decision body also includes representatives from non-governmental organizations and/or the private sector. Development Councils consist of 100 representatives from public and private sectors and civil society institutions. Their roles are simply consultative[95].

However, this has been done without consultation of local actors and without a systematic approach to the drawing of regional boundaries. Furthermore, RDAs' clearly show their centralist conception: their decisions need to be approved by the Ministry of Development, while their activities are financially dependent of the national budget.

With regard to the influence of the European Charter of Local and Self-Government (ratified by Turkey in 1992), AKP did put emphasis on the principle of subsidiarity, at least in its first reform attempt in 2004. Draft Law #5727 on "Fundamental Principles and Reform of Public Administration" aimed at redefining the responsibilities of central and local administration by giving more weight to the latter. The text was however vetoed by President Sezer and declared unconstitutional. The AKP then responded tactically, dividing the whole reform package into its fundamental parts.

In 2005, Law #5302, replaced the 1913 Temporary Law as basic legal framework for Special Provincial Administration (SPA). A first attempt had already been made a year before with Law #5197, which was however vetoed again by the President. The new law aimed at improving the low level of competence reached by SPAs, devolving some duties to these institutions. It also introduced two structural changes:

> The (centrally appointed) governor ceases to be the president of the provincial general council. Instead, the general council is presided over by a person elected by the council from its own membership.
> The provincial executive committee, which continues to be chaired by the governor, would be enlarged to include two additional appointed officials – the head of the finance department and another official to be selected by the governor[96].

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[94] F. Toksöz (ed.), *Good Governance: Improving Quality of Life*, cit., p. 59.

[95] A. O. Özçelik, *Changing Dynamics of Turkish Regional Policy: Resistance for Multilevel Governance?,* in "Journal of Global Analysis", V I II (2015), pp. 34-57, p. 40.

[96] Council of Europe, *Local and Regional Democracy in Turkey, CG (12) 25 Part II E,* Congress of Local

Although endowed with a more democratic structure, SPAs' chief executive is still "an appointee of central government, whose principal function is the discharge of State/central government functions in the province"[97]. Furthermore, SPAs are not at all perceived as local administration units, mostly because of the nature of their competencies: since they are entitled to perform services in the whole province only if those are under responsibility of central administration, i.e. by delegation, they are regarded as "service agent of central administration of governorship"[98]. In fact, local services are carried out by SPAs only outside municipal boundaries and therefore only in relation with the weak villages, relegating SPAs' to a 'rural status'.

Finally, AKP's reform of municipal administration and in particular of metropolitan municipalities, combined with a persistent lack of financial resources, eroded once again the institutional weight of the provincial level. In 2012-13, Law #6360 on "the Establishment of Thirteen Metropolitan Municipalities in 13 Provinces and 26 Districts and Amendments on Certain Laws and Decree Laws" and Law #6447 on "the Establishment of Fourteen Metropolitan Municipalities in 14 Provinces and 27 Districts" expanded metropolitan borders to the provincial ones, therefore abolishing SPAs in those provinces that include a Metropolitan Municipality. In their place, Investment, Monitoring and Coordination Directorates (IMCDs) were founded to fulfil the administrative gap then arisen in 30 provinces: "it can be stated that the newly established administrative unit is the 'alternative province general administration' enabling the provincial general administration"[99]. The creation of IMCDs has been regarded as a great step back in the field of decentralisation: firstly, these new institutions are not subject to supervision by local councils, like SPAs, but have the power to supervise local institutions and organisations in the province; secondly, duties and powers of IMCDs have been listed only in general, leaving the details to following directives.

The latest developments at provincial level therefore led to an uneven system that includes two different administrative approaches: it is still dubious whether Law #6360 will become the common framework throughout Turkey; it is however clear that this would mean a significant erosion of local autonomy.

2.7.3. Municipal Administration

As highlighted in the previous paragraph, Erdoğan presented a whole package of administrative reforms, whose main aim was that of redefining the optimal size of municipalities. At first, the changes proposed by AKP encountered the veto of President Sezer and the opposition of the RPP. However, new regulations entered one by one into force, significantly changing Turkish administrative landscape.

In 2004, Metropolitan Municipality Law #5216, expanded the borders of

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and Regional Authorities – 12th Session (Autumn Session, 07-09 November 2005).

[97] Council of Europe, *Local and Regional Democracy in Turkey, CG (20) 6*, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities - 20th Session (March 2011).

[98] N. Kartal, G. Tuncel, O. Göktolga, *Local Governments and Governments of Cities in Turkey*, in "Journal of Public Administration and Governance", V I (2015), pp. 1-22, p. 11.

[99] Z. Önez Çetin, *The Transformation of Special Provincial Administration System in Turkey*, cit., p. 143.

metropolitan municipalities according to their population: Istanbul and Izmit would be expanded to provincial borders, while other metropolitan borders would be enlarged to 50 km, 30 km and 25 km. The new law also set "a minimum population criterion as 750.000 for provinces for the establishment of a new metropolitan municipality"[100]. This was accompanied by a transfer of administrative and financial powers to metropolitan municipalities, while continuing on the liberalisation path of the previous decade: "all of the metropolitan municipalities have had some forms of special purpose local administrations, inter-local service contracts, local administration associations etc., and benefited from privatization, outsourcing or contracting out in service delivery"[101].

Outside metropolitan borders, cooperation among local administrations was strengthened in 2005: Law #5355 on "Local Administration Unions" established that services that could not be delivered by municipalities singly were to be provided by local administration unions. In the same year, Municipality Law #5393 became reference law for the administration of municipalities: it upgraded the population condition for acquiring municipal status from 2000 to 5000 and restricted the supervision power of higher-level organs; furthermore, it stressed again on the importance of neighbourhood administrations and their cooperation with other institutions.

With Law #5747 on "Establishment of District within Metropolitan Municipality Boundaries and Amendments to Certain Laws" of 2008, AKP tried to close down 862 municipalities with a population of less than 2000 and to turn them into districts, but the Constitutional Court partly nullified this provision. The Law did however abrogate the implementation of 'first-tier' municipalities (those below district municipalities) within metropolitan borders, contrary to what has been done since 1984; neighbourhoods within these municipalities became district neighbourhoods of metropolitan municipalities; furthermore, new districts were set up due to the transformation of the municipality system into a two-tier system[102]; finally, "sub-district organization was abolished" and "sub-district centres and villages were assigned to cities and districts"[103].

However, Law #6360 characterised itself as the most dramatic change in Turkish administrative history and the latest chapter of a long-lasting fight for a reduction of the number of municipalities:

> The first was, as mentioned above, the initiative [Law #2561] of the Military Government of 1980-1983 and one of the consequences of a coup d'état. The second decrease took place under the AKP government, before 2009 local elections. If the Constitutional Court did not abolish certain arrangements of the Law No. 5747 in 2008, and if the Higher Council for Elections as well as the State Council did not adjudicate in favor of the applicant small towns, the decrease in the number of small municipalities would be almost as high as the final one. And finally came the 2012-2013 arrangements

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[100] H. Gül, *A Discussion on the New Model of Metropolitan Municipality in Turkey,* cit., p. 361.

[101] Ibid.

[102] Z. Önez Çetin, *The Critical Analysis of Transformation of Turkish Metropolitan Municipality System*, in "Yönetim ve Ekonomi Araştırmaları Dergisi", XIII III (2015), pp. 1-24, pp. 9-10.

[103] P. Savaş-Yavuzçehre, *The Effects Of The Law No. 6360 On Metropolitan Municipality System In Turkey*, cit., p. 296.

which brought the most dramatic interventionist transformation amongst all[104].

Conceived as an amendment of Law #5216, Law #6360 was enacted in 2012 and slightly amended by Law #6447 the following year. It upgraded the number of Metropolitan Municipalities from 16 to first 29 (2012 – Aydın, Balıkesir, Denizli, Hatay, Malatya, Manisa, Kahramanmaraş, Mardin, Muğla, Takirdağ, Trabzon, Şanlıurfa, Van) and then 30 (Ordu – 2013). More importantly, it made drastic changes to numbers and sizes of local institutions inside the enlarged metropolitan borders:

1. The boundaries of metropolitan municipalities are henceforth boundaries of the provincial administration.
2. Before the Act, in order to be a metropolitan municipality, the sum of population of provincial municipality and the population of settlements which are far from the boundaries of provincial municipality not more than 10.000 meters should be 750.000 in sum. However, after the Act, total population in boundaries of province should be 750.000 in order to be a metropolitan municipality. As a consequence of this arrangements, 14 new metropolitan municipalities were able to be formed.
3. The boundaries of metropolitan district municipalities were widened to boundaries of the whole district. Before, it was boundaries of just central settlement of the district.
4. Special Provincial Administrations in all of the metropolitan municipalities were abolished.
5. Legal personalities of towns within the boundaries of provinces in which metropolitan municipalities exist, are abolished and these towns were transformed into neighbourhood administrations (mahalle muhtarlıkları).
6. Legal personalities of sub-district municipalities within the boundaries of provinces in which metropolitan municipalities exist, are abolished and these municipalities were transformed into neighbourhood administrations (mahalle muhtarlıkları).
7. Bucak (administrative sub-districts) organizations within the boundaries of metropolitan municipalities were abolished[105].

Furthermore, the new law abolished local government unions in those cities were metropolitan municipalities were established and rearranged "the shares transferred to the municipalities from the general budget tax revenue"[106], while the same income was reduced for non-metropolitan municipalities[107]. As a result of these reforms, "54% of all municipalities (more then 1.500), 49% of all villages (more than 16.000) and 37% of all special provincial administrations (30 out of 81)" have been abolished[108], while "the urban population of Turkey increased 14,2 percentage points, and the rural decreased dramatically to 8,7 % from 22,8 % in two years"[109].

If centralisation have undoubtedly characterised first Ottoman and then Turkish administrative history, latest reforms have introduced a new approach. Until the

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[104] A. Alkan, *New Metropolitan Regime of Turkey: Authoritarian Urbanization Via (Local) Governmental Restructuring*, in "Lex Localis – Journal of Local Self-Government", XIII III (2015), pp. 845-873, p. 852.

[105] N. Kartal, G. Tuncel, O. Göktolga, *Local Governments and Governments of Cities in Turkey*, cit., p. 13.

[106] N. Genç, *6360 Sayılı Kanun ve Aydın'a Etkileri*, in "Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi", I (2014), pp. 1-29, pp. 4-5, as cited by Z. Önez Çetin, *The Critical Analysis of Transformation of Turkish Metropolitan Municipality System*, cit., p. 12.

[107] see C. Akman, E. Akman, M. Okcu, *Reform in Local Governments: What Did the New Municipal Law Bring in Turkey?*, in "Global Journal on Humanities & Social Sciences", II (2015), pp 119-12, p. 121.

[108] H. Gül, *A Discussion on the New Model of Metropolitan Municipality in Turkey,* cit., p. 362.

[109] A. Alkan, *New Metropolitan Regime of Turkey,* cit., p. 855.

introduction of metropolitan municipalities, central control has been achieved through the bureaucratisation of local administrations, that is, by granting supervision powers to central agents (governors) or by reducing the financial capacity of local institutions. With the spread and codification of the metropolitan model, the central government have found a way to devolve some duties to lower-levels and thus increasing their efficiency, but also a way to reduce the actors at play: by organising the whole territory as a simple two-tier system and by establishing tutelage-like competences for the metropolitan level, central administrators have therefore replicated those power imbalances already existing between central and local administration.

3. Conclusions

Drawing from the three-fold classification of Bayraktar[110], Turkish administrative history can be roughly divided into a first period of pure centralisation in between the end of the war of independence and the 1961 Constitution, followed by 20 years of attempted decentralisation, which were unfortunately marked by socio-political instability and institutional breakdowns. In response to these events, since the 1980 coup Turkey has gradually shifted towards a mixed system of poly-centralisation.

However, it must be highlighted that these three phases have no hierarchical connotation: neither centralisation, nor decentralisation or poly-centralisation are in principle right or wrong, as well as none of the three structures perfectly suits the Turkish administrative system. However, the 1970s clashes and the recent protests in Gezi Park[111] showed that centrally conceived policies are prone to raise opposition when they do not consider local population, as it has been widely done by the Turkish political elite since the establishment of the Republic. At the same time, decentralisation requires an adequate financial planning in order to allocate resources in a rational and effective way. Indeed, Turkish local governments have constantly suffered from quite severe budget restraints. This is however also "a common problem for most local governments all over Europe"[112], which has been worsened by the last global financial crisis[113]. In the last years, central governments have therefore become much concerned with the searching of the 'right' size for local administrations: in fact, "the issue of size of the single LSG [Local Self-Government] units is generally subject to a compromise between democracy and efficiency", since "citizen participation is more difficult to organize effectively where the size of territory and/or population increases, while this usually favours sustainability and quality of service delivery creating economies of scale"[114]. This process is clearly recognisable in the post-1980 coup Turkey, when Özal's governments strongly pushed for a neo-liberal rearrangement of Turkish institutions, delegating many (until then) public services to the private sector. The institutionalisation of metropolitan municipalities

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[110] U. Bayraktar, *Decentralisation, poly-centralisation, and re-centralisation of Turkish politics*, cit.

[111] see C. Taştan, *The Gezi Park Protests in Turkey: A Qualitative Field Research*, in "Insight Turkey", XVIII (2013), pp. 27-38.

[112] J. Woelk, *Reform of Local Development in SEE: Closer to Europe?*, in B. Dallago (ed.), *Transformation and European Integration: The Local Dimension*, London 2006, pp. 85-107, p. 99.

[113] cf. UCLG, *The impact of the Global Crisis on Local Governments*, Barcelona 2009.

[114] J. Woelk, *Reform of Local Development in SEE,* cit., p. 96.

during the 1980s can also be connected to this 'dimensional debate'. However, the financial crisis that hit Turkey during the 1990s showed how market economy is subject to huge fluctuations that shall not jeopardise the supply of common services. Against this background, Erdoğan has laid out his particular approach to the issue, combining modern trends with traditional patterns into a personal version of a "national revival"[115].

With regard to what may be called the Ottoman-Turkish spatio-temporal continuum, the three-fold classification of Bayraktar[116] can aslo be applied to the Ottoman administrative history, thus highlighting how the Empire and the Republic are strictly connected in their evolutionary process. The transitional period between the Young Turk's revolution and the 1923 Constitution, was in fact preceded by the over-centralising sultanate of Abdul Hamid II, in which power was concentrated in Istanbul to the detriment of the "quasi-democratic" arrangements created by the Tanzimat reforms. Their aim had indeed been that of rationalising and strengthening local institutions in the framework of a much more functional and cohesive administration. Although it would be incorrect to regard those changes as a sincere move towards decentralisation, they had however been able of enhancing public participation and recognising the role of local authorities. In fact, the classical Ottoman period had lacked a clear and homogeneous system of local governance: different traditions had coexisted in a poly-central system dominated by local lords and appointed administrators.

The historical evolution of Ottoman/Turkish administrative systems can therefore be schematised as follows:

Ottoman Empire	Transition	Turkish Republic
P → ?D → C	...	C → D → P

Centralisation (C), Decentralisation (D) and Poly-centralisation (P) thus seem to have been recurrent aspects in the history of Ottoman and Turkish administrations.

However, the rise to power of the AKP in the early 2000s marked the beginning of a new transitional period for Turkey. In fact, the first reforms in 2004 and 2005 swung the administrative pendulum back to decentralisation, as certified by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe [117]: by strengthening the provincial and municipal level and fostering horizontal cooperation between municipalities, Turkey manifested its commitment to a more democratic and participative local governance. At least, this seemed the case. Since 2008, Erdoğan started a process of "authoritarian urbanisation"[118], crowned by the abolishment of provincial administrations in 2012-2013. These changes marked a return to a strongly poly-centric system dominated by AKP's candidates, who were able to win 18 out of

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[115] see M. Hroch, *The Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller European Nations,* Cambridge 1985.

[116] U. Bayraktar, *Decentralisation, poly-centralisation, and re-centralisation of Turkish politics*, cit.

[117] See Council of Europe, *Local and Regional Democracy in Turkey,* 2005; Council of Europe, *Local and Regional Democracy in Turkey,* 2011.

[118] See A. Alkan, *New Metropolitan Regime of Turkey,* cit.

30 metropolitan municipalities[119]. Furthermore, the disappearance of villages and neighbourhoods into the frame of province-wide cities came to the detriment of public participation and of the rural-urban diversification. Indeed, the standardisation of the metropolitan system led to a homogenisation of needs at the advantage of urban settlements and their priorities[120].

In any case, the new course in Turkish administration seemed more a functional and systemic reorganisation rather than an effective and comprehensive empowerment of the municipal level. In fact, the recent removal of two dozens of mayors accused of links with either PKK or the Gülen movement[121] has demonstrated how the accent is still on central control, as it has been for most of Ottoman and Turkish history. The historical dimension itself has indeed to be taken again as the main narrative by which to finally conclude the analysis of Turkish local administration.

AKP's ideology has come to be identified with the term *Neo-Ottomanism*, a rather blurry concept ranging from "a pluralizing and populist Islamic ideology"[122] to a "geostrategic vision of Turkey as an effective and engaged regional actor"[123]. However, in the last years the term has been redirected towards Turkish internal politics:

> In stark contrast to its repudiation by key AKP figures in a foreign policy setting, neo-Ottomanism is far more palatable when utilised domestically. Indeed the AKP has sought to remove any ambiguity inherent in such a concept and impose its own specific interpretation of what this means. Thus one can easily discern the attempts to draw a direct lineage between the Ottoman Empire and the AKP, with particular emphasis on the reign of Abdulhamid II. The regular use of historical comparisons, be they in realising Ottoman-era dreams, equating anti-AKP efforts with those who historically rallied against the Ottoman sultans, or rebuffing foreign influence, shows the desire to create a tangible link. This effort to 'avenge' Ottoman history is not just a form of historical revisionism, but indeed an attempt to completely bypass the 'republican period' of Turkish history (1903-2003)[124].

With regard to the Turkish administrative system, the recent reforms have clearly re-established some of the features of Ottoman administration. Firstly, wider powers are devolved to *valis*/mayors provided that they can demonstrate their loyalty to the Sultan/President; otherwise, the central government can remove the 'dissident' administrators and substitute them with appointed officials. Secondly, the lower administrative level enjoys its autonomy only under the supervision of the

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[119] Supreme Electoral Council of Turkey, *Official 2014 Metropolitan Municipal Results*, Ankara 2015.

[120] cf. H. Kızılaslan, T. Ünal, N. Kızılaslan, *Effects of New Metropolitan Law No. 6360 to Rural Development in Turkey*, in "Journal of New Theory", XIII (2016), pp. 76-85.

[121] *Turkey removes 24 mayors over 'PKK links'*, in "Al Jazeera" (September 12, 2016).

[122] M. H. Yavuz, *Turkish identity and foreign policy in flux: The rise of Neo-Ottomanism*, in "Ciritque: Critical Middle Eastern Studies", VII XII (1998), pp. 19-41, p. 21.

[123] Ö. Taspinar, *Turkey's Middle East Policies: Between Neo-Ottomanism and Kemalism,* Washington DC 2008, p. 3.

[124] A. Czajka, E. Wastnidge, *'The Centre of World Politics?' Neo-Ottomanism in Turkish Foreign and Domestic Politics,* paper presented at ISA Global South Caucus Conference, Singapore 2015, p. 13.

kadi/metropolitan mayor, therefore relying in his/her good behaviour[125]. Thirdly and lastly, central interests have priority over local ones, even if their impact is delimited and thus disregarding public participation in the decision-making process.

Given the complicated political scenario in the Middle East, it is important to evaluate the impact of these internal events and of the fault lines they have possibly opened in the Turkish society. The 2016 failed coup showed that not even a strong figure such that of Erdoğan is immune to the socio-political earthquake that have hit the region since the early 2000s. In order to secure social cohesion in modern Turkey, it is therefore important to foster the political dialogue and enhance public participation in a context of respect for fundamental freedoms and the rule of law.

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[125] cf. G. Marcou, *Local Administration Reform in Turkey: A legal appraisal based on European principles and standards*, Ankara 2006, p. 64.