

Civic Nationalism in Turkey: A Study on the Political Profile of Celal Bayar

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Abstract

Celal Bayar, a prominent figure in Turkish politics who had hold various offices and positions last one being Republic Presidency, contributed to the Turkish nation-building process and took part in its various proceedings and institutions. This article discusses the views of Celal Bayar on nationalism, more specifically on Turkish nationalism. The discussion reflects on Bayar's conception of 'Turkish nation', 'national state', 'the Eastern question', 'Democrat Party nationalism' and 'the non-Muslim minorities'. The public speeches of him clearly point out that Celal Bayar understood and even promoted a type of Turkish nationalism which is very much close to civic nationalism.

Keywords: Celal Bayar, Turkish nationalism, nation, state, civic.

INTRODUCTION

Celal Bayar had been one of the most prominent figures in Turkish politics. Starting his political career in the Union and Progress Party in the Ottoman Empire, with the establishment of modern Turkey, he took part in Republican People's Party (RPP) and many of its cabinets until the transition to multiparty system in 1945. He continued his political career as the leader of the Democrat Party (DP) until 1950, the date that the DP won the

majority of the seats in the Grand National Assembly. However, he left the chairmanship of the DP after having been elected to the Presidency and presumed the office until the military coup of 1960. He was banned from politics but with a decree in 1969 he was permitted again. However, he did not take part in politics actively since then until his death in 1986. In his life of 103 years, the history of Turkey with its roots in the Ottoman Empire can be traced. However, in this paper, the main focus is restricted to his understanding of nationalism. By the same token, his thoughts on Turkish nation, national state, Eastern question, Democrat Party nationalism and non-Muslim minorities will compose the backbone of the article. The discussion, as is argued throughout the paper, illustrate that Celal Bayar's views on nationalism reflect to the contribution that he makes to the making of civic Turkish nationalism.

The paper also argues that Celal Bayar's thoughts on nationalism do not signal to any change in the course of time. Although long and immense experience in governance and politics may set a reader to think otherwise, starting from the Ottoman times to the military coup of 1960 and even after it, he insisted on his thoughts and did not change them. Regarding the consistency within the thoughts of Celal Bayar despite the historical changes witnessed, the article is categorized not by the transformations or the evolution of Celal Bayar but by the topics that form the core of his perception towards nationalism, which is civic nationalism.

It also has to be mentioned that civic nationalism is understood as loyalty to the state under the title of 'Turk' in this article. According to civic nationalism, the people living within the 'National Pact' (Misak-ı Milli) boundaries who consider themselves Turk and who are by nature the citizens of Turkey can be claimed to be Turkish. This understanding of nationalism can be compared in parallel lines with that of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of Turkey, who had tried to enroot a similar understanding of nationalism himself when founding Turkey. Celal Bayar even acknowledged this similarity and referred to Kemalist notion of nationalism in his various speeches. It has to be noted that due to lack of objective

literature on Celal Bayar and lack of any literature that focuses on his nationalism, primary source of information had been his speeches cited as quotations cited in various books.

THE POLITICAL PROFILE OF CELAL BAYAR

Celal Bayar was born in 1883. His father was a well-educated hodja. He attended Bursa French School and without graduating started to work Deutsche Orient Bank in Bursa. He got promoted to high positions within the Bank. During his work in the Bank, he got specialized in banking and attained knowledge about the German and the French national economy politics by way of western documents and books that his banking position provided. He got enrolled into the Unity and Progress Party and was elected as a representative to the Ottoman Assembly from the Saruhan/Manisa region. During the War of Independence, he left the Ottoman Assembly and got involved in the national liberation movement. His nickname during the independence struggle at the mountains of Izmir was 'Galip Hodja' (Galip Hoca). After resistance activities in the Aegean region, he got incorporated to the First Grand National Assembly of modern Turkey. Due to his specialization in banking and economy, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk appointed him to Economy Ministry in 1921. In 1922, he was appointed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 1924, he became the minister of Development, Exchange and Settlement Ministry. Upon the necessity of a national bank felt for the accumulation of national capital and national development, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk offered Celal Bayar the position of general manager of 'Turkish Work Bank' (Türkiye İş Bankası), which he accepted. In the period of 1924-1932, Celal Bayar served as the founder and the general manager of Türkiye İş Bankası. He became the minister of Economy in 1932.

When İsmet İnönü resigned from Prime Ministry in 1937, Celal Bayar resumed the office. After the death of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1938, İnönü became the President of Turkey and empowered Celal Bayar to form the new government. In 1939 Celal Bayar resigned from the Prime Ministry and in the period of 1939-1943, he served as the Izmir representative. On July 7, 1945, he together with Adnan Menderes, Fuad Köprülü, and Refik

Koraltan called the Assembly to discuss the issue that they proposed which was called 'Proposal by the Four' (Dörtlü Takrir). In this delivery, they called for democratic administration of the government that tolerated the opposing views in the government. The RPP, rejected the proposal after discussion. This led Celal Bayar and his friends to leave the RPP and to establish the Democrat Party (DP). It has to be emphasized that İsmet İnönü paved the path for the transition from the single party system to multiparty democracy that enabled launching of the new party, DP, which Celal Bayar and his friends initiated. In the general elections of 1946, DP achieved 65 seats and in 1950 elections the majority by 396 seats. After the formation of DP Government, Celal Bayar was elected to Presidency on May 22, 1950, which he served until the military coup of 1960. He was imprisoned first in Yasstada Prison, where he tried to commit suicide but failed. He was kept in Kayseri Prison until 1964, the time that he was released with an amnesty due his heart illness. Although he had been granted his political rights back in 1969, he did not return back to active politics but preferred instead to write his memoirs.

KEY CONCEPTS IN UNDERSTANDING CELAL BAYAR'S VIEWS ON NATIONALISM

The Turkish Nation

Previous to the emergence of modern Turkey, Celal Bayar defined the rebellions between 1900 and 1919 as separatist movements of the Georgians, Armenians, Albanians, Arabs, Greeks and Kurdish Aghas. It is interesting to specify that he did not use the term, the Kurdish, but instead preferred to use Kurdish Aghas and it was those Dersim Aghas of the tribes that initiated the rivalry by manipulating their subjects. About an uprising in Dersim, an ex-province in the Eastern region of Turkey, he wrote:

“In the meantime, in Central Anatolia, the Dersim Aghas had rebelled. In South Anatolia, the tribe leader, İbrahim Pasha, had resisted. In Adana and its surrounding, a bloody Armenian rebellion had occurred.”¹

“Since the communities having no political legitimacy were aiming to attain political recognition, they were in constant struggle with the government. Albania, Kerek, Yemen, Iraq and Kurdistan rebellions and Macedonia disturbance meant the conflict of tribes’ and their communities’ social power with that of the government forces.”²

In a similar manner, he defined the situation during the time of Erzurum Congress, like this:

“Meanwhile, there had been some organizations in the aim of separation from the Ottoman Community. The members of them were Muslims. Their councils were under the rule of Arab, Kurdish and Circassian politicians. The [Erzurum] Congress tried to overcome this dangerous situation by taking certain decisions and it succeeded.”³

This shows that Celal Bayar saw the separatist ideas prevalent in the Erzurum Congress were provoked and initiated by the elites and not the masses. In addition, Celal Bayar have had kept himself close to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s understanding of nationalism. He frequently referred what Atatürk had said previously on nationalism in order to show that he was not far from Kemalist nationalism.

“The nationalism understanding of Ataturk is very advanced and far from its time. He was in the belief that the common bond between the citizens would be realized with an understanding of non-aggressive nationalism. Atatürk’s nationalism

understanding is very humanistic. His perception and evaluation of world affairs were tied very closely to this humanistic nationalism understanding. He was convinced that humanity was embedded in one body and nations were parts of this totality. He was saying that a person needed to work for the welfare and the happiness of the nation that he primarily belonged to but at the same should protect the welfare and the peace of the world nations.”⁴

In a speech that he delivered in the opening ceremony of Erzurum Atatürk University in 1958:

“Atatürk once said, ‘Dividing the country as West and East is not correct. The country needs to be seen in its entirety.’...Atatürk’s belief, the national reform understanding that sees contemporary welfare and development indispensable for all the members of the nation, had changed the deprived fate that had been continuing for centuries in the East.”⁵

As Mustafa Kemal Atatürk is known to acknowledge his trust in the Turkish nation in various cases, similarly, Celal Bayar mentions his belief in the nation. When he was given the role of establishing Türkiye İş Bankası in 1924, upon the questions about the lack of qualified personnel for the bank in adequate number, he answered:

“...My belief in the national capability and energy has not been shaken. We, at a time when we thought we lost everything, saved the country with this capability and energy.”⁶

Celal Bayar seems to set itself apart from the Turanist movement and Turkism ideology, which can be considered extreme when compared to his own ideology of nationalism. However, he does not refrain himself from admitting the instrumental function of

this movement whose theoretical framework had been formed by Ziya Gökalp, the well known nationalist political thinker who was known to have influences upon Mustafa Kemal Atatürk to a certain extent. He argues that Ziya Gökalp and the Turanist political thought helped the formation of a unity among the citizens of the Turkish state. This can be considered a civic nationalist interpretation of Ziya Gökalp's cultural nationalism. As he wrote:

“In my opinion, the most beneficial and mature form of all these movements including that of Ziya Gökalp Turanism and Turkism for the country is to consider all citizens living within the Turkish national borders Turk without regarding religious, sect and race differences and to recognize all the rights of being Turk, to see every person who perform the legal duties as a citizen and upon the condition of paying attention to these thoughts being put into practice, it is the nationalism that rejects any kind of divisive tendencies and that rests on the unity of culture and goal arising from the common history among the citizens.”⁷

National Independence movement had been an important phase in shaping Celal Bayar's nationalism. According to him, the joint struggle against the invasion powers during the National struggle had provided a universal justification for people's unity within the borders of Misak-ı Milli who should continue to live together without any externally oriented movement or internal separatist grouping. In this sense, the National Independence struggle drew the boundaries of the nation. The ones who had taken active part in the fight against the Imperial powers had initiated to include themselves in the nation and it was the newly formed state's duty and obligation to provide togetherness, the only way by which it could pay back its indebtedness to those heroic people. As a reflection of this view, in his speeches, he frequently referred to the joint struggle against the invasion. The reasoning behind the

inclusion of Antaqia to the borders of Turkey carried the same logic. Celal Bayar argued that living in Antaqia had to be included to the nation because they had fought for the independence of the state during the invasion. About the inclusion of Antaqia to borders of Turkey, Celal Bayar said:

“Antaqia is Turk and will remain so with its culture. People of Antaqia have fought heroically in the National Struggle. We cannot leave such people.”⁸

The National State

Celal Bayar seems to consider state as the supreme authority that organizes the allocation of resources to its nationals. Similar to his thoughts regarding the state’s duty to provide unity among the citizens who had previously fought for the state’s establishment and rescue in times of the National Liberation movement, the state, for him, should provide justice in allocation of the benefits that the state provides as an institution. In other words, the nation enabling the prolongation of the state should in return receive services and benefits by way of infrastructure installation, building of roads, railways, stations, construction of dams, power stations, initiation of new employment centers like industry, trade, service sectors, productivity policies in agriculture and energy, etc. The state should increase the welfare of its citizens in return of the blood that the citizens gave in the fight. Development and progress had composed the core of Celal Bayar’s conception in state administration. His state conception seems to differ very much from the one pursued by the U.S.A Democrat Party led by John F. Kennedy at the end of 1950s. President Kennedy’s famous saying ‘Do not ask ‘what can the state do for me?’ but ask ‘what can I do for the state?’ is the cornerstone that marks this difference.

Celal Bayar, not having been from the military cadres himself, had frequently emphasized his belief and trusts in the armed forces and acknowledged the role of the military

to protect the state against the external threats like communism or internal threats like rebellions in his various speeches. Not only because of that, he also thought that the Turkish military was essential in prevalence of nationalist feelings. As he said in 1937:

“Turkish Army means including both men and women the Turkish nation. Turkish Army is not only a security means of Turkey... It is the greatest home of national culture.”⁹

Celal Bayar explained the various rebellions in the Eastern and Southeastern regions of Turkey as a matter of development and underdevelopment. Although he admitted that the people living in those regions had certain reasons like their backwardness and underdevelopment to be dissatisfied, he refused vigorously any act of disloyalty or revolt against the legitimacy and the rule of the state. His main intention was to keep law and order and any threat against, he thought, should not be tolerated. In order to sustain authority, the state having both a welfare image and a warfare image would appropriate his means and armed forces to suppress any act of disobedience to the state. People should pursue their interests according to their intelligence, account or special conditions and demand service from the state within a non-violent and loyal manner. If they were to act otherwise, the state would not hesitate to show its militaristic face against the violent resisters. In his Grand National Assembly address in 28th of July 1938, he explained the main points regarding the program of the government about the issue of the Dersim rebellion of 1938:

“With regards to the internal affairs of this year, there is an important issue that is worth mentioning. That is the issue of Dersim. We have a reformation program in Dersim. This program is in process with construction of road, police stations and school. Within this year, according to this program, military operations should continue. In comparison to last year, much more armed forces have been drawn

together. In a few places, there have been small-scale conflicts. In order to resolve the issue completely as a requirement of the program that we are undertaking and to clean out the issue called Dersim totally, there is one more measure that we need to take. In the near future, our army will make maneuvers in the Dersim region. Likewise, the mission of our army will be to destroy the roots of the problem with a search and chase operation.

Friends, what do the people of Dersim want? They want to brigandage with a backward mentality; they say, ‘I will steal goods but you will not interfere; I will kill but you will not make any legal investigation; I will wander around carrying arms and you will permit this; I will not perform my national duties but will have all the privileges.’ One thing has to be made very clear: the Republic does not recognize such a citizen. The Republic is composed of people who are united with duties as well as the rights. Until this truth is understood, our forces will be there de facto. If they give in the arms that they have and go under the rule of the Republic, the thing that we will do is to hug them with love. This will be done. People of Dersim should hear our voices. They need to judge every word spent from this chair according to their interests. In our voice, there is not only compassion but power as well. They need to choose either of them. They need to know that our compassion is as much as our brutality.”¹⁰

About the amnesty issue regarding the acts of people who wanted the Sultanate back, he continued his speech like this:

“It is within everybody’s knowledge that the people who can be considered happy are the ones who see that their goals and wishes have been accomplished. We, the ones who have lived and worked in the National Resistance period, tasted the happiness to see that our ideal is realized beyond the limits of our imagination...To the miserable ones that have escaped from national duties, we say, ‘Look what the regime that you have betrayed has done.’ There is another thing that we can add to

this that we can be very much proud of. We say to them, when watching our monument of success, ‘We forgive you.’ This is the enormous wisdom of the reformists besides their constructivist power...we have been successful in achieving our goal. We see that our ideal has become realized. In so doing, we get the pleasure of forgiving the sins. This was comprehended by our Grand National Assembly under the guidance of our leader...We are contempt of any foreign influence no matter whichever country it comes from, whichever meaning it entitles, whether it be rightist or leftist. For us, the Kemalist regime, Turkish unity, Turkish nationalism is essential.”¹¹

The Eastern Question and the 1936 Eastern Report

Celal Bayar’s understanding of state focused on the development of the country as a whole. This view can be applicable to the Eastern and Southeastern regions as well. The state, under the rule led by Celal Bayar government either during the times of the Republican People’s Party or Democrat Party, were providing all the instruments, means and resources to develop the country without any intention of partiality among the regions or people. The investments made in Eastern and Southeastern regions were considered the same if not the more with that of other regions like Aegean, Mediterranean or Central Anatolian regions. He emphasized this issue in a repetitive manner in many of his public speeches. The state had been just in allocation of its resources to people and regions and the level of development witnessed in Eastern and Southeastern regions was a proof of this phenomenon, for him. The justice of the state was because of its indebtedness towards its citizens. The state was fulfilling its task of development because the people no matter of the regions that they live in, had gave in much, the most their blood, in order to rescue the state and its independence. In other words, according to him, all the people, despite their locality or religious identity, gave for the state on equal terms hence should receive equally. The Ulus Daily News of 13th of December 1937 reports from Celal Bayar saying:

“In our country, there are no class struggles, no class ambitions, no separate people who want to destroy and annihilate each other with the motive of interest seeking. All these people are respected people who have been gathered under the unified name of ‘Turk’. In our country, every member, without an exception, utilizes the goods that the country gives according to his account, his power and intelligence. In this utilization, there are no laws or restrictions that get in the way and there will not be. For that reason, we have an internal unity and consensus on the security. I see that you agree with me.”¹²

“We do not differentiate between the citizens on basis of class and not by occupation, richness or poorness. We prefer that every citizen has the right to citizenship, to live free and be happy with his family.”¹³

However, since the Eastern and Southeastern regions were more backward than other regions, the development of those regions would be given priority. The misery caused by the natural geography- like infertile fields, rocky mountains, lack of natural resources or the inefficient use of the existing resources and the general backwardness of people living in those regions like lack of education had made the people of East to be discontent. If certain additional development measures supported by education were taken for those regions, he thought, the roots of the dissatisfaction would be destroyed. For example, Prime Minister Celal Bayar, in the starting ceremony of the construction of the railway between Diyarbakır, Iraq and Iran as part of the visit to the Eastern regions in 1937 said:

“...Our happiness is great. The construction of which we celebrate its start today has a fundamental and important place in our public life. The [railway] will connect us to the borders of these two friendly neighbours and without a doubt; this

railway will make a progress not only in the economic life but also in the social life of the region that it passes through.”¹⁴

About his impression of the visit to Eastern and Southeastern regions, he said:

“We will not leave the ones to those places of bare rocks who cannot find anything other than living a miserable life; we will find them lands in our broad Turkey that will make them happy. Our industry centers that can employ thousands of workers and our fertile and convenient lands enable us to rescue many of our citizens from primitive life easily.”¹⁵

Celal Bayar saw the construction of dams as a way to the resolution of the eastern question:

“You have a very fundamental problem and if that is resolved, only with it, your earnings can increase by five times. Do you know what it is? Your water...”¹⁶

In his various speeches addressing the people living in Eastern and Southeastern regions, he declared repetitively that there had been no regional discrimination. In a speech for 1950 elections in Diyarbakır, he said:

“...Diyarbakır, 18 years after the appearance of Islam, had earned the honor of inclusion to that community and the states established after certain political invasions had represented the Islamic and Turkish civilization...The people of Diyarbakır are ready for sacrifice and duty everywhere in the country. The

Democrat Party does not consider any difference among the citizens whatever their race or religion is but under the condition of obedience to the Republican laws.

From time to time, there arises a suspect in the minds of certain people. Wonder; is there a difference among the inhabitants of the country?

If there is, it has to be uprooted. In our understanding, there is no west or east. In our understanding, there is neither east, west nor of eastern, of western but a nation who need to be satisfied as a whole.

Unfortunately, education here is underdeveloped. One of the last wishes of Atatürk was the establishment of a university in the East. The Democrat party, accepting this latest decision of Atatürk as a legacy, is in the will and determination to establish a university.”¹⁷

It is interesting to note that his thoughts had not changed though the course of time. In this sense, it can be argued that his thoughts on nationalism or the reasons of the discontent in the Eastern and Southeastern regions with its resolution policies had been consistent. In the 1954 election speech in Diyarbakır, he said:

“I had said when I was in the opposing party that there was no east or west of our country and it was a wholly sacred entity. The sacred and noble people living in our country, which is a sacred unified entity, are equal in terms of law and duty. We see our country like this and we evaluate like this. Among our citizens, we have a common history. Similarly, we have common traditions. We see our honor, liberty, and national independence within the foundations of this common nation. If there is an attack on these foundations, which we consider sacred, we unite under this holly flag and with courage and heroism we defend. Our history has recorded many cases most of which were bloody and at the same heroic. Especially our eastern provinces have been vulnerable to many offences compared to our other regions due to its geographic situation. However, in every offence, you and your holly ancestors showed loyalty to the country with their blood and life to protect

this sacred country beyond and above all and stood in front of the enemy and said, 'No, you cannot take over this sacred country.'

The only policy that has to be pursued for these common goals is that people living in this sacred country and on the lands called Turkey should be entirely equal in liberty and with one expression in every good and every pain. We will all benefit from the goods of this sacred country. This is our natural right and this will be equal...

When I had spoken in Diyarbakır, I had mentioned about education and had said that our eastern provinces are remained backward in education than other places. We will try to fill this lack...we have always been far from differentiation like East and West in the issues of schooling and education...

Dear friends, be sure that, our biggest pleasure is to help and whether poor or potent, to aid each person living under this flag that constitutes the boundaries of our nation no matter what region or place of country that he lives in...

They say to us that there has been arms gathered in the East and our eastern people are in armament. They refer this to the supposed impotency of the government as they call and at the same time they point to the emergence of an unnatural condition with this armament...our eastern people refrain from any act of harming the country as our western people do. I am not one of those who believe in the appearance or even the possibility of such an act that may disrupt the order and may cause a small harm on the country's general interests."¹⁸

He argues that there should not be any more discontent towards the state because when compared with the initial stages of the Republic, the Eastern and Southeastern regions had achieved a great level of development under the government of DP. He said, in 1954:

"Now, I have a request from you my dear people. All of you put your head between your hands. Listen to conscience only. What were we before 1950? What were we in the sphere of education, in the sphere of economy, in the field of individual and social liberties? What have we become today and what have been done to you?"¹⁹

Celal Bayar seems to be evaluating Kurdish people as Turkish people living in the Eastern region. He ignores the existence of a difference within the nation and any Kurdish reality, culture, ethnicity or language. It is the argument of this paper that Celal Bayar did not develop this perspective of indifference intentionally or manipulated it politically but rather it was the result of his prioritization of economic concerns to the social ones with a materialist logic. Celal Bayar did not give the same importance to social and cultural policies as he did to economic ones. His main concern was development and progress of the country and the welfare that as a by-product of this development would construe the key solution to every problem that the people face. To put differently, the problems that people were living were caused by material conditions and poverty. As a result of this, he did not entitle the masses living in Eastern regions with a unifying label like Kurds, the Kurdish people, etc. but rather the subjects of the rural/local elites called Aghas within tribes. He addressed masses with speeches that rest on the difference of being rural and being urban rather than being Kurdish or being Turkish. He even seems to be unaware of the difference in language with Kurdish people as this memoir from 1937 shows:

“...We were approaching to Diyarbakır from the direction of Van, Bitlis. We were in a village that has been made district centre recently. The villagers gently came out. We were talking with them and we were very delighted to be talking with them. They were talking our mother language in between the vernaculars of Western Turks and of Azerbaijani. They were thoroughbred Turks. What they wanted from us was land.”²⁰

Celal Bayar, when he was the Minister of Economy, prepared a report in 1936 regarding the situation of the Eastern regions. He submitted his report of Prime Minister İsmet İnönü. In the report, he mentioned his observations, the reasons of the revolts and made suggestions about the resolution of the Eastern question. He said in the report that the

authority of the state was not established totally in the East that made the existence of military forces necessary and vital. As a reflection of his mentality that deduce nationality to citizenship and prioritization of economic matters, he referred the unrest of the people in the East by using the term citizen, pointed that the roots of this unrest was underdevelopment and reserved the majority of the report to economic measures needed to be taken. The measures mentioned in the report were construction of state buildings, railways, infrastructure, roads and initiation of a land reform and development of various economic sectors like agriculture and animal farming. In the report he mentions about nationalist tendencies becoming vigorous after the Şeyh Sait revolt and condemns ‘racist’ nationalism that may cause separateness among the citizens.²¹ He states in the report that if those people of East would be treated as citizens, they would naturally behave as so.

Democrat Party Nationalism

It has to be strongly emphasized that Celal Bayar’s understanding of nationalism has not changed with the abolishment of the single party system and its replacement with the multiparty democracy. Although nationalism within Democrat Party is out of the focus of this paper, Celal Bayar’ nationalism can be traced through the election speeches that he made on behalf of the DP. These speeches may be sounding a bit cultural nationalism but the main assumption and arguments still can be considered rooted in civic nationalism. As follows:

“Our Party believes that the honor of humanity and the honor could only be saved by guaranteeing of the main outlines. We will pay attention to the non-existence of provisions contrary to these principles in the entire state laws. We are loyal to an understanding of nationalism that rests on culture and unity of goal rooted in the common history of the citizens and which rejects any divisive tendencies. Our Party considers every citizen a Turk without any difference of religion and race and recognizes all the rights of being a Turk. It perceives each person who fulfils his

legal duties as a good citizen and pays attention and gives importance to the reflection of these views into practice.”²²

“As Democrat Party, we do not want any kind of division made in the country. This country is all ours. In terms of duty and utilization of benefits, the east, the west, the south and the north of this country are all the same. Whichever region they are from, all our people are potent, mature and patriotic. It is without any suspect that they would show the same sacrifice and heroism in defense of the country if necessary. We are like the slices of a loaf of bread. We have been kneaded from the same dough. People are not born differently. This is why the Democrat Party wants absolute equality in the country...The well known article of the Settlement Law should be changed or abolished...There will be no more local or regional laws.”²³

“For the nationality issue, the Democrat Party without any difference of religion and race considers every citizen who says ‘I am Turk’ as a Turk. To treat all citizens equally and to gather them around the goal of citizenship and to make all of them beneficial to the country is the basis that our party accepts.”²⁴

Non-Muslim Minorities

The civic nationalism understanding of Celal Bayar explains his approach to non-Muslims as well. Since the non-Muslims has done much for the state and since they were the equal citizens of the state, they should not be asked to give more to the state like extra welfare taxes. In spite of the accusations directed against Celal Bayar with the undertones that he was protecting the Jewish minority and was partial to them, Celal Bayar insisted in his proposal that welfare taxation, initiated to make the non-Muslim minority pay more because they were relatively richer than other groups due to their expertise in trade, should be abolished. During a dinner organized by the Jewish Community during his visit to U.S.A., he said:

“...Our Constitution grants all our citizens the right to citizenship without an exception or a consideration of difference by language, religion and race. These decrees of our Constitution will not remain so in a theory. We acknowledge that the practice of these in reality is a duty on behalf of humanity and civilization...we the Turks are loyal to an understanding of nationalism that rests on culture and unity of goal caused by common history and that rejects any divisive movements. We consider every citizen as Turk without differentiating religion and race and we recognize them all the rights of being a Turk. We consider every citizen as a good citizen who fulfils his legal duties. We are very sincere in this statement, indeed.”²⁵

CONCLUSION

In this paper, Celal Bayar, who has been in various political positions since the Ottoman period till 1960 military coup, was one of the most important figures in the history of Turkey. His personal history in a sense overlapped with that of the history of Turkey. He had roots in the Ottoman Empire, had struggled in the National Independence War, had participated in the foundation of modern Turkey, had participated in the transition to multiparty system and in the consolidation of democracy and had been drawn out of politics by the military coup. He had been in several cabinets, had formed and chaired several cabinets either of the RPP or DP, had served as the President of Turkey for nearly ten years. He had participated in designing the fate of Turkey: he initiated policies and took part in their execution. However, it can be argued that he gave priority to economic matters and did not attach the same attention or focus to social and cultural issues as he did to economic ones. He had worked in the Deutsche Orient Bank in the Ottoman Bursa and he established one of the biggest Turkish banks and worked for it. Actually, he can be considered as a skilled economist rather than a skilled politician.

Regarding his views on nationalism and his personal understanding of it, the skilled economist aspect of Bayar seems to make it clearer. He understood nationalism as civic nationalism, which was functional to unite the country, which was under threats of separatism during early Republican period. However, he seems to be not learning from history that could be traced by any kind of change within his ideas or thoughts on nationalism. Although, his election speeches in the period of DP seem to flirt with the idea of cultural nationalism which may be the result of DP populism, he remained conservative with his approach to nationalism and did not change it. Upon this observation only, it can be argued that Celal Bayar had been a state elite, the one who is egocentric, does not change his ideas very easily and do not learn from the occasions in history rather than a political elite who learns and adapts his ideas to the demands of his time.

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NOTES

¹ Celal Bayar, *Ben de Yazdım- Milli Mücadele'ye Gidiş Cilt 1*, İstanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1967, p. 222.

² Celal Bayar, *Ben de Yazdım- Milli Mücadele'ye Gidiş Cilt 2*, İstanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1966, p. 431.

³ Celal Bayar, *Ben de Yazdım- Milli Mücadele'ye Gidiş Cilt 8*, İstanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1972, p. 2680.

⁴ Celal Bayar, *Reisicumhur Celal Bayar'ın İki Nutku*, Ankara: Doğu Ltd. Matbaası, 1958, p. 6.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁶ Cemal Kutay, *Bir Türk'ün Biyografisi: Celal Bayar*, İstanbul: Onan Matbaası, 1950, p. 86.

⁷ Celal Bayar, (1966), *Ben de Yazdım- Milli Mücadele'ye Gidiş Cilt 2*, p. 448.

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- ⁸ Cemal Kutay, *Celal Bayar Cilt 4*, İstanbul: Onan Matbaası, 1940, p. 1666.
- ⁹ Cemal Kutay, *Bir Türk'ün Biyografisi: Celal Bayar*, 1950, p. 109.
- ¹⁰ Cemal Kutay, *Celal Bayar Cilt 4*, 1940, pp. 1664-1665.
- ¹¹ Ibid., pp. 1665-1666.
- ¹² Özel Şahingiray, *Celal Bayar'ın Söylev ve Demeçleri 1921-1938- Ekonomik Konulara Dair*, İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1999, p. 204.
- ¹³ Özel Şahingiray, *Celal Bayar'ın Seçim Kampanyalarındaki Söylev ve Demeçleri 1946-1950-1954*, İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1999, p. 135.
- ¹⁴ Özel Şahingiray, *Celal Bayar'ın Söylev ve Demeçleri 1921-1938- Ekonomik Konulara Dair*, 1999, p. 197.
- ¹⁵ Cemal Kutay, *Celal Bayar Cilt 3*, İstanbul: Onan Matbaası, 1940, p. 1409.
- ¹⁶ Özel Şahingiray, *Celal Bayar'ın Seçim Kampanyalarındaki Söylev ve Demeçleri 1946-1950-1954*, 1999, p. 135.
- ¹⁷ Ibid., p. 57.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 130-134.
- ¹⁹ Ibid., p. 135.
- ²⁰ Özel Şahingiray, *Celal Bayar'ın Söylev ve Demeçleri: 1920-1953*, İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1999, p. 271.
- ²¹ Celal Bayar, *İktisat Vekili Celal Bayar'ın Şark Raporu*, 1936.
- ²² Özel Şahingiray, *Celal Bayar'ın Söylev ve Demeçleri 1946-1950: Demokrat Parti'nin Kuruluşundan İktidara Kadar Politik Konuşmalar*, İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1999, p. 48.
- ²³ Ibid., p. 177.
- ²⁴ Ibid. p. 350.
- ²⁵ Celal Bayar, *Reisicumhur Celal Bayar'ın Birleşik Amerika Devletlerini Ziyareti- Nutuklar, Cevaplar ve Ziyafetlerde Söylenen Sözler*, Ankara: Basın Yayın ve Turizm Genel Müdürlüğü, 1954, p. 39.