



# **Post-COVID-19 Period and New Institutional Politics in Turkey**

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### **Abstract**

Politics and political processes on the institutional ground is being deepened simultaneously with the change in the content and form. With the transition to an institutional culture based on a democratic norm that includes social dynamics, a new institutional political ground stands out, in which institutions emerged depending on the distribution of political and socio-economic power in society. The structural transformation of the state as a central institutional actor is, then, a product of this ground. A new phenomenon of change exists, indicating new perception regarding politics with a more participatory, more flexible, more social-based and more value-content. The situation in Turkey, while pointing to the ground not irrelevant from this explanation; however, it points out a structural basis that cannot be disconnected from its exclusive realities, created by its special context. This is an institutional basis shaped by the conflict of envision between the “statist center” and the “societal center”. At this point, it can be said that, in the process of institutional change of politics for a while, along other reforms, the Presidential system is a new phase in terms of a paradigmatic change regarding the mentality of the executive and the possibilities of operating the system based on sensitivity, effectiveness and flexibility on an institutional and administrative basis. This new institutional politics on the grounds of the administrative processes in the trajectory pointed out by the COVID-19 process in Turkey, is leaning to a pattern of interwoven keywords: coordination, governance. In this context, the concrete practice in Turkey, regarding what COVID-19 and post-COVID-19 periods show in total, is leaning on a base that identifies this new administrative model as the strategic path of its institutional politics.

### **Keywords**

*Institution, state, conventional politics, presidential system, coordination, governance, COVID-19, new institutional politics*



## **Introduction**

A brief period marking the transition from 2019 to 2020 will be remembered as a long period when the world was shaken by a global shock the likes of which the world had never seen recently. In this respect, and with the existential impacts of what it involves, COVID-19 has placed itself right at the center of the existential journey of humanity at a time when modern world engaged in a discussion of moving forward to very different horizons. It has become a major subject in many academic studies how global politics will come out of the turbulence it found itself in or how this could reflect on the national politics or, in a wider sense, on individual and social life.

Parameters such as the efficiencies/inefficiencies demonstrated by governments in the process, real consequences of the globalization practice, pros and cons of the phenomenon of global governance, performance scales of international institutions have produced significant outputs that require a general review of the process from the viewpoint of world societies. A reason for this is that this global pandemic involves shocks that point to an existential crisis that encompasses the fundamental elements of human life (i.e healthcare, poverty, social justice, social policies, economic life, values, and institutions).

This article, essentially, makes an inquiry into what COVID-19 shows us. While doing this, it aims at starting a line of analysis as to how this issue reflects on Turkey and, from there, on the manner in which the institutional politics operates. The article claims that, right at this point, this line of analysis, in and of itself, will present us with the direction of perspectives in this new political ground. We have based the article on two main frameworks. The first one is the section that covers theoretical/conceptual arguments and, the practices that emerge under their guidance. The article will discuss the formation, inefficiencies and facilities of institutions will be discussed based on the meaning and roles of institutions, dynamics that constitute the re-genesis and different

explanatory models. Not only will this allow us to reflect on the dynamics and causes of the state of crisis we are witnessing in the case of COVID-19, it will also provide us with an opportunity to evaluate and interpret the direction which the Western liberal institutional politics has taken from the perspective of the position of the government as central institutional agent. The second part is where the case of Turkey will be discussed. Primarily, inquiry will be made into where traditional/conventional politics stand in the experience pool of the recent political history of Turkey within the context of conjectural dynamics. Starting from this point, the way in which the constitutional-institutional change brought about by the Presidential Government System reflects on the political environment will be further investigated in light of the COVID-19 process. What is this process of change dictating a new form of politics both on a global and a national scale telling us about institutional politics after COVID-19 within the context of conceptual blocks such as governance and coordination? This is the final question we will discuss. This series of questions will fundamentally offer an insight on where Turkey stands in terms of an understanding and practices of institutional politics as well as how a future projection can be made on the matter.

## **Conceptual Ground: New Institutional Politics**

### ***Institutions and Institutional Politics: What is New?***

Among other explanatory models utilized in conceptual discussions of political science, the institutional politics approach stands out a model that is rich in parameters it involves and that triggers stimulating discussions. Such much so that, as it handles phenomena related to doing politics with a multidisciplinary approach rather than from a one-dimensional analytical perspective, it also turns the dynamic picture offered by these disciplines into a gain in the course of its own internal revision. Additionally, it may be asserted that, with a structure that comes and goes between theories inherent in the fields of sociology, economics, history, anthropology and management sciences, it contributes significantly -contrary to common belief- to the formation of a dynamic political perspective. From this point, while the theoretical framework that surrounds the main inquiry of this article requires reliance upon the perspective of institutional politics, we must first and foremost express that our understanding of institutionalism is not static. On the contrary, what we mean by institutional politics is a new form of understanding which is influenced and shaped by different parameters and which does not exclude the dynamic process.

The new institutionalism perspective that emerged from a mutual interaction between sciences that have pulled away from the formal limitations of the traditional understanding institutional politics and stressed the importance of institutions since the second half of the 20th century has recently become the theoretical framework relied on in political-social-economical analyses. Particularly, after it was seen that traditional causality, which regards “the

government that has a static position and its inherent rules and procedures as independent variable and administrative operations in democracies as dependent variable” fails to work (Rhodes, 2006: 94), the new institutional politics perspective gathered momentum. Arguments for development which thinkers such as Montesquieu and ending of formal institutions were smashed by two major global crises, namely the Great Depression and the Second World War while the legitimacy of the established institutional regulations and operations were under serious questioning. This was also the questioning of the Enlightenment internally because the relationship between political institutionalism and development described using formal rules is also a direct product of the Enlightenment idea. When Acemoglu and Robinson (2004: 87) pointed out, years later, that political and economic institutions have to be *inclusive*, not *exclusive*, they also underlined that fact that one of the major conditions for this is the adoption of an institutional culture based on democratic norms that include social dynamics. So much so that institutions form, develop or deteriorate depending on how the political and socio-economic power is distributed in the country/society -which also shows the scale of democracy-. From this perspective, the institutions turn into apparatuses that emerge as dependent, not independent, variables unlike the main premise of historical institutionalism. In other words, causality changes direction:

*Institutions governed by formal rules* → *administrative operations in democracies*



*Social needs/interests, social interaction, power distribution in society*  
(*democratic norm*) → *institutions*

March and Olsen’s (1984: 738) definition of “institutionalism” based on this new approach of institutional politics also signifies this new understanding. An approach to institution redefined to include non-verbal habits, value judgments and social-institutional moral understanding in a much wider sense than merely the formalism of written rules, represents a domain which is capable of changing the policy of the said system fundamentally. This is, in essence, a definition emphasized by the new sociological perspective of institutional politics because while it claims that the *utilitarian* and *individualistic* methodology in the way behaviouralist and rational choice theories perceive politics is deficient and inaccurate in defining political institutions and politics, it also points to the value-centered descriptions in political analysis as the direction that politics will take. One reason is that, according to sociological institutionalism, both models impair the political ideals and lean on a formalism that excludes the thesis that institutions provide a meaning system for politics. They achieve this either by relying on empirical/observable phenomena (behavioralist theory) or by relating the political sphere directly economic rationality theory (rational choice theory). That is to say, political ideals are kept out of analysis.

However, normative rules as regards the political institutions are capable of causing transformative impact on the way political life operates and on the perspectives and behaviors of political actors. And this new phenomenon called the “new politics” draws its power of expression and effectiveness from this world of norms and meanings. The institutions rise from this foundation and assume new functions in this new political setting. This is because, as structures that hold value in and of themselves, emerging as products of social needs and pressures (Selznick, 1957: 5) and consisting of rules shaped by stability, values and behavioral patterns (Huntington, 1968: 12), they transform politics, they also act as dynamic and functional organisms capable of transforming beyond their own accumulation of experience (Sojn and Huber, 2013: 261). Weber (1978: 41) describes this functionality from viewpoint that regulates social relations, limiting potential preoccupations that comprise personal interests by reducing diversity in behaviors and directing these toward common good.

This is, in a way, a description that is consistent with the abovementioned function of institutions to create meaning and value for politics.

It may be possible to examine the hypothesis that institutions are a product of social interaction and historical events or experience through Moore’s (1966, p 67-68) approach where he compares the examples of England (democracy), Germany (fascism) and Russia (communism) as three different outcomes of institutional and political development. This is because in these countries, it is evident that the dynamics that govern the emergence of the aforementioned types of political system are dependent on a political institutionalization originating in close connection with the presence or efficiency of a strong middle class and the way agricultural-economic relations are organized within the context of the period in question. In a similar vein, Easton (1957:383) defines the political system as a subsystem of society, while pointing out that they are, in essence, the determining factors of the political system as they determine the interaction of cultural and socio-economic dynamics with institutions-social actors. As the recent world history showed us, political and economic institutional structures are undergoing changes due to certain socio-economic and political processes at the macro level. As can be seen in such cases as the new forms of poverty brought about by an economic downfall like the Great Depression shaking the political structures of those countries from their foundations or, at a time when all envisioning of an established order are shattered after the Second World War, as the welfare state being replaced by monetarist, political economy visions (Peters, Pierre and King, 2005: 129).

The national politics which took its share of the global transition after 1980 revised its relations with the birth and transformation of political institutions and political-social-economic actors by calling attention to informal conventions rather than formal and to cultural factors rather than legal. For instance, the relationship between the administrative perspective of the Özal period and the bureaucratic institution in that historical episode is, in this aspect, largely connected with this structural-theoretical dimension



as well as with Özal's unique character. In other words, while there is a new definition of relationships between institution, actors and phenomena, it is also a topic of discussion how these institutions resist change. One example worthy of attention in this sense is that the World Bank switched its discourse to institutional development/transformation and good governance after 1980. In other words, this is a different understanding of the notion of "separation of powers" which the English political system raised upon being reinterpreted from a much more dynamic perspective of institutional transformation in Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws* (Kalkan, 2015).

The arguments of historical institutionalism that view change from a very static perspective as something that is rarely seen and, when it is, has only limited influence have lost their credibility even within the very same theoretical framework today. Furthermore, considering the projections of the system theory which argues that different inputs coming into any political system will transform that system and, even further, of the modernization theory that claims that change is essential let alone possible (Lip set, 1967), it would not be an overinference to say the phenomenon of change in institutional politics is now undergoing a serious transformation. In this aspect, as Hall (1993: 288) puts it, institutional transformations are essentially a product of a mutual interaction between the state and the society, which signifies a transformation within context. The complete overthrow of institutions and replacement with a brand new institutional setting -which is a change of context- happens in the wake of exogenous shocks (i.e disasters, wars, economic crises, epidemics, famine) (March and Olsen, 1984: 643). From this point, the world in general and Turkey on a national scale has been experiencing a reflection of a contextual transformation in the state, the institutions and their inherent rules for a while and, at the same time, it has been preparing itself to confront the dramatic changes that this contextual transformation will bring about in the post-COVID-19 period.

What needs to be done at this point is to adapt the requirements of this new institutional politics to specific items. In fact, we can see that this practice is, in a way, being tested by the profound sociological-political-economic challenges Turkey has been facing in recent years. In its experience with refugees for about 8 years, Turkey witnessed the concrete outcome of a reliance on this form of execution. The mobilization and dynamic operation of institutional politics following major natural disasters such as earthquakes have also produced results inherent in the new understanding of institutionalism. And finally, the COVID-19 process has brought the new institutional understanding and type of politics to the test as a body of practices where manifestations are assessed more profoundly and, this time, also systemically. A more detailed discussion of these will be offered in the section where the Turkey case will be examined.

### **COVID-19 and the Central Institutional Player: The State**

At times of major instability and insecurity, it is commonly considered natural and rational that societies fall back upon the state as the centre of power because a safe exit from such crises depend on reliable information and trust in public institutions. However, while a more introversive dynamic -naturally- develops with the global pandemic of COVID-19, the states/governments also became the object of a mass discontentment and rage due to their inefficiencies and weaknesses in saving human lives in the same process. How, then, should one interpret the role of the institution of state in events of such global crisis within the context of social existence?

Since 1952 when it was first published, the *UN Report on the World Social Situation* has been periodically reviewing the state of affairs on the global scale and advises the states and supra-state institutions. These reports on trends in different periods are documents that reflect the dominant politics of a given historical episode. And the preface of the report issued in the early 1980s when the welfare state collapsed and was replaced by a new form of socio-economic and political vision pointed to the emergence of a brand new discourse:

*Economic failures of the recent history not only failed in meeting the expectations, but also revealed the limitations of the nation-state as the governor of socio-economic change.*

*In parts of the world where the governments are facing the challenging task of building a nation and a permanent economy in particular, social and political instabilities emerged in various forms. This took the form of corruption in private and public behavior at the same time. Weakening of various forms of authority and accepted values that binds individuals together gradually created greater individual freedoms and a more fragile society at the same time.” (UN, 1982: 1-2).*

In the UN report that followed in 1985, the main emphasis was the general trend in the development of institutional politics and its reflections on the implementation of the new dynamic:

*In recent years, the potential role of the private sector in the execution of public services - fire protection, police protection, provision of daycare, retirement home facilities, ambulance service and even the construction and management of private prisons- have started to draw appeal again. The US resorts to this kind of service more than any other country. Only in 1980, 66.8 billion dollars were spent on local and state level” (UN, 1985: 93-94).*

The main responsibilities of the welfare state, as classified in three dimensions of welfare are described as healthcare, education and food. At this point, healthcare appears as the provision of adequate and equally accessible healthcare services, public health measures and a network of social security mechanisms. In the words of Mishra (1990: 19), it is the responsibility of the state to ensure the provision of “security network” services on a social level.

In parallel with this, the World Health Organization (WHO) had defined health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” in its early years (UN, 1952: 22). Therefore, the state institution was included in the practice of being apparent in many areas of social existence. So much so that, in the welfare state period, the core countries and many semi-periphery states were steadily expanding their domains to areas of social activity which had previously been defined as “non-state”. The state was gradually stretching the boundaries of its responsibilities via public enterprises gaining momentum, a macro-economic management, social engineering that aims at regulating economic and social activity and preventing social disasters by means of specialized institutions and a mode of operation where the state takes attempts to act as guarantor for the provision of welfare (King, 1983: 8-9). And this was where the crisis started. The increasing burden of public expenditure that the governments had to resort to in the economic conjuncture shaped by oil and debt crises of 1973 were putting a strain on budgets which made economic downfall inevitable.

In its efforts to increase welfare, the state was now facing the social discontentment caused by unemployment and impoverishment which were the results of a serious economic crisis. The state failed to improve welfare and equality and not only did this actual state cause social disintegration and divide but it also set the stage for reactionary social movements. The social divide manifested itself as anti-immigrant sentiment, racism policies and the deep fracture caused by social inequality. And the reactionary social movements become evident under the themes of inequality and poverty. For instance, the “welfare rights movement” in the US was a movement in reaction to the fact that 50% fewer African-Americans received *Medicaid*<sup>1</sup> and Medicaid did not cover 40 percent of the poor who would have potentially been eligible to receive it (Hollingsworth, Hage and Hanneman, 1990: 160). This movement was later joined the African-American movement protesting against the structural unemployment and the poverty of African-Americans in the northern cities (Piven and Cloward, 1977: 331). The result was a return to the policies to increase welfare in response to these reactionary movements and the establishment of “community healthcare centers” for the purpose of providing personalized healthcare service to the poor people in the northern cities (Ehrenreich, 1978: 66). However, as the budget deficit grew due to these measures, the reaction at the bottom finally surfaced and it was then the point of no return in the struggle for the welfare state.

The main issue here is that this wave of social protests against the system laid the groundwork for the re-politicization of issues such as healthcare service, poverty and welfare which had become relatively depoliticized after the Second World War. At this point, the framework that defined the functions and responsibilities of the state as an institution shifted from the social to the political ground (through the politicization of the clash between the state and the market). And this would in the medium term mean the minimization of the

<sup>1</sup> Federal and state support program for provision of healthcare needs of underprivileged social segments.

state's operational flexibility by means of pushing it to a static formalism with regard to the execution of institutional politics. Indeed, the situation went far beyond this in the medium term: the state, which had always been central and at the top since the beginning of the modern world system, was deactivated and lost most of its ground for the first time. The political background of the state-market conflict aside, the problem here is that the state tends to utilize its structural resources inefficiently and via a static, strict bureaucratism. And this was what brought the downfall in the first place. With the anti-welfare movements, a new socio-economic political demand was strongly voiced first in the USA, then in Europe. So much so that, neither the social democratic corporatism of Sweden, nor the socialist government of Mitterand in France had the vision or strength to break the efficiency and strength of this demand. Although the role of other financial resources (relation-family network, religious institutions, charities and non-governmental institutions) in increasing welfare become partially visible in the political arena, the functions and domains of these institutions which did nothing more than complement the execution of institutional politics remained exceedingly limited.

This process of political mobility which the institutional politics underwent created an externalizing effect which also undermined the trust in the democratic institutions in the West. This inefficiency of the democratic institutions was, for some, a sign of a passing era: namely, the post-democratic period. While the democratic institutions were identified as entities that assumed their meaning and function through the social groups and social policies of the welfare state, this downfall now led to the questioning of the faith in institutional politics which drew its strength from the democratic environment. Furthermore, the Western societies, who faced the inefficiencies of the new institutions in resolving social problems, now had their belief in democratic institutions and democratic institutional politics largely weakened. This was because the failure of the democratic philosophy that is centered on the individual to resolve social issues was clearly visible. And a series of proposals were now being put forward which combined social perspectives with a new model of governance. Likewise, the need for a new model aiming at the fact that the passive citizenship role merely based on relationships of voting and representation must change and the social demands must be dealt with through a decision making mechanism in which the society is better involved. In this respect, the new meaning assumed by the notion of citizenship was expanding to include the right to the share in the general welfare of the society rather than merely the right to participate in political decision making (Ambrosius and Hubbard, 1989: 127). In other words, the problem was now more than just a political conflict between the state and the market. The fact that trends analysis we mentioned above in the 1984 UN Report on the World Social Situation came to this point as of late 90s pointed, in fact, to the structural limitations of market individualism in dealing with the major social issues. That is to say, to think that the inefficiencies of the welfare state would be remedied with the new public enterprises handed over to private institutions was a great illusion for individuals and the society in the

context of Western liberal democracies.<sup>2</sup>

However, Fukuyama (2006: 98) would answer the question why the victory of liberal democracy had not yet been achieved years after his theory of the end of history by referring to the conceptualization of “weak/failed state”<sup>3</sup> with reference to the failure to establish a strong institutional infrastructure in non-Western societies due to the inadequacy of the state capacity.<sup>3</sup> However, the problem here is not a crisis that concern non-Western societies, rather the reality experienced by the Western democracies and Western institutions. Indeed, some of the recent quantitative studies demonstrate that, in the Western liberal democracies (England, the USA, the Netherlands, Germany, Spain, France, Australia, New Zealand), young people’s view of democratic values and their faith in the effectiveness of institutional-political leadership in solving social problems is on a downward trend (Foa and Munk, 2017: 6-7; cited by Alkan, 2019). Moffitt (2017) points to the emergence of a trend in Northern Europe that is committed to traditional liberal values, yet introversive and populist when it comes to recent issues (immigration, refugees, Islamophobia, the EU ideal). In this sense, the fact that the far right in Europe has increased their vote from 8% to 12.5% on average after 2000 (Akkerman et al., 2016; cited by Alkan, 2019) is indicative of the new path politics has now taken. So much so that the most distinctive common feature of these far right parties is that, rather than being fascistic in the traditional sense, they gain ground via populist reactions and stress on social issues and institutional inefficiencies based around the social problems of the ordinary European citizen and offer solutions that prioritize social protection policies (Alkan, 2019). It is worth stressing that the reality brought on by COVID-19 has a lot in common with what the said form of policy-making points to.

Is the trend back toward the welfare state, then? Or should it be? First and foremost, it must be said that there are very few governments that are sufficiently equipped to deal with large scale problems (poverty, violence, terror and ecological degradation etc.). Many of them are in deep crisis. Their ability to develop policies toward solving the problems that an ever-changing world produces is currently largely weakened under the effect of emerging global dynamics.<sup>4</sup> In other words, while the states are still the main institutional actors in the global arena, they are not alone (Evans, 1997: 65). They have to maintain their activities on a new plane where their institutional structure is influenced by a system of networks which the social theory calls the “network model”. That is to say, on a global scale, the world is experiencing a political practice where the business world, NGOs, micro-ethnic groups and even crime syndicates exert influence. However, the governments are hierarchical in terms of their institutional structure which makes it fairly hard for them to

<sup>2</sup> As we will analyze in more detail in the section where the case of Turkey will be discussed; with its diversification of the actors of institutional politics and the political functions they produced and its demonstration of a model of coordination and governance between them, Turkey was able to draw a different path in the face of the crises that broke out.

<sup>3</sup> This term is essentially used for states which prove incapable of dealing with the social, economic, political crises and events that the country faces.

<sup>4</sup> New technologies, for instance, are a very strong globalizing element, they can also be the source of an effect that promotes political and social disintegration by facilitating the union of fragmented identities and interest.

adapt to new network relations. As of today, non-governmental structures - some of which have positive impacts and some negative - are at the height of their careers both in terms of their number and effectiveness. And the NGOs in particular, increased their involvement in institutional politics on the global and national scale and now they can now exert influence in official decision making processes. So much so that, globally speaking, the NGOs provide more official development aids than the entire UN system -except IMF and the World Bank- and they provide a number of services that governments in many countries fail to provide such as urban and rural development, education, healthcare and social support services (Rosenau, 2008: 274). The question, then, whether the solution is a return to the welfare state, will not be a valid one. The reason is that we do not have a single, absolute answer to absolute determinations. This new setting of institutional politics necessitates a vision by which many different elements work together in a coordinated model to make policies and put them into practice. We will now try to illustrate this, in the case of Turkey, by specific examples within the context of the indicators from the COVID-19 experience.

## **Institutional Politics in Turkey and its Line of Progress**

### ***Where Does Traditional/Conventional Politics Stand?***

To understand the political tradition in Turkey, one must look beyond the left-right or ruling party-opposition party conflict. In this approach, which would mean a deeper investigation, it can be said that there is a deeper separation that can essentially be described as “statist centre” and “social centre”. Along the line that stretches from the modernization in the Late Ottoman period up to the foundation of the Republic, we have a picture of a sort of “oligarchy-democracy tension” where two different political cultures form two separate lines. The Modern Republic was dominated by an elitist civilian-military bureaucracy made up of a staff that succeeded the Ottoman bureaucracy in the institutional sense and that assumed the role of the architect and protector of this modernization movement. The resulting institutional picture was a tension between the Jacobin political vision comprising bureaucrats, intellectuals and academics aspiring to transform the society and another political vision of representative bodies centered on social demands and sensitivities and advocating that the functions of the state must be designed to address these demands.

The dramatic difference between the First Parliament and the Second Parliament formed after the election on April 8, 1923 in terms of political distribution was the telling sign of the bureaucratic tutelage that was deepening/being built. One reason is that the composition of the First Parliament reflected a blend of intellectuals, bureaucrats and representatives of various social segments, the composition of the Second Parliament presented a picture where 70% of the members of the First Parliament were absent and 58% of this new parliament

was previously public officers (Yücekök, 1983: 163-167; cited by Alkan, 2019).<sup>5</sup> According to Karpat, the dissolution of the Parliament on April 1, 1923 and decision to hold the elections on April 8 was clearly an act of liquidation:

*“The victory against the Greeks and the promise of international recognition soon to be acknowledged in the Treaty of Lausanne made it possible for the modernists-positivists in the First Group to take complete hold of the government and to purge the democrats in the ‘Second Group’.” (Karpat, 2017: 128).*

He also describes the events surrounding Ali Fuat Cebesoy, one of the important figures of the First Group as a step taken in circumstances where the constitutional majority could not be met to liquidate the Second Group:

*“In the extraordinary general meeting of the Grand National Assembly on April 1, 1923 Sunday, it was requested that the motion regarding the renewal of the election of Esat Bey, the MP of Aydın and his one hundred and twenty fellows be urgently finalized. This motion was only signed by the members of the First Group and the MPs in Ankara.” (Cebesoy, 2007:363).*

So much so, that the Second Group, who had a significant influence in the Parliament, decided to protest against the elections by declaring and announcing that the dissolution was a violation of the constitution. Tunçay (1981: 50) underlines the fact that this decision of election was taken by simple majority while it should have been taken with two-thirds of all the votes as per the constitution (*Teşkilat-ı Esasiye*), which is against the constitution.

This historical series of events point to a legitimacy problem and is worthy of examination as regards its implications on the political context. This is because while the precursors of the government philosophy and practice based on civilian-military bureaucracy was being designed in Turkey, a succession of military coups that follow the transition to the multi-party system and constitutions drafted by the military which are the products of interim regimes created a kind of institutional oligarchy in the country. Indeed, the stage that enabled the military coup of May 27 was set by the civilian-military bureaucracy, intellectuals and academics. The constitution of 1961, the amendments of 1971-1973 and the constitution of 1982 emerged as institutional structures that reflect the political vision of a narrow circle of staff enabled by interim regimes. Almost all mechanisms and institutional-structural blockages directed at restricting the governing capacity of the legitimate representative bodies of institutional politics formed the basis for the constitutions of 1961 and 1982. Indeed, among the institutional constructs that aim at restricting the movement of politics and reinforcing the tutelage of the statist bureaucracy, the re-establishment of the constitution of 1961 drafted by the National Security Council and Constitutional Court, the 1971 amendments by the Military Court of Appeals and the reinstatement of the Presidency under a tutelage structure were the products of the 1982 constitution.

<sup>5</sup> For detailed data and competent analysis, see: Demirel, A. (2017).

This conventional setting on which institutional politics stands in Turkey became the leading factor causing major crises and instabilities through the history of the Republic and, in the shadow of the said tutelage institutions, the failure to construct an effective executive and administrative power.

***The Presidential System and the Institutional Change in Politics***

Within the context of the above arguments, when explaining the negative impact of the traditional tension line in Turkey on administrative processes and institutional politics, we must underline the fact that it is not something that can be explained by a mere technical decision to be made between models of parliamentarism, presidential and semi-presidential systems. This is because the determining factor is the world of meanings and the policy vision which not only the debates of theoretical literature but also the changes and practices on institutional scale lean on. However, one other issue that has to be placed in the same context is that the ways the parameters of the institutional politics inspired by this vision are designed have direct influence on the execution and practices of politics. In this sense, without ignoring the traditional context of politics discussed above, the systems debate in Turkey must be considered from this institutional perspective.

We must first state that we have a political tradition where a paradigm shift in the executive structure is capable of great impacts. So much so that, it is possible to see that even merely technical concerns may produce dramatic variations with multiplier effect, but then again, institutional politics fail to operate in circumstances where there is no sensitivity toward the administrative process, even in a well-configured system. While we think that an analysis of institutional politics independent of the above conventional setting is impossible, an examination of how and under which circumstances the executive politics could be expanded would bring with it a paradigm shift in the internal structure of this conventional context. From this perspective, the debate that centers around the Presidential government system ought to be directed at the how a system could be operated based on sensitivities, efficiency and flexibility on institutional and administrative scale.

In an institutional model where the central government and local government work solely and in coordination, an increased emphasis on collaboration instead of tutelage, on the appropriate and legitimate distribution of authority and on coordination and on the role of coordination in policy-making and implementation processes would lead that system to institutional success.

It is seen that the Presidential system is designed as a model that, with respect to the structuring of the central government, stipulates independent and/or semi-official organizations directly working under the ministry in different and micro-level issues and an executive structure based on efficiency, coordination and flexibility not only through the direct executive power of the ministries, but policy committees, presidential offices, thematically configured councils as well. Indeed, this is an institutional structuring where not only



the representatives and executives of the political arena or the institutional bureaucracy but also, within a flexible structuring extending to the civilian domain on different levels of authority, NGO representatives, academics, specialists from various fields and representatives of special committees will be able to influence decision making processes. Also, the functional organization and the model of horizontal collaboration between state institutions that is necessary depending on which area of service it is, is yet another parameter which would cause the institutional politics to differentiate to a large extent.

The main philosophy in the institutional structure of local authorities that are situated on the other end of the system is the efficient provision of public services and a healthy operation of the coordination between local and central governments both in terms of speed and efficiency. This systemic operation raises the necessity to strengthen the structure of the local authorities both in the administrative and financial sense. The appropriacy, effectiveness and swiftness of public services can be ensured via this fundamental condition. Additionally, by means of sub-committees and units the can be formed under local authorities, the provision of these public services and the assessment of public demands and sensitivities will be conducted systematically.

At this point, Alkan (2018) emphasizes that the authority to issue a Presidential decree in relevant areas under its power, is a natural and necessary outcome of this system for the operation of the system in general and to ensure the effectiveness of the executive body and states that the political processes will run through the institutional formulations of the new system. As implied by the institutional theory: institutionalism is closely related with the presence of norms, rules and values beyond individual interests and, while it draws its strength from reality, it grows and takes root in political life through the process and influences patterns of behavior, preferences, even turning into a value in itself.

### ***COVID-19 and Parameters of New Institutional Politics in Turkey: Coordination and Governance***

At this very moment in history, we are confronted with a new political context. Turkey has been running a new political process both in its visions and in the perspective of change in institutional structures and the practices of this perspective. In Buchanan's (1962) words, what is being pointed at is not the rationale of preferences, rather the institutional structure shaping those preferences. And this put before us a new policy. The central point in question here is the conceptualization of the social nature of the institutionalized system of government. Another question that confronts us in the same context and which is inherent in this matter is whether the "sociological network" that runs through institutions is operational or dissolving. And how are we to interpret this?

Circumstances that are caused by the trend of globalization give rise to the obligation to cope with new political, social and financial realities on the part of countries and societies. Coping with this relatively complex and deep

phenomena, the strategies adopted by the institution of politics are also transformed. The need for a multi-agent governance mechanism is growing in harmony with the complexity of these phenomena. As pointed out by Fenger and Bekkers (2007: 15-16) we are going through a period that is shaped by increased functionality on the part of local authorities, private sector and its affiliates, NGOs, institutions and development agencies with semi-public legal entities as subsidiary agents of a central state bureaucracy that will be implemented in public services in a more flexible and dynamic way. This is a gradual process. This process the main philosophy of which is coordination is based on the ambition of creating a state of balance in social relations by means of directing individual preferences and the motives that underlie these preferences toward collaboration through a set of rules in order to make way for social collaboration. Therefore, the philosophy and practices of institutionalism revise and reconfigure their strategies and structuring in line with this ambition.

For instance, the common pattern we see in both the handling of the refugee problem in recent years and the way the aftermath of disasters are managed has been the functional use of AFAD, which is a public legal entity, the active role of the Red Crescent (“Kızılay”) which is association with legal entity working for the public benefit yet subject to private law and the involvement of NGOs and private organizations working in various fields in these processes. This new administrative model underlining the establishment of the institutional infrastructure of this social collaboration is now starting to specialize on dealing with such crises in Turkey. And this is taking place in a context that is highly dependent on a set of principles defined as governance and its system of rules. This is a model that describes the processes of social functions which are run solely or in coordination by various institutions. Unlike governments that ensure obedience by means of privileges such as ruling and constitutional regulations, the efficiency of the rule systems of governance arise from traditional norms and customs, informal covenants, common reference points and practices that invite people to comply with instructions.

Evidently, the public administration mechanism and the context of institutional politics in Turkey are entering a phase of remodeling in this sense. While an internal transformation is being achieved in the structuring of the central government, the relations between the central and local government are also on the table. The central government now adopts a perspective of institutional transformation in line with the improvement and operationalising of the synchronization of authorities and responsibilities between institutions and with the enhancement of activity and accountability in administration by deepening the processes of participation and governance. In other words, this is, as we described above, the establishment of an institutional infrastructure constructed by a governance model involving a wide array of agents including the central government, local authorities, NGOs, private sector and its subsidiaries, non-profit organizations (Eryılmaz, 2012:43). Considering that it is people themselves and their mental adaptation which will put this into

practice, it is inevitable that we have an agenda that is inherent in legislation on the other end of the matter. In other words, the natural practice that regards the legislation from the perspective of a strict formalism will be an executive picture that manifests itself as a problem in the form of evading responsibility, refusing to take initiative, difficulty in adapting to change, hindering efficient and active administration in terms of speed and effectiveness. While an effort is being made to rebuild the institutional infrastructure of the system, one must take it into account that this problem which is at the heart of the matter, will be the most serious structural barrier in the process. The bureaucratic tradition which the above traditional/conventional context of politics in Turkey primarily presents us with a reality that branches out of this.

On the other end of the matter, as we discussed, stands the direction and depth of the relations between the central and local government. The number of areas where local authorities have direct authority in Turkey is 11; that of areas where the central government has full authority is 23 and the number of areas where these two have joint authority is 15. In the financial sense, the share of local authorities in the provision of services is 15% (Toksöz et al., 2009; cited by Alkan, 2019). Local authorities are considered as administrative units at an advantage in terms of their functions and structures in improving integration with society.

Indeed, on a global scale, the international development agencies have been encouraging governments to collaborate with local authorities in order to design effective development strategies since the 1980s. The need for revision in public administration institutions to improve efficiency and effectiveness was one of the central issues mentioned in The European Charter of Local Self Governments approved in 1985 (Commission of the European Communities, 2001). One reason for this is that democratic institutionalism is a phenomenon that is reinforced and carried forward by coordinated collaboration among different units in decision-making and execution (Wickwar, 1970: 74). And, as Hill (1974: 22) puts it, this can only be possible with an understanding of political institutionalism where there is strong participation to political processes. The relationship between local dynamics and democracy is a subject widely discussed by Anglo-Saxon thinkers such as Locke, Hume and Mill. Hayek (2011: 196) also states that local authorities are the most essential factors that make up a democratic society, after private sector. Richards (1983: 167) points out that, as implied by the theory of democracy, coordinated collaboration with the local authorities in meeting the social and economic needs of the society and the individuals will possibly produce positive results. Integrating this thought with people-oriented value perspective will enable countries and cultures to create their unique way of doing politics. Such harmonization and an integrated/compact mode of execution are now inevitable in dealing with the new forms of crisis and poverty created by the post-industrial society.

Another component of this integrated form is the civil society. Now, a broader definition is used for civil society that assumes new roles and responsibilities

within the new conceptual frame of institutional politics: an institutional body engaged with vital areas of activity such as the provision of social services, healthcare, youth, education, environment, disabled citizens and development, in a wide array of entities including voluntary organizations, think-tanks, social movements, citizen initiatives, unions, associations, chambers and human rights institutions. In fact, we see that, in the state tradition of the political philosophy that walks hand in hand with natural law since Aristotle, the concept of civil society is used interchangeably with the state. The reason is that the civil society is a conceptualization that represents the entitlement of individuals in the public sphere and paved the way for the social contract theories of the 18th century. Indeed, Locke and Hobbes position the state and the civil society as alternatives to the “state of nature”. And maybe with an exception: Locke goes one step further and draws out a system of rules/principles for the state-civil society relationship, while he does not sever that connection completely. Edwards (2008: 47) assigns the civil society three main functions that are economic, social and political, Van Tuijl (2016: 3) elaborates on this by pointing out its contributions to the improvement of democracy and social justice as a balancing factor against the state and market players in a political society and its role of preserving values such as solidarity, trust, collaboration, tolerance and social capital.

Indeed, in a democratic culture, the state and the civil society ought to work in mutual interaction reinforcing each other; and seeing these two as opposite concepts is now becoming a thing of the past. This is because an awareness that a dynamic that would reduce the impact of crises could only be reached through this means is becoming more apparent everyday. And this, in essence, make is obligatory to establish relations among individuals and between the individuals and the institutions based on trust (O’Neill, 2002: 65). This trend also has recently manifested itself in the changing character of the social policies. With the structural transformation experienced by the state which has historically been the strongest agent in the face of poverty and humanitarian crises, the social policies are now being executed in increasing coordination among local authorities, civilian and religious organization (Marshall, 1965: 48). In that sense, rather than the welfare state rising from its ashes, we are witnessing a form of politics dominated by new orientations and approaches. In this new context, a part of the practices of social politics is being transferred to the civil society and local units. This presents us with a hybrid bundle of advantages: bringing synergy that combines the flexibility of the civil society and the historical experience and infrastructural strength of the state, without getting lost in cumbersome, inefficient whirlpool of bureaucratism. This is also a process that improves the functionality of the notion of social capital as an element of the civil society and re-thematising it at the same time. Strengthened, diversified social capital of higher quality reveals the importance of civil society in dealing with social and humanitarian crises. In countries that lack such structures of civil society and therefore horizontal trust and solidarity networks cannot be constructed in the society (Fukuyama, 2001: 87), it is more likely that the states exert negative influence on the social capital. And this leaves the society to its fate in the face of humanitarian and social crises.

What, then, does COVID-19 tell us in light of these parameters and analyses? First and foremost, this global outbreak has pointed to the state capabilities, trust and good governance instead of regime types as effective factors in dealing with crises. The general trend in the societies is, naturally, a strong impulse to take refuge in a state mechanism that can ensure their safety in terms of living conditions. And at this point, the importance of the efficiency of public healthcare system and the soundness of its institutional infrastructure brought to the fore. As Stiglitz (2020) puts it: *“When we are faced with a natural disaster or an epidemic, we turn to the government/state again; because we know that such events require collective action.”*

The global pandemic of COVID-19 also provided us with a direct and indirect lesson on the need to strengthen the political institutions in a country. The direct lessons can be taken from the shocking pictures coming from different countries. The indirect lesson, on the other hand, is that we are reminded again of the fact that even the leadership of a country can be infected in such vital crises. Exactly as what happened in the Spanish Flu outbreak of 1918 and other major outbreaks in history. The extent of political institutionalism in a country, in the final analysis, determines the state of affairs in that country and the political risks either grow or are absorbed. For countries where with low levels of political and economic institutionalism, periods of such vital crises may result in a power vacuum in that country as well as major social, economic and political collapse brought on by a sudden reversal of the political structure that depends on the political-economic elite. In this respect, the importance of an institutional system that complements the institutional powers of the state structure with effective management and protective economic and social policies has been confirmed for all countries and societies.

In this framework, another complementary parameter for the factors inherent social policies such as public health and basic services and for protective economic policies has been the prominence of the security/public order perspective. One reason for this is that the operation of any historical system depends on a minimal public order -safety of life and property- at the very least. If the level of security is not high, the production system will not operate as well as the delivery and distribution of goods, which will make it more difficult for all political-cultural institutions to operate. The damage to be caused by the breach of confidence in the state could, in this sense, be dramatic.

The healthy and transparent operation of public relations is another aspect of the problem. And it can be achieved through institutional infrastructure and effectiveness. Keeping the public informed regularly and in a transparent way is a critical parameter that will not only prevent the escalation of vulnerabilities but also ensure the material, social and mental standing of the society by instilling trust. Otherwise, as we can see in a number of global concerns and uncertainties regarding China, it could lead to a state of social paranoia and aphasia where people cannot be reassured about their worries for the future.

Another issue is the national capabilities of countries. In other words, the significance of an investment strategy to serve the facilitation of daily life in different areas relying on a national philosophy emerged in the context of a global outbreak where the countries closed their borders and the nations are left to their own fates.

In summary, in times of such deep crisis, the main problem is to ensure the healthy, active and coordinated operation of the eco-system made up of different sub-elements (public healthcare, food, transportation, energy, security, public relations, mental management, economic support, supply chains etc.) in a given country. And this active and coordinated work mechanics is a criterion and function of the strength of institutional politics in that country. Indeed, this experience has shown to us that the structure of policy-making, too, is undergoing a dramatic change. So much so that the fundamental, vital and socio-economic decisions to be made on the future of a country are left not only to a group of politician-bureaucrats but also to private-technical information systems and their institutional agents. This also underlines a new form of politics where technical expertise and scientific knowledge is in the foreground. For instance, the policy-oriented pandemic strategy adopted in the early stages of the process in England can have such an influence that can urge the government to change its strategy based on reports of a scientific organization or an academic authority (King's College).

Within the context of this pandemic process, Turkey's stand was to designate the new administrative model characterized by coordination and governance as depicted above, as the main strategic path of institutional politics. In this respect, Turkey demonstrated a preliminary experience of this model of institutional politics especially in the supervision of the refugee problem after 2016 and in the administration that followed the natural disasters (as seen in the earthquake in the city of Elazığ in early 2020).<sup>6</sup> As its theoretical framework was outlined in the introduction of this article, this is a hybrid model of institutional politics. And this could be the new model for development. An integrated public activity stands out in the strategy to deal with the vital threat of COVID-19. In the course of this process, we have witnessed an integrated institutional public policy adopted by shareholders such as research and development units (centres, institutes) working on healthcare, social security system, education (teachers, universities, vocational schools), local authorities, semi-public legal entities, social support units, environment protection units, religious officers, agricultural industry, Turkish Armed Forces, internal security units, defense industry, communication channels, institutions of transportation and supply, energy organizations, chambers, unions, loans and dormitories institution, youth centres, old people's homes and nursing homes and NGOs. This is because a public policy is something that cannot simply be reduced to welfare services. Through this model, it can be imagined as a mechanism that ensures consistency between the ways in which the above

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<sup>6</sup> The Ministry of Interior was responsible for the institutional coordination in the Elazığ earthquake. For detailed information on this: <https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/elazig-depremi-sourasi-yapilan-tum-yardimlar>

vital, social and economic needs/requirements are supplied by means of these shareholder institutions.

To put it more plainly, Turkey has successfully drawn for itself a path of institutional structuring with its system that can be operated in a model where the investments on healthcare infrastructure and service capacity under the collaboration between public and private sector and through its model that enables coordination between institutions. This coordination model among the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Industry and Technology, TÜBİTAK (The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey), TÜSEB (Health Institutes of Turkey), private sector and NGOs, for instance, created a result-oriented and motivating dynamic in efforts to produce and distribute a Turkish-made respirator and develop a vaccine. A similar model was adopted in the production of protective equipment and a output of production and supply was delivered where swift and effective results were achieved in coordination with the vocational schools, municipalities, Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) and private corporations. These production processes was made possible by improving domestic production capabilities in coordination with the Presidency of Defense Industries, public-private institutions that are the shareholder in the healthcare sector, the Ministry of Science and Technology and the relevant NGOs. And as such, the path of institutional politics that was adopted in Turkey provided us with a significant model that shed light on the direction the post-COVID-19 would take in terms of the future importance of investment strategies in the national context.

Another important point worthy of mentioning is the transparency public consultation, communication and exchange of information. Under the supervision of the General Directorate of Public Health of the Ministry of Health, *Pandemic Influenza National Preparedness Plan* initially developed in 2019 in light of the data, and lessons learned, from the influenza pandemic in 2009 was finally established with the participation of 33 academics who are specialized medical doctors in various fields. The said plan manifested itself as an institutional system through which deficiencies in patient management were corrected, technical and human capacities were increased, financial resources were improved, organizational units were formed and the public communication strategy was enhanced. So much so that the institutions that took part in the operations of this structure were the General Directorate of Public Health, General Directorate of Public Hospitals, General Directorate of Emergency Healthcare, General Directorate of Health Services for Borders and Coasts, General Directorate of Healthcare Information Systems, General Directorate of Health Improvement, General Directorate of Management Services, General Directorate of Legal Services, Provincial Health Directorates in some metropolitan cities, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services, Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of National Education, Ministry of National Defense, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, Presidency of Disaster and Emergency

Management, Presidency of Religious Affairs, Turkish Red Crescent and Council of Higher Education (General Directorate of Public Health, Ministry of Health, 2019). Indeed, two months before first recorded COVID-19 case in Turkey, on January 10, 2020, Coronavirus Science Committee was formed as an advisory board made up of 38 scientists and in charge of supervising all preventive, protective, diagnostic and treatment processes as well as public health communication in advisory capacity. The fact that this process was managed in this way is a phenomenon that as the implementation of a governance strategy based on information and technical expertise as detailed above. Similarly, the immediate, transparent and varied communication, information and caution strategies of the Ministry of Health have been a significant functional practice that reinforced public communication.

In addition, Uluslararası Sağlık Hizmetleri A.Ş. (USHAŞ - International Healthcare Services) founded last year for the purposes of coordinating the activities of public and private sector in the field of health tourism, offering guidance to the Ministry as regards the policies and strategies on international healthcare services also played an active role in material supply. Another example of this coordination was that private hospitals took an active role in the course of the pandemic and functioned as executive agents of the public policy on maintaining public health in coordination with the Ministry of Health without seeking any financial profit.

Another mode of practice which opened up new horizons was *Vefa Social Support Groups* made up of real and legal entities from the different segments of public-civilian-private sectors in coordination with governorates and district governors, working to provide for those older than 65 years of age and with chronic illnesses that are not allowed to go out. These groups consisting of the police force, gendarmerie, neighborhood wardens, AFAD (Disaster and Emergency Management) officials, Turkish Red Crescent (Kızılay) officials, municipality personnel, teachers, imams and civil society representatives provided a significant example and vision of institutional coordination for the establishment, reinforcement of the sociological network in society and the healthy operation of social cooperation. From this perspective, it was a concrete example of the governance model whose theoretical framework is outlined above. The data published by the Ministry of Interior demonstrated that Vefa Social Support Group received a total of 7.132.453 phone calls from March 22, 2020, when they started their activities to May 13 and these social support groups responded to the needs 6.694.461 people (Ministry of Interior, 14 May 2020).

Another significant act of institutional coordination was that Turkish citizens brought from abroad in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were offered accommodation in the dormitories of Student Loans and Dormitories Institution under the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Based on the data announced by Mehmet Muharrem Kasapoğlu, Minister of Youth and Sports, a total of 77.441 people have been lodged in dormitories in 76 provinces



since the start of the quarantine. Also, the healthcare staff and the staff of the Ministry of Justice are lodged in the Ministry's dormitories as well as the patients in dormitories identified as *Social Isolation and Observation Centre* under the direction of Provincial Health Directorates. Based on the announced data 1294 are currently staying in 29 dormitory directorates identified as Social Isolation and Observation Centres in 20 provinces (Ahaber, 23 May 2020).

Another important chapter in the process was the special interest shown to old people's homes and nursery homes both private and affiliated with the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services. Indeed, considering the dramatic death rates from Western countries as a result of the size of the elderly population and inefficiencies in the social protective policies, this process was a clear confirmation that Turkey has a sounder institutional infrastructure and administrative processes. For instance, a systematic precaution and protection policy was followed against coronavirus in all 426 old people's homes, public and private, where 27.500 old people are staying. Furthermore, steps to ensure income security for citizens, policies to maintain security and hygiene in workplaces as well as preventive measures in childcare institutions were put into practice in coordination and collaboration with the Social Security Institution, the Ministry of Health and all relevant NGOs (Toklucu and Baygeldi, 2020).

The major unifying factor in the entire institutional system along with the social solidarity and collaboration -as in all other processes- was the civil society. The active roles of NGOs as structures that have close links to the target groups due to their work practices and are therefore familiar with their needs not only helped to handle the situation as a whole, but also, as we discussed, became evident as the practical application of an effective public-civil society collaboration. NGOs became visible as structures functioning in a wide variety of contexts including transparency and appropriacy in information, local solidarity networks, social and technological initiatives, special mergers for the disadvantaged communities. For instance, the *Molecular Biology Association* established a "coronavirus emergency action team" and announced that it had equipped the laboratories with devices necessary for the application of more than 50 tests a week. In the context of the virus, temporary mergers were formed in order to identify the disadvantaged groups (healthcare professionals, employees, elderly people, refugees and prisoners) and propose policies in specific areas. Apart from its own institutional aid organization - which, based on their own data, ran a large scale aid campaign which helped 312.716 people in two month in the course of the process- (İHH, 2020), İHH and the youth unit acted in coordination with Vefa Social Support Groups with its entire organizational structure throughout Turkey to help coordinate the identification and aid efforts in the field. Again, the *Deep Poverty Network* founded for in this same process is a structure that finds and organize supporters for families that have lost their jobs, their securities or those that cannot work in the process. From an innovative and scientific perspective, an entity called *Coronathon Turkey Initiative* -among its shareholders are the

Ministry of Science and Technology, Turkish Informatics Foundation, TOBB (The Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges), Boğaziçi University, Middle East Technical University and Istanbul Technical University- was established as a structure that involves a coordination model directed at the technological and innovative path that Turkey follows both in the pandemic process and in the future.

It is also worthy of emphasis that the relatively young public institutions that function as soft power in the Turkish public diplomacy and foreign policy also joined the efforts of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Health and participated in the administrative action in the pandemic. In this context, while Turkish citizen living abroad were provided with any help they need with the *Diaspora COVID-19 Support and Coordination Program* initiated by Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB), NGOs were actively engaged in the efforts to aid those in need and in the production of healthcare equipment for healthcare professionals (YTB, 2020). As examples to flexible public structuring, these institution demonstrate appropriate and active execution of governance without, in this context, being burdened by the weight and ponderousness of bureaucracy.

The last important piece of the governance model is the local authorities. When we examine the active roles and positions of local authorities -we described their theoretical framework above- in public policies from the perspective of this process, we can clearly see some of its significant examples. Within this scope, while some municipalities are working to support the citizens in need in a coordinated manner, online social activities are also provided to those at home who take advice of “stay home”. Some municipalities are running their crisis management operations in the Medical Centre that was formed under it as well as information, precautionary and preventive activities in collaboration with the public and civilian institutions. These municipalities also take the lead in important and acute public services including the production of masks and personal protective equipment for the healthcare professionals working in the vocational courses, transportation services for employees of pandemic hospitals in the relevant provinces, accommodation, food, laundry and provision of personal hygiene materials. In addition to this, they take on important role in the public support policy by turning their activities in youth centres into mental and psychosocial support programs (Marmara Association of Municipalities 2020). In other words, the actions of the municipalities in the field involve examples that are worthy of attention in that they produce effective and result-oriented practices for social service policies on a local scale and offer concrete practices of the philosophy of institutional politics that operate on the basis of coordination and a partnership mechanism.

Here, a specific institutional model must also be mentioned. Under supervision of the Municipality of Sultanbeyli and in cooperation with the District Governorate of Sultanbeyli, the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services and the NGOs that are actively working in the region, the *Refugees Association*

was found in 2014 for the purposes of mitigating the refugee problem in terms of public policies. The Association's principle of working in coordination with private corporations from different areas, other NGOs and public institutions was an important element that provided effective results in the field. So much so that, this is a structure that runs in the capacity of an institutional coordination centre by building a horizontal network between different organizations in areas which require variety of expertise including healthcare, social services, education, culture, law and employment. Today, it operates as a multipurpose civilian centre with 12 different units, thousands of volunteers and 155 professional employees including teachers, interpreters, trainers, physicians, healthcare and social support specialists, lawyers, economists, psychologists and sociologists (Refugees Association, 2020). What needs to be clearly identified here is that such a model of institutional structuring manifests itself as model that offers a hybrid set of advantages, as theoretically outlined in the analysis. In other words, this is a new type of institutional politics model where produces a synergy and dynamism that combines the flexibility of civil society and the infrastructural strength of the state without resorting to inefficiency or bureaucracy. Indeed, Turkey's recent experience of institutional politics as in the context of this specific model is becoming visible primarily in the case of refugees and secondly in the administrative processes in times of natural disasters and is gradually institutionalized.

## **Conclusion**

The importance of defining politics and political processes from the perspective of the institutional context is deepening simultaneously with the changes in content and form and becoming more permanent. The direction of such transformation is such that the legitimacy of the perspective of political and economic processes based on formal institutional philosophy and of the established institutional regulations and operations is collapsing. This is a new context of institutional politics characterized by a transition to an institutional culture based on democratic norms and inclusive of social dynamics and where the institutions emerge based on the distribution of political and socio-economic power in the society. And this is regarded as a setting in which democratic politics can settle and take root. And from an administrative perspective, the philosophy of policy-making is being replaced by a perspective of the institution redefined to include non-verbal habits, value judgments and social-institutional moral understanding, rather than a structuring based on formalism. The new hypothesis is that the institutions provide politics with a new meaning system. In this new setting, institutional transformation is defined as the product of the mutual interaction between the states and the society and internal transformation of institutions operate on this plane. Furthermore, this is a context where an external shock independent of these (disasters, war, economic crises, pandemics, famine etc) is capable of changing the paradigm of institutional politics entirely.

In this context, the structural transformation that the state undergoes as the central institutional agent is a product of this setting. Social movements that arise out of the failure of the welfare state shifted the framework of the functions and responsibilities of the state from the social to the political ground. And this would mean the minimization of the state's operational flexibility by means of pushing it to a static formalism with regard to the execution of institutional politics. The institution of state stuck within political processes and, to a larger extent, this process of political mobility which the institutional politics underwent created an effect which also undermined the trust in the democratic institutions in the West. Furthermore, the Western societies, who faced the inefficiencies of the new institutions in resolving social problems, now had their belief in democratic institutions and democratic institutional politics largely weakened.

And this process created a dynamic which, in essence, imposes and enforces the notion of institutional change. A notion of change that marks a new political philosophy which is more collaborative, more flexible, more social-oriented and value-oriented. The reflection of this on the administrative process is the increase in the influence of non-governmental structures on administrative processes, which can also be described as a network system within a multi-agent governance structure.

The case of Turkey points to a structural setting that, while not independent of the above description, cannot isolate itself from the exclusive realities created by its particular context. Essentially, this is a tension caused by the political intersection of traditional/conventional political setting and the new political setting which it transformed into. In other words, what we are discussing an institutional setting shaped by the conflict between the visions of "statist centre" and "social centre". One reason for this is that Turkey has a traditional context of politics where an administrative philosophy and practice based on civilian-military bureaucracy is dominant along with a kind of institutional oligarchy. The institutional structure reinforced with a succession of military coups that follow the transition to the multi-party system and constitutions drafted by the military which are the products of interim regimes was again the tutelage of this statist bureaucracy. At this point, in the course of the institutional transformation that has been taking place for some time now, the Presidential system, along with other reforms, can be considered as a new phase in terms of the mental paradigm shift regarding the structure of the executive body and the exploitation of all administrative capabilities based on sensitivities, efficiency and flexibility. Indeed, it is also possible to assert that the model of central structuring and the institutional model governing the relationship between the central and local governments are designed accordingly.

What this new setting of institutional politics stands for in the path underlined by the COVID-19 process is the model that is centered around two keywords: coordination and governance. In other words, one must analyze the parameters of the sociological network that operates via the institutions and its implications

on the political transformation. We are going through a period of coordination and governance that is shaped by, interinstitutional coordination as well as increased functionality on the part of local authorities, private sector and its affiliates, NGOs, institutions and development agencies with semi-public legal entities as subsidiary agents of a central state bureaucracy that will be implemented in public policies in a more flexible and dynamic way. The preliminary experience of this new setting of institutional politics was tested, deepened and institutionalized in the management of the refugee problem for the last ten years and, more recently, in the way the aftermath of the earthquake was handled. Within the context of this concrete practice as indicated by the COVID-19 and post-COVID-19 period in its entirety, Turkey's stand has been to designate the new administrative model characterized by coordination and governance as depicted above, as the main strategic path of institutional politics.

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