



Turkish-Style Carp Spiral: An Assessment of the Presidential Government System and Democracy

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Article Info

ISSN (online): 3107-3972

Volume: 02

Issue: 05

September–October 2025

Received: 07-07-2025

Accepted: 13-08-2025

Published: 05-09-2025

Page No: 08-14

Abstract

Throughout history, the concept of democracy has been discussed not only as a form of government but also as a guarantee of political legitimacy, freedoms, and the rule of law. The limitation of power, the active participation of citizens in governance, and the accountability of public authority are among the fundamental principles of democracy. In this sense, democracy has evolved continuously from the direct participation models of Ancient Greece to today's representative democracies, reshaped in each period by social conditions, economic structures, and political cultures. Today, the democratic order goes beyond the understanding of majority rule limited to elections and gains meaning through institutional balance, accountability, and transparency. Democracy has historically been shaped as a system in which power is constrained and legitimacy is derived from popular participation. While direct democracy in Ancient Greece eventually evolved into representative democracy, this study examines the historical development of the concept of democracy and its reflections in Turkey, particularly within the framework of the Presidential Government System adopted in 2017. By analyzing the budget process, the effectiveness of parliament, the use of public resources, and the principles of accountability, the study reveals the aspects of power concentration that conflict with democracy. Consequently, the system established after 2017 is evaluated through the metaphor of the "Turkish-Style Carp Spiral." The article emphasizes the importance of limiting mechanisms for strengthening democratic principles. The adoption of the Presidential Government System in Turkey represents not merely a constitutional amendment but also a profound transformation in terms of power distribution, oversight mechanisms, and the balance of political representation. The centralization of the executive, the restriction of parliamentary oversight, and the monopolization in managing public resources have generated a controversial structure regarding democratic accountability. In this context, the metaphor "Turkish-Style Carp Spiral" symbolizes the cyclical problems produced within the system itself, the structural deadlocks nourished by lack of oversight, and its tense relationship with democracy. Through this metaphor, the study questions the extent to which a governance model centered on executive authority is compatible with democracy, arguing that institutional balance and control mechanisms must be reinforced to ensure democratic stability.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54660/GMPJ.2025.2.5.08-14>

Keywords: Democracy, Presidential Government System, Budget, Parliament, Public Resources, Carp Spiral.

1. Introduction

The term democracy originates from the Greek words *demos* (people) and *kratos* (power/sovereignty), denoting the right of the people to govern themselves. The model of direct democracy first introduced in Athens in the 5th century BC envisaged the direct participation of citizens in decision-making processes. However, as populations grew, states expanded, and social relations became increasingly complex, direct democracy became impracticable and was replaced by representative democracy (Held, 2006) ^[12]. Representative democracy evolved as a model that reflects the will of citizens through elected representatives and

accommodates the complex structure of modern states. This transformation also brought forward the notion of shared sovereignty and the limitation of political power. Throughout history, democracy has been positioned not only as a form of government but also as a source of political legitimacy, an instrument of social participation, and a guarantee of the rule of law. According to Dahl (1989) ^[3], the essence of democracy lies in citizens' equal right to participate in political decision-making and the accountability of those who govern. Tocqueville (2006) ^[29], on the other hand, defines democracy not merely as an institutional structure but as a way of life that permeates all layers of society. In this context, democracy goes beyond the regular conduct of elections, encompassing freedom of expression, the empowerment of civil society, an independent judiciary, and media freedom. In the modern era, the theoretical framework of democracy has been enriched particularly by the debates of the 20th century. Schumpeter (1942) ^[26] viewed democracy as a competitive selection of elites, emphasizing that citizens elect decision-makers rather than policies. Habermas (1996) ^[10] linked democratic legitimacy to rational communication and deliberative reasoning in the public sphere. Hence, in contemporary democracies, the critical question is not only how governments are elected but also how their powers are constrained, to what extent they are held accountable, and through which mechanisms citizens participate in governance. The understanding of democracy in Turkey began to take shape through constitutional experiments in the late Ottoman period. The 1876 Kanun-i Esasi (First Constitution) marked a significant turning point by transferring sovereignty from absolute monarchy to a limited parliament. With the proclamation of the Republic in 1923, a new political regime based on popular sovereignty was established; however, it functioned under a single-party rule for a long period. The transition to a multi-party system in 1946 was considered a major milestone in democratization, yet subsequent military interventions (1960, 1971, 1980) disrupted the development of democratic institutions (Özbudun, 2015) ^[21]. The 1982 Constitution institutionalized a strong executive and weak legislature, undermining the system of checks and balances. During the 2000s, Turkey undertook significant reforms in pursuit of democratization, driven by the European Union accession process, the expansion of civil politics, and the search for economic stability. However, after 2010, regression in judicial independence, media freedom, and parliamentary oversight raised concerns about the quality of democracy (Esen & Gümüşçü, 2020) ^[6]. Within this process, the adoption of the Presidential Government System in 2017 introduced a structural transformation in Turkey's political landscape. The Presidential Government System replaced the parliamentary model and stipulated that the executive power be directly elected by the people, with extensive authority vested in the President. Supporters of this model argue that it ensures efficient decision-making and governmental stability, while critics emphasize the weakening of the separation of powers, the diminished supervisory capacity of the legislature, and the limited accountability of the executive (Turan, 2019) ^[30]. The reduced parliamentary control over the budget, the expansion of regulatory authority through presidential decrees, and the relative weakening of the legislature's law-making function raise serious questions about the system's compatibility with democratic balance. The budget process represents one of the most fundamental tools of democratic oversight. Historically,

parliaments have been vested with the authority to approve executive spending and revenue policies, thereby exercising control over fiscal balance on behalf of the people (Schick, 2007) ^[25]. In Turkey, following the introduction of the Presidential Government System, the transfer of budgetary authority from the legislature to the executive has reduced the effectiveness of parliament and weakened democratic accountability in terms of fiscal transparency (Eren, 2021) ^[5]. This contradicts the principles of participation and oversight emphasized in Dahl's (1989) ^[3] concept of polyarchal democracy. In this respect, the relationship between Turkey's new system and democracy is not only institutional but also cultural. As Tocqueville (2006) ^[29] highlighted, democracy thrives through a culture of civic participation. If a political system weakens critical oversight mechanisms and concentrates decision-making in a single center, it undermines the very spirit of democracy. The model referred to as "Turkish-style presidentialism" has, in practice, established an executive-centered structure that restricts the parliament's legislative and supervisory functions. The aim of this study is to examine the historical background of democracy in Turkey, to analyze the role of the budget process within the democratic system, and to discuss the impact of the Presidential Government System-implemented after 2017-on the democratic order. Accordingly, the study assumes that democracy is not merely a form of governance but a control mechanism built upon the principles of balance and accountability. Through the metaphor of the "Turkish-Style Carp Spiral," the article analyzes the cyclical accumulation of power, institutional blockages, and fractures in democratic functioning that have emerged with the centralization of executive authority. In brief, the institutional transformation brought about by the Presidential Government System introduces both new opportunities and new risks for Turkey's democratic journey. Reinstating the principle of separation of powers, restoring parliamentary control over the budget, and enhancing institutional transparency are vital for reestablishing democratic legitimacy. The study ultimately emphasizes the necessity of returning to democracy's core principle of balance and constraint, underlining the need for institutional reconstruction in Turkey's democratization process.

2. The Historical Background of Democracy

The historical evolution of democracy represents not only the institutionalization of popular sovereignty but also the struggle to limit political power, establish mechanisms of oversight, and safeguard individual liberties. In this process, the emergence of constitutional governance in the West and the emphasis on justice and virtue-based leadership in Eastern political thought together formed two complementary axes. Throughout history, the quest to constrain absolute power has manifested both in Europe's constitutional struggles against monarchies and in the Islamic political tradition's focus on justice and meritocracy (Bobbio, 1990) ^[2]. One of the most significant milestones in the history of modern democracy was the Magna Carta Libertatum, signed by King John of England in 1215. The Magna Carta is regarded as the first written document to restrict the powers of a monarch, establishing the rule of law in opposition to arbitrary authority (Vincent, 2012) ^[31]. With this document, the king ceased to be an absolute ruler and became subject to the law and the oversight of consultative institutions. It also affirmed fundamental principles such as the protection of

property rights, fair trial, and representation in taxation, laying the foundations for the parliamentary system that would emerge in later centuries. One of the Magna Carta's most notable features was its stipulation that the king could not decide unilaterally on matters of taxation and expenditure. This provision required the use of fiscal authority through representatives of the people, paving the way for the birth of parliament (Schick, 2007) ^[25]. Over time, parliaments assumed the role of monitoring government spending, approving budget balances, and constraining the executive's use of public resources. Thus, the power of the purse became the most tangible expression of popular sovereignty. The Glorious Revolution of 1688 in England strengthened constitutional monarchy and institutionalized the parliamentary system. The Bill of Rights of 1689 affirmed the supremacy of parliament and made executive financial powers subject to legislative approval (O'Gorman, 1997) ^[20]. As a result, the budget right evolved into not only a fiscal instrument but also a mechanism of political oversight. This turning point in the history of democracy gave institutional form to the principle of "no taxation without representation." While constitutional developments accelerated in Britain, the idea of popular sovereignty also gained prominence in continental Europe. Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748) ^[17] provided the theoretical foundation for the principle of separation of powers, defining the institutional framework of democracy. The balance and mutual oversight between legislative, executive, and judicial branches were established as essential safeguards against arbitrary rule (Montesquieu, 2001) ^[17]. This principle found constitutional expression in the American Declaration of Independence (1776) and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789), embedding the notion that sovereignty resides with the people (Arblaster, 1994) ^[1]. While Western constitutionalism advanced through legal and institutional limitations, Eastern political philosophy emphasized governance based on justice, merit, and virtue. In his 11th-century work *Siyasetname* (The Book of Government), Nizamülmülk stressed that rulers must govern justly, consult with others, and avoid the arbitrary use of power (Nizamülmülk, 2018) ^[18]. For him, justice was the pillar of the state, and merit was the guarantee of administrative stability. This view grounded the limitation of power in moral and conscientious principles. Similarly, Farabi, in *Al-Madina al-Fadila* (The Virtuous City), argued that a virtuous society should be governed by a wise and just ruler, warning that the system would decay when rulers drifted away from wisdom and virtue (Farabi, 2003) ^[7]. Ibn Khaldun, in his *Muqaddimah*, analyzed the rise and fall of states and asserted that the concentration of power inevitably leads to the decline of societies (İbn Haldun, 2016). These perspectives indicate that in Eastern thought, the limitation of authority rested not on institutional checks but on ethical and religious principles. From a historical perspective, both Western and Eastern traditions acknowledged the necessity of limiting power, yet differed in method. In the West, constraints were institutional and legal; in the East, they were moral and societal. Consequently, the modern concept of the constitutional state emerged at the intersection of these traditions-built on both normative and ethical foundations (Kymlicka, 2002) ^[16]. During the 18th and 19th centuries, processes of industrialization, urbanization, and the rise of the bourgeoisie expanded political representation, extending suffrage gradually to broader segments of society. The Reform Acts

in England (1832, 1867, 1884), the establishment of the Third Republic in France (1870), and the constitutional transformations in Germany institutionalized popular participation through representation (Held, 2006) ^[12]. In this period, the concept of the constitutional state came to signify a governance model in which authority was restrained by the will of the people. The Ottoman Empire was also influenced by this global trend of reform during the 19th century. The Tanzimat Edict of 1839 and the Islahat Edict of 1856 represented major steps toward limiting arbitrary rule. Eventually, the 1876 Kanun-i Esasi introduced the concept of constitutional monarchy into the Ottoman context, curbing the powers of the Sultan to some degree (Findley, 2010) ^[8]. Although short-lived, this development marked the beginning of Turkey's modern constitutional and parliamentary experience. In the modern era, the power of the purse-the right to approve budgets-has become one of the clearest indicators of popular sovereignty. The budget determines the revenue and expenditure boundaries of the executive, thereby constraining the use of public authority. Legislative approval of the budget ensures public scrutiny over fiscal policy (Schick, 2007) ^[25]. Thus, the budget right is not merely a fiscal tool but also a political right. Initially, rulers were expected to be restrained by moral and conscientious boundaries; however, this understanding proved inadequate in the modern state. The Industrial Revolution, the increasing complexity of social relations, the diversification of economic interest groups, and the expansion of bureaucracy made institutional checks on power indispensable (Held, 2006) ^[12]. In contemporary democracies, control must rest not on personal virtue but on constitutional institutions, laws, independent judiciaries, and accountability mechanisms. In conclusion, the historical development of democracy-from the Magna Carta to modern parliaments-reveals that the primary objective has always been to limit power and ensure popular participation. A common principle unites Nizamülmülk's *Siyasetname*, Farabi's *Al-Madina al-Fadila*, and Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws*: where power is not limited, justice, freedom, and legitimacy cannot survive. Modern democratic systems, as inheritors of this legacy, are structured upon both institutional and normative constraints.

3. Budget and Parliament in Turkey

In democratic systems, the budget is not merely a financial planning instrument; it is also a fundamental mechanism for limiting government authority, ensuring the legitimate use of public resources, and holding the executive accountable on behalf of society. Historically, the right to the budget is grounded in the principle that public revenues and expenditures must be determined through the representatives of the people. As an extension of the maxim "no taxation without representation," this principle has evolved into a cornerstone of democratic oversight (Schick, 2007) ^[25]. Through this right, parliaments supervise the financial power of the executive, approving how, where, and for what purposes public resources are used-thereby safeguarding the interests of citizens. In theory, the budget in Turkey serves as an instrument to constrain the revenues and expenditures of the executive. However, in practice, it has increasingly lost its function. Following the transition to the Presidential Government System, the budget has transformed from an oversight mechanism into a mere informational document. This shift has diminished the effectiveness of the legislature

and expanded the discretionary fiscal authority of the executive. After the 2017 constitutional amendment, the relationship between the executive and the legislature was redefined: the President now submits the budget directly to the Parliament (Grand National Assembly of Turkey – GNAT), and if the budget fails to receive approval, the previous year’s budget automatically remains in force (Eren, 2021)^[5]. This provision has rendered the legislature’s final authority over the budget largely symbolic. In effect, the executive can continue to implement its fiscal agenda even if Parliament rejects it, thereby turning the budget process from a political act of approval into an administrative formality (Turan, 2019)^[30]. As a result, the legislature’s position vis-à-vis the executive has weakened, and the principle of separation of powers has become contentious in fiscal terms. The democratic nature of the budget process is measured not merely by technical calculations but by transparency, oversight, and accountability. In Turkey, the fact that Court of Accounts (Sayıştay) reports are seldom debated in Parliament, budget discussions are confined to limited time frames, and most fiscal data are controlled by the executive, has severely narrowed the legislature’s capacity for financial supervision (OECD, 2022). Consequently, Turkey has drifted away from the strong parliamentary budgetary authority once granted under the 1924 Constitution, toward a system where fiscal dominance rests increasingly with the executive. A notable indicator of fiscal indiscipline is the discrepancy between the Central Bank’s inflation targets and the government’s revaluation rates. The decoupling of inflation dynamics from fiscal planning undermines predictability and grants the executive wide latitude to make arbitrary financial decisions. For instance, while tax revenues in 2023 totaled approximately 4.5 trillion TRY, projections for 2025 foresee an increase to 12.5 trillion TRY (Ministry of Treasury and Finance, 2024). This figure exceeds nominal growth trends, highlighting rapid fiscal expansion and the growing influence of public spending on macroeconomic stability. Thus, fiscal discipline must be ensured not only through proportional indicators but also through absolute limits on spending and borrowing. Moreover, much of the increase in tax revenue stems from indirect taxes, which exacerbate income inequality by disproportionately burdening lower- and middle-income households (Eğilmez, 2023)^[4]. As a result, the distributive justice dimension of the budget has weakened, and the democratic legitimacy of the fiscal system has been called into question. The Parliament’s passive stance in this process has allowed the executive to exercise taxation authority in a manner inconsistent with the principle of popular representation. The expansion of executive powers under the Presidential Government System has weakened parliamentary oversight not only over the budgetary process but also in areas such as public borrowing and fund management. A substantial portion of public resources is now managed through off-budget funds, sovereign wealth funds, and special accounts, bypassing direct parliamentary scrutiny (Esen & Gümüştü, 2020)^[6]. Entities such as the Turkey Wealth Fund (TWF) have further centralized fiscal authority under the executive, positioning key financial decisions outside the democratic control chain. The significance of the budgetary right for democratic legitimacy extends beyond legislative-executive relations. It also determines the degree of citizen influence over economic choices. In democratic

societies, citizens indirectly shape how taxes are collected, where expenditures are directed, and how public services are distributed. In Turkey, however, these mechanisms have largely been absorbed by technocratic decision-making processes, with budgetary priorities reflecting the executive’s preferences rather than those of elected representatives (Eren, 2021)^[5]. Historically, parliamentary control over the budget was considerably stronger during the periods of the 1924 and 1961 Constitutions. The legislature had the power to examine executive revenues and expenditures in detail and even to reject them when necessary. However, the 1982 Constitution weakened this balance by granting the executive extensive powers under states of emergency and decree-laws (Özbudun, 2015)^[21]. The 2017 amendments further institutionalized this trend by enabling the President to issue decrees on economic matters, effectively sidelining parliamentary decision-making. Consequently, the legislature’s role in fiscal regulation has been reduced to that of a rubber-stamp institution. International comparisons also reveal Turkey’s regression in fiscal transparency. According to the IMF’s Fiscal Transparency Evaluation (2023), Turkey lags behind the OECD average in publishing budget documents and monitoring expenditures. Similarly, the Open Budget Index shows that Turkey’s transparency score fell from 68 in 2012 to 45 in 2021 (IBP, 2021). This indicates that Parliament has been marginalized not only in the budgeting process but also in the broader framework of fiscal accountability. Fiscal sovereignty represents the economic dimension of democracy. If elected representatives cannot supervise public expenditures and the executive unilaterally determines fiscal policy, the principle of “fiscal democracy” becomes undermined (Streeck, 2014)^[27]. In recent years, rising budget deficits, fund-based expenditures, and unpredictable tax policies in Turkey point to a structural governance problem rooted in inadequate parliamentary oversight. Under these circumstances, the budget has shifted from a democratic oversight tool to a technical document reflecting the executive’s policy choices. In democratic regimes, the budget is not merely a numerical plan but a social contract between the state and citizens-built on the principle of “services in return for taxation.” When the legislature’s mediating role in this contract is weakened, the executive tends to use public resources without sufficient restraint. Hence, revitalizing democracy in Turkey requires the restoration of budgetary authority to Parliament. A transparent, accountable, and participatory budget process would reconnect fiscal sovereignty with the will of the people. In summary, under the Presidential Government System, the budget process has lost its democratic function due to the dominance of the executive. Parliament has ceased to operate as a fiscal oversight body, while the power of the purse has effectively been transferred to the discretion of the executive. Increasing public expenditures, unpredictable tax regimes, and the proliferation of extra-budgetary funds have all eroded the democratic nature of the fiscal system. Ultimately, democracy is sustained not only through elections but through the public scrutiny of every penny spent in the people’s name. Reestablishing Turkey’s democratic foundation therefore necessitates the constitutional and institutional reinstatement of Parliament’s budgetary authority.

4. The Presidential Government System and Democratic Challenges

The 2017 constitutional referendum, which introduced the Presidential Government System, brought about a profound transformation in Turkey's political regime. The transition from a parliamentary system to an executive-centered structure significantly altered the balance and oversight relations among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. In particular, the expansion of executive authority, the weakening of parliamentary oversight, and the erosion of institutional transparency in decision-making processes have raised serious concerns regarding the core principles of democracy (Esen & Gümüşçü, 2020) ^[6]. The Presidential Government System was theoretically justified on the grounds of ensuring stability and efficient governance. In practice, however, the system's detachment of the executive from institutional checks has led to the erosion of the separation of powers. With the 2017 constitutional amendments, the President was granted extensive powers, including the appointment of ministers, the establishment of public institutions, the issuance of presidential decrees, the preparation of the budget, and the declaration of states of emergency (Turan, 2019) ^[30]. These powers transformed the executive from a mere implementing body into one that shares legislative authority *de facto*. Through decree-laws and presidential decrees, the executive has effectively appropriated part of the legislature's law-making capacity, relegating the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (GNAT) to an institution that merely endorses executive actions. Consequently, the Parliament's law-making ability has become contingent upon executive priorities, while deliberative legislative culture has weakened. Although presidential decrees are not meant to regulate matters concerning fundamental rights and freedoms, in practice, numerous decrees have addressed such areas, expanding executive authority at the expense of the legislature (Eren, 2021) ^[5]. This trend undermines Montesquieu's (2001) ^[17] principle that "power must check power." To enhance the Parliament's effectiveness, it would be appropriate to reform budget deliberations so that members of parliament can propose alternative scenarios, evaluate ministerial budgets individually, and apply efficiency criteria. Public expenditures must be audited not only for legal compliance but also for performance and cost-effectiveness. Projects implemented under the Build-Lease-Transfer model exemplify the long-term fiscal burdens created by the lack of such oversight. These projects often impose substantial future financial obligations on the state, yet they remain largely beyond parliamentary control (Sayıştay, 2022). This situation allows the executive to shape fiscal decisions autonomously, disconnected from long-term planning and democratic scrutiny. The reduced role of the legislature in the Presidential Government System is not limited to the contraction of its legal authority—it has also affected political representation. In parliamentary systems, the executive is derived from and accountable to the parliamentary majority. In contrast, under the current system, the President is directly elected by the people, which in practice diminishes parliamentary accountability over the executive (Özbudun, 2020) ^[22]. Although the model claims to embody direct representation of the people's will, it simultaneously weakens institutional mechanisms of representation. In democratic regimes, the legislature's primary function is not only law-making but also the oversight of executive conduct. Such

oversight is exercised through instruments like parliamentary inquiries, interpellations, investigation commissions, and budget reviews. However, under the Presidential Government System, motions of no confidence have been abolished, oral questions have been curtailed, and written inquiries are seldom answered (TBMM, 2023). As a result, the executive's accountability to Parliament has been effectively eliminated. Furthermore, the judicial review of presidential decrees is confined to the Constitutional Court, which renders the process both lengthy and limited in effect. In annulment cases, the executive's superior control over administrative resources further constrains legislative influence (Gözler, 2018) ^[9]. Within this framework, the separation of powers has been replaced by a concentration of powers favoring the executive. Another critical issue in the current system is the weakening of accountability mechanisms. In democracies, the executive must be financially and politically accountable to both Parliament and the public. When the executive becomes overly centralized and independent oversight bodies lose functionality, accountability deteriorates (Schedler, 1999) ^[24]. In Turkey, although institutions such as the Court of Accounts, the Ombudsman Institution, and the Parliamentary Budget Committee formally exist, they have drifted away from their oversight roles (OECD, 2022). The lack of transparency and accountability in public spending undermines democracy's fiscal dimension. Large-scale infrastructure investments conducted under Build-Operate-Transfer and Build-Lease-Transfer models impose long-term fiscal burdens on the public budget. Although such projects appear to preserve fiscal discipline by being financed off-budget, they generate severe intertemporal liabilities that will strain future budgets (Egilmez, 2023) ^[4]. As these expenditures fall outside Parliament's purview, the efficiency and fairness of taxpayer-funded projects become unassessable. Restructuring the budgetary oversight process is crucial for restoring democratic control. Reforms may include the introduction of alternative fiscal scenarios, individual evaluations of ministerial budgets, performance-based analyses, and the binding consideration of Court of Accounts reports (Eren, 2021) ^[5]. Additionally, establishing an independent Budget Office within Parliament could provide legislators with technical expertise to verify the accuracy of executive data—similar to the U.S. Congressional Budget Office (CBO). Such a body would enhance Parliament's capacity for evidence-based policymaking. Although the Presidential Government System was intended to strengthen political stability, it has disrupted institutional balance. The diminishing oversight capacity of the legislature poses a significant risk to democratic legitimacy. In a democracy, executive power should serve the will of the people; however, in Turkey, this power has increasingly expanded beyond institutional constraints. This trajectory conflicts with Dahl's (1989) ^[3] concept of pluralist democracy, which emphasizes balance and control. Thus, the Presidential Government System has fundamentally distorted the balance of power between the executive and the legislature. By issuing decrees, the executive has intruded into the legislative domain, while Parliament has been relegated to a symbolic representative body. For the system to function effectively, parliamentary oversight mechanisms must be revitalized, budget participation broadened, and public expenditures evaluated based on efficiency criteria. Otherwise, democratic legitimacy will remain confined to electoral formalities, and

democracy will lose its substantive values.

5. Conclusion and Evaluation

Democracy represents a system of governance in which power is distributed and constrained. However, since 2017, the concentration of power in a single executive authority, the loss of the budget's oversight function, the weakening of Parliament, and the failure to evaluate public expenditures based on efficiency have created a political structure incompatible with democratic principles. For this reason, the Presidential Government System in Turkey can be characterized through the metaphor of the "Turkish-Style Carp Spiral." For democratic development, it is essential to establish mechanisms that limit power, align public revenues and expenditures with inflation targets, strengthen the role of Parliament in the budget process, and institutionalize efficiency criteria in public spending. The fundamental feature of democratic regimes is the existence of checks and balances that prevent the unrestricted exercise of authority. As Montesquieu (2001) ^[17] stated, "Only power can stop power." Thus, the mutual control among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches is vital to prevent arbitrary rule. With the implementation of the Presidential Government System, the centralization of executive authority, the weakening of legislative oversight mechanisms, and the symbolic reduction of budgetary powers have undermined the essence of the separation of powers (Esen & Gümüççü, 2020) ^[6]. For democracy to function effectively, it is not enough merely to hold regular elections; the post-electoral accountability of those in power is equally crucial (Dahl, 1989) ^[3]. Although Turkey's current system allows the people to elect the executive directly, it has removed the executive's responsibility toward Parliament, thereby reducing democratic legitimacy to a formal electoral process. As a result, accountability, transparency, and institutional balance have weakened. One of the most striking outcomes of the new system has been the loss of the budget's supervisory role. The Parliament's function in the fiscal process has been reduced to providing information, while the executive's ability to re-enact the previous year's budget in the event of rejection has shifted fiscal equilibrium in favor of the presidency (Eren, 2021) ^[5]. This development effectively nullifies the democratic principle of "no taxation without representation." Furthermore, declining fiscal transparency, the disregard of independent audit reports, and the diminishing influence of the Court of Accounts (Sayıştay) have allowed the executive to exercise unilateral control over the fiscal domain. The metaphor "Turkish-Style Carp Spiral" symbolically encapsulates this structural transformation. Just as a carp bites its own tail, creating a self-perpetuating loop, the Turkish governance model has evolved into a self-contained, oversight-resistant, and internally inconsistent system. Each reform, rather than resolving prior deficiencies, has given rise to new ones-producing a cycle of recurring crises that sustains itself through institutional dysfunction. This circular pattern constitutes a structural barrier to democratic maturity.

Breaking free from this spiral requires comprehensive transformation in three main areas:

1. Restoring budgetary authority and fiscal oversight mechanisms: Parliament's supervisory power over public expenditures must extend beyond budget approval to encompass implementation and evaluation. Reports issued by the Court of Accounts should carry binding

weight in parliamentary deliberations, while the Budget and Planning Committee should be granted expanded powers. Introducing a mandatory consultation process before executive fiscal decisions would also strengthen institutional control (OECD, 2022).

2. Strengthening parliamentary oversight tools: Mechanisms such as parliamentary questions, investigation commissions, and mandatory reporting on extra-budgetary funds should be revitalized to enhance legislative influence. Establishing an independent Budget and Policy Analysis Office, akin to the U.S. Congressional Budget Office (CBO), would provide Parliament with technical expertise to verify government data and scrutinize executive fiscal policies based on empirical evidence (Eren, 2021) ^[5].
3. Institutionalizing efficiency and performance auditing in public spending: Public investments should be assessed not only for legal compliance but also for cost-effectiveness, sustainability, and social benefit. The lack of transparency regarding the long-term fiscal commitments of Build-Lease-Transfer projects risks mortgaging the economic resources of future generations (Sayıştay, 2022) ^[23]. Making parliamentary approval mandatory for such projects would create an institutional safeguard against executive discretion.

The concept of democratic governance treats accountability not merely as a legal obligation but as an ethical responsibility (Schedler, 1999) ^[24]. Democratic progress in Turkey depends on ensuring that executive decisions are made in accordance with transparency and public openness. For democracy to gain legitimacy, decisions must be justified not only legally but also in terms of public conscience. Otherwise, democracy risks becoming a ritual confined to election day, devoid of substantive participation. One of the key paradoxes of the Presidential Government System is that a centralized administration, established in the name of efficiency, ultimately breeds inefficiency. When swift decision-making bypasses institutional coordination and political participation, policy errors become harder to correct. As Dahl (1989) ^[3] argued, the strength of democracy lies in decisions made slowly but legitimately. When the balance between efficiency and oversight collapses, governance becomes rapid in the short term but unstable in the long run. In conclusion, the post-2017 governance model has confronted Turkey with significant democratic challenges. The detachment of the budget from parliamentary oversight, the expansion of executive decree powers, the limited scope of judicial review, and the absence of efficiency-based evaluation in public spending have created an administrative structure misaligned with democracy. The "Turkish-Style Carp Spiral" thus represents a governance cycle sustained by power accumulation and lack of oversight.

To overcome this spiral, Turkey must embrace the following principles:

1. Institutionalizing fiscal discipline: Public revenues and expenditures should be aligned with inflation targets, and the medium-term fiscal framework should be granted legal enforceability.
2. Empowering Parliament: The budget process should be removed from the executive's sole initiative, enabling legislators to propose alternative fiscal scenarios and conduct program-based evaluations.
3. Performance and efficiency auditing: Public projects

must be reviewed not only for legal compliance but also for economic sustainability and social utility.

4. Institutional transparency: All public expenditures should be made accessible to citizens through open data platforms.
5. Strengthening independent oversight bodies: Institutions such as the Court of Accounts, the Ombudsman, and the judiciary must operate autonomously, free from executive influence.

Ultimately, Turkey's democratic future will be determined not by electoral outcomes alone but by how power is exercised, through which mechanisms it is limited, and how much voice citizens have in this process. Escaping the "Turkish-Style Carp Spiral" requires a governance model grounded in balanced powers, effective oversight, and fiscal responsibility anchored in public legitimacy.

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