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TURKEY IN THE LATE 1970'S: AN OVERVIEW OF TURKISH POLITICAL PAR--ETC(U)

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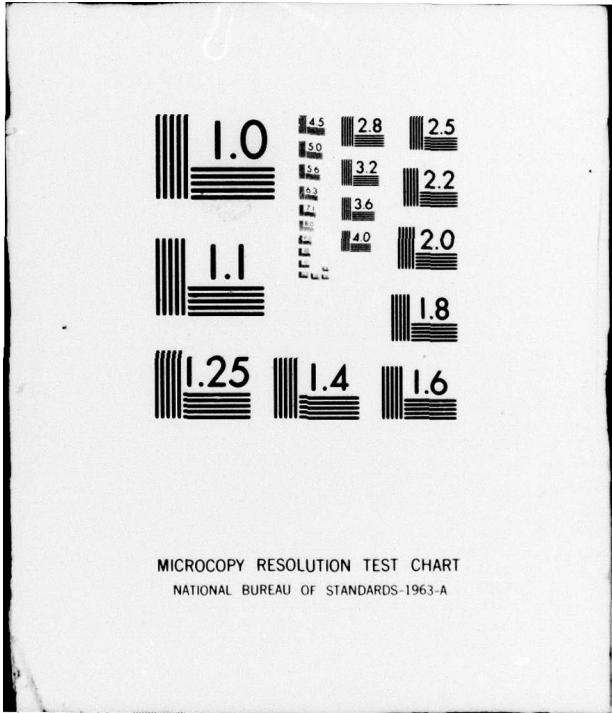
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6 Turkey in the late 1970's:

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AN OVERVIEW OF TURKISH POLITICAL PARTIES AND POLITICS

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Perhaps the quickest means of achieving deeper insight into political

patterns in a country like Turkey is to examine recent electoral statistics from the perspective of a dual hypothesis which, in turn, is based on observations of patterns of politics in Turkey and a number of other developing nations (e.g., Japan, Korea, India, Mexico). The hypothesis may be briefly stated as follows:

- 1) Voting turn-out tends to decline with rising levels of socio-economic development;
- 2) Support for more institutionalized political parties tends to increase with rising levels of socio-economic development.

It is inferred that the underlying causes of this association between voting behavior and levels of socio-economic development may be found in two contrasting patterns of voting behavior. On the one hand, less developed, more traditional constituencies appear to manifest a pattern of so-called "mobilized voting". By this we mean a situation in which masses of voters flock to the polls and cast ballots under the direct influence (either coercive or persuasive) of local notables upon whom they are dependent or to whom they defer for reasons of traditional status. By contrast, more developed, less traditional constituencies appear to manifest a pattern of so-called "autonomous voting." In this case, individual voters are less dependent on traditional notables or persons of influence; accordingly their voting behavior is not so easily controlled (they may choose not to vote at all; their choice among competing candidates and parties is more likely to be based on their own evaluations). These contrasting patterns of political behavior have also been associated with so-called vertical mobilization on the one hand, based on more traditional patron-client relationships, and horizontal mobilization on the other hand, based on class interest.

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It may also be noted that over time, traditional mobilized voting patterns manifest sudden sharp shifts from one party to another, while autonomous voting patterns appear to be more stable and enduring.

The tables presented at the Conference reflect these patterns to some extent. They show the electoral data for selected provinces in the 1973 general election and the 1975 partial Senate election. The provinces are grouped according to the State Planning Office's index of socio-economic development. Basically, the provinces are arranged in five equal groups. The 1973 figures show both the totals for the listed provinces, as well as totals for the entire group of provinces. This enables us to judge the degree to which the listed provinces reflect the voting patterns of their group. The table thus enables us to judge whether the above-stated hypothesis is confirmed by these data, as well as to note changes in voting patterns from 1973 to 1975. It should be noted further that not all parties are shown here; this is especially evident in the 1973 data (for some provinces, the data given represent only about 80% of the votes cast). Finally, although some changes in voting patterns are evident, aggregate statistics of this sort do not tell us very much about actual shifts in voting behavior of individual voters or groups of voters.

Substantively, the table shows no clear pattern of variation in voter turnout such as our hypothesis leads us to expect. (1969 data are much clearer in this respect.) It is notable, however, that the listed provinces do not deviate substantially from the groups to which they belong. For 1975, voter turn-out was reduced in all groups (though a few individual provinces recorded higher turn-outs); and there is a weak pattern in that the most developed Group I shows the lowest rate of turn-out while the least developed Group V shows the highest turn-out. In terms of distribution of votes among parties,

the 1975 vote differs sharply from 1973: the two large parties (JP and RPP) made substantial gains, generally running between 7 and 10% over 1973, in some cases even higher; combined total votes for the two large parties were also substantially higher than in 1973, running consistently at about 20% over 1973 in all groups of provinces; the DP (Demokratik Party) has shrunken dramatically in all provinces (including even Konya, home base of one of the party's prominent leaders), and notably in some provinces (e.g., Ankara, Bursa, Istanbul, Konya, Sakarya, Tekirdag, and Mugla) the amount of DP shrinkage virtually matched the amount of JP gain; the religiously-oriented NSP has survived, although reduced in over-all strength -- especially in provincial groups I and II -- while remaining competitive and even showing greater strength in several provinces (e.g., Elazig, Diyarbakir, Urfa, and Bingol); the rightwing NMP of Alparslan Turkes failed to ~~score~~ significant gains save in one province (Kayseri).

In short, the partial Senate elections of 1975 show a reduced level of partisan fragmentation with the two major parties scoring substantial gains at the expense of smaller parties (particularly the DP). The ~~DP~~ level of JP support appears to be returning to the level of the late 1960s, while RPP support is higher than perhaps at any time since the advent of multi-party politics in 1950. Although, as Professor Frey pointed out, it is risky to attempt to derive too many far-reaching conclusions from this relatively simple set of data, it should be noted that more detailed and refined analysis performed by our colleague, Professor Ergun Ozbudun, confirms our hypotheses for both the 1969 and 1973 elections (see his forthcoming book from Princeton University Press as well as a chapter in preparation for inclusion in a co-authored and co-edited volume on Electoral Politics in the Middle East; a preliminary version of that analysis may also be found in Ozbudun and Tachau, "Social Change and Electoral Behavior in Turkey," International Journal of Middle East Studies, Vol. VI, No. 4

[October 1975]). In sum, our analysis suggests that a "critical realignment" has occurred in the Turkish electorate such that the RPP has gained majority support in the more highly urbanized and modernized constituencies, while the JP appears to retain majority support in more highly modernized rural constituencies. While Frey suggests that the RPP should attempt to broaden its base of support among the poorest peasants in the less developed constituencies (particularly in the East), our analysis suggests instead that such an appeal can only succeed in the long run if either 1) the traditional patron-client relationships in those constituencies are substantially broken up; or 2) if the RPP dilutes its newly developed ideological stance on the "left of center." The former development will take time; the latter development would weaken the new sources of RPP strength in the urban areas, especially in the working-class districts. Thus, it is probably correct to say that the RPP may have reached at least a temporary peak of strength at around 40 - 45% of the votes; that the JP may also stabilize at approximately the same level; and that minor parties will continue to hold the balance of power. Polarization and instability therefore appear to remain as fixtures of the Turkish political landscape.

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