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## Democratization in the Middle East

Turkey-How Far from Consolidation?

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On 24 December 1995, Turkey held free and competitive elections for its 550-member, one-chamber parliament, the Grand National Assembly. Turnout was high. Five parties surpassed the 10 percent threshold needed to qualify for seats in parliament. The three biggest vote-getters were the Islamic-oriented Refah (Welfare) Party, with 21.4 percent and 158 seats, the center-right Motherland Party, with 19.7 percent and 133 seats, and the center-right True Path Party, with 19.2 percent and 135 seats. Intent on preventing Refah from forming a government, leaders of Motherland and True Path began intense negotiations. At the end of February 1996, after two months of talks, they announced the formation of a minority coalition government with the support of the Democratic Left Party (14.6 percent and 75 seats).

While the December 1995 balloting was the twelfth consecutive open election that Turkey has held over the last 45 years, the period since 1960 has also witnessed three military interruptions of the democratic process. Each time the military intervened—in 1960, 1971, and 1980—democracy was restored relatively quickly and smoothly, suggesting that the soldiers' intention on each occasion was a “moderating coup” rather than the creation of a lasting bureaucratic-authoritarian regime. Today, democratic discourses seem to be dominant, and there is little fear of an authoritarian regression. Yet few analysts would call Turkey a stable or consolidated democracy. The continuing elusiveness of consolidation, despite nearly half a century of multiparty politics, indicates a certain malaise and makes Turkey an interesting

case for comparative purposes. What are the factors that may help or harm **[End Page 123]** Turkey's prospects for democratic consolidation, and what light can recent theoretical and comparative reflection shed on them?

The interests of political scientists are naturally conditioned by the political environment in which they live. Thus during the “second reverse wave of democratization” (roughly from the early 1960s to the mid-1970s), they focused on the crises and breakdowns then besetting democratic regimes.<sup>1</sup> With the advent of the “third wave” of democratization (from the mid-1970s to the early 1990s), interest shifted to authoritarian breakdowns and transitions to democracy.<sup>2</sup> The focus now in the 1990s is clearly on the consolidation of democratic regimes; the trendy topic of the following decade is likely to be the “persistence” or “quality” of democracy, unless a third “reverse wave” comes along to command scholarly attention.

Democratic consolidation, to borrow Adam Przeworski's apt description, means that democracy “becomes the only game in town, when no one can imagine acting outside the democratic institutions, when all the losers want to do is to try again within the same institutions under which they have just lost.”<sup>3</sup> The concept of democratic consolidation admits both “maximalist” and “minimalist” understandings. The maximalist view emphasizes the embrace of democratic values by most citizens after a long socialization process, while the minimalist view stresses the mere absence of significant challenges to the legitimacy of democratic institutions—particularly the prevalence of free and competitive elections.<sup>4</sup>

Both approaches have problems. If the maximalist approach is carried to the extreme, no democratic regime can be considered truly consolidated. Nor does it square with historical realities, because “in no known case does there appear to have been a majority of democrats before the advent of political democracy.”<sup>5</sup> The minimalist approach, on the other hand, runs the risk of “electoralism,” or equating democratic consolidation simply with the holding of regular, competitive elections. Even a minimal procedural notion of democratic consolidation must include more—the superiority of democratically elected civilian authorities over nonelected (e.g., military) officials, for instance, as well as broad respect and effective guarantees for the basic civil liberties of all citizens.

As defined above, consolidation seems similar to political institutionalization (meaning a situation in which the formal and informal rules of the regime are widely understood and accepted, and thus heavily influence the behavior of the major political actors). This similarity, however, holds only to the extent that the institutionalized patterns of behavior are truly democratic. If they are not—for example, if nonelected authorities enjoy wide tutelary powers or reserved policy domains, or the basic rights of some sections of the population are routinely violated—institutionalization may be “perverse,” and harm **[End Page 124]** rather than help democratic consolidation. In short, political institutionalization is a necessary but not sufficient condition of democratic consolidation.

By the same token, neither can Samuel P. Huntington's "two-turnover test" of democratic consolidation be taken as conclusive.<sup>6</sup> This test is more meaningful in presidential and two-party parliamentary situations than in multiparty parliamentary systems like Turkey's, in which frequent changes in government do not necessarily spell democratic consolidation. Between 1973 and 1980, Turkey saw three changes of government, yet democratic consolidation advanced not a whit, as the collapse of democracy in 1980 amply showed.

Considerations like these suggest that there is a large gray area between the moment of completed democratic transition and that of democratic consolidation. Here, Guillermo O'Donnell's notion of "two transitions" is particularly useful:

The first is the transition from the previous authoritarian regime to the installation of a democratic government. The second transition is from this government to the consolidation of democracy or, in other words, to the effective functioning of a democratic regime. . . . The second transition will not be any less arduous nor any less lengthy; the paths that lead from a democratic government to a democratic regime are uncertain and complex, and the possibilities of authoritarian regression are numerous.  
**Z**

The difficulties of the second transition mean that many of the new democracies lie in this gray area. They range from *democraduras* to more or less functional but still not fully consolidated democracies. Turkey is one of many in the latter class.

## Political Institutionalization

Noting that "prior democratic experience is more conducive than none to the stabilization of third wave democracies," Huntington argues that "it may also be reasonable to hypothesize that a longer and more recent experience with democracy is more conducive to democratic consolidation than is a shorter and more distant one."<sup>8</sup> By this criterion, Turkey's half-century of democratic experience, though thrice interrupted, counts as a facilitating condition for democratic consolidation. Technically speaking, Turkey is not a "third wave" but a "second wave" democracy.

It may be argued that not only the lack of political institutionalization but also *excessive* institutionalization may constrain the prospects of democratic consolidation.<sup>9</sup> The Turkish Republic inherited from the Ottoman Empire a strong, centralized, and highly bureaucratic state. Indeed, the "output" structures of the state (the civil service, armed forces, police, and courts) have been so highly institutionalized that this **[End Page 125]** overdevelopment of the state machinery, coupled with the predominance of a "strong-state tradition" in Turkish political culture, may impede the emerging of more balanced relations between the state and civil society.<sup>10</sup>

This is not to say that all aspects of this overinstitutionalization work against democratic consolidation. Consider Turkey's strong and independent judiciary. The Constitutional Court that was created by the 1961 Constitution and maintained with minor modifications by the 1982 Constitution is one of Europe's strongest in terms of both its scope of competence and its independence. The Court has 15 full and alternate members; the president must choose appointees for 11 of these seats from a set of three candidates for each vacancy nominated by the other high courts and the universities. The president has a free hand in filling only the four remaining seats—three full and one alternate. The Court's judges enjoy security of tenure until they reach the mandatory retirement age of 65. The Court has generally pursued an activist line: of the 80 challenges to the constitutionality of laws that it heard between 1990 and 1995, it rendered a verdict of unconstitutionality 69 times. The Constitution also provides security of tenure and income for all other judges and public prosecutors. All personnel and disciplinary decisions regarding judges and public prosecutors belong to the Supreme Council of Judges and Public Prosecutors, which is composed primarily of judges nominated by the higher courts and appointed by the president.

Political parties, too, have long displayed a relatively high degree of institutionalization. Frederick Frey, commenting on Turkish politics in the 1950s, noted that "Turkish politics are party politics. . . . Within the power structure of Turkish society, the political party is the main unofficial link between the government and the larger, extragovernmental groups of people."<sup>11</sup>

Between 1946 and 1960, Turkey had a typical two-party system. The two main contenders were the Republican People's Party (RPP) and the Democratic Party (DP). In the 1961 elections following the first military intervention (during which the DP was banned), the former DP vote split three ways and no party obtained a majority. In the 1965 and 1969 elections, however, the Justice Party (JP), having established itself as the DP's main heir, was able to gain comfortable parliamentary majorities even though the number of parties represented in parliament kept rising. The 1973 elections, which followed the 1971 military intervention, again produced a fragmented parliament. So did the 1977 elections. In neither parliament did a single party hold a majority, though the RPP and the JP were the dominant groups. Their combined percentage of votes was 63 in 1973 and 79 in 1977. Because Turkey uses the D'Hondt version of proportional representation, which favors larger parties, these totals meant that together the RPP and the JP controlled almost three-quarters of the seats in 1973 and almost nine-tenths in 1977. **[End Page 126]**

The main characteristics (or "maladies") of the Turkish party system in the 1970s have been described as volatility, fragmentation, and ideological polarization.<sup>12</sup> Volatility took the form of sudden and significant changes in party votes from one election to the next. Fragmentation appeared in the increasing number of parties represented in parliament. Still, moderate multipartism ruled the day until the 1970s, when the growing influence of two highly

ideological parties (the National Salvation Party [NSP], representing political Islam, and the ultranationalist Nationalist Action Party [NAP]) introduced properties of extreme or polarized multipartism. Short-lived and ideologically incompatible coalitions came and went while policy making languished and political violence worsened. Finally, on 12 September 1980, the military intervened for the third time in 20 years.

The new military government tried to overhaul the party system by manipulating the electoral laws. In 1983, a new statute introduced a 10 percent national threshold and even higher constituency thresholds (from 14.2 percent to 50 percent, depending on the size of the constituency) in hopes of eliminating the more intensely ideological minor parties and leading to a more manageable system of two or three parties. The 1983 elections, featuring just three parties (all licensed by the military), produced the expected result. Turgut Özal's Motherland Party won an absolute majority of seats with just over 45 percent of the vote. Motherland increased its parliamentary majority in the 1987 elections despite winning a diminished percentage of votes (36.3). By that time, however, the signs of refragmentation were already in evidence. This became clear in the local elections of 1989 and 1994, and the parliamentary elections of 1991 and 1995 (See **Table 1** on page 128).

**Table 1**

— Percentages of Votes in Turkish Parliamentary and Local Elections (1983–95)

Party	Elections					
	1983 (parliamentary)	1984 (local)	1987 (parliamentary)	1989 (local)	1991 (parliamentary)	1994 (local)
<b>MP</b>	45.2	41.5	36.3	21.8	24.0	21.0
<b>PP</b>	30.5	8.8	—	—	—	—
<b>NDP</b>	23.3	7.1	—	—	—	—
<b>SDPP</b>	—	23.4	24.7	28.7	20.8	13.6
<b>TPP</b>	—	13.3	19.1	25.1	27.0	21.4
<b>WP</b>	—	4.4	7.2	9.8	16.9 <sup>a</sup>	19.1
<b>DLP</b>	—	—	8.5	9.0	10.8	8.8
<b>NAP</b>	—	—	2.9	4.1	—	8.0
<b>RPP</b>	—	—	—	—	—	4.6

Source: Official results of elections provided by the State Institute of Statistics.

**MP**, Motherland Party; **PP**, Populist Party; **NDP**, Nationalist Democracy Party; **SDPP**, Social Democratic Populist Party; **TPP**, True Path Party; **WP**, Refah (Welfare) Party; **DLP**, Democratic Left Party; **NAP**, Nationalist Action Party; **RPP**, Republican People's Party.

**a.** In alliance with the NAP and the Reformist Democracy Party.

## A Fragmented Party System

At present, the Turkish party system is more fragmented than ever, even though the electoral system's high national and constituency thresholds have meant that the fragmentation of seats has not been as severe as the fragmentation of party votes. We have seen that Refah, the largest vote-getter in the December 1995 elections and the heir to the Islamist NSP of the 1970s, received less than a quarter of the vote. Furthermore, the relatively greater weight of the two major parties of the 1960s and 1970s (the center-right JP and the center-left RPP), which lent stability to the party system, disappeared over time. Both major tendencies are now divided into two parties each, chiefly for reasons of history and conflicting personalities. The center-right is represented by Motherland and True Path, while the Democratic Left and the RPP speak for the center-left. The future holds little hope of reunification within either camp, notwithstanding the recent coalition agreement between Motherland and True Path.

**[End Page 127]**

Another worrisome change in the party system is the increasing weakening of the moderate center-right and center-left tendencies. The 1995 parliamentary elections marked the lowest points ever for both tendencies, which so far have dominated Turkish politics: the combined vote share of the two center-right parties was 38.9 percent, while that of the two center-left parties was 25.3 percent. This represented a sharp decrease over the years and a corresponding rise in the votes of noncentrist parties (see [Table 1](#)). Not only did the Islamist Refah win 21.4 percent, but the ultranationalist NAP got 8.2 percent and the Kurdish-nationalist People's Democracy Party (HADEP), 4.2 percent. Although the latter two parties fell below the national threshold and hence sent nobody to parliament, they did boost the combined extremist vote share to one-third and raised the possibility that Turkish democracy is facing a systemic challenge.

Almost all parties and party ties appear to be losing strength as part of the more general problem of "disenchantment" typical of many new democracies. Seemingly intractable problems, especially mounting fiscal, social, and economic difficulties and pervasive political corruption, have created deep pessimism and disappointment among voters. At election time, many simply look for "the least evil" option. Parties have increasingly neglected old-style organizational work, concentrating instead on media appeals and image-building with the help of professional public-relations experts. The slowing of economic growth has placed new limits on the largesse that parties can distribute—a serious blow to their strength, especially given the scarcity of strong ideological motivations.

The only party that has managed to defy these trends is Refah. It alone seems to grasp the importance of classic door-to-door canvassing, which it carries out by deploying hundreds of thousands of devoted and disciplined party workers who make their rounds not only during campaigns, but in every season and during off years as well. Like some other Islamic movements elsewhere, Refah also systematically provides welfare, health care, and other

social benefits to its adherents. Interestingly, Refah's ranks include many women activists, though the party has so far failed to nominate a woman to run for even the humblest elected office.

The only notable improvement in this rather bleak picture of Turkish politics since the 1970s is the seemingly stronger commitment to democracy at both elite and mass levels. Although all the major parties remained committed to democracy even during the profound crisis of the late 1970s, sizeable groups on the left and right did not. The radical left had no representation in parliament, but found support among students, teachers, and sections of the industrial working class. The radical right, by contrast, was represented in parliament and even in government by the NAP, but its commitment to liberal democracy was at best dubious. **[End Page 129]** There were indications that this party was involved in right-wing political violence. In the end, many ordinary citizens and some civilian politicians came to regard military intervention as a legitimate response to violence and chaos. In other words, not everyone saw democracy as "the only game in town."

Today, far-leftist groups find themselves marginalized and irrelevant after the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The NAP, meanwhile, has quietly become much more moderate. At present, there are few calls for military intervention, and there is little expectation that it will take place. Voters have not let their disillusionment turn into ideological rejection of the democratic system itself. "Increased valorization" of democracy as an end in itself is apparent in Turkey as in many other new democracies. <sup>13</sup> As O'Donnell observes with regard to the new South American democracies, "the current prestige of democratic discourses, and conversely, the weakness of openly authoritarian political discourses" is a major factor working to the advantage of democratic forces. He is also correct to warn that this factor "is subject to withering by the passage of time," for "the influence of democratic discourses depends . . . in part on their capacity to be translated into concrete meanings for the majority of the population." <sup>14</sup>

## Military and Political Elites

Military regimes that voluntarily give way to democracy almost always demand and receive certain "exit guarantees" for the members of the departing military government as well as the "military *qua* institution." Typically, such guarantees involve tutelary powers over elected authorities, reserved policy domains, manipulation of the electoral process, and immunity from criminal investigations and punishments.

The 1983 transition in Turkey, like similar transitions in Chile, Brazil, and Portugal, exemplified the degree to which an outgoing military regime can dictate the terms of its departure. Thirteen years later, however, significant civilianization seems to have taken hold. Constitutional amendments have eradicated some legacies of military rule, including the bans on political activity by former politicians and on cooperation between political parties and

such institutions of civil society as trade unions, associations, foundations, and professional organizations. Other constitutional exit guarantees (such as the president's power to block constitutional amendments) automatically expired in 1989. Yet the progress of civilianization after 1983 had less to do with formal constitutional change than with informal practice and adaptation. The government of Prime Minister Turgut Özal, which came to power following the 1983 elections, slowly but firmly established its superiority in policy making. A milestone was passed in 1987, when Özal passed **[End Page 130]** over the military's candidate for chief of staff and appointed his own choice instead. When the presidential term of General Kenan Evren ended in 1989, the Grand National Assembly chose Özal as Turkey's first president of civilian background since 1960. As president, Özal took an active (and for some of his critics, an unconstitutional) role in formulating foreign and security policy, particularly during the Persian Gulf Crisis of 1990–91. <sup>15</sup> His personalistic style of handling this affair led the military chief of staff to resign. As many observers wryly noted, in the past a chief of staff who strongly disagreed with the government would have issued a warning or even staged a coup instead of resigning. After Özal's death in 1993, another civilian politician, Süleyman Demirel (at that time the prime minister and the leader of the True Path Party) was chosen to fill the presidency. While little has formally changed, the civilianization of the regime is nevertheless well under way.

This apparent anomaly can be explained by the Turkish military's current reluctance to become involved in politics. One obvious reason for this is the global popularity of democratic discourses, which certainly influences the generals. Then, too, military leaders have learned that interventions change very little about Turkish politics in the long or even the medium run. <sup>16</sup> When "coup politics" go into eclipse, as they have in present-day Turkey, the military's formal powers and privileges may gradually lose their political significance even if they do not become entirely dead letters.

While the gradual civilianization of the regime is an important element of democratic consolidation, the relatively positive memories associated with the military regime of 1980–83 may work as a constraining factor. It has been argued that the democratic successors of economically destructive and highly repressive authoritarian regimes may have a better chance for consolidation than those that succeeded economically successful and less repressive authoritarian regimes. In the words of a leading Turkish columnist, Yavuz Donat, the military regime of 1980–83 "came amid cheers and left amid cheers." Most ordinary citizens welcomed the restoration of law and order and the suppression of terrorism. The repressiveness of the regime was essentially limited to extreme leftist and rightist militants and Kurdish separatists. The military regime also reduced inflation, shrinking it from about 100 percent to 25 or 30 percent. Not so surprisingly, a survey carried out in 1990–91 showed that the military remained the most trusted institution in Turkey. <sup>17</sup>



Recent scholarly literature on democratic transition and consolidation has tended to emphasize—some would say overemphasize—the role of political elites in “crafting” democracy.<sup>18</sup> Transitions are seen as products less of structural factors than of bargaining among rival elite factions under conditions of great uncertainty. Presumably, this uncertainty should become less severe in the consolidation phase: the first free elections [End Page 131] reveal the balance of political forces in the country, rendering the behavior of political actors more predictable. As consolidation proceeds, social, economic, and cultural factors may come to overshadow the significance of elite behavior and political “crafting.” Still, elites remain important. As O’Donnell argues, during the so-called second transition “democratic actors should agree to subordinate their strategies . . . to the imperative of not facilitating a return to authoritarianism. This is the great accord or pact of the second transition. . . . Even more than the fate of the first transition or that of an already consolidated democracy, the fate of the second transition depends on the quality of democratic (professional) politicians.”<sup>19</sup> Elite accord, as Michael Burton, Richard Gunther, and John Higley note, can be achieved either through “elite settlements” (sudden and deliberate negotiated compromises among warring elite factions “that precede or are coterminous with democratic transitions”) or “elite convergences” (a more gradual bridging of the ideological gaps through a process of electoral competition).<sup>20</sup>

None of Turkey’s three democratic transitions (in 1946, 1961, and 1983) involved an elite settlement. Instead, each followed the “reform” (or “transaction”) path under the strict control of authoritarian rulers. Whether a significant degree of elite convergence has taken place in the post-1983 period is also questionable. In the early 1980s, Özal’s Motherland Party seemed to have built a successful coalition on the center-right, bringing together liberals, conservatives, moderate Islamists, and former ultranationalists. Had this coalition endured, it might have sparked a similar tendency to coalesce on the left. Yet beginning in 1987, the rivalry between Motherland and Demirel’s True Path proved too intense to contain. Today, both the center-right and the center-left are badly split, even though ideological differences are not great (center-right and center-left elites all largely agree on the need for market-oriented economic policies and privatization of Turkey’s vast public sector).

Despite the prominence of elite discord in modern Turkish political history, the last four years have witnessed some limited but important instances of elite convergence. Particularly noteworthy are the constitutional amendments of 1993 and 1995 and the passage of the law on privatization in 1994. On all three occasions, the major opposition party (Motherland) collaborated with the two government parties.

The recent coalition agreement between the two major center-right parties with the outside support of Bülent Ecevit’s Democratic Left Party may be another hopeful sign of elite convergence. The deal, struck after months of painful negotiations, is ingenious. It envisages a rotating premiership (Mesut Yilmaz of Motherland will take the first and fourth years and Tansu

Çiller of True Path the second and third, with the fifth year going to a True Path figure to be agreed upon between the two parties). The major motive, as noted earlier, was a shared desire to keep **[End Page 132]** Refah out of the government, even though Motherland leaders had also been talking seriously enough with that party to make it seem for a time as if a deal was in the offing. The choice of the Democratic Left instead of the RPP as the outside support to the minority government was the result of the cordial relations that exist between Yilmaz and Ecevit. To be sure, the formation of the new coalition marks an improvement over the stubbornness that characterized mainstream politicians' dealings with one another in the 1970s, and augurs well for democratic consolidation. On the other hand, it represents a considerable risk. As of this writing, three of the four mainstream parties are in uneasy coalition; if their government comes to be seen as failed and corrupt, it will give a further boost to Refah. A more meaningful test of elite convergence, therefore, will be the ability of the political system to handle two newer challenges—the upsurges, respectively, of political Islam and Kurdish nationalism.

## Islamists and Kurds

One of the most important events in Turkish politics in the last decade has been the rise of political Islam as represented by Refah. Although the party's origins go back to 1970, its predecessor, the NSP, remained a medium-sized party between 1973 and 1980, with its national vote share never exceeding 12 percent. After a modest start in 1984, Refah's vote share rose steadily, reaching just over 19 percent in the local elections of 1994 and giving the party control over Turkey's two largest cities and many other provincial centers. The 21.4 percent and 158 seats that it won in the December 1995 elections thus represent Islamism's best national showing ever.

Opinions vary as to the nature of the challenge that Refah represents. It combines religious appeals with nonreligious ones such as its emphases on industrialization, social justice, honest government, and the restoration of Turkey's former grandeur. It is unclear whether Refah seriously intends to establish an "Islamic state" based on the *shari`a* (sacred law) or would be satisfied by certain, mostly symbolic, acts of Islamization in some areas of social life. The creation of an Islamic state is a remote possibility that would require the support of a two-thirds majority in parliament to pass a fundamental amendment to the present Constitution. The party's statements on these questions are vague and contradictory enough to lend themselves to more than a single interpretation.

Ambivalence also marks Refah's views on democracy. The party's 1995 campaign platform called the present system in Turkey a "fraud," a "guided democracy," and a "dark-room regime," and announced Refah's intention to establish "real pluralistic democracy." Apart from promises to enhance freedom of conscience and to make greater use of **[End Page 133]** referenda and "popular councils," however, "real democracy" was never defined. In Refah's view, freedom of conscience implies the "right to live according to one's beliefs," a concept

that is bound to create conflicts with Turkey's secular legal system. The party prudently refrains from challenging the basic premises of democracy and declares elections the only route to political power. One gets the impression, however, that the version of democracy it envisages is more majoritarian than liberal or pluralistic.

As for the economy, Refah proposes an Islamic-inspired "just order" that it conceives as a "third way" different from and superior to both capitalism and socialism. Although the party claims that the "just order" is the "true private-enterprise regime," its implementation, if possible at all, would require a heavy dose of state control.

Whether Refah should be considered an antisystem party is an open question. Certainly, it takes pride in its claim to be different from all other parties. It accuses them of being "mimics" that seek to ape the West and make Turkey its "satellite." Refah denounces current economic arrangements as a "slave system" that is based on the International Monetary Fund, interest payments, taxes, corruption, and waste, and is maintained by a repressive "guardian state" that contravenes the history and beliefs of its own people.

The ideological chasm between Refah and the secular parties appears quite wide. Whether it can be bridged in time by gradual elite convergence is at present unknown. Behind its radical rhetoric, Refah (like its predecessor the NSP) often shows signs of pragmatism and flexibility. The Refah mayors elected in 1994 in about four hundred cities and towns, including Istanbul and the capital of Ankara, have not so far acted like wild-eyed radicals but like reasonably honest and efficient managers.

Hard-core Islamic fundamentalists aside, Refah's voters include many ordinary believing Muslims who have no desire to see an Islamic state in Turkey. If Refah's popularity has already levelled off, as appears likely, then the party's leaders may moderate their appeals in order to reach larger numbers of more centrist conservative voters. This should set in motion a process of elite convergence, but its timetable is unpredictable.

A second challenge to democratic consolidation is the Kurdish question. Comprising from 10 to 15 percent of the population, Kurds are Turkey's only large linguistic minority. Although Kurdish speakers constitute a majority in many eastern and southeastern provinces, most of the Kurdish-speaking population lives in the west, especially in the big cities, and is fairly well integrated into Turkish society at large. Since the late 1970s, a separatist guerrilla movement known as the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) has emerged in the southeast. Yet even in that area the PKK seems to enjoy the support of only a small **[End Page 134]** minority of Kurds. In general, most Kurdish speakers appear to favor a peaceful solution that would leave Turkey's territorial integrity undisturbed.

Until fairly recently, no ethnicity-based political party represented the interests of the Kurdish-speaking population. Nevertheless, Kurds have been active in all political parties and well represented in parliament. A Kurdish ethnic grouping, the People's Labor Party (HEP), formed for the first time in the late 1980s. Since both the Constitution and the Political Parties Law proscribe ethnic parties, the Constitutional Court denied the HEP legal status. The Court made the same ruling on the HEP's successor, the Democracy Party, in the summer of 1994. The latest successor formation is HADEP, which contested the December 1995 elections and won slightly more than 4 percent of the national vote. Most of its support came from the southeast, where it received more than 40 percent of the vote in two provinces and more than 20 percent in six others. Because of the 10 percent national threshold, however, it sent no representatives to parliament. Furthermore, as long as the relevant articles of the Constitution and the Political Parties Law remain unchanged, HADEP is likely to share the fate of its predecessors.

The story of the Kurdish parties illustrates the dilemma that Turkey's leaders face. The 1990s have seen modest reforms to redress some of the Kurds' legitimate grievances. The restrictions that the last military regime placed on the use of the Kurdish language were removed in 1991. The notorious Article 8 of the Anti-Terror Law, which made any kind of separatist propaganda a criminal offense, was modified in 1995. The offense is now more narrowly defined and jail terms are lighter, but this category of "thought crime" has not been abolished. Yet to legalize ethnic parties and enter into dialogue with them on the whole panoply of cultural rights or possibly some schemes of local autonomy would require fundamental revisions of both the Constitution and prevailing notions of the nation-state.

Difficult as such changes would surely prove, insisting on a purely military solution to the PKK problem might well be worse. Such a policy would threaten to polarize the situation even further and to add to the popularity of the insurgents, given the human rights abuses and other hardships that military campaigns inevitably inflict upon local civilian populations. Human rights violations already strain Turkey's relations with the West, including the European Union, the Council of Europe, and the United States. Western criticism of Turkey's behavior, in turn, creates an anti-Western backlash that can only help Refah. In short, the increasing importance of religious and ethnic issues raises a number of difficult constitutional problems that Turkish democracy has not previously confronted. These include the question of Islamism versus secularism, the claims of the nation-state versus the rights of minorities, and centralization versus devolution. The full consolidation of democracy **[End Page 135]** depends upon the achievement of a reasonable degree of consensus on these fundamental issues.

## A Delegative Democracy?

Guillermo O'Donnell, who coined the term, calls "delegative democracy" a "new species." Delegative democracies "are not consolidated (i.e., institutionalized) democracies, but they may be enduring. In many cases, there is no sign either of any imminent threat of an authoritarian regression or of advances toward representative democracy."<sup>21</sup> In contrast to representative (or institutionalized) democracies, delegative democracies are marked by an extremely personalistic style of leadership. Horizontal accountability (i.e., accountability to other autonomous institutions such as the legislature) is seen as a "nuisance" and an unnecessary impediment to the fulfillment of the president's "mission." The president and his technocratic advisors make policy by decree without consulting parties, the legislature, or relevant interest groups. Precisely for this reason, however, such policies often face heavy resistance and remain unimplemented. The logic of delegative democracies does not favor the development of strong political institutions.

O'Donnell's analysis implies that delegative democracies are typically found in presidential regimes, and indeed there are good theoretical and empirical reasons for associating the two. Normally, a parliamentary system provides far more effectively for horizontal accountability. A prime minister, no matter how popular, cannot afford to ignore the parliament and political parties the way an elected president can. The Turkish experience with democracy, however, suggests that even a parliamentary regime is not entirely immune to delegative democracy. Turkey's first trial of democracy, under Prime Minister Adnan Menderes (1950–60), was a typical delegative democracy that ended with a military intervention. The period since 1983 has also displayed strong resemblances to delegative democracy. Özal (first as prime minister from 1983 to 1989, and then as president between 1989 and 1991) and Çiller (as prime minister from 1993 to 1995) both showed a penchant for highly personalistic leadership. They often bypassed parliament through the use of law-amending executive decrees. Each made key policy decisions alone or with at most a few favorite ministers, sometimes without even bothering to inform the rest of the cabinet.<sup>22</sup> Strong party discipline often stymied parliamentary mechanisms of accountability. Election campaigns stressed the personal qualities and trustworthiness of individual leaders rather than party programs and policies. Party leaders were presented as "saviors of the country." Their policies in office typically bore scant resemblance to what they had promised while campaigning. **[End Page 136]**

The key explanatory variable here is strong party discipline and the absence of intraparty democracy. With top leaders in control of nominations and patronage, MPs are highly dependent and docile. Patronage in particular is as prominent a feature of politics in Turkey as it is in Latin America. No doubt the Turkish tendency toward *personalismo* also draws strength from political culture and historical traditions.

Turkey today seems to occupy a secure place among the delegative democracies of the world. There is little reason to fear that authoritarianism will return, but equally little reason to hope that democracy will soon become consolidated. Like many other delegative

democracies, Turkish democracy may endure, but in a state of “inherent vulnerability.” As Larry Diamond reminds us, the mere persistence of democracy should not be confused “with the genuine stability that flows from consolidation. . . . Stability requires not merely a passive acceptance of the system, because there is no better alternative at the moment, but a positive belief in the moral value of democracy in principle.” <sup>23</sup>

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### **Ergun Özbudun**

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### Footnotes

- 1.** On the waves of democratization, see Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 13–26. On the second reverse wave, see Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, eds., *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).
- 2.** The best-known work on authoritarian breakdown and democratic transition is Guillermo O’Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead, eds., *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Prospects for Democracy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).
- 3.** Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 26. See also Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Eastern Europe, Southern Europe, and South America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, forthcoming).
- 4.** Guillermo O’Donnell, “Transitions, Continuities, and Paradoxes,” in Scott Mainwaring, Guillermo O’Donnell, and J. Samuel Valenzuela, eds., *Issues in Democratic Consolidation: The New South American Democracies in Comparative Perspective* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 48–49.
- 5.** *Ibid.*, 19–20. See also Samuel P. Huntington, “Will More Countries Become Democratic?” *Political Science Quarterly* 99 (Summer 1984): 212. Dankwart A. Rustow was one of the first scholars who observed that to promote democracy one did not need to foster democrats first. See his “Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model,” *Comparative Politics* 2 (April 1970): 337–63.
- 6.** Huntington, *The Third Wave*, 266–67.
- 7.** O’Donnell, “Transitions, Continuities, and Paradoxes,” 18–19.
- 8.** Huntington, *The Third Wave*, 270–71. Cf. Adam Przeworski, Michael Alvarez, José Antonio Cheibub, and Fernando Limongi, “What Makes Democracies Endure?” *Journal of Democracy* 7 (January 1996): 43–44.
- 9.** Metin Heper, “Strong State as a Problem for the Consolidation of Democracy: Turkey and Germany Compared,” *Comparative Political Studies* 25 (July 1992): 169–94.
- 10.** Metin Heper, *The State Tradition in Turkey* (Walkington, England: Eothen, 1985); Ergun Özbudun, “The Ottoman Legacy and the Middle East State Tradition,” in L. Carl Brown, ed., *Imperial Legacy: The Ottoman Imprint on the Balkans and the Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 133–57.
- 11.** Frederick W. Frey, *The Turkish Political Elite* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1965), 301–3.
- 12.** Üstün Ergüder and Richard I. Hofferbert, “The 1983 General Elections in Turkey: Continuity or Change in Voting Patterns?” in Metin Heper and Ahmet Evin, eds., *State, Democracy, and Military: Turkey in the 1980s* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1988), 81–102; Ergun Özbudun, “The Turkish Party System: Institutionalization, Polarization, and Fragmentation,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 17 (April 1981): 228–40.
- 13.** Larry Diamond, “Democracy in Latin America: Degrees, Illusions, and Directions for Consolidation,” in Tom Farer, ed., *Beyond Sovereignty: Collectively Defending Democracy in the Americas* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 77; Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, “Political Crafting of Democratic Consolidation or Destruction: European and South American Comparisons,” in Robert A. Pastor, ed., *Democracy in the Americas: Stopping the Pendulum* (New York and London: Holmes and Meier, 1989), 47.
- 14.** O’Donnell, “Transitions, Continuities, and Paradoxes,” 21.

**15.** The Turkish Constitution of 1982 established a parliamentary rather than a semipresidential system. The president is elected by the Grand National Assembly, not by the people. Although the president is given some important appointive and other powers which he can use autonomously from the government, the prime minister remains the effective head of the executive. Özal's role in the presidency did not conform to this model, however, since he was the founder and the undisputed leader of the Motherland Party, which until 1991 enjoyed a solid majority in parliament. After Motherland lost its majority, Özal had to act much more like a parliamentary head of state.

**16.** Metin Heper quotes a private admission of one of the five generals who led the 1980 intervention: "We think that the country is going down the drain; we intervene, make a new constitution in the hope that we can have a better democracy, and withdraw to our barracks; soon we see that democracy reverts back to its old ways." Heper, "Consolidating Turkish Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 3 (April 1992): 114.

**17.** This survey was published as *Türk Toplumunun Değerleri* (The values of Turkish society) (Istanbul: TÜSIAD, 1991), 22.

**18.** See, for example, Giuseppe Di Palma, *To Craft Democracies: An Essay on Democratic Transitions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

**19.** O'Donnell, "Transitions, Continuities, and Paradoxes," 22–23.

**20.** Michael Burton, Richard Gunther, and John Higley, "Elites and Democratic Consolidation in Latin America and Southern Europe: An Overview," in John Higley and Richard Gunther, eds., *Elites and Democratic Consolidation in Latin America and Southern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 339, 323–24, and passim.

**21.** Guillermo O'Donnell, "Delegative Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 5 (January 1994): 55–69.

**22.** In an interview that ran in the Istanbul daily *Milliyet* on 13 June 1995, then-Prime Minister Tansu Çiller described how she had "worked for hours on my computer" and personally "determined even the finest details" of the economic-policy package that her government announced on 5 April 1994.

**23.** Diamond, "Democracy in Latin America," 76.

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## Footnotes

### Additional Information

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