

THE INSTITUTIONAL DECLINE OF PARTIES IN TURKEY

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Commenting on Turkish politics in the 1950s, Frederick Frey argued 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, extra-governmental groups of people. . . . It is perhaps in this respect above all—the existence of extensive, powerful, highly organized, grassroots parties—that Turkey differs institutionally from the other Middle Eastern nations with whom we frequently compare her.”¹ Since the 1970s, however, Turkey’s parties and party system have been undergoing a protracted process of institutional decay, as described in the first section. The party system has been beset by growing fragmentation, ideological polarization, and electoral volatility. Parties themselves have been dogged by declining organizational capacity and a lack of public support and identification. The next section will discuss the common organizational characteristics of Turkey’s main political parties. I shall argue that, in general, Turkish parties are catch-all and cartel parties. In the following sections, I shall discuss the social, ideological, and organizational characteristics of the Welfare Party (now the Virtue party), the Motherland Party, the True Path Party, the Democratic Left Party, and the Republican People’s Party, as well as a few minor parties.

Deinstitutionalization, Fragmentation, and Polarization

Turkey displayed the characteristics of a typical two-party system between 1946 and 1960, when the two main contenders for power were the Republican People’s Party (RPP) and the Democratic Party (DP). In the 1961 elections that followed the military intervention of 1960, no

TABLE 1—PERCENTAGE OF VOTES (AND SEATS) IN TURKISH PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS (1950–77)

PARTY	1950	1954	1957	1961	1965	1969	1973	1977
DP/JP	53.3 (83.8)	56.6 (93.0)	447.7 (69.5)	34.8 (35.1)	52.9 (53.3)	46.5 (56.9)	29.8 (33.1)	36.9 (42.0)
RPP	39.8 (14.2)	34.8 (5.7)	40.8 (29.2)	36.7 (38.4)	28.7 (29.8)	27.4 (31.8)	33.3 (41.1)	41.4 (47.3)
NP	3.0 (0.2)	4.7 (0.9)	7.2 (0.7)	14.0 (12.0)	6.3 (6.9)	3.2 (1.3)	1.0 (0.0)	
FP			3.8 (0.7)					
NTP				13.7 (14.4)	3.7 (4.2)	2.2 (1.3)		
TLP					3.0 (3.3)	2.7 (0.4)		0.1 (0.0)
NAP					2.2 (2.4)	3.0 (0.2)	3.4 (0.7)	6.4 (3.6)
UP						2.8 (1.8)	1.1 (0.2)	0.4
RPP						6.6 (3.3)	5.3 (2.9)	1.9 (0.7)
DEM. P.							11.9 (10.0)	1.9 (0.2)
NSP							11.8 (10.7)	8.6 (5.3)

Note: The first row of figures for each party represents percentages of the popular vote, and the second row (in parentheses) presents the percentages of seats won.

Source: Official results of elections, State Institute of Statistics.

Abbreviations: DP: Democratic Party; JP: Justice Party; RPP: Republican People's Party; NP: Nation Party; FP: Freedom Party; NTP: New Turkey party; TLP: Turkish Labor Party; NAP: Nationalist Action Party; UP: Unity party; RRP: Republican Reliance Party; Dem. P.: Democrat Party; NSP: National Salvation Party.

party obtained a parliamentary majority due to the fragmentation of the DP votes among three parties (the DP had been banned by the military regime), and the introduction of the D'Hondt version of proportional representation. In the 1965 and 1969 elections, however, the Justice Party (JP), having established itself as the main heir to the DP, was able to gain comfortable parliamentary majorities, despite the growing number of parties represented in parliament. The 1973 elections, which followed the military intervention of 1971, produced another fragmented parliament. So did the 1977 elections. No party enjoyed a majority in either parliament, although the two major parties, the RPP and the JP, were clearly stronger than others. Their combined share of the seats in parliament was 63.1 percent in 1973 and 78.8 percent in 1977. According to the D'Hondt version of proportional representation, which favors larger parties, these figures corresponded to 74.2 percent of the seats in 1973 and 89.3 percent in 1977 (see Table 1 above).

The main characteristics—or“maladies”—of the Turkish party system in the 1970s have been described as volatility, fragmentation, and ideological polarization.² Volatility meant sudden and significant

TABLE 2—PERCENTAGE OF VOTES IN TURKISH PARLIAMENTARY AND LOCAL ELECTIONS (1983–95)

PARTIES	1983 (PARL.)	1984 (LOCAL)	1987 (PARL.)	1989 (LOCAL)	1991 (PARL.)	1994 (LOCAL)	1995 (PARL.)	1999 (PARL.)
MP	45.2 (52.9)	41.5	36.3 (64.9)	21.8	24.0 (25.6)	21.0	19.7 (24.0)	13.2 (15.6)
PP	30.5 (29.3)	8.8						
NDP	23.3 (17.8)	7.1						
SDPP		23.4	24.7 (22.0)	28.7	20.8 (19.6)	13.6		
TPP		13.3	19.1 (13.1)	25.1	27.0 (39.6)	21.4	19.2 (24.5)	12.0 (15.5)
WP/VP		4.4	7.2 (0)	9.8	16.9 (13.8) ¹	19.1	21.4 (28.7)	15.4 (20.2)
DLP			8.5 (0)	9.0	10.8 (1.6)	8.8	14.6 (13.8)	22.2 (24.7)
NAP			2.9 (0)	4.1		8.0	8.2 (0)	18.0 (23.5)
RPP						4.6	10.7 (8.9)	8.7 (0)
*	0.61		0.51		0.71		0.77	0.79

* Rae's Index of Fractionalization of Assembly seats.

Note: The figures in parentheses represent the percentages of parliamentary seats won by each party.

Source: Official results of elections, State Institute of Statistics.

Abbreviations: MP: Motherland Party; PP: Populist Party; NDP: Nationalist Democracy Party; SDPP: Social Democratic Populist Party; TPP: True Path Party; WP: Welfare Party; DLP: Democratic Left Party; NAP: Nationalist Action Party; RPP: Republican People's Party; VP: Virtue Party (contested in 1999).

changes in party votes from one election to the next. Fragmentation was observed in the increasing number of parties represented in parliament. As measured by Douglas Rae's index of fractionalization,³ the fragmentation of seats in the National Assembly was 0.70 in 1961, 0.63 in 1965, 0.59 in 1969, 0.70 in 1973, and 0.60 in 1977. While such fragmentation was not too high, and the format of the party system was closer to limited or moderate multipartism, the rise of two highly ideological parties—the National Salvation Party representing political Islam and the ultranationalist Nationalist Action Party—in the 1970s increased ideological polarization and gave the system some of the properties of extreme or polarized multipartism.⁴ Short-lived and ideologically incompatible coalition governments were unable to curb political violence and terror. The system finally broke down when the military intervened in September 1980.

The military regime attempted to overhaul the party system by manipulating the electoral laws. While maintaining proportional representation in principle, a new electoral law, passed in 1983, introduced a 10 percent national threshold and very high constituency thresholds (ranging between 14.2 percent and 50 percent, depending on

TABLE 3—VOLATILITY AND FRAGMENTATION IN THE PARTY SYSTEM

ELECTIONS	VOLATILITY ¹	FRAGMENTATION OF VOTES ²	FRAGMENTATION OF SEATS ²	DISPROPORTIONALITY INDEX ³	EFFECTIVE NUMBER OF PARTIES ⁴
1961		0.71	0.70	1.0	3.3
1965	24.5	0.63	0.63	0.75	2.6
1969	11.4	0.70	0.59	7.4	2.3
1973	28.4	0.77	0.70	5.6	3.3
1977	18.3	0.68	0.60	5.5	2.5
1983		0.66	0.61	4.5	2.5
1987		0.75	0.51	15.7	2.0
1991	16.6	0.79	0.71	7.1	3.5
1995	23.0	0.83	0.77	5.8	4.3
1999	19.9	0.85	0.79	4.1	4.9

¹ Total volatility is the sum of the absolute value of all changes in the percentages of votes cast for each party since the previous election divided by two. The 1961 elections are omitted since the DP was dissolved by the ruling military council (NUC) and the two entirely new parties (JP and NTP) competed for its votes. Likewise, the 1983 elections are omitted since the military government (NSC) closed down all existing parties and thus the three parties that competed in this election were new parties. Finally, the 1987 elections are omitted on the grounds that two of the three parties authorized by the NSC—PP and NDP—were relatively artificial parties that soon disappeared after the return to competitive politics. Had these three elections been included, the average volatility score would certainly have been much higher. In calculating the volatility scores, only those parties that have gained representation in parliament in at least one of the two consecutive elections are taken into account. For the 1991 elections, which the WP contested in an alliance with the NAP and small RDP (Reformist Democracy Party), their percentage of votes in the 1989 local elections were taken as a close approximation.

² Based on Douglas W. Rae's index of fractionalization in Douglas W. Rae, *The Political Consequences of Electoral Laws* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 56.

³ Based on Arend Lijphart's index of disproportionality, which is "the average vote-seat deviation of the two largest parties in each election." Arend Lijphart, *Democracies: Patterns of Majoritarian and Consensus Government in Twenty-One Countries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 163.

⁴ Based on Markku Laakso and Rein Taagepera's formula which is as follows: $P_e = \frac{1}{\sum_{i=1}^n p_i^2}$. Markku Laakso and Rein Taagepera, "Effective Number of Parties: A Measure with Application to West Europe," *Comparative Political Studies* 12 (April 1979): 3–27.

the size of the constituency) in the hope that this would eliminate the more ideological minor parties and transform the party system into a more manageable two- or three-party system. The 1983 elections, in which competition was limited to three parties licensed by the ruling military authorities, indeed produced the expected result. The Motherland Party (MP) of Turgut Özal won an absolute majority of seats with 45.2 percent of the vote. Aided by the electoral changes that favored the larger parties to an even greater extent, the MP actually increased its parliamentary majority in the 1987 elections, even though it obtained a lower percentage of the overall vote (36.3 percent). By that time, however, the signs of refragmentation were already in the air. This became increasingly clear in the local elections of 1989 and 1994, and the parliamentary elections of 1991 and 1995 (see Table 2 on the facing page).

At present, the Turkish party system is more fragmented than ever. The largest party that emerged in the December 1995 elections (the Welfare Party, or WP, which was the heir to the National Salvation Party

of the 1970s) received only 21.4 percent of the vote. The fragmentation of the Assembly seats as measured by the index of fractionalization is as follows: 0.61 in 1983, 0.51 in 1987, 0.71 in 1991, and 0.77 in 1995. Due to the electoral system's high national and constituency thresholds, the fragmentation of party votes has been much higher than the fragmentation of seats (see Table 3 on the previous page). Furthermore, the relatively greater weight of the two major parties in the 1960s and the 1970s (the center-right JP and the center-left RPP), which had given some degree of stability to the party system, has also disappeared over the years. Both major tendencies are now divided into two parties each: The center-right tendency is represented by the Motherland (MP) and the True Path (TPP) parties, and the center-left by the Democratic Left Party (DLP) and the Republican People's Party (RPP), with little hope of reunification in the near future.

Table 3 also demonstrates a high degree of volatility in the Turkish party system, which suggests an almost continuous process of realignment. Although such high volatility scores are to be expected given the frequency of military interventions that wreaked havoc in the party system (the 1960 intervention banned the DP, and the 1980 intervention closed down all political parties), 13 years after the most recent retransition to democracy, volatility is still high and rising. This presents a sharp contrast with Southern European party systems (that is, those of Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Greece) where, "following a critical election, volatility declined and voting behavior became more stable and predictable."⁵ High Turkish volatility scores stem partly from the destructive effects of military interventions, as mentioned above, and partly from the fact that Turkish political parties are not strongly rooted in civil society, as will be spelled out below. To the extent that the stabilization of electoral behavior is an element of democratic consolidation, the current trend in Turkey seems to be detracting from it.

Another worrisome change in the party system is the increasing weakening of the moderate center-right and center-left tendencies. The 1995 elections marked the lowest points ever for both tendencies that so far have dominated Turkish politics: The combined vote of the two center-right parties was 38.9 percent, while that of the two center-left parties was 25.4 percent. This represented a sharp decrease from previous years and a corresponding rise in the votes of noncentrist parties. In addition to the 21.4 percent of the vote won by the Islamic WP, the ultranationalist NAP obtained 8.18 percent, and the Kurdish nationalist People's Democracy Party (HADEP) won 4.17 percent. Although the latter two parties could not send any representatives to parliament because they failed to meet the 10 percent national threshold, the combined vote of the three extremist parties reached 33.8 percent, or more than one-third, of the entire electorate. The increasing salience of

religious and ethnic issues represents an overall increase in ideological polarization, especially since such issues are more difficult to resolve and less amenable to rational bargainings than socioeconomic ones. Increasing polarization is also substantiated by recent public-opinion research. A survey carried out in 1991 within the framework of the "World Values Survey" demonstrated that 50 percent of Turkish voters placed themselves at the center on a left-right continuum, 5 percent at the extreme left, 20 percent at center-left, 18 percent at center-right, and 8 percent at the extreme right. A follow-up survey carried out in 1997 gave the following figures: 7 percent extreme left, 14 percent center-left, 35 percent center, 23 percent center-right, and 20 percent extreme right. A comparison of the two survey's findings clearly demonstrates an erosion of the center and the rapid rise of the extreme right.⁶ Thus all three maladies of the Turkish party system in the 1970s (volatility, fragmentation, and polarization) have reappeared, if anything in worse form. The pivotal position of the WP (and its successor, the Virtue Party) has made coalition alternatives limited in number and difficult to accomplish. For some years, the only possible minimum-winning coalitions have been the right-left (MP, TPP, and one of the leftist parties), the WP-right (either with the TPP or the MP), and the WP-left (together with both leftist parties) coalitions. The last one is most unlikely because of the strong secularist views of the leftist parties. At any rate, the rise of the WP, no doubt, increased polarization along the religious dimension, since the party's views on the role of Islam in state and society sharply differentiated it from all other parties.

A fourth malaise in the party system is the organizational weakening of parties and party-identification ties. This seems to be part of the more general problem of "disillusionment" (*el desencanto*) typical of many new democracies.⁷ The seemingly intractable nature of problems—increasing economic difficulties, very high inflation, a huge foreign and domestic public debt, growing inequalities in wealth, a sharp deterioration of social policies, and pervasive political corruption—have created a deep sense of pessimism and disappointment among voters, many of whom vote for parties not with any degree of enthusiasm but with the intention of choosing "the least evil" among them.

In this rather bleak picture, the only notable positive change compared to the 1970s is the seemingly stronger elite and mass commitment to democracy. Although all major political parties remained committed to democracy even during the profound crisis of the late 1970s, some significant groups on the left and on the right challenged its legitimacy. The radical left was not represented in parliament, but it found many supporters among students, teachers, the industrial working class. The radical right, on the other hand, was represented in parliament, even in government, by the NAP, whose commitment to liberal democracy was at best dubious. There were indications that this party

was involved in right-wing political violence. Finally, in the eyes of many ordinary citizens, including some civilian politicians, it was quite legitimate for the armed forces to intervene in such a crisis to end the violence and chaos. In other words, democracy was not seen by all as “the only game in town.”

Today, the situation seems to have changed considerably. The collapse of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union truly marginalized the groups on the extreme left. The NAP underwent a silent transformation, becoming a more moderate, pro-system, nationalist party. Calls for a military intervention subsided significantly. The sense of disillusionment among many voters did not turn into an ideological challenge to the democratic system itself. “Increased valorization” of democracy as an end in itself is operative in Turkey, as in many other new democracies.⁸ As Guillermo O’Donnell observes, “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 actors. He is also right in his words of warning, however, that this factor “is subject to withering by the passage of time. . . . [T]he influence of democratic discourses depends . . . in part on their capacity to be translated into concrete meanings for the majority of the population.”⁹

Organizational Characteristics of Political Parties

Since the beginnings of multiparty politics in the mid-1940s, Turkish political parties have generally been described as “cadre” or “catch-all” parties with strong clientelistic features. If mass parties are defined as parties based on a carefully maintained membership registration system and the mass membership of card-carrying, dues-paying members, with emphasis on political indoctrination,¹⁰ no major Turkish political party qualifies as a mass party with the possible exception of the WP (during its later years), as will be spelled out below.¹¹ Although a 1996 survey showed 12.1 percent of all voters as party members,¹² the irregular nature of party registers and the loose link between the party and the member suggest that what is meant by party “member” in Turkey is often little more than a party “supporter.” Many local party organizations, particularly in the relatively less developed regions, remain inactive in periods between elections¹³ and engage in limited, if any efforts to give their members a political education or indoctrination. Membership participation in party activities other than voting was found to be highest in the two strongly nationalistic parties, the NAP and the HADEP, and lowest in the two center-right parties (MP and TPP). The WP (somewhat surprisingly) and the two center-left parties (DLP and RPP) obtained scores between these two extremes.¹⁴

The loose link between the party and the party members also implies

that membership dues are not paid regularly and do not therefore constitute a significant portion of party income. Instead, parties have been financed by state subsidies since the constitutional amendment of 1971. The present law provides state subsidies to parties that obtained more than 7 percent of the votes in the most recent general parliamentary elections in proportion to the votes received. Private donations also provide an important source of income for parties.

Such organizational characteristics are to be explained by the circumstances in which Turkey made a transition to multiparty politics in the mid-1940s. The opposition Democratic Party (DP) successfully used the longstanding center-periphery cleavage by appealing to peripheral grievances against the RPP's centralist, bureaucratic single-party rule. Most students of Turkish politics agree that the origins of the Turkish party system lie in such a center-periphery conflict, which pitted a nationalist, centralist, secularist, and cohesive state elite against "a culturally heterogeneous, complex, and even hostile periphery" with religious and antistatist overtones.¹⁵ Whether the center-periphery cleavage is still the dominant one in Turkey is open to debate. In the 1980s and the 1990s, no single party has emerged to stand for the "values and interests of the center" or received the kind of electoral support that the RPP had received in the past. With the fragmentation of the vote described above, there is no leading party of the periphery either. "To complicate the picture further, the center is no longer what it used to be: Turkey lacks a coherent and compact elite group occupying the center and defending the collective interests of the center."¹⁶ These circumstances were not conducive to the development of mass parties. The RPP remained what it was during the single-party period, namely a party of the state elites, and the DP found it more convenient to base its appeal on broad populist, antistatist slogans rather than trying to anchor itself in a particular social group.

Another factor that shaped the Turkish party system was "factionalism," prevalent in many rural communities and small towns. Such factionalism gave the DP ready "vote banks" with one faction supporting the DP and the other supporting the RPP. Factionalism contributed to the rapid rise of the DP, but at the same time made it a socially heterogeneous alliance united only in its opposition to the RPP. Later on, when the DP came to power in 1950, it built an effective rural machine based on the distribution of patronage and pork-barrel benefits. Thus the original two-party system was based on vertical rather than horizontal loyalties. "Parties concentrated their efforts in securing the allegiance of faction leaders and local patrons who were then entrusted with the task of mobilizing electoral support. In either case, vertical networks of personal followings proved to be a major base of political loyalties."¹⁷ Later, with increasing rural to urban migration, similar party machines appeared in the larger cities and were used effectively by the

DP and its successor, JP. The prevalence of vertical clientelistic networks and the machine-type politics help explain the failure of political parties to develop organizations based on horizontal loyalties such as common class or group interests. In the 1970s and the 1980s, the increasing complexity of the society and the growing salience of ideological issues led to a fragmentation of the party system, but without changing the clientelistic nature of political parties. A leading student of Turkish politics describes the present political system of Turkey as a "party-centered polity," meaning a "party system largely autonomous from social groups" in the absence of a strong bourgeoisie in the historical development of the Ottoman-Turkish state.¹⁸

The last point is related to the overall weakness of linkages between political parties and other civil society institutions, again with the partial exception of the WP. If we exclude the 12.1 percent of voters who are members of political parties and the 9.8 percent who are affiliated with a trade union, we are left with only 6.2 percent of voters who are members of all other associations. The overwhelming majority of the latter category are members of public professional organizations, where membership is legally obligatory.¹⁹ All organizational links and all kinds of cooperation among political parties and civil-society institutions were explicitly forbidden by the Constitution of 1982 and other laws, until the constitutional amendments of 1995. But even when such links were not forbidden, as in the period between 1961 and 1980, they were extremely weak or nonexistent. Turkish parties, due to their organizational characteristics described above, do not establish or maintain close ties with organized interests or specific sectors of society. Rather, they maintain autonomy from social groups, shifting from one potential base of electoral support to another, or abandoning the interests of their electoral clientele once elected to office.²⁰

Organizationally, all Turkish parties display similar characteristics since the Political Parties Laws of 1965 and 1983 imposed upon them a more or less standard organizational model. This model consists of party congresses (conventions) and elected executive committees at the national and local (provincial and sub-provincial) levels. The smallest organizational unit is the sub-province organization (*ilçe*). Parties are not allowed to organize below that level. Thus the party "branches" (*ocak*) that existed in villages and urban neighborhoods prior to 1960 were banned by the military government in 1960-61, a ban that was continued under the 1965 and the 1983 laws on political parties. The organizational model imposed by these laws seems consistent with democratic principles since party leaders and executive committees at all levels are elected by appropriate party congresses which, in turn, are supposed to represent the entire body of party members. Nevertheless, historically and at present, all parties display strong oligarchical tendencies.²¹ All are overly centralized, and the central executive

committees have the power to dismiss recalcitrant local committees. Changes in the top leadership are very rare. Indeed, Bülent Ecevit (DLP), Necmeddin Erbakan (WP), and Alparslan Türkeş (NAP) have led their parties for more than a quarter of a century, and Süleyman Demirel remained the leader of the JP and the TPP from 1964 to 1993, when he was elected president of the republic.

Perhaps the most important function of political parties is elite recruitment or candidate selection. As E. Schattschneider observed, "the nature of the nominating procedure determines the nature of the party; he who can make the nominations is the owner of the party. This is therefore one of the best points at which to observe the distribution of power within the party."²² The current Political Parties Law leaves the choice of the candidate-selection procedure to party constitutions. If parties choose to hold party primaries, in which either all registered party members or their elected delegates in that constituency can participate, such primaries are conducted under judicial supervision. This method, however, has rarely been used in recent elections, and the tendency is for all parties to have candidates nominated by their central executive committees. These committees are, in turn, strongly controlled by party leaders. Therefore, the candidate-selection procedure has turned out to be one of the most centralized and oligarchical methods used in Western democracies.²³ Central control over candidate selection is both a cause and a consequence of the oligarchical tendencies alluded to above. In addition, such central control allows party leaders to nominate a relatively large number of political novices (usually former prominent bureaucrats) who have no grassroots support and are therefore completely dependent on party leaders. There are no special procedures for socializing party candidates into their respective sets of norms, values, or issue stands either prior to nomination or after election to office.

Turkish parties have traditionally played an important role in electoral mobilization through local branches, door-to-door canvassing by party activists, and other grassroots activities to get out the votes. In recent elections, however, they have increasingly neglected such old-style organizational work and concentrated their efforts on media appeals and image-building with the help of professional public relations experts. The abolition of the state monopoly over radio and television broadcasts in 1993 and the consequent proliferation of private television and radio networks is an important contributing factor in this regard. Television appeals that necessarily center around party leaders have also contributed to the strengthening of their authority and to the oligarchical tendencies within parties. Another factor in the organizational decline of political parties is the slowing down of economic growth and the lessening of the state's role in economy. These changes mean that there is a limit to the spoils parties can distribute to their followers, and, in the absence of

strong ideological motivations, this is an important factor that saps their organizational strength.

The only party that managed to avoid this decline was the WP, until it was found to be in violation of provisions of the constitution and banned by the Constitutional Court on 22 February 1998. Just days before that decision, a new party, the Virtue Party (VP), was formed and then quickly attracted some 135 MPs from the proscribed WP, making the Virtue Party the main opposition party in parliament. Thus the VP is essentially a continuation of the WP, led by Recai Kutan, who has been one of the closest associates of Necmeddin Erbakan, the leader of the proscribed WP. Most of the elected WP mayors and the leaders of their local organizations also joined the VP. Therefore, the analysis offered for the WP here also holds true for the VP. It was the only party that appreciated the importance of classical door-to-door canvassing with the help of hundreds of thousands of highly motivated, devoted, and disciplined party workers. Besides, such activities were not limited to campaign periods but continued all year round. Interestingly, the WP's workers included many women activists, but the party did not nominate a single woman even for the most modest elected office. This practice continued until the WP was shut down. The VP, however, nominated several women candidates in the 1999 parliamentary elections, three of whom were elected. One of them was not permitted to take her parliamentary oath since she refused to take her head scarf off. She eventually lost her membership.

The organizational decline of parties is also reflected in public attitudes toward parties. A 1996 national survey showed that more than half of Turkish voters (50.7 percent) thought that there were no parties defending the rights of the "oppressed," as opposed to 30.6 percent who answered this question affirmatively. The percentage of those who saw "their own" party as defending the rights of the oppressed was 85.6 for the WP, 88.4 for the DLP, 82.1 for the RPP, and 85.3 for the HADEP. The two center-right parties, the TPP and MP, ranked lowest, with 45.3 and 37.8 percent, respectively.²⁴ Another survey showed that political parties were among the least trusted public institutions. The confidence score (computed by subtracting the total of those who had no or little trust in the institutions from the total of those who had much or some trust) was -40 for political parties in 1997. Interestingly the armed forces ranked first with a confidence score of 88, followed by the police (44 percent), the courts (43 percent), religious institutions (40 percent), and the public bureaucracy (36 percent). Furthermore, a comparison of the two parallel surveys of 1991 and 1997 indicate a marked erosion of trust in "political" institutions such as the government and the parliament.²⁵

The role played by parties in "issue structuration" became less prominent in the 1980s and the 1990s, following the collapse of the communist regimes and the decline of the socialist ideology in general.

Consequently, the left-right division over economic issues has lost its relative importance, since all parties now support, to varying degrees, a free-market economy and the private ownership of the means of production. Conversely, the rise of political Islam as represented by the WP meant that issues related to a religious-secular cleavage rose in prominence. Nevertheless the WP, walking on a tightrope in a constitutional system where secularism is strongly safeguarded, generally refrained from structuring issues in overtly religious forms, as the Virtue Party has also done since its founding. Rather, the WP intentionally couched its appeals in such vague concepts as the “just order” and the “national and moral values.” In general, parties have emphasized “valence issues” such as clean government and economic prosperity, rather than “position issues.”²⁶ The relatively low salience of issues is both a cause and a reflection of another general characteristic of Turkish parties, namely personalism. In election campaigns the trustworthiness and other personal qualities of party leaders loom much larger than the parties’ positions on issues. This high degree of personalism is also responsible for the division of the center-right and the center-left tendencies into two separate parties each. The personal rivalries between Yılmaz and Çiller on the center-right, and between Ecevit and Baykal on the center-left make a merger highly unlikely in the foreseeable future.

Finally, Turkish parties have been characterized since the beginnings of the multiparty politics by a high degree of party discipline particularly in parliamentary voting. Deviation from the party line is very rare and, if it happens, usually leads to the expulsion of the recalcitrant MP. This appears to be an outcome of the high degree of centralization of authority within parties, and particularly the strong position of leaders. The parliamentary system of government has also contributed to high party cohesion, since the fate of the government depends on party unity in parliament. In other words, party discipline and cohesion are necessary virtues in a parliamentary system, whereas their role is much less significant in a presidential one. Thus parties can normally be expected to produce and maintain relatively stable and efficacious governments, even though the fragmentation of the party system makes coalition politics a necessary and rather difficult game. Such party unity in parliament is all the more remarkable in view of the fact that most Turkish parties suffer from a marked tendency toward factionalism.²⁷

Given the organizational characteristics mentioned above, one may wonder about the place of Turkish parties in the overall classification of political parties. A recent study has distinguished among four sequential models of party: elite (cadre) party, mass party, catch-all party, and cartel party.²⁸ Most Turkish parties combine certain characteristics of cadre and catch-all parties, with some elements of cartel parties. In a number of respects, they approach the model of the

cartel party. First, the principal goals of politics seem to have become politics as profession, in which party competition takes place on the basis of competing claims to efficient management. Second, party work and party campaigning have become capital intensive. Third, parties have become increasingly dependent on state subsidies and state-regulated channels of communication. And fourth, as a result, parties have shown a tendency to become part of the state and act as agents of the state. In the change from a cadre party model to a catch-all or cartel party model, Turkish parties have never gone through a mass party phase. To some extent the WP was an exception to this rule, as I will discuss below.

The Rise of Political Islam: The Welfare Party

One of the most important events in Turkish politics in the last decade has been the rise of political Islam as represented by the WP. Although the party's origins go back to 1970, its predecessor, the National Salvation Party (NSP), remained a medium-sized party between 1973 and 1980, with its national vote share never exceeding 12 percent.²⁹ After a modest restart in 1984 under the name of the WP, its vote share rose steadily, climbing to just over 19 percent in the local elections of 1994, which gave the party control over Turkey's two largest cities and many other provincial centers. The 21.4 percent of the vote (158 parliamentary seats) that it won in the December 1995 elections represented political Islam's best national showing ever. The WP received 15.4 percent of the vote in the April 1999 elections.

Opinions vary as to the nature of the challenge that the WP represented (and which the VP now poses). The WP combined 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 the WP seriously intended to establish an "Islamic state" based on the *shari'a* (sacred law) or whether it would have been 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 an amendment to the present constitution. The party's statements on these questions were vague and contradictory enough to lend themselves to more than a single interpretation, and they ultimately led to the Constitutional Court ruling that the WP's actions were not compatible with the secular character of the state, as enshrined in the Constitution.

Ambivalence also marked the WP'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 the WP's intention to establish "real pluralistic democracy." Apart from

promising to enhance freedom of conscience and make greater use of referenda and “popular councils.” However, the WP never actually defined “real democracy.” In the party’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 WP prudently refrained 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 envisaged is more majoritarian than liberal or pluralistic. In a 1996 newspaper interview, Tayyip Erdoğan, the former mayor of Istanbul and one of the strongest candidates for party leadership after Erbakan, admitted that the WP considered democracy not so much an aim as an instrument.³⁰ Erbakan himself stated in the same vein that democracy is an instrument, not an aim. The aim is the establishment of an “order of happiness” (*saadet nizami*), an apparent reference to the era of Prophet Mohammed, which is usually referred to as the “age of happiness” (*asr-i Saadet*) in Islamic writings. A leading Turkish student of the WP concluded that “the WP is neither pro-*shari’a* . . . nor democratic, because it is both pro-*shari’a* and democratic in its own way.”³¹ Erbakan and other party leaders often stated that there were only two groups in Turkey, the WP supporters and the potential WP supporters, a notion that is hardly compatible with a truly pluralistic conception of society.

As for the economy, the WP proposed an Islamic-inspired “just order” that it viewed as a “third way” different from and superior to both capitalism and socialism. Although the party claimed that the “just order” is the “true private-enterprise regime,” its implementation, if possible at all, would require a heavy dose of state control. Many observers would agree that Islamists in Turkey have undergone a significant change in the last decades. Thus, while the NSP in the 1970s appeared as the party of the small Anatolian merchants and businessmen, the rise of an important “Muslim” bourgeoisie in the 1980s made the party much more open to the interests of the big business. Indeed, “since the 1980s, the Islamist sector in the economy has expanded, with large-scale holding companies, chain stores, investment houses, banks, and insurance companies. Particularly noteworthy are the joint businesses and investments that Islamist organizations have with international companies based in the Gulf countries.”³² Thus the WP moved away from statist, protectionist concerns to a position much more in favor of a free-market economy and Turkey’s integration into the global economy.³³

Whether the WP should be considered in retrospect an antisystem party is an open question. Certainly, it took pride in its claims to be different from all other parties. It accused them of being “mimics” that seek to ape the West and make Turkey its “satellite.” The WP denounced 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 the WP and the secular parties appeared quite wide. We will never know whether, if the party had not been banned by the Constitutional Court, the chasm could have been bridged in time by gradual elite convergence. Behind its radical rhetoric, the WP often showed signs of pragmatism and flexibility. For the most part, the WP mayors elected in 1994 in about 400 cities and towns, including Istanbul and Ankara, acted not like wild-eyed radicals but like reasonably honest and efficient managers. Similarly, the WP ministers in the WP-TPP coalition government, which lasted from June 1996 until June 1997, vacillated between moderate and responsible positions and highly controversial symbolic acts intended to keep radical Islamists loyal to the party.

An analysis of the attitudes and social characteristics of the WP voters also provides clues about the ambivalence of party policies and positions. Earlier research had indicated that religiosity (as defined by faith and practice of Islam and participation in religious rituals) was a major factor in determining the party preferences of Turkish voters. Thus, according to a 1990 survey, low levels of religiosity are associated with the left vote (although the DLP vote does not show a strong correlation with religiosity), while high levels of religiosity are correlated with electoral support for the MP, TPP, WP, and NAP.³⁴ More specifically, with regard to the association between political Islam and support for the WP, surveys show that the WP combined a religious appeal with a class appeal. According to a 1995 survey, 61.3 percent of WP voters were in favor of an Islamic political order (*şeriat düzeni*), as opposed to a minority among the supporters of other parties (31.1 percent in the NAP, 16.1 percent in the MP, 14.9 percent in the TPP, 8.3 percent in the DLP, and 4.6 percent in the RPP). On the other hand, 23.7 percent of the WP voters did not subscribe to an Islamic political order, and 15 percent had no opinion. Of all voters, 26.7 percent were in favor of an Islamic political order, as opposed to 58.1 percent who were against, and 15.2 percent who had no opinion. About 50 percent of those who were in favor of an Islamic political order saw it as an indispensable element of their religious beliefs. There are strong correlations between adherence to political Islam and the class position of the respondents: 14.3 percent of the upper and upper-middle class, 18.6 percent of the middle class, 22.9 percent of the lower-middle class, and 27.9 percent of the lower-class respondents were found to be in favor of an Islamic political order.³⁵

Similarly, a December 1996 survey demonstrated that 60.6 percent of the WP voters favored the inclusion of some Islamic principles in the constitution. When voters were asked why they voted for the WP, however, only about half gave ideological reasons, such as the WP's

defense of religious values (20.9 percent), its promise of a “just order” (13.4 percent), and its respect for “national and moral values” (12.5 percent). About one-third (29.6 percent) stated that they voted for the WP because they perceived it as an honest and reliable party. Also, 79.3 percent were of the opinion that the WP was the most honest party of all. About half of the WP voters seemed to follow the party line on most ideological issues. For example, 56 percent believed that the government should oblige or encourage women to wear head scarves; 49 percent were in favor of separate education for men and women; 45 percent favored separation of the sexes in public transportation; and 59.5 percent saw the Organization of Islamic Conference as the international organization best serving Turkey’s interests (as opposed to a total of one-fourth for NATO, the EU, and the UN).³⁶

These findings suggest that a good part of the WP’s appeal was indeed founded on religious grounds. The same findings also demonstrate, however, that between one-third and one-half of the WP voters seemed to vote for it for nonideological reasons. The WP vote also correlates with the class variable. The party’s call for a “just order” apparently appealed to the small farmers and the low-income groups in the cities, even though the content of the just order was never made explicit. This appeal was particularly strong in an economic environment marked by high inflation, unemployment, urban migration, deteriorating income distribution, and widespread corruption. Thus economic problems were cited by a substantial number of the WP voters as Turkey’s most important problem: inflation (8.4 percent), economic growth (6.9 percent), unemployment (6.2 percent), and the deterioration of income distribution (3.2 percent). The largest group of WP voters (27.2 percent), however, saw “anarchy and terror” as Turkey’s most important problem. Among the country’s most urgent economic problems, unemployment ranked first (43.2 percent), followed by inflation (33.3 percent). About one-third (33.1 percent) of WP voters saw their party as the party of the poor and the oppressed, as opposed to the 53.5 percent who saw it as a party appealing to all sectors of society.³⁷

Prior to the local elections of 1994, the left had won most of the municipalities in the low-income immigrant neighborhoods along the peripheries of the large cities. By the latter half of the 1990s, however, the same neighborhoods had become strongholds of the WP, evidence of the extent to which the WP had sunk strong roots among the urban poor. “WP support in metropolitan areas [was] overwhelmingly peripheral and provincial, in the sense that it rest[ed] on a politically active ‘secondary elite’ highly effective in mobilizing the urban, lower-middle and lower-income groups, and Kurds.”³⁸

The WP was stronger in rural areas (more than half of its voters were rural), and the WP vote was inversely related to years of schooling. Electoral support for the WP came disproportionately from small farmers,

blue-collar workers, small traders, and artisans, and from among the lower and lower-middle classes.³⁹

These findings go a very long way in explaining the vagueness and ambivalence in the party's positions on issues. To appeal to the more centrist voters who have no desire to see an Islamic state in Turkey, the WP had to moderate its positions and move to the center, in the process becoming a party much like the Christian Democrats in Europe. Some observers perceived that the WP had already completed this transformation. Others noted the WP's efforts to maintain its support among the more radical Islamists and to emphasize its differences with the other parties along a religious-secular dimension, which risked polarizing the conflict and even threatening democracy. The WP faces the same dilemma, although its leaders have been much more careful than their predecessors in using explicitly religious themes. Organizationally, the WP was the only Turkish party that has come close to the model of a mass party, or a party of social integration.⁴⁰ The Islamists constitute the most organized sector of Turkish society, as evidenced in their numerous associations, foundations, newspapers, periodicals, publishing houses, television networks, Quran courses, student dormitories, university preparation courses, a pro-WP trade union (HAK-İŞ), a pro-WP businessmen's association (MÜSAD), holding companies, as well as such informal groups as various *Sufi* orders and other religious communities. Even though most of these groups and organizations had no formal or direct link with the WP, they provided a comprehensive network effectively encapsulating the individual member and creating a distinct political subculture. Members and opponents of the WP recognized it as representative of the Islamist segment of civil society.

On the other hand, the WP seemed to lack the intraparty democracy usually associated with mass parties. Membership entailed obligations (such as taking part in the party work) rather than rights. Party policy was made top down by a small group of leaders (Erbakan and his close associates) who dominated the WP and its predecessors for more than a quarter of a century, with little input from rank and file members. (However, Erbakan and some other WP founders were barred from party politics for five years when the WP was proscribed by the Constitutional Court in February 1998.) There was almost no genuine intraparty debate or competition at the party congresses, which invariably endorsed the leadership by acclamation. In parliamentary votes, the WP deputies displayed perfect discipline. The party had effective women's and youth organizations that campaigned for the party not only during elections but throughout the year. A new member was immediately introduced to party work and given responsibilities in any of a number of committees, including those for women, youth, workers, or polling booths. In fact, the party's organization was based on polling-booth districts, and within

such districts, each street, sometimes even each apartment building, was assigned to a particular member, who, among other things, had to get out the vote on election day. Political education or indoctrination within the party was strongly emphasized and carried out by party members called “teachers.” Each subprovince (*ilçe*) was assigned to the responsibility of a “headmaster,” and there were “inspectors” at the provincial or regional level to supervise political education.⁴¹

Among its many activities, the WP organization also provided some welfare services for its supporters. According to one report, the WP mayor of a poor district in Istanbul distributed 1,500 tons of coal in one winter and gave out packages of food (250 kilos each) to 3,500 families during the holy month of Ramadan.⁴² In fact, providing such welfare services was a characteristic not only of the WP but of Islamist organizations in general. A student of these organizations concluded that “following the example of similar movements in other Islamic countries, the *sufi* organizations have, in the past few years, tended to concentrate their efforts on welfare services, of which education is one. The economic reformist policies of the 1980s limited government expenditure on social services and on the welfare state in general. This in a country in which these services were only at a rudimentary state and at a time when the rapid rural-urban exodus created widespread poverty in cities. The religious organizations have jumped to organize relief for the poor, medical centers, and hospitals that offer treatment schemes and child-care programs.”⁴³ In the final analysis, however, the rising electoral fortunes of the WP were due more to the failure of the centrist parties to fulfill their promises and to provide benefits to the voters and less to the organizational prowess of the WP.⁴⁴

The Center-Right

Since the first free multiparty elections of 1950, Turkey has been ruled by the center-right parties, except for the periods of military rule and the brief spells when their chief rival, the RPP, led coalition governments. The center-right was represented by the DP in the 1950s and by the JP in the 1960s and the 1970s. The TPP claims descent from the JP. When the DP was closed down by the military government in 1960, three parties competed for its votes in the 1961 elections: the Justice Party (JP), the New Turkey Party (NTP), and the Republican Peasant Nation Party (RPNP). As a result, the former DP votes were split among these three parties. The JP eventually established itself as the principal heir to the DP, and in the 1965 elections won the absolute majority of the votes and of the National Assembly seats. Following the 1971 military intervention, the center-right vote was again fragmented among the JP, the Democrat Party (Dem. P, which was a conservative offshoot of the JP), and the Islamist National Salvation Party (NSP).

Consequently, in the 1973 elections, the JP vote fell to 29 percent while the Dem. P and the NSP gained about 12 percent apiece. Most of the Dem. P leaders and voters returned to the fold in the 1977 elections. The NSP persisted, however, as the representative of a distinct segment of voters. Thus, toward the end of the 1970s, the Turkish party system displayed an essentially four-party format: the center-right JP, the center-left RPP, the Islamist NSP, and the ultranationalist NAP.⁴⁵

The military regime (NSC) that ruled Turkey between 1980 and 1983 outlawed all existing parties and permitted the establishment of new ones just prior to the November 1983 elections. This was a carefully controlled process that led to a "limited choice election" that only three parties approved or licensed by the military were allowed to contest. To the surprise of many, the Motherland Party (MP) led by Turgut Özal won the elections with 45 percent of the vote and an absolute majority of the Assembly seats. The MP also won the 1987 elections with a reduced percentage of votes (36.3 percent) but an increased majority of the seats due to the favorable changes it introduced into the electoral system. The 1987 elections were held after the military-imposed ban on former political leaders and members of parliament was removed by a popular referendum, and were thus contested by the four former political leaders (Ecevit, Demirel, Erbakan, and Türkeş) at the head of their own parties.

The most noteworthy feature of party politics in the 1980s was the predominance of the MP, which gave Turkey eight years of uninterrupted single-party government, the first since 1971. The MP did not claim descent from any of the old parties. In fact, Özal always proudly asserted that he brought together all four preexisting political tendencies under the MP roof, although a majority of its votes seems to have come from former JP supporters. Statistical analysis of the party votes in the 1983 elections did not show strong correlations between the MP vote and the votes for former parties in previous elections, thereby lending support to Özal's argument that the MP was not the continuation of any of the old parties but was a new actor in Turkish politics.⁴⁶ In other words, of all the Turkish parties of the 1980s, "only . . . the Motherland Party is based on new societal cleavages and mobilization of a relatively new ideological concept known as the new right."⁴⁷ While some scholars view the MP "as an extension of the 1980 coup government," others see it as "the initiator of liberal revolutions, antibureaucratic, pluralist, modern, and able to bring together a coalition including a wide range of ideological groups," and thus a "genuine catch-all party."⁴⁸

In the 1983 elections, the MP fared better in urban areas and in the most developed regions. It appears that it "gained support from the upwardly mobile, entrepreneurially minded, pragmatic, modernist groups that were predominantly urban and living in the developed areas of Turkey. This included considerable support from such occupational groups as the urban self-employed, businessmen and upwardly mobile

urban workers.”⁴⁹ The MP’s urban accent continued in the subsequent elections, albeit to a more limited degree.

The coalition brought together by the MP did not prove to be enduring. The erosion of the MP support was due to increasing economic difficulties (particularly high inflation) on the one hand, and to the competition of the other right parties on the other. With the reactivation of the WP and the NAP, some of their former supporters who voted for the MP in 1983 returned to the fold. But the most dangerous competitor for the MP was the TPP. With the removal of the ban on the political activities of former politicians, Demirel became the leader of the TPP in 1987. Under his energetic leadership the party became the leading party on the center-right in the 1989 local and the 1991 parliamentary elections, thereby bringing the MP’s predominance to an end. In this race the TPP, as the direct heir to the JP, had the advantage of being based on an older, more powerful, and closely knit network of local party organizations with strong clientelistic ties. By comparison, the MP was closer to a cadre party or caucus party model with relatively weak local organizations.⁵⁰

As for the ideological differences between the two main contenders on the center-right, as opposed to the new right, free-market ideology of the MP, the TPP represented a more conservative, populist, and egalitarian ideology in the tradition of the DP and the JP. Both parties tried to appeal to the conservative voters by making references to nationalist and religious symbols. However, the MP’s propaganda in the 1980s gave much more prominence to the themes of change and modernization, as was evident in Özal’s slogans of “transformation” and “leaping to a new age” (*çağ atlamak*). In contrast, the TPP engaged in a more populist discourse based on the notions of economic justice, egalitarianism, distributive policies, and a paternalistic protective state.⁵¹ The ideological differences between the two parties have tended to disappear in recent years, however. The TPP under Tansu Çiller moved closer to Özal’s free-market oriented, antipopulist, and antiwelfare policies, while the MP under Mesut Yılmaz moved closer to a Demirel-style egalitarian populism.

Public-opinion data demonstrate that the urban-rural factor is still an important variable differentiating between the MP and the TPP supporters. As of 1996, 54 percent of MP supporters (as opposed to 49 percent of TPP supporters) were urban residents. With regard to occupational categories, the TPP seems to be more popular among farmers (35 percent as opposed to 30 percent for the MP), and the MP slightly more popular among blue-collar workers and small traders and artisans. As far as the respondents’ class positions are concerned, the MP seems to be doing slightly better among the lower classes, while the TPP performs better among the upper and upper-middle classes. Nevertheless, these differences are generally too small to suggest that the two center-

right parties are indeed based on clearly distinguishable social bases, leading to the conclusion that the fragmentation of the center-right is due less to deep-seated sociological differences than to historical events and the clash of personalities.⁵²

The Center-Left

The center-left position on the political spectrum has been occupied in recent years by two parties, the DLP of Bülent Ecevit and the RPP of Deniz Baykal, and for a while it was represented by three parties (the DLP, the RPP, and the SDPP) until the merger of the latter two. Thus the divisive effects of the 1980 military intervention can also be observed on the center-left. In the limited-choice elections of 1983, the center-left was represented by the Populist Party (PP), which the military viewed as a loyal and moderate opposition party to its first choice for winning a parliamentary majority, the Nationalist Democracy Party (NDP). On the other hand, the National Security Council did not permit the Social Democratic Party (SDP), founded by a number of former RPP politicians and headed by Erdal İnönü, the son of former president and RPP leader İsmet İnönü, which looked like a more credible heir to the RPP. The PP received 30.5 percent of the vote in the 1983 elections, but soon afterwards it decided to merge with the SDP to become the Social Democratic Populist Party (SDPP). In the meantime, Mr. Ecevit, who had strong reservations about the factional conflicts within the old RPP prior to 1980, formed his own party, the DLP. Since Ecevit, like all former political leaders, was banned from political activity, the party was headed by his wife, Rahzan Ecevit, until the ban was removed by the constitutional referendum of 1987.

The ideological differences between the DLP and the SDPP (now the RPP) are not substantial, although they are much more strongly emphasized by the DLP leaders than by the RPP leaders. A fairly important difference is that the DLP does not claim to represent the legacy of the old RPP, while the elements of continuity are much more marked between the old and new RPP. Ecevit characterizes the old RPP as too elitist, representing a notion of reform from above, "for the people but against the wishes of the people." Another difference is that while the SDPP (RPP) program gives a more prominent role to the state in economic affairs, the DLP is more inclined to diversify the economic structure by encouraging the establishment of cooperatives and producers' unions in order to prevent both state and private monopolies.⁵³ On most other issues, however, the two parties' positions are rather similar. A 1990 survey found that the mean left-right score for SDPP supporters was 3.94, and for DLP supporters it was 4.28, putting the DLP very slightly to the right of the SDPP.⁵⁴ Similarly, a 1996 survey demonstrated that differences between the socioeconomic characteristics

of the DLP and the RPP supporters were small. The RPP was stronger among the white-collar and upper and upper-middle class voters and the DLP did somewhat better in all other social categories. Although both parties draw disproportionate support from urban areas, the urban character of the DLP supporters was stronger than that of the RPP (67.9 percent urban for the DLP as opposed to 58.0 percent for the RPP).⁵⁵

As a result of the April 1999 elections, the DLP emerged as the strongest party in the country, with 22.2 percent of the vote, while its rival RPP remained below the 10 percent threshold, with 8.7 percent of the vote. A new tripartite coalition government was formed between the DLP, the Nationalist Action Party (NAP), and the MP under the premiership of Ecevit. This unlikely coalition has turned out to be surprisingly long-lasting.

Minor Parties

Since Turkish electoral law does not permit parliamentary representation to parties that receive less than 10 percent of the total national votes cast, at present no minor party is represented in the National Assembly. The only exception is the Grand Unity Party (a religiously oriented conservative offshoot from the NAP) as it was allied with the MP in the 1995 elections and presented its candidates on MP lists. After the elections, seven deputies elected on the MP lists resigned from the MP and rejoined their old party.

The other two parties that obtained a fairly high percentage of votes but were barred from representation for failing to meet the 10 percent threshold were the NAP and the People's Democracy Party (PDP, HADEP in Turkish). The origins of the NAP go back to the mid-1960s when the party became an ultranationalist (to its opponents, a fascist) political force under the leadership of ex-colonel Alparslan Türkeş, one of the leading figures in the 1960 military intervention. The NAP played a highly polarizing role in the 1970s in the violent clashes between the extreme left and extreme right-wing groups. It appears, however, that the NAP moved to a more centrist position in the 1980s and particularly in the 1990s, although it is arguable whether the NAP moved to the center or the center moved closer to the NAP's nationalist and statist lines.⁵⁶ The NAP contested the 1991 elections in alliance with the WP and consequently was able to send some representatives to parliament. In the 1995 elections, it received 8.2 percent of the vote, barely below the national threshold. It still represents an ultranationalist position, especially with regard to the Kurdish issue, but its commitment to democratic processes is more explicit today than it was in the 1970s.⁵⁷ The NAP emerged as the second largest party with 18 percent of the vote in the 1999 elections, and it joined in the coalition government led by Ecevit.

Another fairly important minor party that was not able to pass the electoral threshold in 1995 and 1999 is the PDP (People's Democracy Party, HADEP), representing the Kurdish minority. Since both the Constitution and the Political Parties Law proscribe ethnic parties, the two predecessors of the PDP (People's Labor Party and the Democracy Party) were banned by the Constitutional Court. The PDP 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 the Kurdish minority is concentrated. The PDP received more than 40 percent of the vote in two southeastern provinces and more than 20 percent in six others. As long as the relevant articles of the constitution and the Political Parties Law remain unchanged, however, the PDP is likely to share the fate of its predecessors. The PDP also participated in the 1999 elections and received 4.75 percent of the vote, its support again concentrated mostly in the southeast.

Deinstitutionalization

The historical overview of Turkey's political parties and party system suggests that Turkey represents a case of deinstitutionalization. The Turkish party system until the end of 1970s was essentially a bipolar (if not a two-party) system, in which two highly organized, well-established parties with strong historical and social roots (the RPP and the DP/JP) dominated the political scene. The tendencies toward electoral volatility, party fragmentation, and ideological polarization, which had already started to affect politics adversely in the 1970s, have now reappeared in worse form after a stable, one-party MP government for a period of eight years (1983–91). These three maladies in the party system no doubt constitute an important obstacle to further democratic consolidation.

Together with these tendencies in the party *system*, there appears to be an overall decline in the organizational capabilities of political *parties* (particularly in regard to their candidate selection, electoral mobilization, and issue structuration functions) and a fall in the public esteem in which they are held. While in much of Europe organizational change in parties is generally from a mass-party to a catch-all or cartel party model, in Turkey there has been a direct leap from the cadre party to a catch-all or cartel party without having gone through a mass-party phase. To some extent, the WP provided an exception to both generalizations. It was the only Turkish party that avoided organizational decline and the only party that approximated the mass-party model. Parallel to organizational decline, there has been a sharp drop in the public's confidence in political parties, which seems to be at the lowest point ever. Parties are generally perceived as corrupt and highly oligarchical institutions run dictatorially by narrow-minded and uncompromising leaders who are unable to produce solutions to the country's pressing problems.

And yet, Turkish politics are still, by and large, party politics. Most people realize that in a democracy there is no alternative to political parties. Therefore, much of the current debate in Turkey centers around new policies aimed at making parties more democratic and responsive. It is hoped, for example, that the adoption of a single-member, double-ballot majority system will make deputies less dependent on their leaders and more responsive to their voters. Such a system may also reduce party fragmentation by forcing similar-minded parties to forge electoral alliances. Another proposed reform is to limit the leaders' influence on candidate selection by, for example, making it compulsory for all parties to hold primary elections. Finally it is hoped that by reducing the state's role in the economy, the spoils of politics would be limited and party work would be based more on idealistic motives than those of personal material gains.

The trends described above were not significantly altered by Turkey's April 1999 parliamentary elections (although they did produce some surprising results). Once again, the elections produced, as expected, a fragmented parliament with five parties passing the 10 percent national threshold. The two big winners of the elections were the DLP of Ecevit, with 22.2 percent of the vote, and the NAP of Devlet Bahçeli (who became the leader of the party upon the death of Alparslan Türkeş), with 18.0 percent. The two main losers were the two center-right parties, the MP and the TPP, whose votes fell from about 19 percent apiece, to 13.2 and 12.0 percent, respectively. Also among the losers were the Virtue Party (from 21.4 percent for the WP in 1995 to 15.4 percent) and the RPP (from 10.7 percent to 8.7 percent). Thus the RPP, the oldest party of the Republic, remained below the 10 percent threshold and was unable to send any representatives to the parliament. Neither was the Kurdish nationalist HADEP (PDP), which only slightly increased its votes to 4.75 percent. In terms of electoral volatility, the 1999 elections were the most volatile in the last decade.

Issues played a relatively unimportant role in the campaign. The DLP's and the NAP's gains owed to their "clean" images. Conversely, the MP and the TPP apparently suffered from charges of corruption, as well as from the bitter feud between the two parties. The VP's significant loss of support was another important feature of the elections. It seems that the protest votes that went to the WP in 1995 this time switched mainly to the NAP.

Perhaps even more importantly, the 1999 elections confirmed the trend toward identity politics in Turkey. Three parties that define themselves mainly in terms of identity-oriented issues (the NAP representing Turkish nationalist identity, the VP representing Islamic identity, and the HADEP representing Kurdish ethnic identity) together received a total of 38 percent of the vote. To this must be added the growing identity consciousness among the Alevis (Turkish Shi'ites),

even though their votes were split among different parties. The rising importance of identity-oriented issues can be considered another source of difficulty in the development of Turkey's party system in a more consensual and pragmatic direction.

NOTES

1. Frederick W. Frey, *The Turkish Political Elite* (Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1965), 301–3. On the importance of party-system institutionalization for democratic consolidation, see also 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, 1995), 78–81.

2. Üstün Ergüder and Richard I. Hofferbert, "The 1983 General Elections in Turkey: Continuity or Change in Voting Patterns?" in Melin Heper and Ahmet Evin, eds., *State, Democracy, and Military: Turkey in the 1980s* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988), 81–102. Ergun Özbudun, "The Turkish Party System: Institutionalization, Polarization, and Fragmentation," *Middle Eastern Studies* 17 (April 1981): 228–40.

3. Douglas W. Rae, *The Political Consequences of Electoral Laws* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 56.

4. For this distinction, see Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis* (Cambridge University Press, 1976), 131–45.

5. Leonardo Morlino, "Political Parties and Democratic Consolidation in Southern Europe," in Richard Gunther, P. Nikiforos Diamandouros, and Hans-Jürgen Puhle, eds., *The Politics of Democratic Consolidation: Southern Europe in Comparative Perspective* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 321.

6. Yılmaz Esmer, "Dini Değerler Yükselişte" (Religious values on the rise), *Milliyet*, 9 April 1997.

7. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 255–58.

8. Larry Diamond, "Democracy in Latin America," 77; Juan 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: Holmes and Meier, 1989), 47.

9. 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: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 21. See also Scott Mainwaring, "Transitions to Democracy and Democratic Consolidation: Theoretical and Comparative Issues," *idem*, 311.

10. Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State* (London: Methuen, 1959), 61–79.

11. Arsev Bektaş, *Demokratikleşme Sürecinde Liderler Oligarşisi, CHP ve AP (1961–1980)* (Leadership oligarchy in the process of democratization), (Istanbul: Bağlam, 1993), 39–52, 133–37; Sabri Sayari, "Aspects of Party Organization in Turkey," *The Middle East Journal* 30 (Spring 1976): 188–89.

12. TÜSES Veri Araştırma A.Ş., *Türkiye'de Siyasî Parti Seçmenlerinin Nitelikleri, Kimlikleri ve Eğilimleri* (Characteristics, identities, and tendencies of party voters in Turkey) (Ankara: TÜSES, 1996), 95.

13. Sabri Sayari, 197–99.

14. TÜSES, 132–33.

15. Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, "Elections and Party Preferences in Turkey: Changes and Continuities in the 1990s," *Comparative Political Studies* 27 (October 1994): 403. See also Şerif Mardin, "Center-Periphery Relations: A Key to Turkish Politics," *Daedalus* (Winter 1972): 169–90; Metin Heper, *The State Tradition in Turkey* (Wilmington, England: Eothen, 1985); Ergun Özbudun, *Social Change and Political Participation in Turkey* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), ch.2.

16. Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, 407.

17. Sabri Sayari, "Some Notes on the Beginnings of Mass Political Participation in Turkey," in Engin D. Akarlı with Gabriel Ben-Dor, eds., *Political Participation in Turkey: Historical Background and Present Problems* (Istanbul: Boğaziçi University Publications, 1975), 123–25. See also Paul Stirling, *Turkish Village* (New York: Wiley, 1965), 281–82.

18. Metin Heper, *The State Tradition in Turkey*, 100–1.

19. TÜSES, 93–94. Obviously, these figures do not include informal groups such as religious communities and *sufi* orders.

20. A typical example is a frank admission by Abdullah Gül, a former minister of state and a leading figure in the WP that "what counts is our performance in the government, not what the voters were told." *Milliyet*, 20 February 1997.

21. Arsev Bektaş, *passim*.

22. E. Shattschneider, *Party Government* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1942), 64.

23. For comparisons, see Michael Gallagher, "Conclusion," in Michael Gallagher and Michael Marsh, eds., *Candidate Selection in Comparative Perspective: The Secret Garden of Politics* (London: Sage Publications, 1988), 236–45.

24. TÜSES, 121–22, 127–28.

25. Yılmaz Esmer, "Birbirimize Güvenmiyoruz" (We don't trust each other), *Milliyet*, 8 April 1997. See also TÜSIAD (Association of Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen), *Türk Toplumunun Değerleri* (Values of Turkish society) (Istanbul, 1991), 22–23.

26. For the distinction between valence issues and position issues, see William Schneider, "Electoral Behavior and Political Development," mimeo., Harvard University, Center for International Affairs, 1972. Valence issues "are characterized by only *one* body of opinion on values or goals. They define a condition or a situation which is highly valued by the electorate, and political leaders do not take one side or the other. Valence issues are exemplified by peace and prosperity."

27. Huri Tilrsan, "Pernicious Party Factionalism as a Constant of Transitions to Democracy in Turkey," *Democratization* 2 (Spring 1995): 169–84.

28. Richard S. Katz and Peter Mair, "Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy: The Emergence of the Cartel Party," *Party Politics* 1 (January

1995): 5–28. For a slightly modified version of this scheme, see Klaus Von Beyme, "Party Leadership and Change in Party Systems: Towards a Postmodern Party State," *Government and Opposition* 31 (Spring 1996): 135–59.

29. On the NSP period, see Binnaz Toprak, *Islam and Political Development in Turkey* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981); Jacob M. Landau, "The National Salvation Party in Turkey," *Asian and African Studies* 11 (1976): 1–57; Ergun Özbudun, "Islam and Politics in Modern Turkey: The Case of the National Salvation Party," in Barbara Freyer Stowasser, ed., *The Islamic Impulse* (London: Croom Helm, 1987), 142–56; Ali Yaşar Sarıbay, *Türkiye'de Modernleşme, Din ve Parti Politikası: MSP Örneği Olayı* (Modernization, religion and party politics in Turkey: A case study on the NSP), (Istanbul: Alan, 1985).

30. *Milliyet*, 14 July 1996.

31. Ruşen Çakır, *Ne Şeriat, Ne Demokrasi: Refah Partisini Anlamak* (Neither the *shar'ia* nor democracy: Understanding the Welfare Party), (Istanbul: Metis, 1994), 128–29.

32. Sencer Ayata, "Patronage, Party and State: The Politicization of Islam in Turkey," *Middle East Journal* 50 (Winter 1996), 51.

33. Serdar Şen, *Refah Partisinin Teori ve Pratiği* (Theory and practice of the Welfare Party), (Istanbul: Sarınal, 1995).

34. Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, 420–21.

35. TÜSES, 6 7–76, 118–19.

36. PIAR, "Siyasal İslamın Ayak Sestleri" (Footsteps of political Islam), unpubl. ms., 1997, 4, 14, 16, 19, 31.

37. PIAR, 9, 12, 21.

38. Sencer Ayata, 54.

39. TÜSES, 106–16.

40. For parties of social integration, see Sigmund Neumann, "Toward a Comparative Study of Political Parties," in Sigmund Neumann, ed., *Modern Political Parties: Approaches to Comparative Politics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1956), 404–5.

41. Ruşen Çakır, 51–52, 71–73. See also Serdar Şen, 79–101 and Sencer Ayata, 52.

42. Ruşen Çakır, 185.

43. Sencer Ayata, 50–51.

44. Morton Abramowitz, quoted by Ilkay Sunar, "State, Society, and Democracy in Turkey," in Wojtech Mastny and R. Craig Nation, eds., *Turkey between East and West: New Challenges for a Rising Regional Power* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1996), 151.

45. On the dynamics of the party system in the late 1970s, see Ergun Özbudun, "The Turkish Party System: Institutionalization, Polarization and Fragmentation," *Middle Eastern Studies* 17 (April 1981): 228–40; on the RPP for the 1945–1980 period, see Frank Tachau, "The Republican People's Party, 1945–1980," in Metin Heper and Jacob M. Landau, eds., *Political Parties and Democracy in Turkey*

(London: I.B. Tauris, 1991), 99–118; for the JP, see Avner Levi, "The Justice Party, 1961–1980," in *ibid.*, 134–51.

46. Üstün Ergüder and Richard I. Hofferbert, 81, 102. See also Üstün Ergüder, "The Motherland Party, 1983–1989," in Metin Heper and Jacob M. Landau, eds., *Political Parties and Democracy in Turkey*, 152–69.

47. Ayşe Ayata, "Ideology, Social Bases, and Organizational Structure of the Post-1980 Political Parties," in Atila Eralp, Muharrem Tünay, and Bırol Yeşilada, eds., *The Political and Socioeconomic Transformation of Turkey* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1993), 32.

48. *ibid.*, 33, 37.

49. *ibid.*, 35.

50. *ibid.*, 38, 40. Feride Acar reports that as of October 1988, about 70 percent of the local heads of the TPP were former JP members: "The True Path Party, 1983–1989," in Heper and Landau, eds., *Political Parties and Democracy in Turkey*, 190.

51. Feride Acar, 193–97. Ümit Cizre Sakallıoğlu, "Liberalism, Democracy and the Turkish Centre-Right: The Identity Crisis of the True Path Party," *Middle Eastern Studies* 32 (April 1996): 142–61.

52. TÜSES, 107, 113, 115.

53. Andrew Mango, "The Social Democratic Populist Party, 1983–1989," in Metin Heper and Jacob M. Landau, eds., *Political Parties and Democracy in Turkey*, 170–87; Şahin Alpay and Seyfettin Gürsel, *DSP-SHP: Nerede Birleşiyorlar, Nerede Ayrılıyorlar?* (DLP-SDPP: Where do they agree, where do they differ?), (İstanbul: Afa, 1986).

54. Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, 415. See also Yılmaz Eşmer, "Parties and the Electorate: A Comparative Analysis of Voter Profiles of Turkish Political Parties," in Çiğdem Balım et al., eds., *Turkey: Political, Social and Economic Challenges in the 1990s* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 84–85.

55. TÜSES, 107, 113, 115.

56. Ayşe Kadioğlu, "Samurai Sendromu ve MHP" (The Samurai syndrome and the NAP), *Yeni Yüzyıl* (daily), 12 April 1997.

57. For the NAP, see Jacob M. Landau, "The Nationalist Action Party in Turkey," *Journal of Contemporary History* 17 (1982): 587–606; Mustafa Çalık, *Siyasî Kültür ve Sosyolojinin Bazı Kavramları Açısından MHP Hareketi: Kaynakları ve Gelişimi* (The NAP movement, its sources and development in terms of political culture and certain sociological concepts), (Ankara: Cedit, 1995).