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Civil Society.
A Proposed Analytical Framework For
Studying its Development Using Turkey
as a Case Study

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Abstract

Based on her ethnographic fieldwork experience in Turkey during the 1990s, Navaro-Yashin critiques the usage of “civil society” and ultimately wants to do away with the concept. She notes that it is no longer possible to differentiate an autonomous social sphere from the functions and reaches of state power. While she has good ground for making that claim, I argue that if carefully defined and historically analyzed, “civil society” *can* play a role in developing a conceptual framework by which to study the political development of struggling democratic countries like Turkey. I argue that civil society, defined as the public sphere of active citizenship, is the product of three interacting variables: “state autonomy,” “state capacity,” and “social structure/culture.” Using this model I study the changing interactions of state and society in Turkey since the Ottoman period.

Basandosi sulla sua esperienza sul campo nella Turchia degli anni '90, Navaro-Yashin critica l'uso del termine “società civile” e intende sbarazzarsi del concetto. Essa osserva che non è più possibile differenziare una sfera sociale autonoma dalle funzioni e dal controllo del potere statale. Pur essendovi solide base per sostenere quest'argomento, io sostengo invece che, a patto di definirlo accuratamente e inserirlo all'interno di un momento storico, il termine “società civile” può interpretare un ruolo nello sviluppo di un quadro concettuale con il quale analizzare lo sviluppo politico di democrazie inquiete in paesi come la Turchia. Sostengo che la società civile, definita come la sfera pubblica della cittadinanza attiva, è il prodotto di tre variabili interagenti: “autonomia statale”, “capacità statuarie” e “struttura/cultura sociale”. Impiegando questo modello, osservo il mutamento nelle interazioni tra stato e società in Turchia a partire dall'età ottomana.

Civil Society: A Proposed Analytical Framework For Studying its Development Using Turkey as a Case Study

Mehmet Kucukozer*

Navaro-Yashin (1998) criticizes the “use and abuse” of the term “civil society” by both academics and public officials in Turkey during the 1980s and 90s. In particular, she attacks “post-Kemalist” social scientists for optimistically painting a picture of a new democratic and “rationalized” public sphere of social movement actors of various political leanings engaging with each other harmoniously, while simultaneously ignoring the kind of polarizing and fear-laden effect the state’s bloody and destructive war with the Kurdish insurgency in the East was having on public life. The violent, repressive, and manipulative presence of the state in the public sphere led Navaro-Yashin to ask whether it is empirically possible to separate state and society into distinct domains. She argues that attempts by statesmen and politicians to align themselves with the social sphere are really just historically contingent changes in the discourse and practice of state power rather than “an autonomous rise of a civil society” (4).¹

Navaro-Yashin ultimately wants to do away with “civil society.” Since, in her view, the state and society have merged so completely, and that empirically it is no longer possible to identify and differentiate “spontaneous

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¹ I also see Navaro-Yashin’s piece as a reaction to Putnam’s influential work on civil society, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (1993). In this work Putnam ignores the effects that state building has on civil society development and focuses almost exclusively on indigenous traditions of civic capacity (see Tarrow 1996).

expressions of civil society from discourses of state power, and vice versa” (21), she points to the need for establishing new analytical concepts and terms in order to explore the complex power-laden relationships that have bridged the two spheres together. I am more hesitant, however, of discarding the concept of civil society. I argue that if defined properly and its formation historically evaluated, then we *can* understand the nature of power-dependent relationships in struggling democracies such as Turkey. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to begin the formulation of an analytical framework for the evolution of civil society as a function of the changing nature of state-society relations over time. In developing the framework, I am using state building in Turkey as a historical model.

It is my view that “civil society” is the product of three interacting variables: state autonomy, state capacity, and social structure/culture. The interaction of these three variables will determine if states can foster broad linkages with local forms of association, diminishing their insularity, in order to meet long-term developmental challenges. Turkey, for instance, because of its historically low levels of state capacity and high levels of state autonomy, has been both unable and unwilling to build connections with traditionally insular and distrustful local community networks. Turkey has failed to produce a broad social basis for development and its local communities have remained fragmented. Consequently, the state has had to periodically sell some of its autonomy to buy measures of capacity in order to deal with issues as they have arisen. The parceling out of degrees of state autonomy has created competition among opportunistic and fragmented interest groups, leading to a public sphere of active citizenship wrought with tension and distrust.

1. Defining State-Society Relations and “Civil Society”

I define state-society relations as the product of an ongoing dialectic between societal groups and state actors/agencies (and their laws designed to regulate

societal activity) where linkages may broaden and deepen in certain historical junctures and weaken and diminish during others, and this can vary across regions and countries (see Skocpol 1985).

Within the above relationship, I see civil society playing a pivotal role in explaining the nature of collective action, power-dependent relations, economic development, and the degree that democracy is instituted in the polity of a country. In order to explain how these processes may occur, the concept of civil society needs to be elaborated. Civil society can be broken down into three models according to Michael Edwards (2004). The first of these is to view civil society as a container of “all associations and networks between the family and the state, except firms” (vii). The second is to see civil society as the normative order: “a *type* of society that is motivated by a different way of being and living in the world...” (viii)—I call this a discourse of life. The third model refers to civil society as the public arena of “rational dialogue” and “active citizenship,” which governments can foster in order to promote economic development. The models are not self-contained units; each model helps to determine the other. In this paper, I look to operationalize these relationships by identifying certain key variables. I propose to collapse the first two models of civil society to form a variable called “society/culture,”² whose combination with measures of state over time determines the nature of the public arena (the dependent variable), or the current condition of state-society interaction—i.e., the third model of civil society. The arena of active citizenship, however, may not be all that rational or civil in reality; it can be one of contention and distrust depending on the history of state-society relations. Again, I want to operationalize this history in order to determine how the sphere of civil society develops,

² I realize this sounds like an overly broad variable, but I am employing the Weberian use of the concept of “economic ethic,” defined as “the practical impulses for action which are founded in the psychological and pragmatic contexts of religions” (Gerth & Mills 1946 [1958]: 267), which is particularly useful in Turkey’s case with the widespread Anatolian practices of “folk Islam.”

its current condition, and future prospects of democracy and economic development of a country.

The measures of state I am using consist of two independent variables. These are “state autonomy” and “state capacity.” The two variables that qualify the state interact with the society/culture variable over a historical trajectory. The dynamic of the interactions determines the contemporary nature of the public arena of a country. In this paper I will focus on Turkey. Still, an important question to ask is at what point in Turkey’s history to begin the analysis that puts the three variables into play. I chose the period in which the Ottoman state and its policies began to have a greater impact, both directly and indirectly, on the everyday lives of the populations of Anatolia. This is around the middle of nineteenth century, just as the Ottoman state’s centralizing reforms were picking up momentum.

This paper is divided in essentially two sections: state practices and political culture from the Ottoman through the Turkish period (broken into two subsections), and the second section deals with the structure and cultural practices of Anatolian society of the same periods (also broken into two subsections). In the process of presenting the sections on state and society, I will highlight the interplay between the two spheres and how they have worked to create the condition of the current public arena. But before I begin discussing the Ottoman state, I need to define the variables that I have proposed to operationalize in this study.

2. Explaining the Variables

State autonomy is the degree that “[a] bureaucratic state apparatus, or a segment of it, can be said to be relatively autonomous when those who hold high civil and/or military posts satisfy two conditions: (1) they are not recruited from the dominant landed, commercial, or industrial classes; (2) they do not form close personal and economic ties with those classes after their elevation to

high office” (Trimberger quoted in Skocpol 1985: 10). The state’s ability to carry out its policies is a measure of its capacity. ‘Strong states are those with high capabilities “to penetrate society, regulate social relationships, extract resources, and appropriate or use resources in determined ways”’ (Özbudun 1996: 134). The two variables, as Özbudun indicates, are not mutually exclusive. A particular social group or class can capture the state and utilize it for its own interests creating the conditions of a non-autonomous state, but that state’s capacity to intervene in society and carry out its policies may be high. On the other hand, an autonomous state may be lacking in capacity.

There are still other factors to consider in defining state autonomy and state capacity. In terms of autonomy, it is important to consider the social class or group from which the state recruits its officials and where those officials obtain their training and skills (Trimberger 1978). If young bureaucrats are brought in from economically weaker social groups and given their education and training through state schools, then they are likely to strongly identify with the state rather than with any social group within society. State capacity is also dependent on the extent that it has the qualified personnel and the resources to carry out its operations. In the struggle to obtain those resources it is not uncommon for relatively autonomous states, which eschew alliances with the dominant social group, to look to establish links with other groups in society while in pursuit of its objectives (Özbudun 1996).

Clearly, the social structure, an element of the society/culture variable, is playing a significant role because, as indicated, it is the source of the state’s bureaucratic/military personnel and its resources. The social structure consists of an array of “trust networks,” which develop as people look for ways to minimize risk in their various activities such as in marriage, long-distance trade, joining crafts, monetary investment, education, etc. (Tilly 2004). States look to make linkages to these networks in order recruit people and draw resources. The

trust networks have a long-term impact in the way state-society relations develop and whether democratic polities emerge. If trust networks remain “insulated” from “public politics”—which can perpetuate weak state capacity, compromise state autonomy, and ultimately lead to a public sphere of high levels of contention as in anti-government resistance and competition among social groups—then the chances for democratic state formation remain low (Tilly 2004).

These networks also have an associated cultural dimension (the other element of the society/culture variable); that is, they are propped up by a belief system—such as the Weberian “economic ethic” of religion which gives meaning to everyday practices of society (i.e., the discourse of life). Again, the state can tap into this cultural dimension in order to garner legitimacy. The state, as a product of its own traditions of power, is based on certain value systems, beliefs, and worldviews. Where these find common ground with the value systems and worldviews found in society, the greater the societal support for that state’s autonomy of action, which was the case for the Ottoman state until the secularizing reforms which began around the middle of the nineteenth century when a culturally-distinct political elite began to alienate the Anatolian Muslim population.

3. The Ottoman State Tradition and its Legacy

Islamic law was the foundation for the Ottoman state. The state depended on a community of urban-based religious scholars (the *ulema*) who turned the rules in the Koran and the sayings and actions of the prophet Muhammed (the *Hadith*) into a system of laws known as the *Seriat*, or the divine law, which precluded any distinction between the secular and the sacred. However, *ijtihad* (interpretation) did provide means of dealing with new and evolving circumstances. Additionally, the Ottoman state borrowed from the Seljuk use of the Turko-Iranian practice of *urf*, or secular law making (Poulton

1997). Gradual secularization led to two bodies of laws: the public laws known as *kanun*, and the *Seriat* now only dealing with private laws such as inheritance and marriage (Poulton 1997). The leading religious scholar (the *Seyhulislam*) was still retained, if somewhat symbolically, to confer religious legitimacy to state laws. Accordingly, the Ottomans prescribed to the Sunni Hanafi School of law which conferred greater freedom of action for rulers.

According to Poulton (1997), although Islam has urban origins, there is no technical identification of a state apparatus that incorporates elements of an urban society; only a ruler is formally recognized. There are no self-constituted corporate bodies, such as legal courts, only individual *ulema*, and cities are not acknowledged as legal entities. Cities and towns consist only of informal/personalized identities such as families, neighborhoods, guilds, and their headmen.

The Ottomans' power over the *ulema* was just one reflection of the high level of autonomy that the state possessed. Özbudun (1996) provides a good description of the level of Ottoman state autonomy. The religious scholars, as mentioned, did not compose a separate "corporatist" identity; they were dependent on the state for their appointments, promotions, and salaries. A more significant reflection of the autonomous nature of the state lies in the fact that status and prestige for individuals came not through success in market-oriented activities, but through the achievement of a high position in the state bureaucracy, particularly during the modernizing governmental reforms (*Tanzimat*) which began in the mid-nineteenth century.

The Ottoman state was a patrimonial one. Following Islamic tradition, all power rested in the hands of the Sultan-Caliph, and all property in theory belonged to him. Thus in practice permanent economic assets did not exist. The state could appropriate property at will, and did not foster the emergence of a powerful merchant class. The ethnic division of labor placed international commerce largely in the hands of the non-Muslim corporatist

communities (the *millet* system) who were excluded from participation in the state.

Those who controlled land were the *sipahi*, a “military service gentry” (Özbudun: 135), who were paid through a portion of the taxes they collected from the peasants on behalf of the state. The *ayan*, the local notables that emerged in the eighteenth century and began to replace the *sipahi*, were part of the local social and military community, and their service to the state in terms of tax farming did bridge the central government with society to some degree, but not to any significant level according to Özbudun. In fact, because the state never formally incorporated the *ayan* they became a source of resistance to incipient Turkish nation building in the eastern parts of Anatolia during the 1920s (see Özoğlu 2001).

The Ottoman state essentially recognized only political classes rather than social ones. The Sultan conferred authority to officials of the royal court, military, bureaucracy, and the *ulema* directly. Consequently, a formal or institutionalized recognition of a Muslim civil society did not exist in Anatolia. “This means the fragility or absence of corporate, autonomous, intermediary social structures that, in the West, operated independently of the government and played a cushioning role between the state and the individual” (Özbudun: 136). The Muslim community was highly differentiated along informal associations, and the Ottoman state, although highly autonomous, reflected relatively low levels of state capacity by the mid-nineteenth century in making connections with those trust networks in order to regulate and benefit from them. Thus the “pluralistic infrastructure of a modern democratic state” (Özbudun: 137) did not exist when the Turkish Republic emerged.

4. *The Turkish State*

The legacy of the imperial state structure meant that the Turkish government, once formed in 1923, did not have

to contend with any powerful economic interests or formal corporate bodies, especially once the Christian populations were removed as a result of massacre or population exchange with neighboring countries. Thus the Turkish state was highly autonomous with a whole cadre of high-minded bureaucrats and military officers who came of age during the modernizing reforms of the Ottoman state.

Turkish officials were psychologically and socially distant from the larger and mainly rural society. The military academies, for instance, were the path of mobility and success for the sons of modest provincial families. Ottoman military education started at a young age and physically and intellectually isolated cadets from the rest of Ottoman society, creating an extremely elitist group of leaders. Through their education they learned to value state and nation as modern and civilizing forces, and came to look down upon the particularistic interests of the trading and commercial sector, as well as the “ignorant” Turkish peasant (Trimberger 1978, Nawawi 1981-1982, Özbudun 1996).

The Turkish middle classes at its early stages, then, consisted mainly of state officials. They came from the urban petty bourgeoisie and the rural middle classes, and they obtained their knowledge and skills through state schools. Status came to them by moving up in their government jobs, not through amassing wealth as a product of their activities within the economic sphere. Still, as leaders of a modernizing nation, they knew that they had to foster a national bourgeoisie to help the country industrialize and develop. The government introduced its first five-year plan in 1934. The leaders of industry were often former bureaucrats who had been trained in state enterprises before going off to their own businesses (Nawawi 1981-1982).

The Turkish state continued the Ottoman tradition of the patriarchal “father state.” They were to protect the population as a whole and not the personal interests of certain classes. The political culture was one of legitimacy for state intervention in society. However, legitimacy of state intervention did not translate into high levels of state

capacity. While the military was able to protect the territorial integrity of Anatolia, the state was ineffective in its project of modernizing the whole of the country. Waldner (1999) describes an emerging Turkey as a “mediated state,” where regional elites held sway over rural populations in place of the state because of its low level of capacity.

During the Ottoman period, the village was formally outside state administration. Kemalist reforms incorporated the village as the basic unit of local government. In this process, the village head, or *muhtar*, became a salaried official and was to be elected by the villagers. The district officer and the provincial governor were appointed by Ankara. The creation of salaried officials ultimately made them beholden to the state, and this did foster a greater centralization of state power.

Nevertheless, the officials who were paid by the state did not take much initiative in putting into effect local projects (Nawawi 1981-1982). The 1924 Village Law instructed a long list of obligatory and voluntary projects to be carried out by the villagers. These included building schools, whitewashing houses, the registration of births, marriages, and deaths, having regular council meetings, etc. The projects were largely ignored, however, and the state failed to enforce them (Nawawi 1981-1982). For example, land reform was discussed in the 1940s for those areas, mainly in the east, that contained large-landed elites and landless peasants, but such a program failed to be instituted (McDowell 1996). Large sections of rural Turkey, mainly in the east, are still outside the purview of the state (*The Economist*).

The inability to effect substantive change in the countryside, besides a reflection of low state capacity, was also a reflection of the large social/cultural divide between governmental elites and the rural population, a product of the high levels of state autonomy.³Modernizing state

³ This divide continues to the present day. The journalist Jonathan Randal (1997) reports a conversation he had with the high-ranked politician and minister of parliament, Kamran Inan, in reference to Ankara civil servants working on development projects. Inan had

officials abolished in 1924 “irrational” and “superstitious” Islamic practices found throughout Anatolia, such as the Sufi brotherhoods, or *tarikats*, and their associated schools, the *medreses*. Nevertheless, weak state capacity assured these practices would continue and even flourish.

The modernizing political elite also viewed industrialization and the establishment of a protected domestic market as the key to development rather than investing in an export-oriented agricultural economy. Therefore, Turkey did not extensively try to capitalize small-scale agriculture. The mass of the population was agrarian, and since long-distance trade remained weak, formalized and broad trust networks were slow to develop between state and societal actors. Instead, by 1941, in order to guarantee a cheap and sufficient food supply for the populations of the major urban centers and the large military, the government resorted to coercion to ensure its purchases of grain at below-market prices (Pamuk 1991). This led to wide-scale evasion by the peasants,⁴ obviating the progression of broad societal and state trust networks. Eventually, the large rural landholders, *muhtars* (headman), and local representatives of the state’s Republican People’s party received amnesties from the state’s coercive policies against the peasantry.

Pamuk’s explains that the shift in coercion from targeting the whole of the peasantry towards only the smaller landholders had to do with the ability of the larger cultivators to market their surplus cereals. Small peasants were deemed less likely to do so and the state thus opted

asked the group of bureaucrats how many of them had been to Western Europe. The majority raised their hands. ‘ “When I asked how many had visited the east and southeast, only one hand went up,” he said in disgust. “They didn’t know their own country. They devised their plans here in Ankara, and no wonder development projects failed,” he said’ (290).

⁴ According to Pamuk (1991), the government had targeted 800,000 tons of wheat (25% of the crop) for purchase in 1942, which would have been sufficient for an urban population that made up only twenty percent of the total population. The government’s maximum efforts only managed to procure 500,000 tons of wheat in the year noted.

for force in obtaining their surplus. I find this explanation, however, insufficient. As Pamuk also indicates, government representatives depended on local landlords and *muhtars* for lodging as well as advice on assessing harvests during visits to villages. Therefore, I would argue that the state's weak presence in the countryside forced it to depend on the influential rural elite in order to establish a greater measure of control of the provinces. The government thus sold some degree of state autonomy in the 1940s in order to buy some degree of state capacity.

By 1950, the influence of the rural elite became quite evident in Turkish politics.

The arrival of multiparty politics in that year paved the way for the rise of the Democratic Party (DP), which represented the interests of the conservative regional rural elites. The DP Prime Minister, Adnan Menderez, was himself a well-to-do landholder from western Anatolia. The rural elite utilized their influence over the smaller peasantry in order to maintain themselves in power. After a decade as the ruling party, the military intervened in 1960, outlawing the DP in order to reclaim state autonomy from the dominance of a particular social class.

The military and civilian bureaucracy always maintained the politically elitist notion of themselves as protectors of the "father state," standing above selfish and petty interests of particular classes. Every time the state was perceived to be threatened by capture or challenge by any social group or groups, the military orchestrated coups. 1960 was the first such event followed by others in 1970 and 1980, and the threat of one drove the Islamist Welfare party out of national power in 1997.

However, weak state capacity had continued to compromise the state's autonomy. After the 1980 military coup, the state sold some more state autonomy—this time to the more Islamist elements in society—in order to build enough capacity to stem the tide of left-wing revolutionary movements. The move began by incorporating Islamic education into state schools and was titled the "Turkish-Islamic Synthesis." It was a new attempt to foster a Turkish-Islamic identity and thereby consolidate society

under a banner of shared fundamental values, which, interestingly, was similar to Sultan Abdulhamid's attempts at using Islam a century earlier to unify his Muslim subjects against European encroachments (Poulton 1997).

According to Poulton, the synthesis resulted first in the purging of left-wing-minded professors from the universities and in the penetration by Islamists of several state and governmental bodies—except for the military, which has continued to be staunchly Kemalist. It also contributed significantly to a greater institutionalized Islamic presence in society through the state's extensive construction of new mosques and religious schools, and through a greater distribution of Korans.

Nevertheless, the state's incapacity during the post-1980 period of structural reforms and instability continued to compromise its autonomy. For instance, the inability to institute an effective tax system in order to generate revenue, or to combat the Kurdish insurgency in the east have led to informal, personalized, and shady alliances between state officials and certain businessmen, violent right-wing/religious groups, as well as with elements of organized crime well into the 1990s. The situation, in reference to the post-1980 liberal reform policies, could be described as such:

The private sector growing up in the shadow of the state (and thanks to the public sector) certainly has interest in gaining freedom of economic action, more access to credit, fiscal facilities, the freedom of cross-border traffic, but why should it have to undertake open political action when it can try to obtain all this at less cost to itself by remaining entrenched in bureaucratic or palace politics where its informal networks of family, regional, and factional solidarity is at the heart of the game. (Leca quoted in Özbudun: 150)

5. The Socio-Cultural Legacy of Ottoman Anatolia

To the institutionalized and formal existence of Islam among the urban theologians and legal scholars (the

ulema), Islam had a “parallel” (Poulton 1997) existence in the village, the core social grouping of Anatolian life during the Ottoman period (and well into the twentieth century). “Folk” Islam was characterized by Sufi practices which, although accepting the formal declarations of law from the *ulema*, formed inner circles among various brotherhoods, or *tarikats*. Their system depended on a hierarchical relationship between master and disciple in order to facilitate a mystical relationship with God, the next step in the hierarchy.

According to Mardin (1989), the knowledge of Islam was popularized and diffused by trained Sufi disciples and bards who traveled throughout Anatolia recounting stories passed down through centuries. Religious folk literature dealt with epics of heroism, love stories, and tales of the life of the prophet, and they were targeted for the village.

Mardin adds that Islam, therefore, became the “pervasive” element of Anatolian life. As a belief system, it encompasses “all aspects of life in society and that it is shared more equally by upper and lower classes than its equivalents are in the West” (6). It formed the language of a common culture that structured the daily practices of life. Islam constituted the “economic ethic” in that it psychologically defined for people the practical parameters of action, even at the most basic level of satisfying needs.⁵ The fact that it was shared so widely gave Islam a strong degree of legitimacy.

Challenges to this legitimacy came starting in the early-to-mid-nineteenth century with Ottoman political reforms (*Tanzimat*)—promoted by a relatively autonomous government—which looked to alter the nature of social relations in society. Consequently, political Islam emerged in the latter half of the century as a reaction to the threats the reforms posed to the cultural framework of Islam. Mardin indicates that Ottoman attempts at modernization dealt with instituting an impersonal state apparatus over a society based on the personalized and patriarchal relations

⁵ See Meeker (1997) for a more detailed analysis of how Islam structured both ontology and social interaction in Turkey since the Ottoman period.

of Islam. The Young Turk reformers, post-1890, intended to institute secular and abstract notions of nation and society, and a public sphere regulated by laws. Islam never quite differentiated the public from the private and personal—hierarchical patriarchal allegiances ran directly through family life to the religious teacher, to the Sultan, and to God. Islamists wanted to “reintroduce the traditional Muslim idiom of conduct and personal relations into an emerging society of industry and mass communication” (Mardin: 13). Interestingly, in regards to an emphasis on personal relations, there is much continuity between contemporary Islamists in Turkey and those that emerged towards the close of the Ottoman Empire.

Poulton (1997) notes that Islam formed the basis of an “imagined” identity, while the village and kinship networks were the main “real” identities. In the largely Kurdish areas of southeast Anatolia, the nomadic and semi-nomadic tribe played the same role in terms of identity as the village for settled rural communities.

The Ottoman city was structured in a manner analogous to the village. Islamic notions of family honor, maintaining women away from contact with non-familial males, determined the structure of physical space in the city: dead-end streets and high walls protecting households and their courtyards from the public gaze. The neighborhood, or *mahalle*, played a similar role as the village in determining group identity (Poulton). For instance, neighborhoods had boundaries that were protected by young men and trained dogs on the lookout for strangers, as in the village. The center of learning was the mosque and the center of social life (for men) was the coffeehouse, again similar to the village. Both villagers and urban residents used the term *hemşehri*, denoting a non-family member of the same community.

In summary, the social groupings of Ottoman society were based on the informal associations of village, kin, Sufi order, and the neighborhood. The ontology of Islam formed the psychosocial praxis of action and interaction within these communities. Fundamentally, Islam emphasized

family and sociability within the groups identified; the individual could only find meaning and fulfillment as a member of the group (Meeker 1997).

The challenge for modern Turkey, with its high degree of state autonomy but low state capacity, has been to impose the concept of nation on an insular and informal Anatolian society. Poulton writes, “This picture of highly fragmented inward-looking *Gemeinschafts* can be seen to be repeated throughout the Ottoman Empire, especially in Anatolia and the Balkans” (1997: 42). I will now discuss these identities in the context of modern Turkey.

6. Turkish Society

Contemporary Turkey has inherited much from Ottoman society. A culture of informal and hierarchical associations is prevalent throughout the country. Meeker describes this culture as “an implicit philosophy of social thought and action that serves in its own right as a vehicle of family, kinship, friendship, partnership, and patronage—indeed, of all kinds of unofficial and uncodified associations” (1997: 159). What accounts for the endurance of these forms of social interaction in daily life, and how do they influence the nature of urban civil society today in Turkey?

Nalbantoğlu writes, “...the cultural border between the city and the village is a fluid one” (1997: 193). Therefore, the answer to the first question lies with the significant presence of village society in the lives and psyche of an increasingly urban Turkish population. Up until the WWII period, as Pamuk (1991) notes, 80% of the population was still rural. Mass urbanization began after 1950 with the introduction of new farming technologies such as the tractor, and Turkey became a predominantly urban society only in the last thirty years or so. Agricultural activity today still employs a relatively large percentage of the population, accounting for 4.4 million jobs, or 32% of all jobs (*The Economist* 3/19/05), and constitutes a relatively large portion of the GDP, 13.4%

(*The Economist* 3/19/05). Furthermore, nearly one million people on average migrate each year since 2000 from the countryside to the major cities (*Turkish Daily News* online Domestic Section, 4/20/05), taking with them their village ways to their new urban setting. Also, because of poor economic opportunity, many migrants remain unassimilated into city life, living among their co-villagers, or *hemşehriler*, in dilapidated housing on the edges of cities without public services, and thus preserving their peasant mentality and a longing to return to the village (White 2000).

Another factor that accounts for the powerful presence of the village in the psyche of many has to do with village life itself. Villagers are imbued with a strong sense of solidarity and identity (Poulton 1997, Delaney 1993). Outsiders are not easily welcome. Men who leave the village for employment still return to look for wives. People who leave continue to be identified as villagers of their particular village. It is not uncommon for migrants to have family and still own property in the village, and to go back seasonally to help with village tasks. Marriage papers are also only obtained in one's village of birth, and most migrants are returned for burial after death. "One cannot adopt a different village or country any more than one can truly adopt a child" (Delaney quoted in Poulton 1997: 39, see footnotes). Delaney (1993) also points out that the men she talked to, who worked in town, mentioned that they found village life more satisfying because of the variety of activities that it offered versus the monotony of city life.

The Anatolian village propagates a certain discourse of life that emphasizes the preeminence of the social group—in this case both family and village—in the psyche of the individual. This dynamic comes out in Delaney's (1993) ethnographic work of a central Anatolian village.

First, rigid authority relations ordered hierarchically and patriarchally subsume individual identity under the group identity. The structure of authority can take the form of a pyramid. God is located at the top. The ruler of the nation comes next. The male

head of the household is situated at the bottom half of the pyramid, and he rules over his spouse and children. The concept of honor sustains the authority men have over women, because man is the source of life and he must be able to ensure that his children are his.

Authority is operationalized through terms such as *izin*, which Delaney defines as “authorized permission to do something specific...” (143). Since seeking permission is the norm, authority is never actually transferred, and therefore one never has the sense of having complete control over one's actions or movements. In turn, because authority can be overwhelming, furtive resistance and attempts at getting around it are common. Delaney indicates that *izin* reveals the lack of trust that people have in others to make proper decisions.

Another concept that promoted village solidarity was *imece*, or “community project,” as Delaney defines it (152). Mainly women engaged in cooperatives but this depended on the project, which could take various forms: pooling money for cooperative construction of infrastructure; helping members of the village community who were in need (such as relatives from the city when they run out of money, or taking in their children during the summers); and organizing sporting and social events. Both *izin* and *imece* indicate the emphasis placed in Turkish culture on maintaining the harmony of the social group, whether the family or its extension, the village.

Jenny White's (2002) ethnographic work of a poor migrant district of Istanbul illustrates how rural traditions of social organization and collective action become rearticulated in urban grass-roots politics of the Islamist movement. *Imece* continued to be the basis of social networking in the city and provided a foundation for horizontal political organizing, mainly among women, while the concept of *izin* still regulated their activities. The hierarchical relations in Turkish society became translated into “organized patronage politics” through *himaye*, a principle that embodied “protection by and loyalty to family, region of origin, and, by extension, political party” (73).

White points out that the Islamist Welfare party of the 1990s was successful in local and national bids for political office because they, unlike the Kemalist oriented Republican People's Party, effectively tapped into existing local networks of trust. Attracting members of these *imece* networks, Welfare then mobilized them as activists by creating neighborhood cells of supporters. Local trust networks would then link up with civic associations, which were in turn linked to political parties. Consequently, local interests could be projected to the national stage. The activists were mainly women (consistent with the tradition of *imece*), and in discussing their activism they indicated that their work was morally grounded in the good of the community. The women who formed the *hücre*, or cell, were neighbors who already knew each other and "had a history of [face-to-face] interaction," and thus a history of trust.

The trajectory of activism for these women, however, was dependent on the *izin* and *himaye* of their families. Familial protection, or *himaye*, meant that women were beholden to the possibility that *izin* for their activities could be withdrawn at any time. This often occurred upon marriage, as the new husband would not allow the wife to be away from the household for any extended period of time since it was deemed a threat to the health of the Muslim family.

For the community, *himaye* also meant providing protection for those in need, and loyalty to those who were perceived to best serve the interests of the community. *Himaye* and *imece* were both drawn from the traditions of Islamic morality and the Anatolian social structure, reflecting the imperatives of generosity and social justice (i.e., a moral economy), as well as patriarchal and hierarchical forms of authority grounded in social relations.

Organizationally, according to White, this meant that local trust networks would work with civic associations such as Islamist foundations, providing them with information and organizers, in order to then provide aid services for the needy of the community. Although strict

laws prohibited direct affiliation between foundations and political parties, the Islamist Welfare party supported and funded, through informal and shady connections, the activities of the foundations as well as associations. The local trust network, then, working with the foundation could also be converted into a political cell mobilizing for the interests of the party. The Islamist foundation was identified with the Islamist political party, therefore the community, which benefited from the generosity of the party in the form of aid projects, had to now show the party its loyalty through activism and voting on its behalf. In short, patron-client networks became a means of “social control” in the service of the party and its ideals (White 2002: 179).

In one case, when Welfare won the mayoralty of an area in Istanbul in 1994, the mayor would go directly to the people at the local coffeehouse to offer its protection and services by hearing the concerns and petitions of the residents (Navaro-Yashin 1998). Those citizens who did not support the party were excluded. In another example (White 2002), again following Welfare’s success in local elections in 1994 in a district of Istanbul, the party had its local followers close down the centers of activity of a left-of-center women’s association, which provided vocational classes for the working-class women of the district and libraries stocked with books by “modern” authors. Welfare supporters, “bearded men and veiled women,” physically took over the buildings that housed the schools and libraries forcing them to shut down. It is not uncommon for interest groups to violently clash in the streets, often spurred on by politicians.

Looking at the above examples of citizen action, one can see a public sphere of jealously guarded social groupings or communities of personalized networks—a continuation of Anatolian cultural traditions. Politicians can tap into these networks through civic associations and foundations, developing personalized linkages of *himaye*. This, in turn, can be utilized to mobilize residents of neighborhoods to do the bidding of the political benefactor. The hierarchical and personalized face-to-face nature of

community networks and their associated association mean that outsiders are viewed with tension and distrust that, which in turn can help explain the nature of the public sphere.

In my framework, new actors have entered the sphere of active citizenship, where before they were largely excluded, because the state has periodically sold some degree of its autonomy to different social groups—thus politically empowering them—in order to buy some capacity to deal with emerging challenges, as for example the state’s struggle to establish some degree of control of the countryside through the co-optation of rural elites, or the state’s incorporation of Islamists as a means of dealing with the threat of left-wing movements. These empowered social groups, utilizing their culturally inherited forms of organization, are now opportunistically competing to capture the state.

White notes the success that Welfare has had in mobilizing supporters and gaining political clout has been a wakeup call for Kemalist-oriented civic associations. As their orientation implies, these associations approached their work with an elitist modernizing outlook, ignoring and shunning the local *imece*-style organizing of face-to-face informal networks. Following the inroads of the Islamists, the Kemalist organizations are trying to build personalized relationships in working-class neighborhoods in order to revitalize their base.

Consequently, White is illustrating a greater appreciation of the public sphere of “active citizenship” (civil society) as more than just an arena of legally defined organizations; it’s a complex space where the boundaries separating organizational types and institutions are not only formed, but constantly compromised, by historically determined forms and practices of politics, society, and culture. White perhaps states it better: ‘Civil society, in this broader rendering incorporates personal, kin, and ethnic relations on the one hand, and civic and political institutions on the other, linking their practice, rather than artificially separating out “cultural,” civic, and political domains’ (2002: 179). The challenge has been to

systematically map out these interactions. This paper has tried to start that process.

8. Conclusion

At this point, I think we can begin to respond to Navaro-Yashin's complaints about the use and abuse of civil society in the context of Turkey. On the one hand, Navaro-Yashin is correct in pointing out that civil society can never be a completely autonomous sphere of citizen action. State-fostered power-laden relationships will always be a determinate factor in the public sphere. On the other hand, the public sphere can also be a place where state policies and the social groups that support them can be challenged and constrained by the activities of other social groups as they enter the arena of social action.

The dynamic (the degree of confrontation or coordination) of civil society is historically determined by the interactions of state structure, its capacities for carrying out policy, and the social/cultural forms and practices found in society. In other words, we need to look at the interplay between state autonomy, state capacity, and societal structure/cultural practices that take the form of trust networks and religiously informed discourses of life (the "economic ethic").

In Turkey's case, a high level of state autonomy was part of the Ottoman-Islamic state tradition. The Muslim populace of Anatolia gave legitimacy to the Sultan's autonomy to establish policy. The lack of legally identified corporate bodies such as the city in Muslim Ottoman society also enhanced the autonomy of the state. There was no real development of an independent merchant class that could find status through the accumulation of property and wealth. Status came only with career development within the state. This was truer with the advent of the *Tanzimat*, or state reform, period at around the mid-nineteenth century. A new breed of civil and military bureaucrats was developed through the sons of modest provincial families. They were taken from their families at a young age and trained in state schools with

Western notions of modernization and development. They were thus socially and culturally distant from the largely rural Anatolian populace.

The Ottoman state, however, reflected low levels of state capacity because it never fostered broad linkages with local trust networks in order to maximize resource extraction and cooperation, and consequently failed to build an institutional infrastructure of a pluralistic society. The Turkish state, therefore, inherited an autonomous bureaucratic state elite but low levels of state capacity to carry out its modernizing projects. The high-minded political elite focused their interests in developing an urban-industrial complex for a protected domestic market. In the process, they largely excluded the majority rural population from participation in developing the country, and instead tried to squeeze them for food harvests. This led to widespread resistance and distrust of the state by the rural population.

In order to deal with certain challenges, the state would periodically sell some of its autonomy to particularistic interest groups in order to buy a measure of state capacity. Since the state never fostered broad and formalized trust networks across groups to deal with broader issues of development systematically over the long-term, it was forced to deal informally through shady patron-client networks with narrower issues as they arose at the moment. That would explain the co-optation of rural elites to establish some degree of state control over harvest production in the countryside, the incorporation of Islamists into the government following the 1980 coup to deal with left-wing elements in society, the state's dealing with certain business interests and organized crime in order to raise capital quickly due to an ineffective tax system, and forging secretive alliances with militant religious groups and other third parties in order to battle the Kurdish insurgency in the south-east of the country.

Furthermore, the lack of effective state linkages with rural-village society resulted in the continuity of traditional social/cultural practices of *imece* and *himaye*, which, through continuous migration in the last fifty years or so,

have become transplanted to the urban setting. The insulated and chauvinistic nature of these practices, along with the shady particularistic interests the state has fostered through its informal patron-client networks, has contributed to a civil society wrought with tension and distrust. Sold parcels of state autonomy have created a sense of opportunism among social groups who are now competing to capture the state.

Nevertheless, I see an opening for the development of broader networks of trust within the public arena. The state is immune to simple capture due to its complexity of organization and because of the Kemalist bulwark of the military. Consequently, interest groups are forced to play politics; that is, negotiate and compromise with other interest groups. These interactions will become routinized and formalized over time. Local trust networks will not continue to be insulated from public politics. Furthermore, women are increasingly playing a leading role in the public arena. As Jenny White's work illustrates, political parties and civic organizations are increasingly dependent on women activists. In conservative Muslim communities, women have access to households and are the ones collecting demographic information and organizing it. They are learning skills which will project them further as equal partners in the arena of active citizenship, and this will continue to alter the dialectic of civil society, or the sphere of active citizenship, in Turkey.

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