

**Turkish Economic, Social, and Political Change :
The Development of a More Prosperous and Open Society**

by Edwin J. Cohn

Praeger Publishers, New York, 1970, 169 pp.
Appendix and Bibliography

Dr. Cohn's study is an outgrowth of his years in Turkey as an AID economic advisor, (1960-1968) part-time lecturer at the Middle East Technical University, (1963-67) and as an advisor in the Turkish State Planning Organization (1961-63).

The aim of the study is to analyze the main features of the structural transformation that Turkey has been undergoing in the period since World War II. In order to do this, the author, has arranged the data under four headings, namely "The Historical Background" (Ch. 1); "The Main Themes of Turkish Development Since World War II, (Ch. 2); "Major Constraints: The Elite-Villager Gap, The Bureaucracy, And The Educational System", (Ch. 3); "Some Problems Affecting Turkey's Future Development", (Ch. 4).

The first chapter (pp. 3-46) dealing with the historical background is mostly descriptive and the inadequate treatment of crucial subjects such as the reasons for Ottoman underdevelopment and failure to participate in the Commercial and ensuing Industrial Revolutions emerge as a serious omission for a study purporting to analyze the structural transformation of Turkey. In this section there is only the mention of the 'economic dualism' in the Ottoman Empire and 'social dualism' is completely left out of the 'discussion, leaving the later treatment (Ch. 3) of the "elite-villager gap" 'dangling in the air'. Dr. Cohn's conclusions and generalizations about the Ottoman period mostly concur with those of the Anglo-Saxon 'Orientalist' school, therefore a statement like, "... the Turks, traditionally contemptuous of business, had previously left finance, commerce, and manufacturing to members of the minorities.." (pp. 10-11) is internally consistent but completely ignores the emergence of the "Hayriye Tüccarı" at the beginning of the 19th century

and the "unfair competition" they were confronted with after the "1838 Anglo-Turkish Commercial Convention".*

Dr. Cohn's handling of the second chapter (pp. 46-78) is more authoritative and the main themes of Turkish development like the increased output and welfare, broadening of economic opportunities, expansion of the education, and the processes of pluralization and politicization are brought out with admirable clarity. The author draws attention to the rise of new elites in the Turkish polity and concludes that "... to a considerable extent, contemporary Turkish political life revolves around the contest for power between the older elite of the Kemalist era, composed essentially of the 'official' classes, and a newer elite whose base is economic and professional." (p. 64)

The author, in his discussion of the major constraints, (Ch. 3 pp. 78-119) singles out education as the key to explain the "gap" between the elites, whom he likens to Plato's "guardians" and the masses (villagers). The Kemalist reformers are criticised for giving priority to modernizing (Dr. Cohn uses this term as a synonym for "westernization") the urban population (p. 71) and viewing the villagers 'as "... an inert mass" (p. 82) In this discussion, the economic aspects of the relationship and its consequences is completely ignored and the "gap" is explained away with a set of entrenched attitudes, without going into the reasons for the formation of these attitudes.

The second major constraint, the bureaucracy, is considered to be both an asset (because of its stability and durability) and a liability because of "... its caste-like structure and attitudes which are more attuned to traditional regulatory functions rather than functions associated with stimulating and guiding rapid economic and social change" (pp. 85-86) The author provides future researchers in this field with valuable insights into the relationship between the bureaucracy and the business community and in conclusion passes a rather harsh judgement on the Turkish bureaucracy by asserting that "... Turkish development is taking place in spite of the bureaucracy". (p. 88)

The critical remarks which Dr. Cohn had used relatively sparingly up to this stage of the study are unleashed in his treatment

* See: Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1962 p, 167.

of the third major constraint, the educational system. The author singles out "... the failure of the educational system to teach the young how to evaluate information, look at problems objectively, and think for themselves ..." as the most serious long-term constraint on Turkey's future development (p. 111). Dr. Cohn's treatment of this section is very skillful and precise, but from time to time the temptation to make speculative generalizations, such as, "... the appeal of extremist movements is mostly due to the tendency of the education system to provide authoritative black or white answers...", has proved to be too strong.

The final chapter (pp. 119-169) deals with such issues as the specific pattern of Turkish industrialization (steady progress behind massive protection, lack of cost-consciousness and "autarkic" tendencies are discussed and the "Japanese Model" is recommended,) (p. 126); the relative neglect of agriculture; the political parties, the armed forces and the development process; the development of the East; and Turkey's relations with the outside world. Dr. Cohn reflects his intimate knowledge of the Turkish culture in explaining the 'introvert attitudes' of the Turks towards the outside world and attributes this to the ethnocentric convictions of first the Ottomans, and later the Republican Turks (p. 155). The author makes another interesting observation when he remarks that "... the Turks regard their dealings with foreigners as a zero-sum game ..." (p. 159).

Dr. Cohn, finally, mentions four major "problems" which he considers as being crucial to Turkey's future development. These are how to make Turkish economy more competitive, how to preserve and expand the recently gained freedom, how to combine rapid economic development with adequate economic orderliness and price stability, and how to assure a reasonable degree of equity in the society (p. 161). On Turkey's ability to cope with these issues in the coming years, the author is cautiously optimistic.

In summary, this book, in spite of a number of short-comings arising mostly out of the approach to the subject matter, has much to offer, particularly to non-Turks wanting to acquaint themselves with the process of development in Turkey. The doubtless contribution of the study is enhanced by the well-prepared statistical appendix pertaining to the quantitative aspects of the Turkish development.

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