

Short Communication

Does modernization always lead to political decay?

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Abstract

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In his article "Political Development and Political Decay" published in 1965, Samuel P. Huntington suggests that certain social problems like political disturbances, military problems and even prevalence of bribery are caused by literacy rates, economic growth and political engagement rates that give rise to a social mobility developing faster than political institutionalization. Huntington supports all these arguments by statistical data and objects to a fast modernization process for adoration of order. Huntington argues that modernization means mobilization of masses and this increases political engagement, but this engagement always leads to political decay. Is it true that modernization always leads to political decay as argued by Huntington? Is this thesis of Huntington having the same meanings for every country? In this study, it is argued that modernization does not always lead to political decay, contrary to Huntington's argument?

Keywords: Huntington, political development, political decay, modernization

INTRODUCTION

Political Development, Modernization and Political Decay

Huntington starts with Tocqueville's expression "*If men are to remain civilized or to become so, the art of associating together must grow in the same ratio in which the equality of conditions is increased*". First of all, it is required to add an annotation to this expression of Tocqueville that Huntington takes as the headline. It is because I believe that the art of association together and equality of conditions cannot progress to the same degree. Considering the fact that there is a matter of priority here, it does not seem possible to decide the order of priority in terms of reasons. In other words, if priority is to be given to political engagement, it is very natural that the art of associating together is a little slower and comes from behind. The process in which the Republic of Turkey stopped being an empire and preferred republican administration is a good sample for this matter. As political engagement is the priority, the Republic of Turkey even used the election method "open vote, secret counting", which may be deemed as "strangeness" by some, in its political history. At this

point, it is possible to justify Huntington from a superficial perspective. However, when one gets into the root, it is seen that it is even a success for a public with a history of empire to go to the ballot box. In this regard, conflict of mobilization and institutionalization, which is the deadlock of politics Huntington's view, is actually nothing more than innate reactions one after another. Institutionalization is not possible without mobilization. As a matter of fact, mobilization is a chain of events which arises from many sociological, psychological, economic, cultural and religious reasons and which cannot usually be foreseen. After mobilization stage, needed political systems or institutions will naturally appear. It is also contrary to the logic of social sciences to firstly ensure institutionalization and then expect mobilization accordingly with a reverse point of view since society is like a living organism. Just as a living organism comes to different states according to environmental conditions, the society takes on role according to the general world order and goes through the changes required by this role within a natural process. These processes of course vary from country to country, and even from region to region in these countries. As the simplest example, abortion law

has been perceived with different meanings in each of European countries generally having the same characteristics. As shown by this example and many other events experienced in the past, it seems impossible that reaction to every event is the same.

Assuming mobilization and increase in political engagement as the primary indications of modernization, Huntington considers that the final outcome is a political decay, not a political development. Use of the term "economic growth" in Huntington's argument "rapid economic growth leads to political incapacity" is also controversial. If looked closely, Huntington uses the concept "*economic growth*". Economic growth means for a country to expand limits of its production facilities by increasing its poor resources or improving quality of these resources or get to higher production levels by changing its production technology and institutional framework. By Unay's definition, economic growth also means constant increase in production factors in a way to increase per capita real national income (Unay, Cafer; Makro Ekonomi, 3. Basım, Akademi Yayınları, Bursa, 1983, s. 248). Since it is not clear what "economic growth" exactly means in Huntington's study, the first meaning that comes to mind is living a prosperous life or achieving a better economic position. However, the concept of "economic growth" here also misdirects the perception it intends to create, while supporting Huntington's argument. In the list of "fastest growing economies" of 2013 in the Economist Magazine, Mongolia, Macau, Libya, China and Kingdom of Bhutan are in the lead respectively. Economy of Mongolia, or Macau, which is a Portuguese colony and a port city with a population of 65,000 people, may grow very fast and only for a certain period of time, but it does not prove that Mongolia or Macau develops economically. It is because economic development, which is confused with economic growth, has a quite different meaning. With Kongar's words, economic development addresses to increase in investments and rise in production efficiency, which is a much more structural result (http://www.kongar.org/makaleler/mak_mi.php (Access date: 28.04.2013)). In other words, economic development is the process of a homogeneous growth of economy, which requires a change in economic and social structure and ensures an equal distribution of wealth level of the region, not a certain class or group, by taking its share from the enhanced welfare. As emphasized by Güven, economic growth also means growth by solving social problems. The main purpose of development is to use increasing economic facilities in solving social problems in order to ensure a better life for people (Güven, Sami; Sosyal Planlama, Ezgi Kitabevi Yayınları, Bursa, 1995, p. 5 vd). To sum up with Kongar's expressions, economic growth does not necessarily involve economic development and progress, and economic development and progress are necessarily dependent on cultural development and progress

(http://www.kongar.org/makaleler/mak_mi.php (Access date: 28.04.2013)). In his study, Huntington does not mention the meaning implied with economic growth, and concludes the subject in a sentence with the argument that increase in the literacy rate will not strengthen democracy. However, parameters and fallacies of economic growth and its irrelevance with economic development should be emphasized here

Some Examples in the Context of Modernization and Political Decay

With a general view to Huntington's study, it is seen that political decay is associated with modernization. According to Huntington's approach, every system with an intense and fast modernization is open to corruption. Indeed, Western societies experienced a high-level corruption in the periods when modernization started. In many countries, corruptions stand out as activities prevalent in the most intensive stage of modernization. Most of the modernizing countries have been obliged to realize a fast social modernization at the risk of political corruption.

Huntington suggests that modernization influences all sections of the society and political aspects of this situation are accepted as political development. Fast modernization leads to a political corruption, not a political development. Rapid social and economic development raise concerns about current values and behavior patterns and therefore usually causes corruption of people. In societies, rapid economic and social modernization processes are parallel to corruption process. Corruption may be more prevalent in some cultures when compared to others, but most of the cultures go through a more intense corruption in the stage of modernization. In summary, corruption tendencies in political and administrative institutions increases initial stages of modernization, since conventional institutions and norm systems are dissolved, new institutions and norm systems have not gained stability and there are also new opportunities and incomes. However, after a while, mechanisms of the new order will be institutionalized and gain a certain level of stability and then, as a consequence of effective supervision by these institutions, corruption tendencies will decrease.

I would like to state that I do not agree the above-summarized ideas of Huntington at some points. First of all, looking at the country or culture where modernization occurs will provide a better insight. If it occurs in a society that is a cradle to modernization, political decay is less likely to occur in that society. In other words, political decay in a society that acts as a locomotive for modernization and initiates and leads modernization and political decay in a society that tries to import modernization integrate it into itself will be considerably

different. For example, destruction that modernization creates on the political order will not be the same for USA and Turkey. While USA takes modernization as an unexpected phenomenon generated by cells of the society in the real plan, Turkey takes it as a concept required to be accepted due to an accepted helplessness and obligation. At this point, considering the examples of USA and Turkey, it becomes clear to which extent modernization will have an influence on which country (society) in terms of political decay. Will a society be influenced by the wind of modernization created by its own internal dynamics? If it is influenced, what will be the extent of this influence? Questions waiting to be answered on the other side of the coin may be the following: How well can a society obliged to accept developments and innovations (modernization) for certain reasons internalize these innovations or to which degree will those innovations destruct its current political system? As a more solid example for Turkey, is it possible that the Imperial Edict of Reorganization (Tanzimat Fermanı) was an appearance of modernization with the Ottoman Empire's own internal dynamics in the Ottoman Empire? Or was it a compulsory application of modernization, which was led by others, in the political area? To give a more current example, is the damage of mass communication tools (media and internet), which constitute an aspect of modernization, to political systems of USA and Western and to the Middle Eastern Countries (Egypt, Libya, Syria etc.) the same? Taking a reverse look at the situation, what was the extent of the damage that internet made on political system in USA, the inventor of internet? Does internet make an impact on political system in countries which have to use internet unwillingly? If it makes, what is the extent of damage when compared to USA?

Here it will be useful to give place to the expressions of Kapani and Özbudun, who associates the emergence of political parties with modernization.

In countries which have a widespread urbanization, transportation and communication, a high level of literacy rate, a high level of per capita income, a secular culture and which has achieved modernization to a certain degree, it is common that social groups get organized in the political area and use their influence on the government. In such countries, people adopt the idea that they can change social conditions with their actions. Modernization strengthens the ability to organize with a sense of confidence and cooperation, rather than a lack of mutual confidence which is a typical characteristic of traditional societies (Kapani, Münci. (2001) *Politika Bilimine Giriş*, 13. baskı, Ankara: Bilgi.p.113).

As understood here, modernization is the birth point of parties, which are in a sense the main actors of political order. It is because modernization will be possible only in an environment where political parties can arise. As expressed by Güler, the approach that supports modernization has brought the distinction of

developed/undeveloped (underdeveloped) countries to the scene of politics (Güler, F. D. (2003) *Adalet partisi*, Ankara: TODAİ.p.11). Additionally, it is seen that most of the election committees in England are in crowded industrial cities. The case is also similar in Turkey. There is a statistical relationship between socioeconomic development levels in villages and the possibility to have a political party organization (Özbudun,a.g.e. p.23). If modernization really leads to political decay, it is surprising that political parties, which are primary actors of the political system, owe their emergence to modernization and its results.

CONCLUSION AND EVALUATION

In consequence, Huntington's indicating modernization as the only reason of political decay and associating it with institutionalization, which is not parallel to modernization, may lead to confusions, since it is not clearly specified how modernization and institutionalization of democracy is staged and ranked. Therefore, it seems possible to both agree with and object to Huntington. Huntington may be agreed for the final target he addresses to; political institutionalization should not be sacrificed for modernization. In other words, if political institutionalization is not possible after modernization, this type of modernization will corrupt the political system. However, the main point to be taken into consideration here is that modernization is the pioneer of political institutionalization. In other words, political institutionalization may only occur after modernization. That is to say, for a bird to come into the world, the egg should be broken, which seems like a loss at first sight. Here, the egg being broken (modernization) is not an unfavorable situation, it is a necessary stop for that bird to grow and develop (political institutionalization). From this point of view, it is possible to suggest that Huntington is wrong in terms of thought.

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