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EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUNDS OF CONTEMPORARY TURKISH ELITES

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ABSTRACT

Elite studies have great importance within sociological and political studies, because elites are the main agents of social change (Arslan, 2003). On the other hand, education is one of the most important social indicators in the contemporary world. As a result of the rapid transformation from capital based society to knowledge based society, education has become more important than ever before, in determining success. Therefore, the main aim of this study is to analyse the educational background of the contemporary Turkish elite, including political elites, labour union elites and media elites. Educational levels, education and school types and foreign language ability will be investigated in the study.

The multi-method approach was used. The “positional” approach was used for identifying the elites who have a potential for power because of their status and social position within society; the “reputational” approach was used to select those respondents who have a reputation for power and influence. Findings show that the level of education experienced has a significant importance in the recruitment process of contemporary Turkish society. Holding at least one university degree has

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become one of the most necessary conditions of the elite recruitment process. The quality and type of education obtained also has significant influence in achieving an elite position.

Key Words: Democracy, Education, Elite, Elite Theory, Power, Turkey, Turkish Elites.

TÜRK ELİTLERİNİN EĞİTİMSEL ÖZGEÇMİŞLERİ

ÖZET:

Stratejik toplumsal kurumların en üst konumlarını işgal ettikleri ve karar verme sürecini en etkin şekilde etkileyebilecek pozisyonda oldukları için, seçkinin toplumun hiyerarşik yapısı içinde ayrı bir yeri ve önemi vardır. Bu nedenle seçkin araştırmaları sosyoloji ve siyaset bilimi açısından oldukça büyük önem taşır. Çalışmanın temel amacı çağdaş Türk elitlerinin eğitimsel özgeçmişlerini incelemektir. Araştırma kapsamında üç elit grubunun üyeleri ile yüz yüze görüşülerek, çağdaş Türk elitlerinin almış oldukları eğitim niteliksel ve niceliksel boyutları ortaya konmaya çalışıldı. Araştırma evrenini ve örneklem kümesini belirlerken “konumsal” ve “ünsel” yaklaşım birlikte kullanıldı.

Sermayenin temel teşkil ettiği kapitalist toplum yapısından, bilginin en önemli değer olarak kabul edildiği bilgi toplumuna geçişe paralel olarak, eğitim, çağdaş dünyadaki en temel toplumsal belirleyicilerden ve başarı ölçütlerinden biri haline gelmiştir. Araştırmanın bulguları, yaşanan hızlı toplumsal değişim ve dönüşüme paralel olarak eğitim ve bilginin, çağdaş Türk toplumunda da temel toplumsal başarı kriterlerinden biri haline gelmeye başladığına işaret etmektedir. Türk siyasi elitleri, medya elitleri ve işçi elitlerine yönelik olarak gerçekleştirilen eldeki araştırmada, alınan eğitimin düzeyinin, türünün ve kalitesinin, elitlerin deveranı sürecinde, bir başka deyimle bireylerin elit pozisyonlarına ulaşmalarında oldukça önemli ve belirleyici rol oynadığı görülmüştür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Demokrasi, Eğitim, Elit, Elit Teorisi, İktidar, Türk Elitleri

1. INTRODUCTION

Inequalities in the distribution of power, wealth and prestige are common features of contemporary societies. According to Mosca, although absolute political equality, majority government and free elections are a “myth”, they are essential elements of an open ruling class. Researchers of elites aim to understand and explain the existence and persistence of inequalities in the distribution of power and the relationship between power and control in contemporary societies.

The term elite (Jary & Jary, 1991: 188) is of French derivation. It originally derived from the Latin “eligere” which means select and shares a common root with “electa” that means selected (Arslan, 1995: 3). Theoretically, elites can be defined as those people who hold institutionalised power, control social resources (including not only wealth, prestige and status but also the personal resources of charisma, time, motivation and energy) and have a serious influence (either actively or potentially) on the decision-making process. They can realise their own will in spite of opposition (Arslan, 1999: 79)..

According to this definition, the term elite does not necessarily involve only the occupier of the top strata. It may comprise both those people who are at the top, bottom or outside the organisations. Also it may include the people in the capitalist, middle or working class. Power, control and influence are the major concepts in this definition. If the people have power actively or potentially, they have a direct or indirect effect on the decision-making process and are control the social resources, thus they can be identified as the elite.

The concept of elite acquired world-wide popularity in social science as a result of the writings of Italian sociologists Vilfredo Pareto (1968) and Gaetano Mosca (1939) in the nineteenth century. Then it became popular in Britain and America in the 1930s. Elite theory (Arslan, 2004-a) was concerned almost exclusively with inequalities based on power or lack thereof. This distinguishes it from class theory. Power in turn, is based on other resources (such as economic assets and organisational strength) and may give rise to control over other resources as well.

According to elite theory, societies are divided into the ‘few’ who hold power and rule and the ‘many’ who are ruled. The ruling group, called the elite, effectively monopolises power and makes the important decisions. On a general basis “Elite Theory” was used in this study to understand, to examine the occupational backgrounds of the Turkish elites.

2. METHODOLOGY

According to Mills (1956: 363), it is not too difficult to understand the middle classes, but understanding the very top of modern society needs discovery and description. This is a very difficult task, because they are usually inaccessible, busy and secretive. It is always difficult to get information about their backgrounds and their activities.

Elite studies (Etzioni, 1993; Frey, 1965; Turhan, 1991; Çağlar & Arslan, 2000; Arslan, 2004-b) obviously stress elites, their existence, their positions and reputations, their careers, their roles in society. These particular kinds of study has great importance within sociological and political studies, because elites are the main agents of social change. They manage the direction, the speed and the form of social change, because they hold institutional power, and influence social decisions on a macro level.

This study will concern itself with the Turkish elite, including Turkish political (Arslan, 2001), labour union elites and media elites. The main aim of the study is to analyse their educational backgrounds. The “multi-method approach” (Moyser & Wagstaffe, 1987) was used in this study. Both the “reputational” and “positional” approaches were used for identifying the elites: the “positional” approach was used to identify the individuals who have a potential for power because of their status and social position within society; the “reputational” approach was used to select those respondents who have a reputation for power and influence.

The positional approach was used to define the elite universe. Firstly, a list of elite sectors was drawn. Following this, the most important organisations within each sector were specified. Then, the top positions within each organisation were determined. Finally, the current incumbents of these positions were considered as members of the elite. Furthermore, the reputational approach was also used as a supplementary approach to select the effective members of some elite groups, such as mass-media elites and political elites following the simple random sampling techniques.

No single source for data or data collecting techniques was chosen. The study was operationalised using the multiple methods of observation, documentary analysis and focused interviews. The majority of the data used in this study was obtained from field research and documentary sources. Observations helped the researcher to get more detailed and reliable information concerning elites and the existence and operation of elite organisations.

As Hertz and Imber argue (1995: 78), semi-structured interviews have a very special importance for elite studies. Following this tradition, these particular types of interview techniques were chosen. The questionnaire was used for semi-structured interviews to get more detailed and

specific data from the field. In addition to completely structured questions, open-ended (unstructured) questions have also been used. In general, semi-structured questionnaires have been widely used in elite studies and have great popularity amongst elite researchers. This particular kind of interview schedule is more suitable and valuable than the fully structured or unstructured questionnaire for realising the major goals of this research. It will be especially helpful in gaining more detailed information about the respondents' social backgrounds, attitudes, beliefs, values, behaviour and roles.

The research has a descriptive kind of quantitative research character. In addition to field research using questionnaires and the data archives, publications and bulletins of the related private and state institutions, semi-structured interview schedules, written and printed materials which were gathered from were used for data collecting. The data was analysed using the SPSS program (Fielding, 1994).

3. SAMPLING GROUP

Higley (1979: 29) defines national elites as “those people who hold power individually, regularly and seriously to affect political outcomes at the macro level of organised societies”. For pragmatic methodological purposes and simplification, a “positional” definition of elites will be used during the sampling procedure. In accordance with the positional approach, elite can be defined as those people who occupy a position at or near the top of important institutional hierarchies, such as economic, political, judicial, civil service, military, mass media, educational. They have power because of their social positions.

The researcher carried out face to face interviews with the elite members of the three elite groups which are media, politics and labour unions. The political elites (Arslan, 2004-d; Arslan, 2004-e) were chosen because they are one of the most powerful elites groups in Turkey. The study on media elites would be interesting and useful. As there has been a great deal of speculation about Turkish media and its power, as happens in both developed and developing countries: was the media really the fourth power in a democracy?

Labour union elites were selected because this elite group was relatively less studied. Labour unions have enormous potential power. If they wished they could mobilise millions of people in a short time. This kind of action has already taken place several times in the recent history of Turkey.

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Therefore, governing political elites are forced to take into account the views and the desires of the leaders of the most influential union confederations, such as TURK-IS, DISK, HAK-IS.

For the reasons given above, 6 major and most powerful confederations of the Turkish labour and white collar unions were included in the sampling group. Their historical-financial-physical powers, membership density, reputation and their previous militant actions were taken into account in the selection procedure. Three of them were the most powerful labour union confederations of Turkey: TURK-IS, DISK and HAK-IS. The other three confederations were mostly white collar workers' unions: KESK, KAMUSEN, EGITIM-SEN. The presidents and chief executives of these organisations were classified as the Turkish labour union elites.

Table 1
The Sampling Group

SECTORS	ORGANISATIONS	POSITIONS	RESPONDENT NUMBER
Political Elites	- Presidency - Government - Major Turkish Political Parties	- The President - The Prime Minister - General Presidents, Presidents, Deputy Presidents and General Secretaries of Parties	45
Media Elites	The Largest and Most Influential Media Institutions	Columnists and editors (Hürriyet, Milliyet, Cumhuriyet, Türkiye Sabah, Kanal D, Atv)	40
Labour Union Elites	6 Most powerful Confederations of Turkish Labour and White Collar Workers Unions : - TURK-IS : The Confed. of Turkish Trade Unions - DISK : The Confed. of Revolutionary Workers' Union - HAK-IS : The Confed. of Rights of Turkish Workers' Trade Unions - KESK : The Confed. of Public Sector Workers' Unions - KAMUSEN : The Confed. of Civil Servants' Unions - EGITIM-SEN : The Confed. of Teachers' Unions	- General Presidents - Chief Executives	35

The selection of the Turkish political elites was quite difficult and complicated at the beginning as there is a plurality in Turkish politics: more than 30 political parties are competing and trying to become influential in the social and political life of Turkey. To overcome this problem, the researcher first looked at the composition of the Turkish parliament (1997-8): about 7 political parties have their members in the Turkish Grand National Assembly as a result of the last general election which was held in 1995. Three of them were liberal rightist, two of them were social democrats and the remaining two were radical Islamists parties. Six of the seven political parties had their own group in the assembly and only one of them did not have enough MPs to set up a group.

In addition to these 7 parties, there were two other important and influential Turkish political parties outside the Parliament: the Workers' Party (IP-Turkish Socialist Party) and Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) were included in the sampling group. The general presidents, the presidents and deputy presidents, and general secretaries of these Turkish political parties, the President of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, Prime Minister and the President of the Republic were accepted as the most powerful Turkish political elites.

There was the same plurality and complication existing in the Turkish media as well: there were a large number of small and large scale media groups which were publishing or broadcasting in Turkey. Almost every political and ideological group had their audio-visual or written media tools. There were hundreds of local-national-international television channels, more than one thousand radio stations and countless small or large-scale weekly or daily newspapers. Nevertheless, the BIMAS (the united organisation of the two largest Turkish media groups) has control of about 70-80 % of Turkish media.

Almost all the powerful groups were active either in written media or visual media, and most of the columnists or journalists were working both for a newspaper and television channels. It is quite difficult to separate newspaper journalism and television journalism in Turkey. The three largest and the most influential Turkish daily newspapers belonging to the BIMAS (United Media Group) were selected. Two of them were known as liberal rightist and one of them was a moderate leftist paper. In addition to them the Cumhuriyet newspaper was chosen as the most intellectual and most effective leftist newspaper of Turkey, and a daily paper was chosen from the radical Islamist papers. Finally, the well known columnists and editors of these papers were accepted as the most effective Turkish media elites.

4. EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND OF TURKISH ELITES**4.1. EDUCATIONAL LEVELS OF TURKISH ELITES**

As occurs in most other countries, it can be argued that education (both educational level and educational background-either education type or school name) is one of the most important factors which effects the circulation of elites in Turkey. The extent of education has a large impact on the elite circulation process. University degrees in particular are an almost universal precondition for recruitment to elite positions. This precondition is valid for the elite recruitment process in Turkey as well. At most all Turkish elites have at least a high school (lycee) degree. In addition, the vast majority of Turkish elites have at least one university degree. An important proportion of them also have post-graduate (Masters, PhD, Postdoctoral, etc.) degrees.

Table 2

The Educational Level of Turkish Elites and Entire Turkish Population

Education Level	Turkish Elites			Entire Turkish Population (*)		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Primary School	-	-	-	91.31	87.29	89.35
Junior High School	2.4	-	2.2	61.90	44.58	53.44
High School	13.3	-	12.2	42.29	30.84	36.69
University	84.3	100	85.6	9.67	7.29	8.51
Total	100	100	100			

Source: Reorganised from Arslan, 1999.

(*) The data about Turkish population is reorganised from the official internet web site of the State Institute of Statistics Prime Ministry of Turkey and covers the findings of the 1994-1995 census year.

It is possible to observe this situation in **Table 2**. According to the figures, 98 percent of Turkish elites have completed high school education. In addition, 86 percent possess at least one university degree. On the other hand, the rate of elite respondents with only middle (secondary) school education is just 2 percent for all the three elite groups.

Turkish elites differ sharply from the adult population of Turkey in terms of education. Whereas about 86 percent of the Turkish elites hold at least one university degree, the rate of university educated people among the general Turkish population is under 9 percent.

As occurs in Germany (Hoffmann, 1985: 67), Turkish labour union leaders have less formal education than other elites. The proportion of labour union elites with a university degree is about 67 percent whereas the proportion of elite respondents with university education among the

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political elites is 97 percent and among media elite is higher than 93 percent. Furthermore, almost all Turkish political elites and media elites, and 98 percent of the labour union elites have at least a high school diploma. This situation is correlated with the occupational career patterns and class backgrounds of the elites. Thus, whereas white collar occupations necessitate a more advanced education, a moderate or lower educational background is enough for blue collar occupations.

On the other hand, the family's social status determines the kind and extent of the education of their children. Generally, those people who have a higher class background have greater chance and opportunity to acquire a better quality and a higher level education than others. The people with a lower class background are more restricted socially and economically. They not only have economic barriers but also social barriers blocking their careers. Therefore, people from lower class backgrounds have to spend much more time and effort than others to be successful in the competition.

Family background also has indirect effects on the elite circulation process. A better family background opens up connections with the top strata and provides social networks with the cream of the cream of society. Those people who come from bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie families do not need to make much more effort to gain power, wealth and prestige in social/economic and political life in comparison with those who come from a poor family background.

Table 3

Educational Level of Turkish Elites by Their Social Class Origin

Educational Level	Respondent's Social Class Background % (Number)				
	Lower Class	Lower Middle Class	Middle Class	Upper Middle Class	Upper Class
University	9 (7)	22 (17)	40 (31)	25 (19)	4 (3)
High School	-	18 (2)	46 (5)	27 (3)	9 (1)
J. High School	50 (1)	-	-	50 (1)	-
TOTAL	(8)	(19)	(36)	(23)	(4)

Source: *Reorganised from Arslan, 1999.*

The findings which are presented in **Table 3** shows that, those elite respondents who have the highest class origins have the lowest educational levels among Turkish elites. Whereas, roughly 89 percent of Turkish elites with lower and lower-middle class origins possess a university degree almost 75 percent of the elites from upper class origins have a university degree.

Table 4

Educational Level of Turkish Elites by Their Fathers' Occupations

Father's Occupation	Elite's Educational Level			Total
	University	High School	J. High School	
Tradesman-Artisan	81	15	4	100
Public Administrator	91	9	-	100
Farmer	78	17	5	100
Worker	87	13	-	100
Professional	100	-	-	100
Civil Servant	100	-	-	100
Law	75	25	-	100
Soldier-Police	100	-	-	100
Businessman	100	-	-	100
Teacher	100	-	-	100
Journalist	50	50	-	100
Doctor	100	-	-	100
TOTAL	86	12	2	100

Source: *Reorganised from Arslan, 1999.*

There is a relationship between educational level of the elites and their fathers' occupation. **Table 4** shows that those elites whose fathers have a white collar occupation have a higher educational level than those elites whose fathers have a blue collar occupation. In addition, there is also a relationship between the educational level of elites and their mothers' occupation. Almost all the elites whose mothers were employed in paid work (non-housewives) have university degrees.

4.2. EDUCATION TYPES OF TURKISH ELITES

Respondent's type of education is also an important variable which effects future career patterns. It appears that the social sciences (including economics and political science) and technical sciences lead most often to other areas of study among contemporary Turkish elites. The least popular types of education among Turkish elites are medical sciences and engineering of agriculture (agriculturist). Nevertheless, if one looks at **Table 5**, a relatively higher level plurality in terms of type of education among Turkish elites can be observed.

Table 5

Educational Types of Turkish Elites

Educational Types of Elites	Elite Groups (%)			Total
	Political	Trade Union	Media	
Not Applicable	3.3	33.3	6.7	14.4
Social Sciences-Politics	6.7	16.7	30	17.8
Management	-	10	-	3.3
Philology-Turkish Language	-	7	3	3.3
Mathematics	3	7	-	3.3
Technical Sciences	23	10	10	14.4
Economy	20	7	13	13.3
Education	17	10	10	12.2
Law	13	-	13	8.9
Public Administration	3	-	-	1.1
Medical Sciences	7	-	-	2.2
Agriculture	3	-	-	1.1
Journalism	-	-	13	4.4
Toplam	100	100	100	100

Source: *Reorganised from Arslan, 1999.*

Although, no single field of study dominates any sector, the study of politics, economics, public administration, management and engineering are more popular than other subjects. As happened in Germany (Hoffmann-Lange in G. Moore, 1985: 68), this reflects the fact that research funding opportunities are provided by the government and public sector. It is also important to note that, whereas legal studies were popular among Turkish elites in the early period of the Republic and early-mid years of the multi-party period (Arslan, 1995: 54-55, 65-66), their popularity has been sharply declining for two decades. This finding supports Hoffmann's speculative conclusion that "the law has lost its functions as a general intellectual training and (re)gained the status of a specialised training in legal matters" (Moore, 1985: 70).

4.3. SCHOOL TYPES OF TURKISH ELITES AND ELITE SCHOOLS IN CONTEMPORARY TURKEY

The majority (about 65 percent) of the members of all elite groups mostly attended the normal state (public) school. The number of people who attended prestigious schools (both state colleges and private colleges) is about 34 percent. **Table 6** shows that the number of media elites who were educated in prestigious schools is worth noting; whereas about 80 percent of political elites and labour union elites have had a normal (ordinary) state school education, a majority (which

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is about 60 percent) of the media elite have received a prestigious private or state school education. Only 40 percent of media elites have been educated in state schools.

There is a big difference between Turkish elites and the general population in terms of the quality of education received. As can be seen in **Table 6**, about 18 percent of Turkish elites have been educated in prestigious private schools and 16 percent of them graduated from prestigious state colleges. On the other hand, **Table 7** demonstrates that the average rate of private school educated people is just 2 percent amongst the general Turkish population.

Table 6

School Types of Turkish Elites by Elite Groups

Elite Group	Elite's School Type (%)			Total
	State Normal	State College	Private College	
Political Elites	80	10	10	100
Trade Union Elites	80	17	3	100
Media Elites	40	20	40	100
TOTAL	67	15	18	100

Source: Reorganised from Arslan, 1999.

Table 7

The Proportion of Private School Graduates Among Whole Graduates in Turkish Society
(According to the Statistics of 1991-1992 Educational Year) (*)

	General Graduates			Private School Graduates		
	Male	Female	General Total	Male	Female	Total in General
Primary	691809 (53.4)	604529 (46.6)	1296338 (100)	5391 (55.6)	4244 (44.4)	9635 0.74
J. High School	423636 (62.3)	256462 (37.7)	680098 (100)	9320 (55.8)	7379 (44.2)	16699 2.5
High School	226525 (61.3)	142742 (38.7)	369267 (100)	6026 (52.8)	5385 (47.2)	11411 3.1

(*): The data about Turkish population is reorganised from the 1994 Yearbook of Turkey (the State Institute of Statistics Prime Ministry of Turkey).

As mentioned before, another highly important finding is on the relationship between social origin and educational background. **Table 8** shows that there is an association between the class background of Turkish elites and the quality of their education. Those respondents who come from bourgeois and petty bourgeois families were mostly educated in prestigious schools whereas 65 percent of those of upper-middle class origins and 100 percent of upper class originated elites have

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a prestigious school education only. 12.5 percent of those elites who come from working class backgrounds and 21 percent of the elites who come from the lower-middle class have enjoyed a prestigious school education.

Table 8

School Types of Turkish Elites by Their Social Class Origins

Elite' Social Background	Elite's School Type (%)			Total
	State Normal	State College	Private College	
Lower Class	87.5	-	12.5	9
Lower Middle Class	79	10.5	10.5	21
Middle Class	83	11	6	40
Upper Middle Class	35	35	30	26
Upper Class	-	-	-	4
TOTAL	67	15	18	100

Source: Reorganised from Arslan, 1999.

Also it seems there is an association between the educational level of respondents' fathers and the educational quality of the respondents. If **Table 9** is examined this positive relation can be seen: when the educational level of the respondent's father increases the quality of the respondents' education increases, and when the educational level of the respondent's father decreases the quality of the respondent's education also decreases. Statistically, whereas 62 percent of the elites whose fathers possess a university degree graduated from prestigious elite schools, only 16 percent of the respondents whose fathers only received a primary school education were educated in prestigious schools. In addition, none of the uneducated fathers' children had received a prestigious private school education.

Table 9

School Types of Turkish Elites by Their Fathers' Educational Levels

Elite' Father's Educational Level	Elite's School Type (%)			Total
	State Normal	State College	Private College	
University	38	14	48	23
High School	42	42	16	13
J. High (Middle) School	75	-	25	5
Primary School	84	8	8	42
No School Education	80	20	-	17
			Total	100

Source: Reorganised from Arslan, 1999.

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As in other countries, there are a number of famous and prestigious elite schools in Turkey. Some private exclusive high schools are highly prestigious and have long historical roots. Galatasaray High School, Robert College and some French High Schools can be counted among them. Their graduates have very close and strong relations and friendship ties with one another which are extremely effective in many aspects of political, economic and social life.

On the other hand, almost all the universities have traditionally been owned by the state and there were no privately owned universities in Turkey until the 1980s. As a result, the owner of almost all the prestigious universities was the state. Ankara University (especially the Faculty of Political Sciences-MULKIYE), Istanbul Technical University, Bogazici University, Istanbul University and METU (Middle East Technical University) may be counted among the most prestigious state owned universities.

Nevertheless, as a result of changing governmental policies, some privately owned universities have sprung up since the 1980s. The first and most famous privately owned university is Bilkent University. A number of other private universities opened in the 1990s. Now, there are more than 70 universities (both state owned or privately owned) in Turkey.

Table 10
Elites Universities in Turkey

Names of the Universities	Elite Groups (%)			Total
	Political	Trade Union	Media	
Not Applicable	3	33	7	14
Gazi University	-	13	3	6
Ankara University (SBF-FPS)	50	20	37	36
METU (Middle East Technical University)	3	4	3	3
Other Universities	10	20	13	15
Istanbul University	17	7	20	14
ITU (Istanbul Technical University)	17	3	7	9
Bogazici University	-	-	7	2
Foreign Universities	-	-	3	1
Toplam	100	100	100	100

Source: Reorganised from Arslan, 1999.

Table 10 demonstrates that Ankara University is the most prestigious and well known elite university in Turkey. The Faculty of Political Sciences, in particular, has a very long tradition and has a very effective clique character. The Faculty of Political Sciences of Ankara university has

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traditionally been called the “Mulkiye” and many Turkish elites have graduated from this school. Its graduates represent all the peculiarities of group conspiracy, coherence and consciousness. They are highly effective not only in Turkish politics but also in every part of the administration of society. Also, Istanbul University, Istanbul Technical University, Gazi University, Bogazici University and METU (Middle East Technical University) are highly popular universities among Turkish elites.

4.4. FOREIGN LANGUAGE ABILITIES OF TURKISH ELITES

Another important factor which is related to the education of the elites is foreign language ability. Knowing a foreign language is very important in today’s world. This ability has even greater importance for those people who occupy elite positions. In paralel to globalization, if people wish to communicate with other people who come from different cultures and societies they need to have foreign language ability.

Table 11
Foreign Language Abilities of Turkish Elites

Foreign Language Ability	Elite Groups (%)			Total
	Political	Trade Union	Media	
No	10	63	10	28
One	77	20	43	47
Two	6	17	40	21
Three & more	7	-	7	4
TOTAL	100	100	100	100

Source: Reorganised from Arslan, 1999.

As can be seen in **Table 11**, the majority of Turkish elites do possess a foreign language. About 82 percent of them know at least one foreign language. In addition, 47 percent of Turkish elites have the ability in at least two foreign languages and 26 percent of them are competent in at least 3 foreign languages.

Educational Backgrounds Of Contemporary Turkish Elites**Table 12**

Foreign Language Abilities of Turkish Elites by Gender

Number of Foreign Language	Elite's Gender (%)		Total
	Female	Male	
No	-	30	28
One	71	45	47
Two	29	20	21
Three & more	-	5	4
TOTAL	8	92	100

Source: *Reorganised from Arslan, 1999.***Table 13**

Foreign Language Abilities of Turkish Elites by Their Educational Levels

Foreign Language Ability	Elites' Educational Level (%)		
	University	High School	Middle School
No	21	73	50
One	52	9	50
Two	23	9	-
Three & more	4	9	-
TOTAL	100	100	100

Source: *Reorganised from Arslan, 1999.*

There is an important relation between the gender status of Turkish elites and their foreign language abilities. **Table 12** shows that almost all female Turkish elites have the ability to speak at least one foreign language. However, roughly 30 percent of male Turkish elites cannot speak any foreign language. According to **Table 13**, there is an association between educational levels and the foreign language ability of Turkish elites. Almost 80 percent of university educated Turkish elites can speak at least one foreign language, whilst 73 percent of high school educated and 50 percent of middle school educated Turkish elites can not speak any foreign language.

Table 14
Turkish Elites' Foreign Language Types

Foreign Language Type	Elite Groups (%)		
	Political	Trade Union	Media
Not Applicable	10	63	10
English	50	17	20
French	10	-	7
German	7	3	6
Arabic	6	-	-
English-French	7	10	27
English-German	3	4	10
Arabic-European Language	-	3	10
Others	7	-	-
Three European Languages	-	-	10
TOTAL	100	100	100

Source: *Reorganised from Arslan, 1999.*

As in other countries of the world, the most popular foreign language among Turkish elites is English. **Table 14** shows that more than half of Turkish elites speak English as a second language. The second most popular language among Turkish elites is French, and the third is German. There is also a meaningful relationship between the gender of Turkish elites and the nature of their foreign language abilities. As can be seen in **Table 15**, almost all female Turkish elites could speak only European foreign languages. It has to be also noted that all the female elites can speak English. In addition, 14 percent of female Turkish elites can speak both German and English, and another 14 percent could speak both French and English. However, male Turkish elites present a highly pluralist character when it comes to foreign language ability.

Table 15

Foreign Language Types of Turkish Elites by Gender

Type of Foreign Language	Gender of Elite (%)	
	Female	Male
Not Applicable	-	30
English	72	25
French	-	6
German	-	6
Arabic	-	2
English-French	14	15
English-German	14	5
Arabic-European Language	-	5
Others	-	2
Three European Languages	-	4
TOTAL	8	92

Source: *Reorganised from Arslan, 1999.*

Table 14 and **Table 15** also provide some ideas about contemporary Turkish society. Turkey has turned its face completely towards western civilisation since the beginning of the Republic and it has taken a very large step in the process of westernisation. The tables illustrate this: more than 95 percent of Turkish elites who know a foreign language speak European languages.

5. THE GENERAL FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

Elite studies have great importance within sociological and political studies, because elites are among the primary agents of social change. They manage the direction, the speed and the form of social change, because they hold institutional power and influence social decisions at a macro level, and they can affect the political outcomes within society. The researcher began with a formal definition of a set of positions, then those people who held these positions were identified as the elite. At the second stage of the procedure, the key positions in the major elite sectors were defined. Finally, the occupiers of these key positions were accepted as the elite.

Three major sectors were originally examined for reasons that were mentioned at the beginning. As has been explained in the methodology, the sampling group comprises of the presidents of political parties and those five people who occupy the most affective positions after the president in each

political party in contemporary Turkish politics. This group can be identified as “the cream of the cream” of Turkish politicians.

On the other hand, the media is one of the most important institutions in contemporary societies. It is a reality that media plays very substantial role in the production and social distribution of knowledge. Also, contemporary media wields very distinctive weapons to obtain power, wealth and prestige in the society. If media owners and elites are so powerful, the identification of media elites is of great importance. The managers, editors, influential columnists and reporters of major Turkish media elites are defined as Turkish media elites.

Additionally, as a result of rapid transformation from the capital based society to the information-based society, education has become more important than ever before, in determining success in contemporary world. Not only the extent but also the type of education has a large impact on the elite circulation process. University degrees in particular are an almost universal precondition for recruitment to elite positions. This argument is also valid for contemporary Turkish society. Turkish political elites present a highly elitist character in terms of their educational backgrounds. According to the findings, a large proportion of the Turkish democracy makers possess at least one university degree.

Generally, contemporary Turkish elites differ sharply from the adult population of Turkey in terms of education. Specifically, Turkish labour union leaders have less formal education than the members of the other elite groups. This situation is correlated with the occupational career patterns and class backgrounds of the elites. Thus, whereas white collar occupations necessitate a more advanced education, a moderate or lower educational background is suffices for blue collar occupations. In addition, the family’s social status is ver effective on the kind and extent of the education of the children: i.e. those people who have a higher class background have greater chance and opportunity to acquire a better quality and a higher level education than others. The people with a lower class background are more restricted socially and economically. They do not only have economic barriers but also social barriers blocking their careers. Therefore, people from lower class backgrounds have to spend much more time and effort than others to be successful in the competition.

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