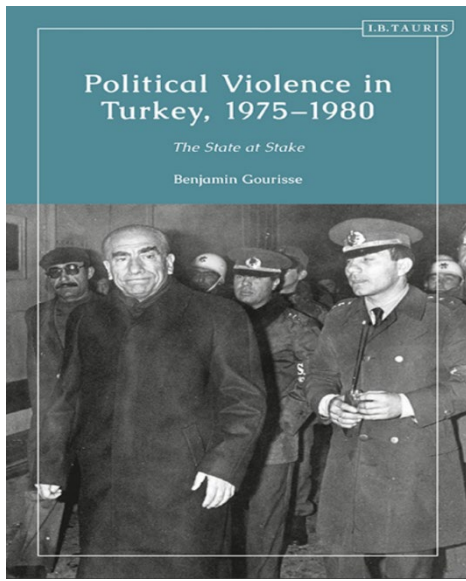Benjamin Gourisse, **Political Violence in Turkey, 1975–1980, The State at Stake,** I. B. Tauris, 2023, 233 pages, ISBN 978-0-7556-4646-3

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Benjamin Gourisse discussing the political violence and social unrest in Turkey during the period of 1975-1980. The author appears to challenge certain prevailing explanations and interpretations of the events during that time. The key points in the book:

Background of Violence (1975-1980): The military coup in September 1980 is presented as a response to a period of escalating violence in Turkey. Social mobilization and clashes between extremist left-wing and right-wing organizations led to a state of generalized chaos.

Symmetry of Conflicting Groups: The author challenges the notion of symmetry between radical left-wing and right-wing movements, arguing that the Far-Right (far-right) movements had more coordinated and disciplined activities compared to the far-left.

State Dynamics and Economic Crisis: The text explores the impact of the economic crisis, political instability, and the state's inability to control the violence. It suggests that the state was not temporarily knocked out but rather central to the conflict.

Role of the State Institutions: The author questions the traditional view of the state as an autonomous body, emphasizing its role as an arena for conflict. State institutions were depicted as being heavily involved in the rivalry between radical movements, leading to a politicization of practices within these institutions.

Autonomy of Violence: The author challenges the idea that violence became autonomous, arguing that its intensity and occurrence were tied to the fluctuating balance of political power.

State's Inability to Control Violence: The author suggests that the state, overwhelmed by the radical groups within it, was unable to restore security. Violent actions by militias and armed groups became entrenched through contacts between these groups and the state apparatus.

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Violence as a Political Lever: Violence is portrayed as a means for these radical groups to accumulate resources and power. The Far-Right movements used violence strategically to gain control and influence in public institutions.

Combination of Legal and Illegal Tactics: The text points out that legal and peaceful activities were combined with illegal and armed actions. The threat of violence was used as a negotiating tool by the far-right movements in their dealings with the political authorities.

The main themes and chapters of the book:

Historical Analysis of Overlap and Accumulation (Chapter 1): The first chapter delves into the historical context of practices involving the penetration of the state apparatus by coalitions of actors seeking to access and exploit its resources. The analysis extends back to the Ottoman Empire and challenges the traditional view of the Turkish state as a unified entity, highlighting mechanisms such as co-optation, collusion, alliance, and circumvention.

Comparison of Far-Right and Far-Left Movements (Chapter 2): The second chapter compares the emergence and development of the far-right and far-left movements, exploring their respective origins, ideologies, and trajectories.

Examination of Resources and Asymmetry (Chapter 3): The third chapter analyzes the types and levels of social, political, and economic resources available to the far-right and far-left movements. The focus is on the pronounced asymmetry favoring the Nationalist Movement (far-rights) in contests against far-left organizations.

Impact of Activities on Contest Functioning (Chapter 4): The fourth chapter describes how the activities used by conflicting movements to capture public resources influenced the functioning of the contest. It explores the effects of the Nationalist Movement's participation in government on public-sector recruitment processes.

Effects of Tactical Ploys within the State (Chapter 5): Chapter 5 explores the effects of tactical maneuvers implemented by the far-rights within state institutions to diversify the sites they held. It examines how these maneuvers forced adjustments from far-left groups, leading to a homogenization of their demands and mobilization strategies.

Transformation of Violence as Political Action (Chapter 6): The sixth chapter investigates how violence became a mode of political action in Turkey during the late 1970s. It explores violence as a means of accumulating resources and the role it played in shaping political dynamics.

Impact of Escalating Violence on Contests (Chapter 7): The final chapter examines how the escalation and generalization of violence transformed the contests within political and state arenas leading up to the military coup of September 12, 1980. This chapter likely

explores the culmination of the political crisis and the ultimate consequences of the violent dynamics.

The text appears to provide a detailed analysis of the socio-political landscape in Turkey during the specified period, emphasizing the interaction between radical movements, the state apparatus, and the role of violence in shaping political outcomes.

It should be noted that the book provides several important insights:

Periodization of the 1970s: The prevailing view of the second half of the 1970s characterizes it as a period marked by escalating violence and political disorder, culminating in the military intervention of September 12, 1980. The interpretation suggests that the failure of the state to maintain order led to the military stepping in to restore sovereignty.

Critique of Traditional Interpretation: The author challenges this view, arguing that the events of the 1970s were not exceptional but rather rooted in historical practices of penetrating the state and capturing its resources. The inability of political elites to address the crisis and the rise of clientelism within political parties are seen as continuous phenomena rather than unique to the 1970s.

Continuity of State Penetration: The study emphasizes the continuity of activities to penetrate the state, even after the military intervention of 1980. The actors involved may change, but the fundamental practices persist. The military's indirect control over political life until the early 2000s is highlighted, influencing political parties' access to state revenue streams.

Coalitions and Collusion: The text notes the existence of coalitions between security institutions, politicians, and entrepreneurs in post-1980 Turkey. These collaborations, driven by the war against illegal organizations, illustrate ongoing links between official sectors, political parties, and criminal or mafia networks.

Routine Operation of Institutions: The work sheds light on the routine functioning of institutions in Turkey, suggesting that the activities of conflicting groups to penetrate the state in the 1970s were not aberrant. It underscores the political and party-political rationales as key factors in regulating society and the economy.

Influence on State Institutions: The activities of far-rights and far-left groups influenced state institutions by politicizing their members' practices. Public institutions became arenas for conflicts of interest connected to political divides, leading to a loss of objectivity toward citizens.

Generalization of Violence: The author suggests that violence became a widespread form of political action in the late 1970s, with far-right and far-left groups, as well as

moderate actors, employing mobilization, resource capture, and violence as primary political tools.

Crisis Strategies: The author advocates for a close observation of the tactical activities deployed by various actors during crises, emphasizing the need to understand how mobilized groups' practices modify the formal and informal rules governing social contests.

In conclusion, the book challenges conventional narratives, highlighting the persistence of historical practices, the continuity of state penetration, and the complex interplay between political actors and institutions in Turkey during the tumultuous period of the late 1970s. The author is challenging existing narratives about the events in Turkey during that time, highlighting the intricacies of the relationship between the state, radical movements, and the use of violence as a political tool.