

Neoliberal Transformation of Education in Turkey

Political and Ideological Analysis of Educational
Reforms in the Age of the AKP



Edited by Kemal İnal and Güliz Akkaymak

Postcolonial Studies in Education



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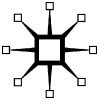
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Series Editors' Preface*

On September 12, 1980, Turkey experienced a terrible military coup that, like the 1973 coup in Chile, led to thousands of arrests and disappearances. The coup was a bid by the Turkish military, influenced by US cold-war politics, to establish conditions for bringing in neoliberal policies in this heavily populated nation covering areas in Europe and Asia. The introduction of neoliberal policies in Turkey actually occurred with decisions taken in January 1980. The main political figure behind these decisions was former World Bank employee, Turgut Özal, later to become prime minister (1983–1989) and then president (1989–1993). He was, at the time of the January 1980 decisions, undersecretary to Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel. As in Chile, after its coup of September 11, 1973 (considered by many as the first 9/11), and in other Latin American countries thereafter, forceful measures were utilized to establish and consolidate neoliberalism in Turkey.

The military coup in Turkey took place only a few years after the May 1, 1977, celebration in Istanbul's *Taksim* Square was crushed by the opening of gunfire on participants, leaving around 34 people dead. The *Taksim* May Day celebrations were, after the coup, banned for a number of years and revived after the ban was lifted in 2009 (only in 2011 and 2012 was participation allowed to all and not to just select groups). Those who witnessed the 2011 celebration, where hundreds of thousands of workers rallied anew, could readily understand why the manifestation was banned and why it required such drastic military action to usher in neoliberal policies in a country that historically has been the home of a wide variety of movements and a vibrant political left. Among the victims of the 1980 coup were activists, as well as editors of left wing publishing houses in Turkey. One of these was İlhan Erdost, editor of *Sol Yayınları*, a publisher of many Marxist classics. He was beaten to death while in custody, allegedly

for publishing banned leftist books. Nevertheless, many such publishing houses and bookstores still continue to make their presence felt in and around major Turkish cities.

The army in Turkey is often regarded as the legacy of the secular policies introduced by Mustafa Kemal, known as Atatürk, the leader and military strategist who strove to modernize the country, seeking to extricate it from the grip of the Muslim Ottoman influences. The army, however, supported religious schools and included the need for obligatory religious courses in the 1982 constitution. On the other hand, it continues to play an important role in the promotion of a modernist push toward “Turkification,” allowing little space for the flourishing of the various cultures, notably the Kurdish culture, that form a significant section of the Turkish mosaic. Furthermore, and here lies the connection with neoliberalism, it is largely regarded as an important US satellite force in a region of the world known for its volatility. Accordingly, in a nation where many people are schooled into its military culture from a young age and also through certain specialized university institutes, the Turkish military constitutes a formidable force as one of the world’s largest armies. AKP¹ political interventions, however, have led to the army taking a backseat, and numerous high-level officers are currently in prison.

Meanwhile, the kin of those who disappeared in Turkey also continue to make their presence felt in the form of a mothers’ movement that meets on Saturdays in one of Istanbul’s squares, the one surrounding Galatasaray High School.² The parallels and influence of the *Madres* of the Plaza Cinco de Mayo in Buenos Aires are not to be missed. They provide further testimony to the fact that the process that led to transformations in different aspects of social life in Turkey, manifestations of Turkey’s “growing up modern,” had its birth pangs in a terrible period in the country’s recent history.

The impact of neoliberalism is also highly visible within different sections of the nation’s educational system. There is a noticeable, constantly increasing presence of privatization and market ideology, and instrumentalization of education as an object of consumption. While Turkey is not a member of the European Union (EU), its higher education system is not immune to the influences of the Bologna process,³ as this gospel is being preached and taken on board by policy makers. With its large youth population, the country becomes an attractive market for European universities in their competition with the United States and Southeast Asia to recruit international fee-paying students from outside the EU as part of what is being termed the “internationalization” of higher education.

A quick glance at the faculty profiles of universities such as METU (Middle East Technical University), Boğaziçi Üniversitesi (University of the Bosphorous), Ankara Üniversitesi, and others, suggests that, traditionally, the United States has been the main postgraduate destination for promising young Turkish academics. Although many have also studied in Europe, especially Germany and the United Kingdom, exposure to the Bologna process of harmonization and credit transfer renders Turkish graduates more likely today to pursue their further education in this continent. Meanwhile, though highly selective public universities do exist in Turkey and feature among the best higher education institutions available, we also increasingly witness a plethora of private institutions where academics from nominally public institutions teach part-time at piece rate to supplement their meager salaries. This is often regarded as a win-win situation for both the private sector and the state, thus leading to the typical neoliberal blurring of the “private-public” divide, a process skewed in favor of the private sector.

Given these conditions, *Neoliberal Transformation of Education in Turkey*, through the contributions of a variety of Turkish writers in the field of education, specifically centers its analysis directly on this political–economic phenomenon. True to postcolonial concerns, a historical perspective is also well highlighted by a number of the authors. For instance, we read about the tensions that prevailed within the Ottoman Empire as a result of the nation-state’s move toward modernization, while at the same time preserving and promoting Islamic values. Other important themes raised by the authors include curriculum development; the roles of IMF and World Bank; the onset of neoliberal policies in the new millennium; and the role of teachers’ unions, focusing on the pro-AKP *Eğitim-Bir-Sen* whose membership increased ten times. This is not to be confused with the very visible and progressive education union, *Eğitim-Sen*, which embraces a critical pedagogy and, incidentally, produces one of Turkey’s main refereed education journals. Other significant issues raised in the book include those of human rights education, the role of the “new managerialism” in Turkish education, preparation for flexi-work, adult education in the context of the recent neoliberal discourse on lifelong learning, private foundation universities, private tutoring (a phenomenon in other Mediterranean countries, as well), body politics, and sexual regulation under AKP rule, among others.

The timely view provided by this impressive group of Turkish scholars is panoramic and varied. Hence, the volume provides a much-needed comprehensive insight into educational concerns in

this increasingly influential nation—a nation characterized by conditions, tensions, and struggles that result from an intermeshing of different cultures within a context of asymmetrical relations of power. In this light, Turkey serves as a perfect example of the postcolonial phenomenon of hybridity: East meets West, Europe meets Asia, secularism coexists with Islam while modernist conceptions in the form of Turkish nationalism exist side by side with postmodern ones, involving different ethnic identities seeking affirmation, greater political power or autonomy, even by armed struggle, if necessary, as has been case with the Kurds.

This thoughtful collection is a worthy contribution to the existing literature in the field. It sheds light on the pedagogical influences of a nation-state that must grapple with the inherent cultural and political conflicts and contradictions resulting from the ideological push-pull of modernizing secularization and existing religious traditions of Islam in the midst of changing economic conditions. In providing a multiplicity of scholarly perspectives across the education sector, *Neoliberal Transformation of Education in Turkey* offers a welcome, comprehensive analysis of the impact of neoliberal policies and practices on the process of Turkish education—an analysis that resonates deeply with postcolonial concerns.

Notes

* We are indebted to Professor Hasan Aksoy from Ankara University and Onur Seçkin from Boğaziçi Üniversitesi, for their important comments on earlier drafts of the Preface.

1. *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, (Justice and Development Party), which is the current ruling party in Turkey led by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. It is a centre-right party that favors a conservative social agenda and a liberal market economy.
2. Incidentally this school is said to have given rise to the famous football club, Galatasaray, UEFA Cup and European Super Cup winners in 2000. The club traces its origins to the high school team.
3. This refers to the system of organization of university courses to facilitate credit transfer and overall harmonization between degree programs across the EU. By attuning people from outside the EU to this process one increases their chances of moving to universities and other higher education institutions within the union instead. The EU is bent on competing with the United States to obtain the lion's share of "international" students, that is, outside the EU. That lion's share is currently enjoyed by the United States.

Preface

Kemal İnal Güliz Akkaymak

Why did we need to write this book? Despite the many other issues related to education in Turkey, why did we prefer to write specifically on the educational politics of the Justice and Development Party (AKP)?

There are several reasons. The first reason is rooted in structural transformations of educational system in Turkey. Since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, the education system has been restructured twice. The first structural amendment was made in the Mustafa Kemal Atatürk era (1923–1938). During the Ottoman Empire, the education system had a dual structure: traditional (religious) and modern (western) education. The republic put an end to the dual structure by closing the traditional educational institutions. Modern educational institutions, on the other hand, were considered very crucial for the construction of the “nation-state.” In this respect, the Arabic alphabet was replaced with the Latin alphabet, and madrasas with universities. A coeducation system was adopted. Curricula and textbooks were written in accordance with the values of the new regime, such as democracy. A literacy campaign was launched. Religious education was trivialized. The religious discourse in education was replaced with a nationalist discourse. All these changes represent the Kemalist Reformation. Atatürk considered education as a tool with which to modernize Turkey. For him, religious educational institutions were the main reason for the country’s backwardness, and modernization could only be achieved with modern educational system. For this purpose, John Dewey and many other thinkers were invited to Turkey, and their recommendations were used as a guide in the modernization of education. In short, the scholastic education

system of the Ottoman Empire was reformed into a scientific-based and secular education system.

The second structural amendment started in the early 1970s and has accelerated since 2002. The economic system of Turkey was based on the planned development model and the import-substitution industrialization of the pre-1970 era. However, in line with the neoliberalization efforts in many other countries in the late 1970s, Turkey liberalized the market mechanism to converge the national economy with global capitalism. This structural change came with the January 24, 1980, measures, which were solidified with the September 12, 1980, military coup. The military officers who staged the coup implemented two policies. With the 1983 elections, they left the political power to the Özal government, which was supported by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the United States. Then, in order to dilute the power of the left wing, they began to implement the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis doctrine. This doctrine increased the impact of religion in political and social life, and led the pro-Islamist, anticapitalist, and antisocialist Welfare Party (RP) to come to power as part of a coalition government in 1991. The party, however, was banned by the February 28, 1997, postmodern coup for violating the principle of secularism in the constitution. After the banishment, the successors of the RP split into Radical Islamists and Moderate Islamists. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the current prime minister, took part in the latter group and established the AKP in 2001. The party won by a landslide in the 2002 general election, winning over two-thirds of parliamentary seats¹.

The AKP considered education system, which has been based on the behaviorist education model, responsible for several problems, such as unskilled labor power and the low success of students in international exams. The party criticized the curricula for not teaching students critical thinking skills, and pointed out the necessity for a structural reform in the education system that would replace the nationalist and behaviorist education model with the liberal and constructivist model. The shift from the former model to the latter was achieved with the guidance and support (both financial and intellectual) of the World Bank (WB), the IMF, and the European Union (EU) in 2004. At the national level, the largest capitalist association, the Turkish Industry and Business Association (TUSIAD), has also been publishing reports since the early 1990s that address the necessity of reform in several fields, such as the economy, education, and law. In its reports on education, the TUSIAD states that to help Turkey play a strong role in global capitalism, the educational system needs to be reformed. The

new education system, according to the TUSIAD, should aim at producing the labor force needed by the market economy. In line with the TUSIAD's report, the educational reform initiated in 2004 adopted a neoliberal discourse and changed the national stance of education into a global stance.

The AKP has made several structural changes in the educational arena since 2002. The revision of curriculum and textbooks; the introduction of Total Quality Management (TQM) and performance assessment of teachers; the abolishment of laws restricting religious education; and an increase in the number of Koran courses are among these changes. With these structural changes, the AKP, on the one hand, left the education system to the control of neoliberal ideology. On the other hand, the party integrated its conservative ideology into the system. In this book, we aim to examine and present these processes of change from a critical perspective.

The second reason is the close relation created between the economy and education. The AKP's policies have reorganized the education system to educate students/citizens in the way that the market economy requires. Almost every stage of public education has been privatized. That is, several nationwide exams have been created to determine admissions to highly ranked public schools and universities. Due to the intense competition on these exams, many students take private courses to increase their chances. Many services at schools, such as maintenance, transportation, and cafeteria work, were subcontracted to private firms. As a consequence, students are now paying more for these services, and workers in these services are now working in conditions without job security. While glorifying the relation between market and education, the educational policies of the AKP disregard social values, which should be the main part of the education system.

The third reason is an insufficient amount of the national budget spent on public education. Today, there are many public schools buildings that are not in good shape and that urgently need to be renovated. Likewise, common areas in the schools, such as restrooms and libraries, are filled with old tools and furniture. The salary of teachers in public schools is very low. The lack of enough investment in schools also dilutes the quality of public education, which leads students and parents to seek alternative educational institutions like tutoring institutions/courses. Moreover, since it came to power, the AKP has initiated a number of reforms that have led to complaint by both teachers and parents about the unstable education system.

Although the AKP considers its policies as revolutionary steps for the education system in Turkey, as the chapters in this book demonstrate, the policies have done nothing more than damage the entire system.

The fourth reason is a lack of study at the international level that critically evaluates the policies of the AKP. As opposed to international opinion, which views the party as reformist and liberal, this book highlights the necessity to present the negative aspects of the party's policies. Unlike the so-called enhancement of the Turkish economy, Turkey has a high current account deficit and, in a sense, is dependent on the flow of hot money from international financial organizations. It is not surprising, then, that under these economic conditions all public services are considered as a burden by the AKP. Erdoğan, the leader of the party, in this context, declared on several occasions that he and his supporters aim to privatize all aspects of education. However, the AKP disregards the fact that almost half of the Turkish population is under 18 and that many of them are from the lower class. Therefore, the privatization of education means both stealing the future of these young people and strengthening class differences. The privatization attempts in education also contradict the constitution, which defines Turkey as a social welfare state.

Through destroying the social composition of education, the AKP aims to restructure the education system in accordance with postmodernism. That is, the party seeks to replace the modernist role of education (i.e., the creation of a citizen) with the postmodernist role (i.e., an individual defined within a specific community). For this purpose, the emphasis on religious education has been enhanced. The party, for instance, criticizes coeducation, but it glorifies single-sex schools and classrooms, arguing that single-sex schools are more helpful for students' physiological, mental, and social well-being.

The fifth reason is the AKP's oppressive attitude toward intellectuals, professors, and all other educators. Since it came to power, the party has not allowed educators to criticize any of its policies. Its constant oppression of Eğitim-Sen, the most critical union, constitutes a significant example. Moreover, to enhance the party's power, Prime Minister Erdoğan began appointing the presidents of the main scientific institutions: the Turkish Academy of Sciences (TUBA) and the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK). The presidents of these institutions, however, had been selected by their members in the past. In response to this change, a great number of members of these institutions resigned. The authors of this book aim to give voice to the "suppressed academia." We believe that

science and democracy cannot flourish when there is no criticism. Therefore, this book provides a well-rounded critical analysis of educational policies and reforms in the age of the AKP.

Note

1. During the period between 1997 and 2002, Turkey was ruled by unsuccessful coalition governments.

The AKP and Education in Turkey

The Political Economy of Education in Turkey: State, Labor, and Capital under AKP Rule

Gamze Yücesan-Özdemir and Ali Murat Özdemir

This chapter evaluates the political economy of education in Turkey under the rule of the Justice and Development Party (AKP). The education regime does not stand on its own and must be located within the general economic, social, and political conditions within which state, capital, and class relations are constituted. Thus, an understanding of the realities behind the education regime in Turkey requires an analysis of the Turkish economy, the transformation in the form of the Turkish state, the development of capital, and the experience of class politics. This study explores the contemporary education regime under AKP rule in the context of the historical and socioeconomic and political circumstances within which it is embedded.

In so doing, this chapter firstly aims to clarify the status of the education regime, in other words, to provide an account of how to understand the education regime. It then provides an understanding of the political economy within and beyond the education regime during the AKP years by analyzing the transformation of the state and the redefinition of labor-capital relations. Lastly, given that education is part of social policy, this chapter evaluates the social policy in Turkey under AKP rule. It discusses recent developments, describes the current scheme, and reveals the neoliberal and Islamic-conservative guises dominant in Turkish social policy and in the discoveries of policy makers.

Clarifying the Status of the Education Regime

Firstly, it is important to investigate the dynamics behind the current education policy of Turkey by way of reference to the correlation between the dynamics of accumulation and the form of the state, in which the state's realizes its function of securing the conditions necessary to reproduce the dominant ideology. The correlation between the capitalist relations of production and the surface forms, including the economy, education, politics, and the law as elements of state power, cannot be traced on the basis of linear causality. Thus, this investigation of the education regime has to take into account the imbricatedness of the relations that constitute these realms. Within this context, the process of transformation ("change") in the form of the Turkish state and the impasse related to import substitution as a chronic feature of the Turkish economy will become a point of departure for the assessment of state power, which shapes education policy and which is limited by the paradoxes of capital relations and/or the state's controversial relation to the accumulation process, which has international dimensions.

Secondly, the current education policy deals with and is characterized by significant political and institutional changes, the incentives of which cannot be understood solely by referring to the "needs" of the domestic economy. Within this context, the transitions experienced by the set of structural forms that have a certain impact on education policies and on state apparatuses that deal with education must be investigated here with reference to the ongoing crisis of capitalism after the collapse of the Fordist mode of regulation and of its corollary in peripheral countries, namely, import substitution. Neither the reason for the impasse that is related to the strategy of import substitution nor the accelerated processes of commodification of public services, including education, is related solely to the outcomes of class struggle in the domestic realm. They carry—at the same time—the footprints of the ideological and political effects of central capitalism, which provided the necessary social/structural forms in which the class struggle was shaped. The complexity of the issue makes it very difficult to establish a general theory of the politics of regime transition. It is, however, possible to view the correlation between hegemonic strategies and trends in the international division of labor. To this end, a historical evaluation must be based on an investigation of the transformation in Turkey within the world capitalist system during the last 30 years.

Thirdly, the changing balance of class forces in the realms of politics, economics, and ideology created an environment in which the democratic society is believed to have no power to challenge the choices related to the fundamental economic organization through the means of participatory democracy. For this reason, the whole neo-liberal legal reform process is self-confidently conducted by the ruling AKP, which believes in a direct causal link and/or straight correlation between economic growth and the protection of private property rights, together with the enforceability of contracts, despite the growing income inequality and poverty in the society.

Fourthly, proposals for reforms—such as education, health, and social security—that have an impact on the form of the state in Turkey have been developed by commentators who judge development (a synonym for “capital accumulation” in AKP jargon) on the basis of measuring the gross domestic product (GDP). Even the “modest” goal of building the institutional framework to market products seems to be largely uncompleted. Law enforcement through a formal system has been replaced by informal methods of dispute resolution conducted by organized crime and/or clientalistic-religious networks. Possible redistributive and indirect economic goals of reforms have never come onto the agenda. Even though a detailed critique of the failures of the “old establishment” has been developing for at least the past eight years of AKP rule, nearly the same economic programs are being promoted under the auspices of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and/or other international organizations. Under these conditions, the rule of law and the rhetoric of democracy adopted by the AKP do not represent a desire for genuine change.

Fifthly, in its attempt to depoliticize the economic decision-making process and restrict the domain of democracy as a means of fostering the smooth implementation of market-based economic reforms—including education reform—the AKP created and widely benefited from the conditions that led to the spread of generalized corruption and clientalistic/religious networks and are backed up with the generalized commodification in public services. In this respect, the changes in the form of the Turkish state that have been witnessed under the rule of the AKP have many things common with the recent changes observed in “developing” countries and with the policy recommendations of international organizations.

Last but not least, many of the so-called AKP reforms, especially those in the realm of social policy—such as education, health, and social security—correspond to a post-Washington consensus based

on attempts aimed at the creation and protection of the institutions that support the market-based allocation of resources. Given the drastic consequences of income inequality, the AKP failed to mitigate the negative consequences of the market mechanism by creating new institutions. Reforms designed to secure neoliberal capitalism in Turkey provoked new problems and crises. As a result, the reforms to impose a neoliberal rationality undermined the legitimacy of democratic institutions in Turkey.

Understanding the Political Economy in and beyond Education during the AKP Years: Creating a State and Redefining Labor-Capital Relations

Throughout the 1970s, the benefits of world trade were open to peripheral countries that had higher degrees of control over their national work force. The traditional mode of the articulation of the Turkish economy with the international division of labor, namely import substitution, seemed unsuccessful in face of the growing amounts of exports from Newly Industrializing Countries (NICs), which were in no better position than Turkey before the 1970s, to the industrialized West. The 1980s were years in which Turkey's economic policies were radically reoriented under strict measures provided by the military coup of 1980 and by "elected" governments that followed under the 1982 Constitution, which was designed according to the demands deriving from international and domestic capital. The major footprints of the 1980 alterations can be found in the January 24, 1980, stabilization program, which could not be applied "properly" before the military coup was realized in September of that same year. The main objectives of the program were a reduction in government involvement in productive activities, an increased emphasis on market forces, and the replacement of an inward-looking accumulation strategy with an "export-oriented strategy of import substitution" (Kepenek and Yentürk 1996).

The process of the reconstruction of the state and the marketization of social reproduction owed its repressive measures to the military coup of 1980. The military intervened in the main codes that constitute the form of the semiperipheral Turkish state for the purpose of attaining a more market-directed system of resource allocation. In the 1980s, the global decline in unionization, the excessive use of repressive methods to dominate domestic politics, the rising

marginalization of the work force in daily jobs, and the replacement of unionized workers by temporary employees all served to contribute to the deterioration of resistance based on labor solidarity.

After the military coup, in conformity with the rest of the peripheral world that was experiencing a debt crisis (especially after the Mexican crisis of 1982), the Keynesian-like economic policies of the pre-1980 governments of Turkey became instable and incoherent. Pre-1980 social entitlements and institutionalized compromises became threatened. In conformity with the international political climate of the 1980s, conservative/liberal calls for a reduction in the protective involvement of the state in labor issues were realized. Not only a change in the political regime but also a change in the structural forms constituting the state was on its way. Due to the fact that means of representation are themselves a part of the conjuncture that determines class interests, the balance of class forces, or, to put it in structuralist terms, the shared borderline between the classes, which were reflected in the state itself, was to be changed (Yalman 1997, 218–242).

Articulation of the Turkish economy with the new international division of labor aimed at transforming Turkey into an export-oriented country has been explicitly stated as a state policy. Post-1980 hegemonic projects succeeded in presenting the state as having no relation to class interests and in presenting the market and civil society as autonomous spheres, and concealed the fact that the state and the market are the sites where the hegemony of the bourgeoisie is exercised.

Turkey managed to obtain inflows of international credit in the first years of the neoliberal and conservative Özal governments, despite the lack of any policies to promote the introduction and effective implementation of sectorial policies necessary to effect a productive linkage to the existing division of labor (Yalman 1997, 191). The country's role in the wake of the events in Iran and Afghanistan and the so-called second cold war of the early 1980s may partly provide a reason for the Turkish success in having access to capital inflows and favorable borrowing conditions during the adjustment period (Öniş 1998, 128). Furthermore, despite the newly emerging impact of internationally conducted monetarism of the central world, major debt rescheduling did not result in spillover effects in other countries. Yet the situation was to change after the crises in Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina occurred in the first half of the 1980s. With the continuation of the borrowing facilities of the state after the January decisions,

which resulted in a relaxation of supply constraints, the Turkish bourgeoisie found a base on which earlier practices could depend and did not radically opt to initiate the investments necessary for the implementation of export substitution (Öniş 1998, 77–128). Within this context, the “export-oriented strategy of import substitution” meant the government aimed to achieve structural adjustment by liberalizing finances without structurally changing the investment patterns of the Turkish bourgeoisie. The 1990s and the 2000s would witness the continuation of this vicious and blind pattern.

The neoliberal “revolution” in Turkey did not include the structuration of industrial organizations to charm international investment, and concern about a weak level of national productivity did not lead to a break with the old patterns of production norms. The stress created by the unproductive investments over the division of total income caused the 1994 crisis (Boratav et al. 2000, Yeldan 2003). The response to the reliance on domestic debt as a result of weak international competitiveness in industry was a vicious circle that had a detrimental impact on the overall productivity of capital (Boratav 2003, Kazgan 1999). In the absence of investment patterns that would “utilize” the labor dwelling in Turkey, and thus in the absence of change in the structure of industry, placing greater reliance on market forces in policy making became a political mantra. The overall structuration of industry ceased to respond on a material level to the changes in the reproduction of capitalism on a global scale. Mainly since the 1994 crisis, the fundamental dynamic of growth has become the ongoing deterioration of wages, and thus, the conditions of the reproduction of collective labor power due to the ongoing stress that derives from the structural deficiencies of import substitution. The neoliberal restructuring of the Turkish state resulted in an ongoing decline (except in the period between 1989 and 1993) (Dereli 1998) in terms of real wages and agricultural incomes throughout the 1980s, the 1990s, and the 2000s (Boratav 2003).

The discourse of the so-called “Washington consensus,” in conformity with the New Right premises, provided the Turkish ruling classes with a new hegemonic apparatus that would be instrumental in dealing with the heritage of the mixed economy of the 1970s. New requirements for borrowing in the international arena included the opening of the economy, the reordering of public expenditure priorities, financial liberalization, privatization, the deregulation of labor markets, the providing of an encouraging environment for the private sector, and thus, the championing of the vigorous virtues of

individuals capable of “emancipating” themselves from intermediary, democratic, and corporatist powers (Yalman 1997, 225–226). This situation was not in conflict with the strengthening of the authoritarian prerogatives of the state, which has been the case for Turkey up until now. On the contrary, this new approach was in line with the New Right thinking that a strong state was necessary as the political guarantor of economic individualism and private property.

Since 1994, accusations made in search of an excuse for the clear failure of neoliberal policies have concerned the rigidities of labor legislation and social policy regulations. Within this context, state expenditures on social services related to welfare and protective provisions that result in “rigidity” in the markets came to be considered as a source of impediment for the “successful” transformation of the existing accumulation strategy into an export-oriented strategy.

The above-mentioned noncompetitive configuration can be considered as the continuation of import substitution. Moreover, the subsequent crises of 1994, 1998, and 2001, which resulted in a major outflow of short-term capital, occurred as a result of a crisis of confidence related to the viability of an import substitution strategy as a dominant strategy, which included the majority of the industry.

In conformity with the traditional perception of liberalism, it was assumed, once again, that the Turkish market economy, like any other capitalist economy, faced instability because of the exogenous interventions of a rent-seeking state, rather than its inherent systemic characteristics. However, throughout the last two decades, the Turkish state was expected to contribute to the market in such a way that its “exogenous intervention” would socialize the risk of the private sector. To put it differently, state intervention in Turkey always enabled the financial sectors and industry to transfer its costs (whether they derived from weak levels of productivity or not) to the public sector, and therefore, to society. This is one of the inherent systemic characteristics of capitalism in Turkey (Yeldan 2001, 26). Other means of state intervention have been considered to be a source of uncertainty.

Between 1998 and 2008, IMF-oriented economic policies played a significant role in the “discoveries” of policy makers in search of credit. Given that financial or capital account liberalization had already been achieved, the promarket rhetoric became inadequate for the initiation of necessary reforms aiming to commodify the existing assets of Turkey. Turkey had to carry on with new international debts and problems if the import-oriented structure of the industry was to

go on producing despite low levels of productivity with regard to new competitors in the world market, namely, the first, second, and third generations of NICs. Put differently, the price of reproducing capitalist relations of production in a peripheral country that had no conveniently disciplined labor force for international markets became greater than before.

The main axis of the IMF policies, especially after February 2001, aimed to achieve stabilization by way of rebuilding market confidence. According to this strategy, Turkey was to undertake the necessary reforms that were designed by the IMF and would be subjected to direct control by that institution on a regular basis. If, after each regular control visit, the controllers announced that Turkey was successful in meeting IMF requirements, then the markets would perceive the country as trustworthy and the aim of rebuilding market confidence would be deemed to be achieved (Yeldan 2003). The expected outcome of this “success” was the decrease of risk margins for international finance capital and a rise in consumption and investments together with total development. The last stand-by agreement between Turkey and the IMF ended in May 11, 2008. Mainly after the international crisis of 2008, the Turkish economy obtained international credit by borrowing freely from international markets and by charming the Middle East-based resources that “preferred” to invest in areas other than those provided and “offered” by Europe and the United States.

Throughout the 2000s, conditions of the reproduction of labor power consistently worsened for the individual worker. The process that officially started with an open-economy rhetoric exhausted the majority of the wage earners’, including state officials’, capacity to be members of the middle class. The process of informalizing wage relations had a negative impact on wages and covered all areas of productive activity. Import substitution as a hegemonic project disappeared, but it remained as a social reality that was decisive in the reproduction of the capitalist relations of production. A new institutionality in work, together with the refusal to deepen import substitution, led to a decline in the numbers of skilled workers among workers overall. Thus the main dynamic of growth after 1994 led to the ongoing deterioration of wages, and as a result, to the conditions of the reproduction of collective labor power rather than successful management of the economy led by domestic implementers of IMF-designed programs.

Understanding Social Policy in and beyond Education under the AKP's Rule: The Coexistence of Neoliberalism, Conservatism, and Islam

The AKP has described itself as a moderate Islamic political organization. Fittingly then, the reform plans in areas of social policy such as education, health, and social policy that the party initiated on its arrival to the government were an amalgam of Islamic conservatism and neoliberalism. Such a program might be further described as one in opposition to the basic premises of rights-based approaches to social policy. Firstly, the social policy regime of the AKP targets a process of transition from community-based ideals to those of individualism. The focus here is on individual responsibility, and it is stressed that there are no rights without duties. Put differently, rather than depending on the state for healthcare, education, and care for the elderly, the individual has to accept more responsibility for him/herself in accessing healthcare, education, and care in old age. Hence, personal consumption is presented as the key to a good life, and low taxation on income becomes essential. Specifically, the private pension system is a good example of this stress on individualism during the AKP's rule. The Turkish Private Pension Law was drafted in 1999 and approved by the parliament in October 2001. In the same vein, for the education regime, the transition from community-based ideals to those of individualism means a transition from public schools to private ones. The social effects of this "choice" have become visible in the towering numbers of private colleges and preparatory courses for the national university examination and for other purposes, including driving licenses, language examinations, and so forth.

Secondly, the social policy regime of the AKP emphasizes the market and its role in the reproduction of society. The party has led the process of market colonization or rather, the penetration of market norms into nonmarket spheres. In other words, under the AKP's rule, life itself, with its social, academic, and cultural dimensions, has become a marketplace. Both in the classical political economy and in neoliberal theory, the market is often defended as a sphere of freedom, of voluntary, uncoerced contracts between free and independent agents. Hence, it is assumed that in the marketplace, free women and men are able to simultaneously maximize the general interest and pursue their own interests by freely exchanging goods and services, without intervention from the state. Neoliberal writings