

Consolidation of neoliberalism through political islam and its limits: The case of Turkey

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Abstract

The Justice and Development Party (JDP) carries the neoliberal programme with a moderate form of Islam in Turkey since 2002 elections. This article aims to present a political economy reading of Turkey's state-society formation historically through embarking on Gramscian historical materialism. It then questions how institutionalist and critical political economy literature debate the JDP rule. I shall argue that while the institutionalist political economy literature fails to explicate the JDP rule, critical political economy literature contributes to unravel market-oriented nature of the JDP policies and to debate limits to consolidating neoliberalism through political Islam.

Key words: Turkey, Gramsci, Hegemony, Critical Political Economy, Institutional Political Economy

1. Introduction

The Justice and Development Party (JDP) has carried the neoliberal programme with a moderate form of Islam in Turkey since 2002 elections. In its two terms in office, until 2010, the JDP was successful to get support from different segments in society around its neoliberal project. However, since 2010, the JDP started to lose the consent of groups which previously supported its rule. Turkey

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was administered by state of emergency following the attempted coup on July 15, 2016 for two years. Meanwhile, Turkey changed its regime from a parliamentary to a peculiar presidential one with the referendum held on April 16, 2017. Following the presidential and parliamentary elections held on June 24, 2018, President Erdoğan rules with increased constitutional power, though the JDP lost its single-party majority position in the parliament and sought to form an alliance with the Nationalist Action Party (MHP). Within this historical context, this article aims to study rise and decline of the JDP rule through embedding the debate within Turkey's integration into the capitalist world structure especially in the period after the 1980 neoliberal restructuring. It does so by presenting a political economy reading of Turkey's state-society formation historically with the help of Gramscian historical materialism. How can we read Turkey's state and society relations using conceptual tools provided by Gramsci? How does institutionalist and critical political economy literature explicate the rise of the JDP and study its decline? The paper argues that institutionalist political economy literature fails to problematise capitalism and neglects social class as a category to approach Turkey's social formation. They subscribe to strong state tradition and thus end up reading the rise of the JDP positively expecting a rupture from previous periods to consolidate democracy. This literature develops arguments such as post-Kemalism, bounded communities and/or neighbourhood pressure, none of which presents an overall explanation to grasp decline of the JDP rule. The paper then presents an alternative reading conceiving of the rise of the JDP as *trasformismo*, expecting continuity rather than rupture from the JDP rule. Gramsci originally used *trasformismo* to describe 'formation of an ever more extensive ruling class' (Gramsci, 1971: 181). The JDP was instrumental to expand social base of neoliberal restructuring through incorporating disadvantaged groups from globalisation and constraining political space for dissent by taking consent from lower income groups through social assistance mechanisms and charities. The decline of the JDP is explicated as a result of dissolving consensus around the JDP after economic crisis, fall of Arab Spring and Gezi Park protests.

This paper offers two contributions. First, it provides a political economy reading of Turkey's state and society relations from a Gramscian historical materialist perspective. In the political science literature on Turkey, there are studies using Gramscian tools which fail to embed the debate on pre-eminent accumulation strategy and social relations of production. For instance, Tuğal's reading of the rise and decline of the JDP using Gramscian tools of passive revolution and war of position is problematic. Tuğal explicates the rise of the JDP as a passive revolution, which he interprets as absorption of a former radical movement against the world system to existing patterns of domination (Tuğal 2009, 3-4). Ironically, Tuğal argues, Islamic politics is a source of opposition as the left-

wing movements in the Middle East including Turkey cannot present an alternative. He argues that class has never been the primary determinant in politics due to the Middle East tributary production structure in which struggles within elites are central (Tuğal, 2016: 236). In this sense, Tuğal argues Gezi is a left-liberal war of position which aspires to democratize the passive revolution (Tuğal, 2016: 249). In these readings, Gramsci is ‘divorced’ from historical materialism creating a constant confusion for the reader (Erol, 2010: 538). These studies indeed present ‘a non-Gramscian analysis with Gramscian terminology’ (Altınors, 2017: 184). Thus, this paper aims to contribute to a limited number of studies which employs Gramscian concepts without divorcing Gramsci from the historical materialist tradition (e.g. Yalman, 2009; Yıldızoğlu, 2015). Second, it aims to situate the rise and decline of the JDP rule within broader structural dynamics and provide a historical reading of Turkey’s state-society relations through highlighting particular coordinates of class struggle. The analysis is structured as follows. It starts with explicating merits of adopting Gramscian historical materialism and historicising relations of state with capital and labour in Turkey with an emphasis on the period after 1980s. The article then examines how institutionalist political economy literature explicates the rise of the JDP rule and studies its decline. It then presents criticisms of critical political economy and highlights its contributions to the debate before concluding.

2. Gramscian Historical Materialism and its contributions to reading Turkey’s state-society relations

Gramscian historical materialism takes social relations of production as a starting point and structure its analyses on three spheres namely social relations of production, forms of state and world order. Production is not limited to the production of goods but encompasses social relations of production determined through three categories: material capabilities, ideas and institutions (Cox, 1981: 136). Social forces engendered by relations of production structure particular historical blocs, ‘upon which state power ultimately rests’ (Cox, 1987: 105). Historical bloc, a form of unity among various class forces with competing and heterogenous vested interests, is key for both constructing and contesting hegemony (Morton, 2007a: 96). Historical blocs project a particular ‘... world view, grounded in historically specific socio-political conditions and production relations, which lends substance and ideological coherence to its social power’ (Rupert, 1995: 29). Different configurations of state/society complexes engender different forms of state, which are understood in the plural sense (Cox, 1981: 127). The ruling class projects its hegemony internationally, in turn shaping the world order and rendering particular social forces structurally privileged in their struggle over hegemony at the national level (Cox, 1987: 109). The concepts of hegemony and passive

revolution are key in debating class struggle and the role of state in capitalist transition and restoration. Hegemony is a moment in which the ruling class takes 'moral and intellectual leadership' by transcending 'the corporate limits of the purely economic class, and can and must become the interests of other subordinate groups too...' (Gramsci, 1971: 181). The hegemonic level is political - it 'marks the decisive passage from the structure to the sphere of complex superstructures' (Gramsci, 1971: 181-182). Gramsci reads the bourgeois revolution in Italy as a passive revolution. He remarks that 'what was involved was not a social group which "led" other groups, but a State which... "led" the group which should have been "leading" and was able to put at the latter's disposal an army and a politico-diplomatic strength...' (Gramsci, 1971: 105). Gramsci thus emphasises the "'Piedmont"-type function' of the state that 'replaces the local social groups in leading a struggle of renewal' and its relation with social groups as of "'domination" without that of "leadership": dictatorship without hegemony...' (Gramsci, 1971: 105-106). Morton (2007a: 419) conceives passive revolution as a pointer in analysing modern state formation within the 'causal conditioning of "the international"' and uneven and combined development of capitalism. Similarly, van der Pijl (1998: 79) associates passive revolution with slowness of social class formation and a strong state. To quote van der Pijl (1998: 80), '... by aiming to catch up with the leading social system of production in the world economy, every contender state has by definition been "capitalist" already before it "turned capitalist"'.

There are four merits to adopt Gramscian historical materialism. First, it conceives of each historical period as an open-ended struggle among social forces, the outcome of which can be determined through class struggle. This unravels agency behind each accumulation strategy and ultimately opens floor to consider alternatives. Second, analytical tool of hegemony is decisive to acknowledge that rule of particular class configurations at different historical specificities are always contested. Third, the international sphere is salient not only in relation to the uneven and combined development of capitalism but also related to its role within the struggle over hegemony in a national context. For Gramsci, 'international relations... follow (logically) fundamental social relations...' and the 'geographical position of a national State follows (logically) structural changes, although it also reacts back upon them to a certain extent' (Gramsci, 1971: 176). Morton (2007b: 621) contends that Gramsci presents a theoretical framework that 'displays an awareness of the uneven development of social power relations and class struggle that provides a stimulus to taking the "national" social form as a point of arrival intertwined with the mediations and active reactions of "the international" dimension'. Fourth, this approach does not treat state and society relations as one of exteriority. Gramsci's conception of the integral state is key here. To quote Gramsci (1971: 263) '... the general notion of the State includes elements which need to be

referred back to the notion of civil society (in the sense that one might say that State=political society+civil society, in other words hegemony protected by the armour of coercion). This stance avoids state centrism and fetishising the state as a black box beyond human agency. It equally escapes from a problematic treatment of civil society as monolithically progressive, a conception that is autonomous and independent from the economy and political society. Such a standing thus captures the role of the capitalist state *per se* in the struggle over hegemony and unravels mechanisms of hegemony of the ruling class within civil society. The analyses below debate the relation of state and configuration of social forces in Turkey's social formation within the neoliberal restructuring.

3. Integration of a peripheral country into the capitalist system: Turkey and neoliberal restructuring

The integration of the Ottoman Empire in the capitalist world system can be traced back to the nineteenth century. A popular Turkish saying from the nineteenth century, 'If you want to hang yourself, use an English rope' illustrates that the Ottoman economy had begun to integrate with capitalist system via trade (Quoted in Boratav, 2007: 1). This resonates with van der Pijl's argument that countries started to be integrated into capitalist relations before forming capitalist social relations at the domestic level (van der Pijl, 1998: 80). Indeed, it is debated that the Young Turks as reformist bureaucracy conducted capitalist modernisation as a passive revolution.¹ The indigenous bourgeoisie was not developed and the state took the initiative in institutionalizing capitalism as a revolution from above without a national-popular base. Following the end of World War II, a new world order was founded upon Fordism, mass production and mass consumption of consumer products. In the periphery, Cox contends, neo-mercantilist developmentalist states prevailed which emphasised industrialisation and development but continued to be dependent on world capitalist accumulation due to foreign capital and technology transfer (Cox, 1987: 232 and 235). In this period, Turkey implemented import-substitution strategy, with the economy planned through development plans from

¹ It is possible to raise the reservation in reading this period as passive revolution considering that the Kemalist regime was anti-imperialist and it pursued economic policies to provide national economic independence after the Independence War. Yet, the regime institutionalised capitalist modernisation by manufacturing a national bourgeoisie through etatist policies based on a protectionist trade regime. Moreover, the Kemalist regime developed policies to contain labour such as outlawing all interest-based associations including workers' associations and prohibiting strikes in 1925. For a debate on passive revolution, please see EROL, E. (2013) *Capitalist spatiality in the periphery: regional integration projects in Mexico and Turkey*, Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Nottingham.

1963 to 1978. Yalman (2009: 217) distinguishes this period as a new hegemonic project under developmentalism. The historical bloc was based on a compromise among the Kemalist bureaucratic cadres, industrial bourgeoisie, industrial workers and peasantry. The state was a 'developmental welfare state'. It protected the domestic market on behalf of industrial capital through corporatist institutions. Indeed, the 1961 Constitution defined the state as a 'social state' and granted the right to strike and collective bargaining for the first time in Turkish social formation. Accordingly, real wages were construed as an instrument of demand triggering production for capital (Boratav, 2003: 124).

This historical bloc began to dissolve in late 1970s in tandem with world recession, the foreign exchange crisis, balance of payment deficits and political instability. Turkey adopted neoliberalism within a context of rising violence as well as economic and political crises. The military junta took over the administration on September 12, 1980 and ruled the country until the November 1983 general elections. In the neoliberal period, there is a new division of labour among core and periphery. Whilst the core holds capital-intensive phases of production through technological innovation – requiring a supply of high-cost labour – the periphery carries out labour-intensive production, conducted by standardised technology and cheap labour, and remains dependent upon the core for its software requirements (Cox, 1987: 319). The state was redefined as a hyper-liberal state which retrieves former social policy accomplishments and discards redistributionist tools. Not only is tripartism among labour and capital abandoned, but the government-business alliance is consolidated through weakening and fragmenting working class by casualisation and promotion of flexible work (Cox, 1987: 284-286). Turkey's adjustment to neoliberal restructuring can be analysed in two phases: a period of trade liberalisation and export promotion from 1980 to 1988; and a period of financial market liberalisation and deregulation from 1988 to 2003 (Yeldan, 2006: 196). In the first period, the 24th January 1980 Stabilisation Programme envisaged a liberal trade regime substituting import-substitution with export promotion and liberalisation of trade. Additionally, the programme aimed to decrease inflation through tight monetary control. The state withered away from production by privatisation of state economic enterprises. The welfare state was cut back with tripartism being abandoned. Labour is conceived of as a 'production cost' under the new accumulation strategy of the post-Fordist period (Önder, 1999: 54). Accordingly, nominal wage increases were systematically kept below the level of annual inflation rate (Boratav, 1990: 209). The surplus accumulated within the export-led strategy was largely shared by the rentier fraction; financial bourgeoisie; and exporters of agricultural and industrial goods (Boratav, 2003: 167-169). The disadvantaged social forces were fixed income groups, wage earners, low-ranked bureaucrats and agricultural workers (Boratav, 1990: 224). Welfare expenditures of

the state fell and the state actively encouraged charities in this post-Fordist period (Yalman, 2009: 324).

Concomitant with Yalman (2009: 311), the 1980 transition can be read as a passive revolution. The key question here is the status of the bourgeoisie. Yalman (2009: 311) argues that bourgeoisie was hardly in a position to lead society around a new hegemony. Moreover, labour had to be contained under the new division of labour among the core and periphery with periphery having a role of labour-intensive production. Indeed, the military regime was instrumental to implement the programme. For instance, the number of workers on strike rose from 6,414 on January 25, 1980 to 57,000 on June 27, 1980 after the structural adjustment programme was introduced whereas workers returned to their work three days after the military coup of September 12, 1980 (Koç, 1998: 186-187). The military regime suspended unionism, banned strikes, adjudicated unionists and smashed organic intellectuals on the Left. Hence, the role of the Turkish military cannot be understood as autonomous from class struggle. However, particular unease is raised in the literature in relation to stretching the concept of passive revolution from 'a particular path *to* capitalist domination' during modern state formation process, towards strategies of '*maintaining* capitalist domination' and/or '*restorations of capitalism*' in understanding neoliberal transitions (Emphasis in original, Callinicos, 2010: 491-492 and 503). Yet, for Morton, passive revolution is not limited to a condition of revolution without mass participation, but can also be read as 'a technique of statecraft which an emergent bourgeois class may deploy by drawing in subaltern social classes while establishing a new state on the basis of the institution of capitalism (Morton, 2010: 317-318). Indeed, Gramsci also asks whether passive revolution can 'be related to the concept of "war of position"²...' (Gramsci, 1971: 108), paving the way for an interpretation of the condition of passive revolution as a strategy of the ruling class within the war of position, rather than a condition linked exclusively to bourgeois revolution.

In 1989, Turkey liberalised its finance through abolishing controls on foreign capital transactions and opening its domestic asset markets to international competition (Cizre and Yeldan, 2005: 389). Whilst productive sectors in the economy take a central role in productive accumulation including investments being directed to production, financial assets prevail financialised accumulation

² Gramsci questioned why revolution occurred in Russia rather than a capitalist setting and differentiated state-society relations in the East and the West. Accordingly, he advanced two strategies: the 'war of manoeuvre' (a mode of 'frontal attack') and the 'war of position'. He concluded that the contradictions of capitalism would not automatically prepare the ground for a socialist revolution in the West, as 'the superstructures of civil society are like the trench-systems of modern warfare'; they provide a 'system of fortresses and earthworks...'. Thus, in the war of position, the concept of hegemony takes a central place in explicating and challenging the capitalist rule in the West (Gramsci, 1971: 235, 238 and 239).

(Becker and Jäger, 2012: 172). Lapavitsas (2009: 124-125) identifies three factors behind the rise of financialisation namely declining productivity-growth, rise of atypical work and casual labour and de-localization of production from West to East. Financialisation triggered de-industrialisation as industrialists preferred speculative gains for rapid and high returns with particular industrialists founding their own banks (Aydın, 2005: 113-115). For instance, Öztürk shows in his empirical research that eighteen among twenty-five Turkish-based big corporations were active in banking sector in the 1990s (Öztürk, 2010: 129). Aydın (2005: 134) explicates the role of state behind accumulation within financial liberalisation arguing that 'the state had borrowed externally at a cheaper rate in order to pay its internal debts with phenomenally high interest rates'. Thus, the Turkish economy in the 1990s was open to cycles of growth, crisis and adjustment because of the dependence of accumulation to short-term financial capital flows (Yeldan, 2006: 199-200). This rentier type of accumulation within a content of fragile banking system created a foundation for economic recession with a sequence of crises in 1994, 1997 and 2001 (Akyüz and Boratav, 2003: 1552). Turkey offered real rates of 80% in 2001, 60% in 2002 and 75% in 2003, whilst the average of the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) interest rates was around 2.5%-4% (Yeldan, 2006: 202). The domestic debt deteriorated in tandem with the sale of state bonds and treasury bills, and increased from 36.4 quadrillion Turkish lira in 2000 to 170 quadrillion Turkish lira by the end of 2002 (Aydın, 2005: 123). It was against this background that the JDP came to power. Financialisation has been further consolidated under the JDP governments in the 2000s. Financialisation has primarily advanced further through two mechanisms which would engender conditions for 2008-2009 economic crisis: financialisation through individual worker-income by indebting personal revenue, and investment-banking activities (Lapavitsas, 2009: 128). The following sub-section presents how scholars within an institutionalist political economy read the rise of the JDP followed with contribution of an alternative critical political economy reading.

4. Rise of the JDP regime from an institutionalist political economy perspective

In 2002 elections, none of the former coalition government and/or opposition parties (the Democratic Left Party, the Nationalist Action Party, the Motherland Party and the True Path Party) could enter the parliament as the JDP acquired two-thirds of the seats by only getting 34% of votes while the Republican People's Party got 19% of votes and acquired 177 seats thanks to 10% threshold. Scholars read 2002 election results as an expression of a deep anger in society towards the political parties who formed the previous coalition governments. The JDP transformed former anti-European, statist/developmentalist and nationalist

components of the National View Movement, the former conservative religious orientation within Turkish politics. It assertively defined itself as a 'conservative democratic' party enabling Turkey to be presented as a model for 'Muslim democrats' in the Middle East. The first period of the JDP governments was marked by a liberal discourse emphasising democratisation and economic liberalisation in line with the Copenhagen criteria for the European Union (EU) membership (Çilingir, 2011: 120-122). This is received positively by scholars within institutionalist political economy literature. Indeed, in periodising the JDP rule, they interpret 2002-2007 as 'party's golden age' for Europeanisation and democratisation (Öniş, 2009: 34). In this period, the JDP was expected to consolidate democracy through limiting the military tutelage and role of statist bureaucracy as well as recognizing Kurdish identity (Öniş, 2013: 105). Equally, the JDP was seen as bearing the potential to enlarge middle classes that would enhance the social base of democracy. For instance, Öniş (2013: 106) argues that the JDP can contribute to pluralism through advancing conservative business from Anatolia to 'challenge the dominance of secular, big business and to "share the center"'. Similarly, the JDP is welcomed for social policy. According to Öniş and Keyman (2003: 100), the JDP successfully found a 'synthesis of communitarian (or conservative) and liberal elements' in line with the global dynamics of 'postdevelopment state'. Öniş and Keyman (2003: 102) argued that '... the JDP, in spite of its strong Islamist roots, has looked far more like a European social-democratic party of the "third way" type...'

Indeed, institutionalist political economy literature explicates the rise of the JDP with the pre-eminent understanding of state-society formation in Turkey's political science namely strong state tradition (e.g. Heper, 1985; Mardin, 1973). The strong state tradition highlights differences of Turkey's social formation from Europe. First, in this reading, Turkey lacked a mature bourgeois class to lead a capitalist revolution during the founding of the Republic (Keyder, 1987: 2). This reference to the lack of a mature Turkish bourgeoisie is a common assumption in their analyses. For instance, Buğra (1994: 5) claims that 'Turkish businessmen have neither taken individual self-interest as the centre of their economic activity, nor requested independence from state'. Second, the Ottoman noble class could not form a powerful aristocracy (Heper, 1985: 32). Third, the patrimonial Ottoman state was controlling the periphery whereas societal forces were countervailing feudal authority in Europe (Heper, 1985: 14). The end result is 'bureaucratic reformism' in Turkey rather than 'a capitalist state under bourgeois domination' (Keyder, 1987: 2). To quote Heper and Keyman (1998: 259) during the Ottoman period, Turkey is ruled by 'a particular category of elite, who acted in the name of the state, by assuming virtually complete autonomy from other groups in the polity, including the political elite'. The crux of the issue is here the differentiation from political

elite (comes to power by elections democratically) and state elite (bureaucratic and military elite in power independent of the election results). Hence, the dominant axis of struggle is not between social classes but ‘between populism and bureaucratic revanchism’ (Keyder, 1987: 141). Thus, as Mardin (1973: 170) argues centre-periphery is the major cleavage in Turkish politics which ‘... seemed to have survived more than a century of modernisation’. This reading of Turkey’s state-society relations ends up perceiving the JDP as bearing the potential to consolidate democracy.

A fraction within left also supported the JDP rule for democratisation. İnsel, for instance, argues that the JDP can prepare the ground to ‘exit from the authoritarian regime’ of 1980 military coup with the party bearing the potential to act as a democratic movement to normalise Turkey’s democracy (İnsel, 2003: 293, 300 and 301). Similarly, Keyman (1999: 173) reads Kemalist modernity project as ‘hegemonic’, which imposes ‘ontologic constraints’ in ‘disciplining’ the political sphere and thus constraining democracy and pluralism. Here, military is seen as the major impediment to democratisation (İnsel, 2004: 42). İnsel conceives military as a ‘social class’, not able to act as ‘class for itself’ but one that is governing (İnsel, 2004: 45). Indeed, after the end of Cold War, these scholars propose politicising liberal democracy as progressive for leftist politics under globalisation. Keyman with reference to Laclau and Mouffe’s *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (1985) proposes radical democracy (Keyman, 1999: 45), whereas İnsel (2000) proposes ‘emancipatory left’ as a synthesis of Marxism and political liberalism. This project aims to cultivate a political culture open to pluralism, multiculturalism and dialogue with respect to different identities (İnsel, 2000: 79 and 86; Keyman, 1999: 49). It is within this context that the JDP was seen as a force bearing the potential to contribute to democratisation. The following section presents how critical political economy criticises these assumptions and presents an alternative reading.

5. Critical Political Economy and the rise of the JDP as trasformismo

Critical political economy develops an alternative reading associating the rise of the JDP more with continuity rather than change from previous neoliberal order. This reading is built upon a critique of strong state tradition. First, the strong state tradition conceives of the state as autonomous from society. This constitutes ‘a dualistic conception of state/market and/or state/society relationships’ as if they are externally related ‘with their own logics and principles’ (Bedirhanoğlu and Yalman, 2010: 107). This reading ‘...not only presents the state as a neutral entity in capital-labour relations but also defines major cleavage in society as elites versus people (folk)...’ (Bedirhanoğlu, 2009: 43). Second, as Yalman (2002b: 23-24) contends

the strong state tradition ‘... presents neo-liberalism as domain of freedom and choice and justifies economic liberalisation as a political project’. Yalman names this tradition as paradoxically ‘dissident but hegemonic’ given that ‘the political behind this tradition is to legitimise capitalist social order by presenting itself as “dissident” to the regime...’ though it is the hegemonic tradition able to shape public opinion and policies for market and state (Yalman, 2002a: 316). In a nutshell, social purpose behind strong state tradition and its knowledge is consolidating neoliberalism. Third, Bedirhanoglu and Yalman (2010: 115) also argue that this reading not only presents the relation between capital and state as confrontational but also covers the transfer of income from labour to capital. There is a need to integrate capitalism into the analysis as ‘... in the neoliberal era as ever, state power is integral for the constitution and the reproduction of the market economy as a “form” of the capitalist relations of production’ (Bedirhanoglu and Yalman, 2010: 108).

Critical political economy literature also criticises leftist intellectuals expecting democratisation from the JDP regime. As Turkeş reminds us, these scholars have ‘... replaced class analysis with a communitarian identity-based democracy’ (Turkeş, 2016: Footnote 6). Theoretically the assumptions of Keyman and Insel strongly resonate with the arguments of Laclau and Mouffe’s *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (1985). A similar form of critique levelled for the project of radical democracy can be developed for Insel and Keyman as well. First, these analyses turn a blind eye to relations of production and class politics. Here, for instance, Žižek (2000: 97) posits that the absence of class analyses in postmodernist critical thought (such as Laclau and Mouffe’s) signifies a ‘theoretical retreat from the problem of domination within capitalism’. Second, they conceive of economics and politics as externally related to each other. As convincingly argued by Wood, the separation of economics and politics has always been immanent to capitalism, and constitutes its ‘most effective defense mechanism’ (Wood, 1981: 67). Similarly, Žižek also contends that whilst post-modernism politicises previously apolitical or private issues such as language and gender, it fails to re-politicise capitalism. Its reading of the political is predicated on ‘depoliticisation of the economy’ (Žižek, 2000: 98). Third, it is important to recall Wood’s critique for identity politics that one of the functions of post-Marxism is ‘to conceptualise away from capitalism’ (Wood, 1990: 60). For Wood (1990: 79), what is alarming is not that post-Marxism ‘violate[s] some doctrinaire Marxist prejudice concerning the privileged status of class’, but rather that it fails to critically engage with capitalism, seeking ‘to sweep the whole question under the rug’.

Critical political economy literature reads the rise of the JDP rule as consolidation of neoliberal hegemony. Following the 2001 crisis, the JDP presented

itself as a rupture from previous ‘corrupted’ right-wing political parties and depicted the main struggle as ‘people versus elites’ via a populist discourse. To use the conceptual framework provided by Gramscian historical materialism, the JDP hegemony can be read as ‘trasformismo’. Gramsci originally used the term to describe the process whereby the political programmes of right and left-wing parties converge to such an extent that ‘there cease[s] to be any substantive difference between them’ (Gramsci, 1971: 58, footnote 8). In other words, the concept expresses a condition of ‘formation of an ever more extensive ruling class’ (Gramsci, 1971: 58). And yet, for Cox, *trasformismo* can be extended to the ‘strategy of assimilating and domesticating potentially dangerous ideas by adjusting them to the policies of the dominant coalition...’ which can constrain the political sphere for forming a class-based organised opposition *vis-a-vis* established social and political power (Cox, 1983: 166-167). The JDP rule is read as *trasformismo* on two grounds. First, the ruling class managed to include Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) and disadvantaged groups from globalisation to the capitalist discipline and formed an extensive ruling class. To quote Yildirim (2009: 68, 69 and 91), neoliberal populism is a ‘class strategy’ functioning to not only overcome crisis of neoliberalism but also to integrate lower classes into pre-eminent hegemonic project and its accumulation strategy. In short, it helps to extend the ruling class. Second, it equally weakens political instruments of dissent through ameliorating destructive impacts of neoliberal restructuring by populist mechanisms and charities (Yildirim, 2009: 69).

A word of caution is needed regarding this reading of *trasformismo*, however, as the JDP is not coming from a leftist tradition. Yet, within identity politics, the possibility of Islam to form an alternative to the Western capitalism was debated. For instance, Cox highlights Islam ‘can be seen as a metaphor for the rejection of Western capitalist penetration’ carrying a progressive potential in terms of alternatives to globalisation in the peripheral context (Cox, 1992: 41). However, it is imperative to recall Amin’s intervention that political Islam sets its struggle at the cultural level, which is ‘... reduced in actual fact to the conventional affirmation of belonging to a particular religion’, which in return veils ‘real social confrontations between the popular classes and the globalised capitalist system that oppresses and exploits them’ (Amin, 2007: 1). To quote Amin (2007: 2) ‘Political Islam is not anti-imperialist, even if its militants think otherwise! It is an invaluable ally for imperialism and the latter knows it’. In that sense, social forces that are disadvantaged from globalisation bearing a progressive potential to come up with an alternative to globalisation are incorporated to the neoliberal hegemony of the JDP that served to disarticulate dissent. Its social policies (e.g. hyper-liberal understanding of trade unionism as well as charity mechanisms) were instrumental to get support from lower income groups and thus to sustain neoliberal transition.

6. The decline of the JDP rule: Institutional and critical political economy

The institutionalist political economy can hardly explicate the fall of Turkish model and the decline of the JDP rule. Yet, scholars within institutionalist political economy literature develop three arguments. First, this period is called as 'post-Kemalist' when Turkey moves in the direction of 'illiberal democracy' (Öniş, 2015: 25). This post-Kemalist regime follows the Kemalist regime's pattern (Öniş, 2013: 108). The Gezi Park protests are perceived as a milestone after which security state has dominated with the coercive tool of police force which replaced military in this post-Kemalist period (Öniş, 2016: 143). Although formal institutions of democracy endure, a civilian majority of religious conservatives rule with Erdoğan monopolizing power, constraining opposition and equating democracy with election results (Öniş, 2015: 25). Thus, the JDP restricts pluralism. Özbudun (2014: 162) names it as delegative democracy or plebiscitarian democracy in which democracies are not consolidated but endured with a personalistic style of leadership, a strong majoritarianism and a weak horizontal accountability to other state institutions (Özbudun, 2014: 162). It is argued that Erdoğan's leadership turns into personalismo 'with a strong sense of mission and an excessive concentration of authority in his hands' while the ballot box is accepted as the sole instrument of democratic legitimacy (Özbudun, 2014: 163). Yet, the JDP is successful to strengthen pious periphery (ignored segments of society within the Kemalist modernity project) *vis-à-vis* center (the Kemalist military and judiciary) through reconciling tradition with modernity and ending '... the hegemony of the Republican establishment...' (Heper, 2013: 153 and 154). A second explanation is advanced by Öniş who uses the concept of 'bounded communities' to explicate why the JDP continues to win elections despite its governmental fatigue, declining power and strong allegations on corruption (Öniş, 2015: 36). In bounded communities, attachment to political identity determines inclusion and exclusion. Intra-group trust is the main determinant in which an insider would not penalise the leader through selecting an outsider considering that 'material benefits for all group members are expanding' (Öniş, 2015: 37). As a third argument, this literature uses 'neighbourhood pressure', a concept developed by Mardin. 'Neighbourhood' is a sociological structure constructed by 'looking' to the others. It not only sets norms by describing 'good, truth and beauty' in the neighbourhood but also creates a pressure about what is acceptable and unacceptable in society (Çakır, 2008). Toprak et. al. (2009: 126) argue that neighbourhood pressure can easily be observed in various cities in Anatolia which '...discourages individualism and pushes both men and women to conformism'. They conclude that the JDP could not stimulate pluralism and transform 'repressive conservatism' as expected. Rather Turkey's

societal dynamics for toleration and pluralism worsened through cadre-isation under the JDP regime (Toprak et. al., 2009: 126-128).

Scholars who supported radical democracy and perceived the JDP previously as a party able to consolidate democracy were disappointed by the performance of the JDP in the last decade. As Esen and Gümüřçü (2016: 1585) acknowledge democracy has not been consolidated ‘... as hoped by students of Turkish politics’. Keyman names the transformation of the JDP as ‘metamorphosis’ when the JDP became a dominant party aspired to devise a ‘New Turkey’ (Keyman, 2014:19). The ‘New Turkey’ for Keyman is more polarized in terms of secularism, religion and ethnicity with the civilian government stronger than the military and the judiciary (Keyman, 2014: 27). The JDP rule has increased ‘... conservatism as a scepticism and closure of difference, pluralism and multi-culturalism’ (Keyman, 2010: 324). For Esen and Gümüřçü (2016: 1582 and 1584), although the JDP rule in the 2000s transformed ‘tutelary democracy’ through curbing the powers of military and judiciary, it established a ‘competitive authoritarian regime’ where regular elections are held but under the partisan use of state institutions and unfair conditions of competition for opposition. Similarly, İnel raises his critique to the JDP within rising authoritarian capitalism globally. For İnel, neoliberal globalization has engendered insecurity, deunionisation, deinstitutionalisation and precarity. These processes caused societal reactions which are articulated by right-wing populist leaders under the new authoritarian capitalism globally (İnel 2018b). Erdoğanism, İnel argues, centralizes authority and power around President Erdoğan (İnel 2016). After Kemalism, for İnel, Erdoğanism is the second authoritarian regime centred around an individual while presenting societal engineering (İnel 2018a)

The critical political economy literature debates the JDP decline through a focus on social forces, crisis of neoliberal hegemony and increasing coercion. They argue that the historical bloc upon which the JDP established its hegemony is dissolved. The United States and the EU support evaporated, large and medium-sized capital groups decreased their support and liberal intellectuals abandoned the bloc after the Gezi protests (Türkeř, 2016: 204-207). Moreover, 2007-2008 financial crisis and declining growth rates negatively impacted the bloc founded with the Gülen movement around political Islam (Yıldızođlu, 2015: 55). This literature reads the June 2015 elections as a milestone as the JDP could not get majority and was forced to form a coalition. Yet, after the elections the JDP has increased its resort to coercive mechanisms under single-man rule through halting the Kurdish peace process and shelving liberal principles and institutions such as

separation of powers and rule of law (Türkeş, 2016: 207; Yıldızoğlu, 2015: 11).³ Turkey underwent another election on November 1, 2015 within a political context of blasts, terrorist attacks of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and Islamic state of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (e.g. Ankara bombing on 10th October 2015 caused 109 casualties). It appears that the July 15, 2016 coup attempt undermined any possibility of a renewal of previous partnership between the JDP and the Gülen movement. At the international sphere, although the JDP was presented as a model in the 2000s, in line with the failures of Arab Spring and prolongation of the Syrian conflict, the JDP is increasingly isolated within the international community (Yıldızoğlu, 2015: 58). In a nutshell, the consent around the JDP rule is dissolved with its support constrained to core political Islamist group (Yıldızoğlu, 2015: 69).

Critical political economy literature contributes to debate especially on three grounds. First, it unravels market-oriented nature of the JDP policies and ultimately highlights how socio-economic conditions for labour and lower income groups are deteriorated. For instance, Boratav⁴ pinpoints overlaps between interests of capital and the JDP policies such as adoption of structural adjustment programmes, introduction of flexible labour markets and privatisation of public services (Boratav, 2015: 525). The JDP period is often depicted as 'jobless growth' with persistent unemployment and stagnation of real wages (Onaran, 2009: 246 and 252). Thus, despite positive growth rates especially between 2002 and 2007, it is difficult to observe an increase in employment or participation to employment (Bağımsız Sosyal Bilimciler, 2015: 47-49). For instance, although growth was 7% on average between 2002 and 2007 (World Bank, 2018), labour force participation rate averaged 51% between 2000 and 2004, 49% between 2005 and 2009 and 54% between 2010 and 2016 (OECD, 2018). Women labour force participation is still 35% in 2016 whereas the OECD average is 63% (OECD, 2017). Similarly, Bozkurt-Güngen argues that authoritarianism in Turkey did not start with the JDP's illiberal turn. Rather, the JDP has deepened authoritarianism of neoliberal era through lowering labour costs, excluding collective/institutional representation of labour groups in policy making and disciplining labour by unmediated/individual incorporation as consumers, credit users and social assistance recipients (Bozkurt-Güngen, 2018: 220 and 233).

Second, this literature integrates class struggle unravelling social basis of the party as well as its populist instruments. Although the JDP got support from the

³ Aksoy highlights that hegemon becomes sovereign when it has the power to determine which conditions constitute normality under rule of law or state of emergency (Aksoy, 2016: 19). This resonates with debates whether a political authority is stronger when it can rule through coercive mechanism or lead society around its moral and intellectual leadership.

⁴ Throughout the article, Prof. Dr. Korkut Boratav's work is cited not as a Gramscian scholar but a scholar of critical political economy and historical materialism.

SMEs and lower income groups, the JDP has not taken any initiative to transform relations of distribution in favour of working class. Rather, the JDP kept the power of disseminating aids to people who were under poverty lines through charity mechanisms which in return renders people dependent to the JDP. The JDP's policies comply with the structural dynamics of withering away of the welfare state and they rely on an individualistic hyper-liberal form of social welfare based on charities or social assistances. The tax burden still relies on middle and low income groups by indirect taxation and the party continues to perceive Turkey's low wages as an advantage in global markets for competitiveness (Bakırezer and Demirer, 2009: 167 and 175). Bozkurt, here, argues that populism under neoliberalism goes beyond wage policies of the 1960s' populism. It operates within the sphere of social reproduction '... whereby the destructive consequences of neoliberal policies were alleviated through social assistance programs, addressing specific areas such as health, education and so forth' (Bozkurt, 2013: 377-378). To quote Bozkurt (2013: 391), 'Social assistance programmes are used as a substitute for welfare state functions, with charity groups and philanthropic associations taking over some state functions'. Besides, critical political economy focuses on essence (socio-economic content) uncovering politics behind populist discourses. For instance, as Boratav (2017: 20) reveals, Turkey's economic dependence to imperialism has accelerated under the JDP rule contrary to its populist discourses challenging and threatening imperialism. For Boratav, this is a result of dependence of economic growth to inflow and outflow of Foreign Direct Investment as well as its unsustainable foreign account deficits.

Third, this literature highlights limits and contradictions of consolidating neoliberalism through political Islam. First, indebtedness of labour considerably increased under the JDP period which is not sustainable. The scholars of Independent Social Scientists defined growth pattern of 2000s as 'growth through consumption' at a time when wages are suppressed for providing Turkey's international competitiveness in global markets (Bağımsız Sosyal Bilimciler, 2015: 178). Scholars refer to three specific policies followed by the JDP: further indepting labour groups through consumer loans; privatisation of public services such as health and education systems; social assistance programmes (Bağımsız Sosyal Bilimciler, 2015: 166-167). For instance, the percentage of real estate loans to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) increased from 1.3% in 2003 to 7.1% in 2014 which is used to create demand for the economy that is based on growth of construction sector (Bağımsız Sosyal Bilimciler, 2015: 171). Koç (2012: 27-28) argues that consumption credits and credit cards enabled workers/public employees/retired to consume above their real income (e.g. buying cars or houses through debts). This not only created the impression that their socio-economic conditions economically improved but also prevented eruption of dissent due to their deteriorating working

conditions and increasing economic inequalities of the 2000s (Koç, 2012: 27-28). As Güngen rightly observes, accumulation strategy around financialisation accuses individuals for their indebtedness rather than questioning structural relations of production or distribution of wealth (Güngen, 2017: 41). Second, privatisation of health and education services eased public reach to these services, a decisive populist tool for the JDP regime to guarantee votes from lower income groups. However, privatisation of these public services has engendered new challenges related to flexibility of health and education services as well as commodification of public services. The JDP founded new universities and increased student quotas for existing departments. This increased the number of university graduates, again giving the impression that conditions of lower income groups improved. Yet, youth unemployment is on the rise and being a university graduate will not suffice to be employed. Third, as highlighted by Yıldızoğlu socio-economic conditions of women are deteriorating with rising physical and symbolic violence against women (Yıldızoğlu, 2015: 70-71). It is indeed women as a category that was disadvantaged under both neoliberalism and rise of political Islam. This in return would stimulate further opposition among women. However, concurrent with Erol neoliberal transformation of social relations under the JDP rule culminate in ‘sporadic and spontaneous resistances’ such as Tekel resistance, protests against construction of hydroelectric power plants and Gezi protests (Erol, 2014: 478). Yet, there is still a need to go beyond undermining neoliberalism through a real transformative alternative (Erol, 2014: 479).

7. Conclusion

The JDP has been in power for sixteen years by 2018 after winning six general elections and four constitutional referendums. Within such a historical context, this research is an outcome of two concerns. First is to show strengths and weaknesses of international political economy literature on the rise and decline of the JDP rule. Second, how can we read state-society relations in Turkey’s social formation through using conceptual tools provided by Gramsci that would also shed light to understand the rise and decline of the JDP rule? This research offers two contributions. On the one hand, the study aims to critically approach institutionalist political economy in studying the rise and decline of the JDP rule. It is decisive to read the coordinates of struggle over hegemony to uncover socio-economic content of dominant power relations and to open the floor for a viable alternative. On the other hand, it aspires to contribute to critical political economy literature by reading Turkey’s social formation through Gramscian historical materialism. Though Gramscian conceptual tools such as hegemony and passive revolution are referred in explicating the rise and decline of the JDP in the literature, these concepts are often abstracted from historical materialism tradition.

The research highlights two historical instances of passive revolution and reads the JDP rule as *trasformismo*. In the 1980s neoliberal turn was restored through passive revolution as the capitalist class could not lead society around the new export-promotion strategy with labour defined as a 'cost' for international competitiveness in global markets. Contrary to the expectation of institutionalist political economy that the JDP would create a rupture in Turkish politics through normalising democracy, the research argues that rise of the JDP can be read as *trasformismo* on two grounds. The JDP regime was instrumental to extend ruling class through integrating SMEs as well as taking consent from lower income groups. More importantly, it was conducive to co-opt potentially disadvantaged groups from globalisation to neoliberalism, constraining the space for the leftist politics to articulate dissent as a result of neoliberal destruction. The JDP social policies were in line with charity mechanisms which were effective to ameliorate social inequalities and tensions created within the context of a neoliberal hyper-liberal state. The way institutionalist political economy reads the decline of the JDP rule through concepts such as post-Kemalism or neighbourhood pressure is also problematic. This fails to detect the dominant power relations and contradictions of neoliberal hegemony through political Islam and ultimately closes space for an alternative. Here, it is highlighted that critical political economy literature contributes to uncover market-oriented and anti-labour policies of the JDP rule, unravel class struggle as well as the populist instruments under the JDP rule and study limits and contradictions of consolidating neoliberalism through political Islam. Turkey passed to a presidential regime under conditions of state of emergency. It is too early to answer whether the current period is another historical conjuncture in which capitalist restoration is guaranteed through the state taking a leading role by disciplining the working class and dissent. Future coordinates of class struggle, new dynamics of accumulation and a new division of labour between core and periphery would determine new configurations of social forces and form of state in Turkey.

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Özet

Neoliberalizmin siyasi islam ile konsolidasyonu ve sınırları: Türkiye örneği

2002 yılından beri Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi neoliberal dönüşümü ılımlı İslam programı ile birlikte uygulamaktadır. Bu makale Gramsci'nin sunduğu tarihsel materyalizmin kavramlarından yararlanarak Türkiye'nin devlet-toplum ilişkilerine tarihsel açıdan siyasi ekonomi okuması yapmayı amaçlar. Kurumsalcı ve eleştirel siyasi ekonomi yazınının Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi iktidarını nasıl açıkladığının üstünde durur. Çalışmada kurumsalcı siyasi ekonomi yazınının Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi iktidarını açıklamakta yetersiz kaldığı gösterilmekte ve eleştirel siyasi ekonomi yazınının neoliberalizm ile siyasi İslam arasındaki ilişkiyi doğru konumlandığı vurgulanmakta ve böylece neoliberalizmin nasıl konsolide olduğu Gramsci'nin sunduğu kavramlarla tartışılmaktadır

Anahtar kelimeler: Türkiye, Gramsci, Hegemonya, Eleştirel Politik İktisat, Kurumsal Politik İktisat