

Editors' Letter

This Fall 2016 issue of *New Perspectives on Turkey* is an open issue, yet a common concern runs through all five of the research articles published here in No. 55. We might claim that the authors are all concerned with the contradictions, paradoxes, and social consequences of the exercise of state power in spheres ranging from law to economic, social, and foreign policy, all as refracted through the prism of contemporary Turkish politics.

We feature two articles on the implementation of exceptional executive powers and their legal underpinnings in the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. Noémi Lévy-Aksu's essay on the *idare-i örfiyye* (state of siege) during the first constitutional period in the late nineteenth century discusses how the Ottomans created a legal tool of government for exceptional (and non-exceptional) times by taking advantage of various legal sources, including the French *état de siège*, as well as of the political context of the early Hamidian reign. Moving into republican times, Joakim Parslow's article on theories of exceptional executive powers between 1933 and 1945 focuses on the fashioning of a legal system that dispersed emergency powers across various statutes, temporary laws, regulations, and decrees. Legal theoreticians of the period sought to normalize this contradictory and haphazard system by integrating prerogative into ordinary legality, rather than defending the rule of law. Since 1960, long episodes of martial law and states of emergency have characterized the aftermaths of military takeovers; currently, following the failed coup attempt of July 15, 2016, the country is once more being governed according to state of emergency decrees. Lévy-Aksu and Parslow's studies on exceptional executive powers are therefore very timely for thinking about the legal and political lineages of the current state of affairs in Turkey.

During a period of heightened authoritarianism that has culminated in a state of emergency, the ruling Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) has also utilized an ever intensifying populism, even while deepening neoliberal policies. The remaining three articles in this issue demonstrate this observation from areas as diverse as social policy, investments, and foreign policy.

Tim Dorlach's article is a study of the sudden change that occurred in 2009 in the government's pharmaceutical expenditure policy. Despite its neoliberal bent, the government, instead of privatizing the cost of medicines, forced national and international pharmaceutical producers to lower their prices, and thus reduce their profit margins, by introducing a global budget on public

pharmaceutical expenditures. Dorlach shows how populist concerns won out over neoliberal economic concerns among policy makers.

In a different sector—namely, construction and property development, which has been the locomotive of economic growth for some years now—neoliberal and populist concerns have merged rather than diverged, unlike in the case of the pharmaceutical field. The rise in private and public construction during the first half of the AKP's rule so far has contributed considerably to economic growth, albeit at the expense of manufacturing, as well as to employment creation. Seda and Selva Demiralp and İnci Gümüş's article on the construction sector emphasizes how it is characterized by clientelism, overcentralization, and a lack of transparency.

Özlem Tür and Mehmet Akif Kumral's article investigates the paradoxes of Turkey's Syria policy, focusing on the important episode of February 2012. They argue that the discourses of the foreign policy elite at the time began to oscillate between idealistic-normative calls for humanitarian intervention and realistic-utilitarian calls for interference. Ever since, this ambivalence has marked the country's Syria policy, even as the Syrian crisis spiraled into civil war.

Turkey is currently undergoing tremendous political and cultural challenges, and one can also hear the fast approaching footsteps of serious economic problems. While class, ethnic, and religious tensions had already been high, leading to quite dire social consequences, now we are witnessing increasing tensions within the governing bloc as well. By pointing toward historical patterns and highlighting inherent tensions, the articles in this issue provide us with important insights for understanding the contemporary situation.

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