

Editors' Letter

We are happy to be offering to our readers the 58th issue of *New Perspectives on Turkey*, featuring a range of articles that deal with highly topical issues. From evaluation and diagnosis of the state of Turkish democracy and the current political regime to the state of the country's health regime and its current policies on fossil fuel subsidies, and from an appraisal of the Southeastern Anatolian Project to an evaluation of Islamic fashion, this issue brings together articles covering a wide range of subjects with a great degree of contemporary relevance.

Our first article in this issue is a very timely contribution by Koray Çalışkan on Turkey's political regime. The article discusses the freeing of Turkey's democracy from military tutelage along with its nearly simultaneous slip into authoritarianism. Çalışkan critically reflects on the ongoing discussion of how Turkey's political regime can be categorized, as well as on a body of literature that cautiously pointed toward Turkey's emerging authoritarianism and the increasing problems of its democracy, arguing that, in the contemporary moment, competitive authoritarianism has become fully institutionalized in the country. Çalışkan substantiates his argument by going through the relevant criteria as identified by Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, and he methodically documents the developments that testify to the institutionalization of competitive authoritarianism in Turkey.

Our next article presents an evaluation of the Turkish health system. Arguing that situating Turkey's health performance within the context of developing countries is useful for measuring to what extent the country has or has not proven successful in this sphere, İlhan Can Özen uses China's experience between 1960 and 2010 as an alternative route through which to understand Turkey's health policy and human development. The article conducts an analysis of the relationship between economic growth and improvements in the area of health and demonstrates that Turkey's performance in this regard has been much more stable than that of most other developing countries. Even in the globally problematic 1980–2000 period, Turkey's health performance did not lag, and in fact, its overall performance during this period was relatively similar to its own performance in the 1960–1980 period. Özen argues that the two most successful periods in terms of relative health development in Turkey were the 1960s and the 1990s, and that, since 2000, health improvements have continued, though at a slower pace.

The next article—by Sevil Acar, Sarah Challe, Stamatios Christopoulos, and Giovanna Christo—discusses the persistent reliance on fossil fuels, an issue of burning importance in our contemporary condition, wherein climate change

and its consequences pose one of the greatest, if not the greatest, threats for the future of global human existence. In the article, the authors provide a meticulous account of the subsidies provided by the Turkish government for fossil fuels, such as coal and natural gas. Thus documenting how Turkey continues to support fossil fuels through state subsidies, they argue that the amount allocated to these subsidies stands in direct contradiction with Turkey's stated aims of sustainable development.

Next, Arda Bilgen's article concerns one of the most consequential and contentious modernist development projects embarked upon by Turkey; namely, the Southeastern Anatolia Project (*Güneydoğu Anadolu Projesi*, GAP). Since its inception in the 1970s—right in the thick of modernizationist discourses and a time of unchallenged belief in the idea of development—GAP has stood witness to major changes in the global and national economy, politics, and culture as it transformed from an irrigation project (albeit an ambitious one) to a massive project of regional development. Bilgen follows the trajectory of GAP's development, aligning the project's history with transformations in development discourse and with the major restructuring of global and national economic and political structures.

The issue's final article deals with a highly topical yet quite understudied issue. In Turkey, we are all observing the increasingly forceful expansion of the fashion industry in such a way as to incorporate Islamic fashion in an apparent effort to lure the Islamic bourgeoisie to new consumption spheres and practices. Within this context, Feyda Sayan-Cengiz's article presents a much needed study dealing with veiling fashion and Islamic consumerism. Her study focuses on one of the leading Islamic fashion magazines, *Âlâ*, and particularly on the discomfort that it stirs up in Islamic intellectual circles concerning Islam's relationship with commodification and consumerism. The article also unveils how class cleavages are ossifying within Islamic circles and reflects on the changing meanings of veiling in Turkey.

In this issue we also feature a commentary by Franck Düvell on the challenge of migrant and refugee integration in Turkey. As Turkey has transformed from a country that only sends migrants into a country of immigration, the question of integration has inevitably become a key one on the agendas of scholars, politicians, and policy makers. As such, a nascent debate on integration has developed within the country, and in his commentary Düvell contextualizes Turkey's current experience with *de facto* and *de jure* integration within the framework of the European experience of the post-war period. He makes a provocative argument by inviting open discussion on religiously inspired as well as legally based definitions of integration. But regardless of how integration is defined, Düvell argues, there remains a need to focus more on the shortcomings of migrant and refugee integration in Turkey.

We hope that this issue of *New Perspectives on Turkey* will, as always, contribute to a lively scholarly discussion about the various challenges that Turkey is currently facing, from authoritarianism to environmental degradation and from human development to the integration of immigrants.

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