

Editors' Letter

The 61st issue of *New Perspectives on Turkey* brings together four articles on different aspects of modern Turkey as well as a fifth article on the Ottoman Empire. The common thread weaving through the articles is the fresh perspectives they bring to their respective fields. The first article offers a new perspective on the rise of Islamic politics from the vantage point of the Kurdish conflict, the second unsettles the overused concept of entrepreneurialism by putting the term into a social class perspective, the third calls for a rethinking of organizational policy capacity and state capacity in the context of the Central Bank's policies in the 2010s, and the fourth invites us to rethink the historical relationship between tribes and states. Then the final article brings us back to contemporary Islamic politics to systematically compile and observe the all-too-familiar contemporary struggles over the symbolic appropriation of urban spaces. Put differently, this issue offers new perspectives on fields ranging from politics to history and from economics to sociology.

Onur Günay and Erdem Yörük's article offers a bold new perspective on an issue that has puzzled scholars for decades now: what lies behind the electoral success of Islamic politics in Muslim majority nation-states? The existing literature offers a wide range of explanations for this phenomenon, including among others the discursive advantages and cultural repertoire of Islamic parties in countering Western hegemony, or their convincing promise to bring justice and equality in the face of the neoliberal assault on welfare services, or their superior organizational resources and capabilities. In their article, Günay and Yörük argue that Islamist political parties' promise to resolve existing ethnic questions is a key factor in explaining the temporal and spatial variation in the Islamist political advantage. According to the authors, the promise to resolve, under the banner of Islamic solidarity and Muslim brotherhood, ethnic conflicts that are of long standing as well as being economically, socially, and culturally devastating, has significantly contributed to Islamic political success in Muslim majority nation-states like Indonesia, Morocco, Iran, and Turkey. They substantiate this challenging argument by studying the Justice and Development Party's (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) electoral fortunes in Turkey within the context of its promises of and backtracks from resolving the Kurdish conflict.

The next article, by Alpkan Birelma, offers us a very sumptuously detailed look at working-class entrepreneurialism in Turkey. Though Birelma takes up the fashionable and rather mainstream concept of entrepreneurialism,

he carries it to an unexpected place and social class. As he argues, entrepreneurialism as a subject of research has largely been left to pro-business studies, which have been largely indifferent to categories of social class and labor; as a result, working-class entrepreneurialism has been marginalized in labor history and critical labor studies. One of the strengths of Birelma's article is that it is based on exceptionally rich ethnographic research carried out over two years by the author in İkitelli, a working-class neighborhood in İstanbul. This ethnographic depth distinguishes the article from existing studies on the topic, which largely depend on surveys. The article argues that entrepreneurialism among working-class men might not be an exceptional phenomenon that is peculiar to specific periods, locations, and sections of the working class. Birelma contextualizes his arguments within the scattered literature of case studies on working-class entrepreneurialism in peripheral countries.

The third article, by Caner Bakır and Mehmet Kerem Çoban, poses an intriguing question: how did the Turkish state—so often marked by fragmentation, conflict, and a lack of policy coordination within the state apparatus—manage to take pre-emptive measures to contain the risks of speculative and short-term capital inflows and bank credit expansion between 2010 and 2016? Studying the policies of the Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey in this period and thinking through the relationship between organizational policy capacity and state capacity, Bakır and Çoban argue that proactive policy design and implementation are more likely to complement state capacity when the principal bureaucratic actors have strong organizational policy capacities. The article underlines the significance of the strength of organizational policy capacity—including analytical, operational, and political capacities—in enabling states to be able to respond to the challenges posed by global financial processes and forces. In this way, the article challenges the relevant literature's frequent claim of a weak Turkish state unable to adopt a proactive approach in the financial services industry.

In the issue's fourth article, which sheds new light on a neglected aspect of Ottoman history, Yonca Köksal and Mehmet Polatel offer a new perspective on the historical relation between tribes and states. Through a study of the semi-nomadic Cihanbeyli tribe—who were a crucial actor in the Ottoman Empire's meat trade across a large area encompassing Bursa, İstanbul, and İzmir and were in fact the main suppliers of meat for the imperial capital—Köksal and Polatel successfully challenge the conceptualization of tribes and states as mutually exclusive, antithetical entities belonging to different stages of historical progress. The article showcases tribes as "integrated components of the modernizing form of institutions," enabling us to rethink the economic role of tribes within the larger society. The article also contributes to the important historiographical discussions on the economic policies of the

Tanzimat period, showing that, despite the dominant understanding of the Tanzimat economy as a liberal period, state intervention into market relations continued well into the 1850s, especially in İstanbul.

The final article of this issue focuses on sociology of space and politics. Husik Ghulyan studies the AKP's politics of space by concentrating on the spatial politics of the capital city of Ankara. Since the early days of the Republic, this city has always held a special place in terms of the politics of space, and today it continues to be an important battleground for the making of the national identity and culture of Turkey. In his article, Ghulyan traces the processes through which secular republican spatializations in Ankara have been steadily dismantled and transformed since the early 2000s, in line with the Islamist, populist, and neo-Ottomanist vision of AKP rule. He studies this transformation in the representational spaces of the Turkish capital through toponym changes in the city, the recently constructed Presidential Palace, and the rebranding of university campuses as *külliyeler*.

As we were writing this letter, we learned with great sorrow of the death of Immanuel Wallerstein. Wallerstein has a distinctive place in the world of the social sciences. He was one of the foremost sociologists of the twentieth century, and his ideas and theoretical perspective continue to be highly relevant. Beyond this, however, Wallerstein holds a special place for many of the members of this journal's editorial board. There are quite a few among us, including the writers of this letter, who have worked with him on collaborative intellectual projects, have been part of the same departments, or have been his students. We are all deeply saddened by his loss, and in his memory this issue includes a commemorative essay by Çağlar Keyder, one of the founding editors of *New Perspectives on Turkey*.

Wallerstein long argued that the modern world-system is in the midst of a structural crisis whose outcome may produce either a more equal, egalitarian, and just world or a more unequal and hierarchically organized world where injustice is rampant. He always looked at the historical *longue durée* in order to be able to understand the trends and processes leading the way into the future. In the last and 500th commentary published on his personal website and entitled "This is the end; this is the beginning," Wallerstein writes: "It is the future that is more important and more interesting, but also inherently unknowable [. . .] What those who will be alive in the future can do is to struggle with themselves so this change may be a real one. I still think that and therefore I think there is a 50-50 chance that we'll make it to transformative change, but only 50-50."¹ We believe that, with this new issue, *New*

1 Immanuel Wallerstein, "This Is the End; This Is the Beginning," Commentary No. 500, *Immanuel Wallerstein*, July 1, 2019. <https://www.iwallerstein.com/this-is-the-end-this-is-the-beginning/>.

Perspectives on Turkey strives and continues to live up to its name, even under challenging academic conditions, so as to make some contribution to the creation of transformatory change.

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