

How Was the Asiatic Mode of Production Discussed in Turkey?

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The 1950s saw the emergence of what would be called the “transition debates” in Marxist literature, in which almost all social scientists participated. Paul M. Sweezy, in his 1950 review of Maurice Dobb's 1946 book *Studies in the Development of Capitalism*, which opened the "transitional debates", wrote: "We live in a period of transition from capitalism to socialism; this fact gives rise to a special interest in the study of previous transitions from one social system to another." The subject of these debates, hosted by the journal *Science and Society* throughout the 1950s, was the transition from feudalism to capitalism, and the geography covered included Western European countries, especially Britain, except for Japan. Studies examining the economic and social development (or underdevelopment) of non-European societies in historical perspective were rare and/or impotent during this period (although the literature on development and underdevelopment began to flourish after the Great Depression of 1929 and especially after World War II). The publication in German in 1952, in Italian in 1956 and in English in 1964 of a chapter (*Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*) from Karl Marx's *Grundrisse (The Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy - The Rough Draft)*, which saw the light of day in 1939-1941, played a triggering role in the revival of studies on non-European societies. The debates were fueled by the fact that the linear reading of history (primitive communal, slave, feudal, capitalist and socialist) was subjected to criticism during the destalinization process after 1956 and Karl A. Wittfogel's *Oriental Despotism* published in 1957. In the same vein, in France from 1964 onwards, publications focusing on the concept of the Asiatic Mode of Production (AMP), led by Maurice Godelier, *La Pensée* magazine and the *Centre d'études et de recherches marxistes*, have fueled historical debates on underdeveloped geographies.

The first reflection of these debates in Turkey could be observed in an article written by Şerif Mardin "A Note on Theories in Social Sciences" published in the Journal of Faculty of Political Science of *Ankara University* in 1964. Here, following Wittfogel's *Oriental Despotism*, Mardin discusses the development of Marx's concept of "Asiatic Mode of Production". The real trigger of literature on Asiatic Mode of Production in Turkey became however the article written by Selahattin Hilav “Remarks on Asiatic Mode of Production” in the journal *Eylem* in 1965. Following Hilav's introductory article on AMP, Sencer Divitçioğlu published his “treatise” entitled *Asiatic Mode of Production and Underdeveloped Countries* in March 1966. Divitçioğlu emphasized the importance of Karl Marx's newly discovered text *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*. According to Divitçioğlu, the importance of the text lies in the fact that it reveals that apart from the stages of modes of production that Western societies went through (slavery, feudalism and capitalism), there were other modes of production in non-Western societies. Divitçioğlu analyzed the AMP further in the context of Ottoman society in his 1967 book *Asiatic Mode of Production and Ottoman Society*. Both books written by Divitçioğlu proposed a new reading of Ottoman and Turkish economic history and then dominated the research agenda of social scientists in the 1960s and 1970s. In this paper I will first discuss the reception of the Karl Marx’ concept of AMP in Turkey and secondly concentrate on the analysis of Sencer Divitçioğlu on it.

Agrarian Populism as an Ideological Discourse in Interwar Europe: Reflections from the German and Turkish Experiences

Asım Karaömerliođlu

The interwar period in Europe was characterized by significant social and political upheavals, leading to the emergence of agrarian populism in several countries, notably Germany and Turkey. This phenomenon can be understood as part of the broader "zeitgeist" of the era, which saw agrarian ideologies gaining prominence worldwide. The Great Depression played a crucial role in this rise, as urbanization, industrialization, and liberalism were increasingly blamed for the global economic crisis. In both Germany and Turkey during the 1930s, agrarian populism emerged, with a strong emphasis on the cult of the peasant, becoming a central intellectual motif in cultural and political discourse.

In Germany, this discourse was rooted in the Völkisch ideology of the 19th century, which idealized rural life and the peasantry as embodiments of national virtue and tradition, while denouncing urban life and industry as sources of social decay. Nazi policies aimed to revitalize agriculture and create a new peasant class, exemplified by the Erbhöfe law, which established hereditary land ownership. The regime vigorously promoted rural life through education and propaganda, simultaneously harboring a deep mistrust of intellectuals and urban elites. The peasantry was depicted as the backbone of the nation, a bulwark against societal ills such as capitalism and Marxism. This worldview was epitomized by Walter Darré, the Minister of Agriculture under the Nazi regime, who championed the virtues of the peasant and advocated for reorganizing society through rural corporations.

Similarly, in Turkey, the "peasantist" ideology (köycülük) gained traction among the ruling elite. Turkish intellectuals, much like their German counterparts, were suspicious of urbanization, cosmopolitanism, socialism, and the proletariat. This ideology manifested in various initiatives, such as the People's Houses, Village Institutes, and the Land Reform Act of 1945, which drew heavily from the German Erbhöfe Law.

This paper aims to shed light on the nature, practices, and discourses of agrarian populist ideologies in Germany and Turkey, assessing their comparative dimensions and exploring their impact on the nature of both Kemalism and Nazism.

German Soft Power in Turkey in the Interwar Era: 1919-1939

Mert Doğukan Perk

In this paper, I intend to analyze the issue of German soft power in Turkey in the interwar period. Unlike the conventional literature on the Turco-German relations in the interwar era, which has underestimated the wider repercussions of the German economic and cultural influence in Turkey, I assert that Turkey had become a part of the German economic area in the Balkans, called the *Großwirtschaftsraum*, by the mid-1930s. The inclusion of Turkey in it enabled Germany to derive significant benefits without resorting to hard power, such as securing a proximate source of chromium and opening new export opportunities for various German companies. Similarly, the employment of German academics, specialists, and technical personnel at Turkish universities, public institutions, and industrial facilities also contributed to German soft power. Likewise, more and more Turkish students were sent to Germany for educational purposes while those Turks who had completed their education in Germany inadvertently continued to open new areas for German cultural and economic influence. Thus, mundane everyday encounters between transnational German and Turkish non-state actors, such as Turkish students and German academics at Turkish and German universities, played a key role in the enhancement of German soft power in Turkey.

Such benefits that Germany enjoyed, and, more importantly, the abovementioned role of Turkish/German transnational actors and encounters between them have mostly been overlooked by the existing state-centered literature. Therefore, I hope to address this issue and restore the long-neglected agency of such non-state actors. To do that, I will analyze the German influence in Turkey and the role of non-state actors in the improvement of German soft power in the country from a transnational and comparative perspective. By so doing, I hope to 1) transcend the prevailing state-centric approach, 2) contextualize my analysis within the transnational literature on German soft power in the Balkans and the Middle East in the interwar era, 3) and contribute to the recently emerged New Diplomatic History research field.

In terms of archival sources, I aim to utilize the Turkish Prime Ministry Archives, the minutes of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, and the German Foreign Ministry Archives. Particularly, the minutes will be of great use in uncovering the unheard voices of those Turks who became Germanophiles thanks to the growing German soft power but left no written document through which that can be proved. For instance, some Germanophiles, during the assembly sessions, ardently strove to justify the overrepresentation of German academics at Turkish universities, and such undiscovered moments can only be uncovered through a meticulous analysis of the minutes. In terms of non-archival sources, I will explore rich newspaper archives on both sides. Moreover, memoirs written by prominent Turkish and German statesmen, diplomats, soldiers, and, more importantly, Turkish students who received higher education in Germany shall be extensively utilized.

German Influence on the Turkish Business Institutions

Seven Ağır

The paper explores the German influence on the institutional environment of Turkish businesses during the first of the twentieth century. By institutional environment, we refer to two components: the business education and the business law; both of which were largely shaped by the German faculty members recruited in the Faculty of Law at the University of Istanbul and the School of Commerce during the rise of National Socialists to power in Germany. Drawing upon the previous scholarship (in particular, Üsdiken 2004 and Üsdiken, Kieser and Kjaer 2004) as well as an analysis of the primary sources including legal texts, legal commentaries and parliamentary discussions on the Turkish Commercial Law, we aim to shed light on the political economic factors underlying the reception process. We argue that the ideological motives such as ‘national economy’ and later etatism that seem to have shaped the bureaucratic cadres’ choices regarding the legal origin (the law to be transplanted) and the particular divergence from the origin law, certain characteristics of the Turkish business environment (‘a missing middle’) mediated the German influence on business law and business education. Furthermore, the political debates on the business law towards the end of 1940s show that the German model was used as a rhetorical tool (a superior case whose historical account was distorted) that could serve different opinions.

The signature of the German-Turkish First *Gastarbeiter* Agreement (1961): A German Genesis and its Consequences on Turkish Economic and Social Sciences

Alisait Yilkın

Migration from Turkey to Western countries is a well-known phenomenon for the 1960s onwards. However, this migration movement already took place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, concerning mostly non-Muslim population¹ while in the first years of the Republic, between 1923 and 1950s, emigration towards Western Europe was mostly the fact of people issued from well-off families and who emigrated for studying and then stay there. Intellectuals emigrated by choice or professional opportunities or, especially in the 1940-1950s, because of their ideas and political repression in Turkey².

Movement of migration from Turkey towards Western Europe intensified in the 1960s, this time due to the needs of labor forces in Western Europe. Germany was, from the beginning, the privileged partner. In the context of the *Wirtschaftswunder*, or “Economic Miracle” of Germany, from the early 1960s onward with respect to workers from Turkey, the *Gastarbeiter* policy was, indeed, at the roots of the arrivals of Turkish laborers according to a bilateral contract signed in 1961 between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Republic of Turkey. 6,800 Turkish citizens arrived in the first year following the signature of this agreement; 2,803,000 reached by 2023 (Abadan-Unat 1976, 42; Faist 2000, 171; The Federal Statistical Office of Germany 2023). While the majority of the first Turkish *Gastarbeiters* who arrived to Germany in the first years (1961-3) were urban immigrants and skilled workers (Faist 2000, 171), those who arrived later came through chain migration but this time mostly from rural areas of Turkey and were unskilled workers (Abadan-Unat 1976; Leiken 2011). In 1973, the Oil Crisis led to dramatic changes in the labor movement dimensions and the German State, as other European countries, stopped its politics of *Gastarbeiter* migration, while Turkish migrants continued to enter to Germany with via family reunifications and arrivals of political refugees or asylum seekers (especially, after the coup d'état of 1980).

The main aim of this paper is to delve into the developments and thoughts which led to the signature of the 1961 labor agreement from the German perspective, considering Germany's immigration policies from the 19th century and its position concerning Turkish labor, more specifically after the Second World War, while Turkish workers began to arrive to Germany

¹ Niyazi Berkes, for instance, explains in his memoirs that, in the 1930, he met many “Turkish workers” in Chicago, who migrated to the U.S. predominantly during the last decades of the Ottoman era. Actually, most of them were Armenians but had been recorded as “Turks” since they arrived at the time of the Ottoman Empire and their “Turkish affiliation” was kept after the fall of the empire (Niyazi Berkes, Unutulan Yıllar, p 42)

² Personalities such as Niyazi Berkes and Pertev Naili Boratav are among these emigrants. The former went first to the U.S. (Chicago) as a student between 1935 and 1939. He returned to Turkey and attended Ankara University as an associate professor of sociology before going back to the American continent, but this time to Canada, as a visiting professor at McGill University in 1952. He continued his career at McGill until 1975, after that he decided to settle in England where he continued to write for the Turkish press. He died in England in 1988. The later, Pertev Naili Boratav, left Turkey in 1952 because, as Berkes, he was accused to work for the propagation of communism and the judicial inquiry following the so-called Events of DTCF (DTCF Olayları). During his migration/exile, he worked in the U.S., where he founded the department of Turkish language at the Stanford University, in Germany and in France, where he entered the CNRS. He died in Paris in 1998.

without any state control. The signature of the 1961 agreement took place in a post-war context combining various political and economic factors :

- 1) In the 1950s, German politicians such as Ludwig Erhard (minister of economy) and Theodor Heuss (president of West Germany) work closely with their Turkish counterparts ; German academicians such as the economist, Fritz Baade (director of Kiel Institute), had personal experiences, were interested in Turkish society and influence Turkish academic world. They were the main impulse for the signature of such an agreement with Turkey.
- 2) Germany and mostly USA desired to keep Turkey in the Western Alliance (NATO) despite political difficulties of Turkey (i.e. military coup taking place 6 months before the signature of the agreement). Controlled labor migration was a way to keep control on Turkish society and economy
- 3) While Germany became the main target for Turkish labor migration and foreign trade after the WWII, the 1961 agreement appeared as the first attempt of the Western German State to control this migration movement.
- 4) The aim of this agreement was also to break or balance the Italian and Greek labor monopoly which took place in the German labor market of the previous years.

As a result, the agreement request came from Germany, which influenced Turkish economic thought and policy about labor migration and triggered the bilateral institutional and economic process leading to the signature of the 1961 agreement and later Turkish academicians working in migration studies and economy.

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