

GLOBALIZATION, CLASS AND NATIONALISM: AN ANALYSIS OF POST-1980 PRIVATIZATION PROCESS IN TURKEY

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Abstract

This study is an attempt to analyze theoretical debates within the Turkish Left and the political strategies of labour unions and socialist parties against the perceived problems of neoliberal globalization with reference to ongoing privatization process in Turkey. As in other developing countries, recent anti-neoliberal strategies in Turkey mostly take the form of national developmentalism and protectionism associated with nationalist discourse, rather than internationalist and class-based alternatives. The analysis of the privatization process in Turkey may contribute to the debates on globalization, the role of the state and alternative strategy formulations for the future of international labour movement.

With these considerations in mind, this study aims to analyze the recent wave of protests of working classes-labour unions and debates among intellectuals in Turkey against neoliberal globalization in general and privatization process (in public services and “critical” sectors such as telecommunications, energy, and agriculture) in particular. For this purpose, the first part provides a review of the Marxist literature on nationalism to evaluate the theoretical promises and pitfalls of Marxism for a better understanding of the political economy of nationalism in the global age. In the second part, theoretical debates among intellectuals, strategies of political parties and labour-unions during the privatization process in Turkey are analyzed in greater detail. It will be argued that the relevance and utility of Marxist theory of nationalism and its political repercussions can be better assessed by an analysis of intellectual debates and formulations of political strategies in Turkey during the massive wave of privatizations. In the last and main part of the thesis, the methodology and questions guiding the field research will be presented. The field research will be based on quantitative and qualitative researches, a questionnaire, in-depth and focus group interviews with workers affected by massive wave of privatizations in critical sectors of Turkish economy; it will investigate how neoliberal globalization in Turkey is experienced and perceived by working-

classes, and question why nationalist and reactionary attitudes and discourses have gained prominence among workers.

1. INTRODUCTION

The globalization process, the neoliberal restructuring project and the great transformation of capitalism after the 1980s introduced many debated issues into the political agenda in the context of both state-capital relations and relations between social classes. In the critical political-economy literature on the great global transformation, the character of the internationalization process of capital and reconfigurations of the role of the nation-state are being discussed on different levels of analysis. From early debates on state theory between Poulantzas (1978), Murray (1971) and Palloix (1975) in 1970s to regulation and state derivation approaches (Hirsch 1978, De Vroey 1984, Jessop 1991), open-Marxist approaches (Clarke 1991, Bonefeld 1992, Holloway 1994) and other theses in relation with the state debates such as on the new imperialism (Harvey 2005, Wood 2003) figure out a highly detailed analysis of the role of the state, state-capital relations and the process of internationalization of capital.

However, apart from the debates on the role of the state and the peculiar economic characteristics of the great structural transformation in question, there is scant literature focusing on how this process is experienced by working classes subjectively, within the labour movement collectively and discussed within leftist politics theoretically. Therefore, this dissertation, based on the particular case of the privatization experience of Turkey during three decades, is firstly an attempt to analyze the subjective experiences and perceptions of this structural transformation by the workers; secondly, how the internationalization of capital (namely, the hyper-mobility of capital beyond borders) introduces new challenges to the collective struggle of labour-unions against neoliberal globalization and thirdly, how all these political-economic processes are theorized as well as what kind of counter-discourses are developed within leftist politics. The importance of such an attempt lies in the fact that theoretical answers and political strategies against the multi-dimensional effects of the neoliberal globalization process could be developed by means of an accurate analysis of how working-classes and labour organizations experience this process in the new era of capitalism.

With these considerations in mind, the main thesis investigated in this study is that the discourse of working classes and labour unions and the approaches of leftist politics against the internationalization dynamics of capitalism and the hegemony of neoliberalism in general and the privatization experience in particular present a nationalist-reactionary content¹, rather than class-based politics. This means that during the internationalization process of capital, social contradictions are increasingly perceived as “national” ones. The power of nationalist discourse in the struggle against those processes and in theoretical formulations-approaches could only be understood with a framework mentioned above: a focus on workers’-labour unions’ perceptions of neoliberal globalization in general and experiences during the privatization process in particular. Obviously, theoretical conceptualizations of nationalism within Marxist theory in general and Turkish left in particular and of its political character are also important issues for such an analysis. This would mean that a macro-level analysis is crucial to understand intellectual roots of nationalism both theoretically and politically. Therefore, in the following sections 2 and 3, those theoretical debates within the Marxist theory and the Turkish Left will be analyzed respectively. In the last section, the structure/outline of the field study will be presented.

2. MARXISM AND NATIONALISM: THEORETICAL REMARKS

Although theoretical approaches and debates within Marxist theory on the question of state and internationalization of capital are highly sophisticated (and therefore a political economy approach is still helpful), a critic of theoretical pitfalls within Marxist theory on the analysis of the subjective perceptions and experiences of neoliberal globalization process amongst workers is rarely seen in the literature. The most important pitfall which constitutes the theoretical subject matter of this study is the “epiphenomenalization of nationalism” within the Marxist theory and the economic determinism which reduces it to a direct outcome of underdevelopment and a question of “false-consciousness” as masking the true class struggle. E. Nimni (1991, p. 4) argues that Marxist discussions of nationalism were, with few and relatively unknown exceptions, clouded in “epiphenomenal terminology”: concrete instances of nationalist agitation were to be explained in terms of the “class struggle” or a pervasive

¹ By the term “reactionary”, I mean the reactions of fear and insecurity in the face of the forces unleashed by globalisation. This reactionary mood can easily be directed to protectionist demands and chauvinist sentiments. See Munck 2002.

“false consciousness”² that distracted the workers from their real aim, namely the destruction of the bourgeois order. It is argued that the generalizing and universalizing developmental logic that has its origins in the European continent is a key factor in the Marxist failure to conceptualize diverse forms of the national phenomenon. Therefore, for Nimni, the question should be formulated as “there are national questions”, not as “there is”. Moreover, commentators such as Nimni, Löwy and Munck criticize Marxist analysis of nationalism within the terms of “the laws of motion of political economy”. In this manner, both “Eurocentric evolutionism” (or to put it another way, “mechanical perception of historical evolution and “ontological privilege of the process of production”) and “economic reductionism”³ are the most important theoretical pitfalls of Marxism in the analysis of the specific character of nationalism.

The analysis of the “difficult dialogue” between Marxism and nationalism is crucial for this study because of its theoretical-practical implications in the political strategies developed by Marxist scholars, labour-unions, and workers’ movements against the structural transformation process of global capitalism. First of all, it can be argued that such conceptual pairs as “progressive vs. reactionary nationalisms” (Marx and Engels), “oppressed vs. oppressor nations” (Lenin), “bourgeois vs. revolutionary nationalisms” and theoretical debates on imperialism (Bukharin, Hobson, Lenin, Kautsky), socialist-autonomous development model (Stalin), dependency theory (Baran, Frank, Escobar and Amin) and Third World analyses⁴ cause a confusion in the analysis of the national question and nationalism. This is so because of the fact that in some instances nationalism is negated as an enemy of the principle of internationalism but in other instances it is favored as a partial emancipation from the general tendencies of world capitalism, especially in economic terms. It should be also noted that the problematic conceptualization of classical works of Marx-Engels and Lenin on

²Regarding the false consciousness approach to nationalism, Paul James (1996, p. 69) argues that “ideologies like nationalism were in Marx’s writings often reduced to imaginary or fictitious representations of the really real”. For a critical approach to nationalism in which nationalism is not a matter of false-consciousness, see B. Anderson 1983.

³ For examples of deducing the nation form from capitalist relations of production, see T. Nairn’s (1981, 1997) approach to nationalism as an outcome of underdevelopment and M. Hechter’s (1975, 2000) theory of “internal colonialism”. For critics, see also E. Nimni (1985, 1989), G. Kitching (1985), R. Munck (1986).

⁴ In Paul Baran’s words, “socialism in backward and underdeveloped countries has a powerful tendency to become a backward and under-developed socialism (1968, p. viii). In Escobar’s words, “not only does the deployment of development contribute significantly to maintaining domination and economic exploitation but that the discourse itself has to be dismantled if the countries of the ‘Third World’ want to pursue a different type of development” (1984, p. 378). Reversing the key tenets of modernization paradigm which considers integration into the capitalist world economy as the only path to development, dependency approach proposes delinking from the world economy as the key to development. It will be later discussed that those approaches have also been influential within a large segments of Turkish Left during 1960s and 1970s.

national liberation and the principle of self-determination in the context/framework of Reelpolitik and retreat from the principle of labour internationalism- rehabilitated nationalism within Marxist theory and practice. In Munck's words (2000, p.126), "Marxism-Leninism was becoming a promoter of 'non-capitalist' national development in the Third World. The lines between Marxism and nationalism were becoming very blurred indeed and in many cases a marriage, whether of conviction or convenience, was consummated"⁵.

Aforementioned solutions have also been influential in contemporary Marxist discussions on nationalism, which is therefore being naturalized in Marxist thought and practice. Moreover, the political consequences of these theoretical approaches have been retreat from the principle of the internationalism in the struggle against the effects of globalization and its replacement with the "national level" as the pertinent area of struggle. As a part of these considerations, the first part of this study focuses on such reductionist approaches and those theses that epiphenomenalize and rehabilitate nationalism within Marxist theory⁶.

Theoretical debates and approaches in the analysis of nationalism within Marxist theory are critical for the goals of this study, namely, understanding how the labour movement in various levels and the Left are reacting against the current phase of internationalization of the capital on a global scale, the acceleration of capital flows and increased mobility of capital without barriers and the outcomes of neoliberal globalization nowadays. To begin with, the substantial structural transformation of the state in line with the principles of market-oriented internationalization, post-fordist transformations that promote a vertical disintegration and fragmentation of production, neoliberal economic policies such as deregulation, financial liberalization, trade liberalization, rolling back of the welfare state, the privatization of a number public services and remarkable cut downs in social expenditures after the 1980s (Klein, 2008) brought up increasing sentiments of "fear", "anxiety", "insecurity", "suspicion" and "anger" amongst working classes. Secondly, these selfsame factors have led to

⁵ Munck (2000, p. 50) argues that "Leninism became a bridge between classical marxism and the more contemporary theories of development, from modernization theory to the radical dependency theory of the 1970s. For a whole historical period in the 1950s and 1960s in a range of countries in the Third World, not all of them even claiming to be socialist, the Soviet development model took a grip. Soviet marxism even fashioned a particular theory of 'non-capitalist mode of development' as a supposed third way between the Western model and a marxist model deemed utopian for the actual conditions of the Third World".

⁶ See M. Löwy (1976, 1998, 2001), H. B. Davis (1973, 1978), R. Debray (1978), J. Ehrenreich (1977, 1983), W. Connor (1984), R. Munck (2001, 2005), J. Schwarzmantel, G. Albo (1997, 2002), S. Avineri (1991), E. Benner (2005), J. Blaut (1987), V. Chibber (2005), G. Dufour (2007), J. Pratt (2003), G. Saul (2004), A. Starr (2000), H. Radice (2000), B. Silver (2003).

“fragmentation, “decomposition” and “dispersion” among working classes⁷; accompanied with subcontracting, poor working conditions, competition between workers in the labour market, decline in the labour-union membership as well as in the bargaining and organizational power of labour unions⁸. As P. Meiksins (1998) argues, “the rise of global capitalism, increasing capital mobility, the shift towards ‘flexible’ production, technological change, and a series of other developments have transformed occupational structure and stimulated the development of a variety of ‘new’ employment relationships”. The result of these processes has been disaggregated and disorganized working class and failure of labour unions to resist them. On the other hand, some scholars take an optimistic position on labour internationalism that considers capital’s tendency to homogenize labour across national borders and as increasing the chances that workers will actively break down divisions among themselves and cooperate across previously existing divides. It is debatable that declining bargaining power of labour unions necessary to influence their governments, will they once again find themselves without a “fatherland” and will labour politics turn internationalist once again (Silver 2003, pp. 12-22; see also Waterman&Munck 1999, Waterman (2001). This study will also attempt to analyze the effects of those changes on workers and labour unions and to testify those views with reference to the Turkish privatization experience.

It is an important question demanding an immediate answer that what kinds of class responses are developed against those processes. It can be argued that the ongoing unmaking and making of working classes which create dislocations and competitive pressures on them bring a tendency for workers to draw nonclass boundaries as a basis for claims for protection from

⁷ An amalgamation of flexible production, declining wages, rise in mass unemployment and informal labour sector or “Brazilianisation” which is a term used for the spread of production patterns and social relations typical of the South to the advanced industrial societies of the North (a preponderance of “informal” and “precarious” forms of work, see Munck 2002, p. 4) should also be considered as influential factors in such a reconfiguration. It is also argued that labour unions’ response in the North to this shift of jobs to South will probably be nationalist. For a discussion, see also R. Munck 2004.

⁸ As P. Meiksins (1998) argues, “the rise of global capitalism, increasing capital mobility, the shift towards “flexible” production, technological change, and a series of other developments have transformed occupational structure and stimulated the development of a variety of “new” employment relationships”. The result of these processes has been disaggregated and disorganized working class and failure of labour unions to resist them. On the other hand, some scholars take an optimistic position on labour internationalism that considers capital’s tendency to homogenize labour across national borders and as increasing the chances that workers will actively break down divisions among themselves and cooperate across previously existing divides. It is debatable that declining bargaining power of labour unions necessary to influence their governments, will they once again find themselves without a “fatherland” and will labour politics turn internationalist once again (Silver 2003, pp. 12-22). See also P. Waterman and R. Munck (1999), P. Waterman (2001). This study will also attempt to analyze the effects of those changes on workers and labour unions and to testify those views with reference to the Turkish privatization experience.

the maelstrom, a special treatment within the terms of nationness (Silver 2003, pp. 22-23)⁹. Therefore, discourses of national protectionism and developmentalism gain popularity among labour-unions and workers instead of class-based strategies but a defeatist politics, “calling for the state back” to revitalize the principle of etatism and economic protectionism to struggle against the outcomes of neoliberal globalization (see P. Meiksins 1998, Munck 2002, Herod 2001, Dunn 2004 and Bieler&Bonefeld et al. 2006). In addition to these trends, states—still an effective force in taming and disciplining the labour movement—have taken strict measures seeking compliance by labour unions to the dictates of global capital.

From a more general point of view, it is widely argued by many scholars that following its retreat from the class, the Left is currently incapable of offering a response to the hegemony of neoliberalism, with the dire consequence of the absence of any effort to formulate an alternative vision, namely an emancipatory project for “the workers of the world” (Forman 1998). In many Third World and developing countries, the first and foremost case being Latin America, recent anti-neoliberal strategies are mostly taking the form of “left economic nationalism and populism” and “national developmentalism” (Munck 2004, Ercan and Oğuz 2007). Munck (2002) argues that national unions are also changing under the impact of globalization and suggesting nationalist, economic and corporatist strategies, as seen during the NAFTA (North American Free Trade) process. In this manner, the opposition to “globalization” discourse usually seeks a return to a national capitalism and developmentalist protectionism (Savran 2008). As Hensman (2001, p. 431) argues, the idea that capitalism can overcome problems of poverty, unemployment and crisis provided that it remains national, and that the real enemy is the foreign “Other” (depriving workers of from their “global solidarity”) is popular among labour unions nowadays.

Defenders of labour internationalism (for example, see Herod 2001) criticize nationalist and developmentalist-protectionist theses among labour-unions and suggest that international labor solidarity is the strategy for unions to pursue in an increasingly globalizing international economy. It is argued that only through labour internationalism seen in the mid-19th century,

⁹ Moreover, as Harvey (2005, p. 85) argued, nationalist discourse is used for the promotion of neoliberal policies by the state within the terms of taking competitive advantage in global economy: “the neoliberal state needs nationalism of a certain sort to survive. Forced to operate as a competitive agent in the world market and seeking to establish the best possible business climate, it mobilizes nationalism in its effort to succeed. Competition produces ephemeral winners and losers in the global struggle for position, and this in itself can be a source of national pride or of national soul-searching”. It is argued in this study that such an approach is even influential among leftist circles and labour unions in Turkey.

labour unions may get rid of reliance on the state¹⁰ and develop innovative responses to new situations (a new “repertoire” of labor action and new projects of cross-border cooperation), organize-generate a transnational collective action against increasingly organized and totalized logic of capitalism. Nevertheless, for many Marxist intellectuals and labour movement actors, such a nationalist approach could still be instrumental in the struggle against the effects of neoliberal globalization involving i.) implementation of new rules by multilateral agencies such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO); ii.) the concentration of market power in the hands of multinational corporations and financial power in the hands of transnational banks and iii.) the subordination of many developing and Third-World countries to global institutional forces. Particular attention is given to calling for the nation-state back in and for a “national alliance or front” (that includes fractions of national bourgeoisie) to realize the strategies of national developmentalism, protectionism and sovereignty that “should not be left to the control and interests of international or foreign capital”¹¹. Resulting in a pervasive reproduction of the internal-external duality and misconceptualization of global tendencies as exogenous to national economies, nationalist solutions are increasingly put into the agenda.

It should be noted that those debates are not peculiar to developing or third world countries. An example of similar debates and proposals can be seen in the Canadian labour movement case and scholars of critical political economy. Smith (2000, p. 7) states that the “tendencies toward capitalist crisis manifest themselves unevenly across the world economy that creates an opening for “nationalist” explanations of economic downturn”. For this reason, Smith argues, “left nationalism remains an important weapon in the arsenal of those who would seek to disrupt the capitalist status quo” (Ibid, p. 12). In this manner, NCPE (New Canadian Political Economy) theorists are criticized since they have an understanding of nationalist, etatist and reformist project suggesting the expansion of “public ownership” and democratizing role of the existing state in the allocation of economic resources and the regulation of markets. Actually, the tendency to forget the class character of the state is a common misunderstanding within certain Marxist circles. Moreover, in the Canadian case, it

¹⁰ History of labour movements in the world prove that the reliance of labour unions on state resulted in picturing themselves as stalwart defenders of the national interest against international capital.

¹¹ This process may be considered as “the breakup of corporatism” —the erosion of government support for trade union movements, a mechanism affecting the success or failure of transnational labor solidarity. It is argued that the growth of transnational banks-companies and regulatory agencies, such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Union (EU), and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) have weakened consolidated-state policy making in areas of great concern for trade unionists (Hanagan 2003, p. 491).

is argued that “collaboration and alliances between the working class and ‘progressive’ elements of the national bourgeoisie might be an appropriate strategy for socialists” (Ibid, p. 15). The implication of such an approach on Canadian labour politics, similar to the Turkish case, is that “the international unions are considered as an obstacle to the development of the fighting capacity of Canadian workers in the struggle for their ‘national’ as well as their class interests” and “rejection of the task of campaigning for a class-struggle, socialist program within the North American labour movement as a whole” (see also Albo 1997, 2002)¹².

Besides theoretical misconceptions such as approaching globalization to be something exogenous to national economy and nationalist explanations for the negative outcomes of neoliberalism, the practical implications of those on the part of the working classes and leftists is an understanding of the real contradiction as between core and periphery (or North and South) rather than antagonistic class relations. The basic political implication of the ambiguity in terms of class character of such projections is the impossibility of an alternative vision to overcome the global subsumption of labour under capital. In contrast, the result of the internationalization of capitalism is the rise of the nationalist sentiments in many countries. As Wood (2003, p. 30) argues, “It is in the very nature of capitalism to intensify the contradiction between its expansionist imperatives and the territorial divisions of its original political (and economic) form”¹³. Thus, class contradictions are intertwined with national contradictions. Against the expanding logic of world capitalism and increasing tendency towards transnationalization and deterritorialization, the decline of welfare state and the social rights of the working class, nationalism has a domineering character within all aspects of class struggle. It is still widely suggested that the role of the state is crucial at this conjunction to realize national-developmental and protectionist strategies while underestimating the general laws of motion of world capitalism, the globalization of capitalism conquering and manipulating the capacity of national markets and economies. Therefore, the notions of class and nation-state, as well as the overall Marxist approach towards nationalism need to be

¹² See Silver (2003, p. 11) for a discussion on the nature of arguments by Third World delegates claiming in the WTO meeting in Seattle that Northern countries and labour unions seek to protect welfare standards. Demonstrations in Seattle can be seen as the expression of national-protectionist agenda, rather than a new evidence of labour internationalism.

¹³ Tabb (2005, p. 51) argues that “there is a complex relation between development strategies in the sense of building production capacity controlled locally and the way developmental states deal with the relation between national production and international trade, on the one hand, and financialization on the other. There are tensions and contradictions within each of these processes as well as between them that involve conflict between class fractions both within peripheral formations and between states of the periphery and the core, and among core formations as well”.

strategically reconfigured in this conjunction, more crucial a task than ever. I believe that it is also crucial to reconsider an internationalist approach in labour struggle, which suggests restructuring and reorganization of labour unions on the international level. This is so because of the fact that only an internationalist strategy may develop cross-border solidarity of workers and strategies against the dictates of global capital, cease the role of the nation states which is influential in taming and disciplining the labour movement within national borders and in generating national interest discourse for development-welfare instead of international political-economic emancipation of working classes throughout the globe.

Moreover, a non-reductionist conception of nationalism which bridges between structural processes and subjective experiences is essential to understand it in its multidimensionality. Recent studies on nationalism focus on such a perspective¹⁴, namely to track nationalism in everyday life practices, rather than simply reducing it to economic categories and broad generalizations and general processes. At this point, Balibar (1990) rightly puts that a social formation only reproduces itself as a nation through a network of apparatuses and daily practices. This means that under which historical conditions, internal and external relations of force and by virtue of which “symbolic forms”, nation/nationness are invested in elementary material practices¹⁵. The same is relevant for class studies, which should also investigate the relation between “political-economic dynamics of world capitalist development” and subjective-collective experiences arisen from those dynamics (working-class experiences within capitalist relations and working-class organizations within class conflicts) as well as perceptions and reactions (or unrests) developed against them. As E. O. Wright correctly puts (2005, p. 9), the conceptual menu of class analysis – class conflict, class interests, class formation, class consciousness – all derive their meanings from their link to class relations and class structure. Therefore, in Bourdieu’s terms (1990, pp. 55-65), both the concept of *habitus* defined as a socially constituted system of dispositions that orient “thoughts, perceptions, expressions, and actions” (“subjective” identifications, cultural orientations, and lifestyles, as well) and the analysis of symbolic systems are crucial. Moreover, contributions of Marxist labour historians (such as E.P. Thompson and E. Hobsbawm) are also crucial, especially the conception of “experience” which mediates between structure and process,

¹⁴ The nation is not simply the product of macro-structural forces; it is simultaneously the practical accomplishment of ordinary people engaging in routine activities: the production of national sensibilities through the ritual enactment of symbols and the constitution and expression of national difference through everyday habits (Fox 1998, pp. 2-3). For an excellent study, see M. Billig 1995. See also T. Edensor 2002.

¹⁵ As Otto Bauer (1996 [1924]) argues, nationness is not reducible to bourgeois imperatives and the appeal of nationalism is rooted in lived experience and called for a different analysis and different strategies.

social existence and consciousness. To conclude, this study can be considered as an attempt to bridge those processes (macro level structural changes-micro level subjective experiences) and theoretical approaches (theories of nationalism and class).

As a part of these considerations and in the first part of this dissertation, it is attempted to introduce a theoretical framework that goes beyond the constraints of the Marxist analysis of nationalism. Moreover, uses of nationalist discourse in political, economic and cultural terms among labour unions, leftist or socialist intellectuals and will be analyzed in relation with current configuration of working classes and their subjective experiences during the neoliberal globalization process.

3. NATIONALISM AND THE TURKISH LEFT: A HISTORICAL FAILURE

In the second part of this study, theoretical debates within Marxism and their aforementioned political-practical implications are examined with reference to the Turkish case of post-1980 neoliberalization and the resultant “privatization of state economic enterprises”. For this purpose, firstly, the Turkish Left’s historical legacy of theoretical pitfalls of the Marxist theory as to the analysis of nationalism is briefly discussed. This historical analysis is critical to questioning how nationalist discourse became dominant and powerful within the Turkish left, labour organizations and workers’ reactions against the neoliberal globalization process in general and the privatization process in particular.

In this section, it will be asked how has nationalism historically become a strong ideology in socialist or Leftist thought in Turkey during 1960s and 1970s. It will be argued that the Turkish Left’s problematic approach to the question of state, development and imperialism, as well as its close relation with Kemalist nationalism and Third Worldism (and Maoism-Galiyevizm), rehabilitated nationalism within the theory and practice¹⁶. Through such an analysis, I expect to reveal how the problematic relation between Marxism and nationalism and historical legacy of the Turkish left and labour-politics with respect to this relationship have obstructed the development of class consciousness and class-based politics in Turkey against the hegemony of neoliberalism and capitalist globalization after the 1980s.

¹⁶ For some literature, see G. Atılgan (2002), E. Balta (2002), H. Özdemir, (1993), S. Aydın (1998, 2002, 2007), Ünüvar and Doğan (2007), M. A. Kara (2008), G. Karsan (2005), Ö. Laçiner (2007), B. Somay (2007), H. Kakinç (2003), A. Kazancıgil (2006).

The literature on the historical legacy of the 1960s and 1970s is critical for understanding how both theoretical positions (namely, Kemalist nationalism and Third Worldism) were ambiguous in terms of their class characters and how political positions based on the principles of anti-imperialism and national developmentalism (images of nationalism and the War of Independence still being fresh in the collective memories of labour unions and of leftist intellectual leaders) were usually deprived of anti-capitalist character. It should be firstly noted that Kadro movement of early the 1930s has been influential in the shaping of arguments within the Turkish Left during 1960s and 1970s. To summarize the views of Kadro intellectuals, a national socialism peculiar to Turkey and a “non-capitalist” accumulation strategy (they actually refer to “state-led capitalist accumulation”) based on the principles of etatism and corporatist-protectionist economic program are crucial to become an independent and developed country. For Kadro intellectuals, the main contradiction in Turkey is not that between classes but colonized countries and metropolitan countries. It is argued that the end of class conflict within a country would not mean the end of international conflicts. Therefore, an anti-imperialist national liberation struggle (completion of political liberation with economic one) is suggested instead of class struggle. They also underline the concepts such as national will, pride, excitement, unity, welfare, independence and economy, while concepts such as internationalism, proletarian revolution, Marxism and class struggle has negative connotations¹⁷.

It can be said that there are close resemblances in terms of the debates between the Turkish Left during the 1960s-1970s and 1930s’ Kadro movement: given priority of the national question both in political and economic terms, the formulation of real contradiction as between oppressed-oppressor nations rather than classes. Particular attention is paid to the notion of “anti-imperialism” during 1960s and 1970s, while nationalism was perceived as natural response to imperialism. In other words, nationalism in those countries satisfied two essential needs which are independence and development. Obviously, it can be stated that such interpretation of socialism, namely the “independence struggle of oppressed nations”,

¹⁷ For further readings on the Kadro movement, see N. Bostancı (1990), M. Türkeş (1999), E. Yıldırım (2005), İ. Tekeli and S. İlkin (1984). It should be also noted that those arguments were prevalent among Turkish Communist Party intellectuals of the age. They are especially influenced by the debates in the first Congress of the Peoples of the East in Baku in 1920 and partly by the views of Sultan Galiyev who proposed that the main contradiction is between imperialist countries and underdeveloped countries and claimed that the proletariat of the West forms a coalition with imperialist motives – hence the impossibility of labour internationalism. Therefore, Marxism is criticized for its failure to explain the differences between industrialized European countries and non-industrialized Asian countries. See A. Kuyaş (2001) on the influence of Sultan Galiyev’s views on the Turkey’s Communist Party (TKP) and intellectuals of the age.

became very influential in numerous African, Arab and Asian countries and gave rise to emergence of “socialist nationalism” in those countries¹⁸.

In the Turkish case, the journals of *Yön*, *Devrim*, *Türk Solu*, *Aydınlık Sosyalizm*, intellectuals such as Mihri Belli and Doğan Avcıoğlu and the principles of Galiyevism and Maoism have been influential during this period in defining the struggle of oppressed nations against imperialists, calling it “national democratic revolution”, a term coined by Mao in 1967. In these circles, firstly, it is argued that the real contradiction in the global world is between an international bourgeoisie and oppressed nations; and secondly, as the proletariat in developed capitalist nations have an interest in the continuity of capitalism’s unequal development structure, the proletarian revolutions in these countries is impossible¹⁹.

Moreover, the national liberation movement in Turkey and Kemalist Revolution (which is considered as an incomplete national democratic revolution in economic terms) are recognized as the beginning of the Turkish anti-imperialist struggle which can be a model for many third world countries, and a similar nationalist struggle for independence by the national forces (with the alliance of national classes and the Kemalist Turkish army)²⁰ instead of the class struggle for socialism should be the guiding principle (giving priority to the concepts of “nation and nationalism” and “etatism and corporatism” over any class ideology). The state’s role in planning is considered as the primary condition in order to achieve economic development and social welfare and etatism is regarded as the third alternative for development to socialism and capitalism. This would mean a strict adoption of foreign trade and investments, private enterprises and import-substituting industrialization (ISI) program. Those theses continued to be influential during 1970s among leftist parties and intellectuals, student and labour movements. When the power of nationalist labour unions such as *Türk-İş* (The Confederation of Turkish Labour Unions) and *MİSK* (The Nationalist Labour

¹⁸ Especially the cases of Vietnam War, Chinese and Cuban revolutions have been influential in the development of the “anti-imperialism” with nationalistic tones during this period. See A. Liakos 2008, p. 42.

¹⁹ For some debates, see T. Bora (2007), S. Savran (1996, 2006, 2008), Y. Akkaya (2002, 2007), Gülaip (1998).

²⁰ In the writings of D. Avcıoğlu, Ş. S. Aydemir, N. Berkes, İ. Selçuk, therefore, Kemalism has been major intellectual source for the idea of national democratic revolution, while Maoism and the Chinese case have influenced Mihri Belli’s formulation. The Kemalist revolution is considered as the pioneering model for other third world countries, with “originality” claims in an essentialist view. Those theses have also been influential within Turkey’s Workers Party (TİP), despite criticisms within the party by major figures such as party’s leader M. A. Aybar and Behice Boran. Aybar and Boran criticized national democratic revolution theses based on the alliance of national classes and the Turkish army for the survival of the state and at the same time the top-down transformation task of the state, since they gave priority to national bourgeoisie-army rather than working classes and their vanguard party, with no reference to socialism and democracy.

Confederation) are taken into account²¹, it can be said that nationalism has also been historically an important ideological motive of working class organizations and labour movement.

The second section of this part will focus on how the labour unions and leftist politics approach to globalization, the post-1980 neoliberal restructuring and privatization processes, through the analysis of their discourses, reactions, political-practical strategies and organizational capacities developed against these processes in comparison with the debates and practices of the 1960s and 1970s. An analysis of the points of departures and similarities in the labour movement between these periods (in terms of their discourses, organizational capacities and characteristics of the repertoires of political action) is of critical significance figuring out the effects of post-1980 process of the retreat from class politics in Turkey. Obviously, the following four factors should not be underestimated in such an analysis: i.) the increasing role of the state in oppressing labour movement and leftist politics during and after the 1980s, ii.) attempts to create divisions based on nationalist (as well as religious) values after the 1980s, iii) the hegemony of nationalist discourse within the labour unions after the 1980s, especially during the privatization process, as privatized enterprises were mostly under the control of nationalism oriented labour unions (*Türk-İş Confederation*) and ²², iv.) the pragmatic public manipulation of the nationalist discourse by domestic capital fractions to reap the benefits of appropriating the label of the “domestic” vis-à-vis their “foreign” rivals during the privatizations in “the nationally strategic sectors of Turkish economy”. In addition to these factors, lastly, reactions and discourses of socialist parties, professional associations, trade and commerce chambers will be evaluated via their publicly announced reports and documents, to understand how the various political and economic organizations became part of the process and developed strategies against the effects of neoliberal restructuring in general, and the massive wave of privatizations in particular.

It should firstly be noted that the major themes within the Turkish Left have been nationalism, national developmentalism, Kemalism and a view of anti-imperialist struggle peculiar to

²¹ It should be noted that those nationalism oriented labour unions and another division based on religious values, namely HAK-İŞ founded in 1976, have been instrumental for the struggle against “communism”, especially during mid-1970s.

²² In this manner, 1980 constitutes a critical date in Turkey for the expansive oppression of working-class organizations and labour movement. To eliminate pre-1980 militant working class activities and conduct neoliberal policies in a politically-economically stable conjunction, extensive support for the formation and development of nationalism oriented labour unions was given.

Turkey following the legacy of 1960s and 1970s. In addition to the effects of the changing configuration of the global division of labour in the world economy, certain political processes have become the arsenal of the so called “left-nationalistic” (*ulusalcı sol*) discourse in Turkey. The Resurgence of political Islam (perceived to be linked to imperialist concerns in the Middle East), the separatist Kurdish movement (regarded as an artificial problem created by imperialist forces) and the EU accession process (considered as the violation of national interests in foreign policy issues such as Cyprus and Armenian questions and national sovereignty in domestic politics issues) from 1990s onwards have dominated the political agenda in Turkey, as well as the attention of leftist circles and political positions of labour unions. The normalization of nationalist attitudes and chauvinist hysteria during this period would also lead to the articulation of different political positions, as well as shifting political positions and strategies, to gain popular support as we see in the cases of “Red Apple Front (Kızılelma Cephesi)” (the cooperation of the left nationalist groups with right nationalist groups), “Patriotist Front (Yurtsever Cephe)”, “revolutionary Kemalists”, “Nationalist Front (Ulusalcı Cephe)”. Anti-EU perspective of unions with nationalist objections brought the rejection of cooperation with labour-unions in Europe, as well²³. Therefore, it is widely accepted that nationalism is a strong ideological tool among the actors of labour-movement in Turkey²⁴.

When talking about the privatization process, it is claimed that imperialist forces and foreign capital “strive for forcibly interfering with the Turkish economy”. Some sorts of suggestions are listed to eliminate such attempts. First of all, it is suggested that the state should control the allocation of resources without possessing the means of production. Secondly, the state

²³ As a matter of another fact, some Turkish labour unions who try to develop methods of cooperation with the ones in EU failed in their attempts since privatization process in major EU countries is almost complete and political agenda of major union confederations in Europe is completely different nowadays ,

²⁴ See F. Başkaya (2007), O. Atalay (2006), E. Uslu (2008), C. Somel (2002), K. Can (1998). Common objectives suggested by left nationalists and radical nationalists are as such: protection of the state in an anti-globalist perspective, the revitalization of the principles of etatism and national developmentalism, calling the military as a progressive force to duty against the violation of the principle of secularism. The possibility of a coalition between the most rightist and the most leftist groups under the umbrella of “nationalist politics” is considered as vital to realize such objectives (for an example, see A. Bulut 1998). Although left nationalists choose the term of “ulusalcılık” instead of “milliyetçilik” to distinguish themselves from “right-wing nationalism”, there is no objective criteria, especially when economic programs are considered, to distinguish between the two. The main organizations, media and figures of left-nationalism can be listed partly and respectively as such: ADD (Ataturkist Thought Association), ÇYDD (The Association in Support of Modern Life), USİAD-Association of National Industrialists and Businessmen, KİGEM-Central Foundation for Developing Public Management (which has been influential on the legal processes to annual privatization decisions); Cumhuriyet daily newspaper, Türk Solu and İleri journals and Kaynak Publications, Ulusal Kanal (National Channel-TV), Mümtaz Soysal, İlhan Selçuk, Erol Manisalı, Yıldırım Koç, Alparslan Işıklı and Gökçe Fırat.

should strive for creating a national bourgeoisie which will pursue national interests because of the fact that principle of national development is crucial in underdeveloped countries like Turkey. To realize these purposes, thirdly, all classes of society should act in accordance with national purposes because the major aim of privatizations in Turkey is to dissolve Turkey, to bring Sèvres instead of Lausanne and to take revenge from Atatürk. In short, privatizations and foreign capital access to Turkey are considered as a threat to the political-economic independence of Turkey. Rather than discussing the neoliberal hegemony in general and the privatization process in particular in terms of their effects on working classes and the reconfiguration of capital-labour relations, the discourses of national independence and interest are favored against the foreign domination of national economy. Therefore, it is evident that aforementioned political positions (namely, anti-imperialist and national-developmental positions which are not based on class-politics) have given a nationalist character to the Turkish left and labour-politics during 1990s²⁵.

Apart from the political positioning of the Turkish Left and labor-unions in nationalist terms, it would be interesting to reveal how domestic capital fractions have used a “pro-globalization” discourse that supports the overall shift to the global scale, but opportunistically tried to benefit from the label of “domestic” against their “foreign” rivals by simultaneously using a discourse against the “dangers of foreign investments” in critical and national-strategic sectors (Ercan and Oğuz 2006). For example, large scale-internationalized capital groups such as Koç and Sabancı pursued a “dual strategy”: on the one hand, they seek close alliances with international capital and on the other hand, they generate the discourse of “the dangers of multinationals’ ownership on strategic sectors”. Moreover, in the privatization cases of Erdemir, Tüpraş and Petkim, professional associations such as TMMOB and trade-commerce chambers such as TOBB (Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges) and ATO claimed that those privatizations in “nationally strategic sectors” cannot be accepted and that their struggle against the sale of those public enterprises intends “to save the nation”. It is suggested that if those enterprises will be privatized, they should be sold to national companies. Since those associations and trade chambers have close ties and relations with labour unions as well as a capacity to direct workers’ reactions against the privatization

²⁵ Since theoretical programs and ideological boundaries of “left-nationalists” are not drawn clearly yet (for an attempt on this way, see G. Fırat 2006), I think there is still need for time to analyze them in a more coherent framework. Although I will not get into the details of the above-mentioned political agenda of left nationalists, I expect that the question of how those views are perceived by workers could find an answer by the outcomes of the field research.

process to a certain extent, an analysis of their discourses is crucial for our case²⁶. The privatization process in Turkey, therefore, cannot be simply discussed in economic terms but should be taken into consideration with political and ideological processes. It should be lastly pointed that the terms of “national sovereignty”, “national developmentalism”, “competitive nationalism” discourses that don’t conflict with accelerating processes of capital accumulation but rehabilitate antagonistic class relations constitute the main framework in the perception of those processes²⁷.

Recent discussions accelerated by the privatization process (the internationalization process of capital or increasing flows of foreign capital and domestic class contradictions as well as nationalist alliances between different political positions in the case of public procurement law framing the execution of privatizations) would help us to evaluate the theoretical approaches derived from the literature review and to understand their political-practical implications. In the privatization process of state economic enterprises such as Seka, Erdemir, Tüpraş, Petkim and Tekel, it is evident that nationalist arguments could easily gain popularity within the Leftist discourse and labour politics, just like in the discourses of domestic capital groups for whom the economies of scale matters in procurements of state economic enterprises²⁸. Labour protests and slogans (such as “They sold out our country!”, “Damn the IMF, independent Turkey!”, “Tüpraş, Erdemir mean homeland, they can’t be sold” “This is the 2nd National Liberation Movement” and the discourse of the Labour Platform (formed in 1999 in response to the draft laws on social security reform, privatization and international arbitration) and its “Labour Program” claiming that “the means of national sovereignty should not be left under the control of international capital” and “Privatization has a damaging effect on our country’s national defense and economy; therefore it must be stopped” clearly proves

²⁶ For example, the labour union of Erdemir workers, *Türk Metal-İş*, cancelled its protest meeting when it is announced that Erdemir was purchased by OYAK, which is considered as a guarantee of the management of factories in accordance with national interests. However, the sale of 41% of dividends of Erdemir to Arcelor (which is the world’s second and Europe’s first company in this sector) just after a few days after privatization caused a change in discourses and it was declared that this choice would be better for the national interests in economic terms. In another case, the privatization of Tüpraş oil refinery, left-nationalist columnists such as İlhan Selçuk in Cumhuriyet daily newspaper supported the sale of Tüpraş to Koç Group (in partnership with Shell), which is assumed as reliable in terms of national interests. The pragmatic use of nationalist discourse or in Murray’ terms “political opportunism of capital” (1971), could be also seen in other sectors of energy; for example, newspapers of the biggest media group in Turkey, Doğan Group (which also invests in the energy sector, one of the most serious sectors in privatization) criticized privatizations as “sale of nation by capitulations” if it conflicts with its interests as seen in the BOTAŞ case. On various debates on the privatization cases, see [www. sendika.org](http://www.sendika.org) website.

²⁷ See also F. Ercan and S. Oguz (2004, 2007).

²⁸ On the manipulation of the media in nationalist terms during the procurement process of state economic enterprises issued to privatization, see F. Ercan and S. Oguz (2006).

these tendencies. Moreover, a review of discussions between labour-unions (“Kesk, Türk-İş, Hak-İş, Petrol-İş”), left-nationalist intellectuals (organized around “Independent Economists Group” generating the theoretical background of “national-developmental” discourse and “Labour Platform”) and leftist political parties (such as Party of Labour-EMEP, Turkish Communist Party-TKP, Workers Party-İP, People’s Liberation Party-HKP) is crucial to understand how nationalist and reactionary positions supersede class-based politics.

While the history of privatization efforts can be dated back to mid-1980s, the major privatization campaign was executed by the Justice and Development Party government after 2002, which took over the National Program prepared by Kemal Derviş after the 2001 economic crisis. In this national program, it is suggested that “major public banks, state-owned telecommunications, electricity, airlines, petroleum, steel, tobacco and spirits, sugar, natural gas and electricity distribution industries would be privatized and opened to global markets as well as a wide range of social services such as education, health and social security systems”. In compliance with the program, public procurement law was issued in January 2002 with the rationale of “more efficient public spending” as a typical element of neoliberal fiscal policies. Therefore, it should also be mentioned that discourses and strategies of leftist parties, intellectuals and labour-unions against the privatization campaign under the JDP government intersected with the struggle against JDP’s political program within the terms of secular-nationalist-anti-imperialist (but not anti-capitalist and internationalist in Marxist terms) concerns²⁹.

4. NATIONALISM AND CLASS: LESSONS FROM THE TURKISH CASE

The third part of this dissertation is based on field research aiming to scrutinize and to elaborate on the discussions and approaches mentioned above. In the field research, the post-1980 privatization process in Turkey, as both the most important moment of globalization and the neoliberal restructuring process, and the realm in which labor unions-workers’ protests came to concentrate on, will be analyzed within the framework of the subjective and collective experiences and perceptions arising from these very processes. The pertinence of the field-work as the core part of this study lies in the fact that it tries to find out “how all social contradictions appear as national ones and reflected in nationalist manner” and “how

²⁹ For the main framework of such a struggle, see Y. Koç (2005, 2006).

this situation affects workers' attitudes, reactions, perceptions as well as political-ideological stances (an amalgamation of objective and subjective dimensions) in the current conjuncture"³⁰.

The following questions will be guiding the field research: i.) is there a relationship between the perceptions of neoliberalism amongst the workers (the worsening of the daily life and working conditions of working classes) and the resurgence of nationalist agenda? ii.) What do workers think and feel about the privatization process of state economic enterprises (SEEs) and the increasing inflows of foreign capital in Turkey? iii.) How are their reactions articulated politically and discursively? iii.) What are the main motives behind workers' discourse during the protests? iv.) What are the political positions of labor unions and how these affect on workers' protests? v.) What are political and practical implications of discursive processes and strategies in the struggle against neoliberalism in general, and privatization, in particular? vi.) What are the possibilities of transforming the struggle into one based on class politics with an anti-capitalist-cum-internationalist character, which is crucial for a progressive politics based on the demands of workers rather than the dictates of global capital and its collaborating domestic fractions?

The prevailing strategy during the fieldwork is to direct attention towards the interactive relation between working classes' perception of internationalization of capital and the political-economic-ideological conjuncture in general, and of the privatization process and foreign capital entry in particular, and through which processes and discourses these perceptions and reactions are articulated around the nationalist discourse or ideology. My fieldwork will try to map out how the working class community in these places is interacting with surrounding political-economic and ideological dynamics. Furthermore, I will direct my attention to the question of how the position of labor unions and the Turkish Left affect the working classes' perception of recent trends. In order to accumulate adequate knowledge of their social behavior channeled into nationalist thought, an understanding of their perspectives

³⁰ Öniş (1997, pp.744-747) argues that as a result of rising unemployment and inequality and corresponding erosion in social rights—including both a decline in the bargaining capacity of labour unions as well as a reduction in the degree of entitlement to key social services in the areas of education, health and social security— and failure of social democratic and socialist parties to cater explicitly for the needs of the poor, the disadvantaged or the excluded, a vacuum in political space occurred as in the Turkish case and this vacuum has provided a gateway for the proliferation of political movements organized on the basis of extreme nationalism or religious fundamentalism. Therefore, in our fieldwork analyzing the relation between nationalism and class phenomenon; the impacts of the recent resurgence of conservative values, as another important factor, on workers' perceptions could also be investigated.

on life and description of their feelings, attitudes, reactions and positions should be posed in the face of the conjuncture challenging their social reproduction and well-being. In brief, it is expected that outcomes of the fieldwork will contribute to shed light their understanding of class-identity and nationalism.

In view of such considerations, the field research will be organized and formulated in terms of four consecutive steps. In the first step, there will be a series of in-depth interviews with those intellectuals and labour union leaders who have taken part in the privatization debates in Turkey. This section will explore how neoliberal globalization affects workers and in which ways labour-unionists and specialists as well as leftist intellectuals become influential on the resulting resistances, reactions and discourses of workers against this process and privatization in particular. It is envisaged that the issue of intellectual and organizational leadership plays a crucial role in understanding reactions of workers during the privatization process. In addition to these interviews, a textual interpretation of the reports of labour-unions and theoretical debates of leftist intellectuals on privatization and other dimensions of neoliberal globalization will be examined in detail. In this way, theoretical and political positions of these circles during the privatization process in Turkey will be analyzed in a comprehensive and critical way.

In the second step, a preliminary questionnaire will be filled up with each worker who participates in focus-group interviews. In the third and fourth steps, five in-depth interviews will be run with the leaders of labour unions and ten focus group interviews with workers (randomly selected) working in the SEEs subjected to the privatization process. The criteria in the selection of (former) SEEs subjected to the privatization process are the importance of those enterprises in Turkish economy, the level of protests, reactions and debates raised against the privatizations³¹. Selected (former) SEEs are Seka (paper-production), Tekel (monopoly of tobacco and spirits), Tüpraş and Petkim (the biggest oil and petrochemical refineries), Erdemir (the biggest steel plant in Turkey) and two focus group interviews with workers are planned for each case.

³¹ In all cases of privatization process of selected state economic enterprises, nationalism has been the main motto of labour unions and workers. During the protests against privatizations, the national independence struggle of Turkey in the 1920s and the so-called ideals of economic independence posed by Kemalist nationalism are particularly emphasized. Moreover, privatizations are considered as an attack on national sovereignty and national unity. Therefore, the struggle against privatizations is defined as the defense of the nation and homeland against imperialist rivals. It should be also noted that waving Turkish flags and emblems of Mustafa Kemal are other symbols displayed in protests. Similar nationalist themes are also used on the websites of relevant labour-unions (which will also be discussed in this study).

In questionnaires and focus-group interviews, the demographic characteristics of the workers, their social/educational backgrounds, subjective experiences and perceptions during and after the privatization process³², their daily-life practices and political views on domestic and international issues, their political behaviors and preferences will be depicted to find out the processes-discourses shaping their views and life worlds³³, together with the diverse dynamics that have become influential in the development of class consciousness and politics. In this manner, it is thought that a critical praxis must be established to understand the strength of nationalism in the current age, by tracking the political-practical implications of theoretical positions posed in material experiences.

As last words, this study could be considered as an attempt to understand the complex phenomenon of nationalism in its relation with the class phenomenon. For this purpose, in one way, macro level structural processes are analyzed in relation with micro level subjective experiences; in another way, theoretical pitfalls of Marxist theories of nationalism and class are investigated in terms of their political-practical implications on labour politics and socialist internationalism. For the revitalization of principles of labour internationalism and the advancement of the dynamics of class struggle, such critical investigations on the class and nationalism phenomena are crucial for questioning why nationalist and reactionary attitudes and discourses have gained prominence among working classes.

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³² Firstly, neoliberal globalization process in general and the privatization process in particular will be analyzed in a relational perspective; secondly, it will be investigated that how those processes are experienced-perceived by the workers and to which political positions and discourses are their reactions channeled.

³³ Questions in this section will be guiding to depict the everydayness of nationalism and its reproduction through different processes, especially the reproduction and manipulation of inside-outside or core-periphery dichotomy in everyday politics.

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