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“Globalization as the Ultimate Evil”: Reading Turkey’s Extreme Right and Extreme Left Political Parties’ Views of Globalization

H. Bahadır Turk

Turkey has been witnessing multi-dimensional debates concerning the question of globalization. What is particularly striking is that Turkey’s extreme right and extreme left wing parties, which are literally enemies of each other, have been meeting at the same anti-globalist point by using the same rhetoric. In this study, the central argument is that Turkey’s new political context has given rise to this anomaly. Analyzing why these parties detest the globalization process, this article focuses on the dynamics of Turkey’s political context through globalization debates and discusses the dimensions of the alliance between these anti-globalist political parties.

Introduction:

This article aims to describe and analyze Turkey’s extreme right wing and extreme left wing political parties’ approaches to globalization. In doing this, examples are drawn from four different positioned political parties in Turkish political spectrum. These are the Independent Turkey Party (ITP; BTP in Turkish acronyms), the Grand Unity Party (GUP; BBP in Turkish acronyms), the Labour Party (LP; IP in Turkish acronyms) and the Communist Party of Turkey (CPT; TKP in Turkish acronyms). These parties can be seen as marginal or extreme parties not only because of the rigid and vulgarized political discourses that they have in common but also because of the electoral support which is very weak for all of them. In the last general elections held on July 22, 2007, these parties were not able to pass the 10 percent nationwide electoral support threshold to gain seats in parliament and achieved very low vote percentages. The article is structured as follows:

the first section highlights Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus. The second section provides a brief overview of the attitudes of these four political parties in a descriptive way; the next section provides an analysis of why these political parties, which are ontologically "enemies" of each other, are saying the same thing about globalization. In this section, the main characteristics of these parties' attitudes towards globalization will also be highlighted.

Mapping Pierre Bourdieu's Concept of Habitus

Habitus is an old Aristotelian and Thomist concept (Jenkins, 1992, p. 77). Habitus has been variously defined in Bourdieu's intellectual world but, it can be put more simply as "the system of schemes of perception, thought, appreciation and action which are durable and transposable" (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 171). Moving from this definition, Bridget Fowler is right in saying that "Given that this [habitus] implies that the subjective world constituted in a stable pattern, Bourdieu then goes on to link habitus to a material or structural position, not unlike the Lukacsian notion of worldview" (1997, p. 18). The habitus is a kind of practical sense for what is to be done in a given situation—what is called in sports a "feel" for the game, that is, the art of *anticipating* the future of the game, which is inscribed in the present state of play. To take an example from the realm of education which we shall discuss below, the "feel" for the game becomes increasingly necessary as the educational tracks become diversified and confused (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 25).

Bourdieu rethinks this concept in order to get away from classical dichotomies between the subject and the structure:

Since the habitus, the virtue made of necessity, is a product of the incorporation of objective necessity, it produces strategies which, even if they are not produced by consciously aiming at explicitly formulated goals on the basis of an adequate knowledge of objective conditions, nor by the mechanical determination exercised by causes, turn out to be objectively adjusted to a situation... Constructing the notion of habitus as a system of acquired dispositions functioning on the practical level as categories of perception and assessment or as classificatory principles of action meant constituting the social agent in his true role as the practical operator of the construction of objects. (Bourdieu, 1990, pp. 11-13).

Habitus, as the system of dispositions to a certain practice, is an objective basis of regular modes of behavior and thus for the regularity of modes of practice, and if practices can be predicted, this is because of the effect of the habitus that agents who are equipped with it will behave in a certain way in certain circumstances (Bourdieu, 1990, pp. 77-8). Habitus which is a “socialized subjectivity” (Bourdieu 2003, p. 117) cannot be examined as if it were a “computer program” and this concept has to do with what is called “hexis” that is used to signify deportment, the manner and style in which actors carry themselves: “stance, gait, gesture, etc.” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 24). This means that the modes of behavior created by the habitus do not have the fine regularity of the modes of behavior deduced from a legislative principle (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 78). The habitus goes hand in glove with vagueness and indeterminacy. Therefore, it can be assumed that habitus obeys a practical logic. In Bourdieu’s words, “it is intentionality without intention which functions as the principle of the strategies devoid of strategic design, without rational computation and without the conscious positing of ends” (1990, p. 108).

For Bourdieu, first of all, habitus realizes itself, becomes active only in relation to a field, and the same habitus can lead to very different practices and stances depending on the state of the field. Secondly, habitus, as the product of social conditionings, and thus of a history (unlike character), is endlessly transformed, either in a direction that reinforces it when embodied structures of expectation encounter structures of objective chances in harmony with these expectations, or in a direction that transforms it and, for instance, raises or lowers the level of expectations and aspirations. Habitus, in certain instances, is built upon contradiction, upon tension, even upon instability (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 117). Thirdly, not only can habitus be practically transformed (always within definite boundaries) by the effect of a social trajectory leading to conditions of living different from initial ones, it can also be controlled through awakening of consciousness and socio-analysis, and habitus is a concept which, indeed, has to do with different approaches to culture. As David Swartz pointed out,

Bourdieu theorizes culture as more than a “common code” as in structuralism, more than an ideological system of ideas, beliefs, or values, as in Marxism, or more than a general world view posited by Mannheim’s *Weltanschauung*. All of these images of culture, despite their quite different theoretical origins, convey little sense of agency. While the concept of habitus includes all of these features, it privileges the basic idea that action is governed by a “practical sense” of how to move in the social

world. Culture is a practical tool used for getting along in the social world (Swartz, 1997, p. 115).

Habitus is both a system of schemata of production of practices and a system of perception and appreciation of practices. And, in both of these dimensions, its operation expresses the social position in which it was elaborated. Consequently, habitus produces practices and representations which are available for classification, which are objectively differentiated; however, they are immediately perceived as such only by those agents who possess the code, the classificatory schemes necessary to understand their social meaning. Bourdieu wrote,

Habitus thus implies a “sense of one’s place” but also a “sense of the place of others”. For example, we say of a piece of clothing, a piece of furniture, or a book: “That looks petty-bourgeois” or “that’s intellectual.” What are the social conditions of possibility of such a judgment? ... Thus through habitus, we have a world of common sense, a world that seems self-evident (1990, p. 131).

Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of habitus within this framework may be functional as a political concept owing to the fact that each peculiarity that the term habitus enjoys is clearly related with the field of politics. Before debating this relationship between the term habitus and the political realm, it may be fruitful to take a look at the anatomy of marginal parties in Turkish political life.

Different Political Parties, Same Opinions: A Contradiction?

The Independent Turkey Party (ITP) is an extreme right party which is both pro-Islamist and nationalist. ITP is also a populist party especially in economic policy. ITP had only 0.52 percent of the votes in the last election. From ITP’s point of view, globalization is a concept coined by industrialized states that want to dominate the resources of less developed or developing countries. According to ITP, after the World War II, imperialist states which had experienced destructive costs of wars, suggested the term globalization in order to dominate the world market with minimum cost. As is seen, in ITP’s program, globalization is totally decontextualized and, not surprisingly, seen as purely ideological gimmick. ITP’s economic program holds that “the only purpose of globalization is the exploitation and taking possession of each and every resources that less developed or developing countries have.”⁶ ITP

also mentions “the rules of globalization.” According to these rules, first of all, globalization is driven by means of global corporations which aim to maximize their profits by currency speculation. In this process, the imperialist states try to establish an “economic cooperation” between international organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or the World Bank and “the targeted” less developed or developing countries. Within this framework, ITP summarizes globalization process at one go. For ITP, there is no room for doubt: “Globalization is the name of an economic war against developing countries.”⁷

The ITP puts forward that this war has some crucial impact on Turkey as well. ITP asserts that IMF policies carried out in Turkey have given rise to economic instability and crises. ITP also holds that IMF policies in accordance with the logic of globalization are nothing but a series of projects that aim to eliminate the Turkish Republic. Therefore, such policies which are determined and carried out by global powers should be thought not as an economic issue, but as a matter of national security. Here we see that within the discourse of ITP, globalization is instrumentalized. For ITP, globalization is an instrument to weaken the Turkish state and impoverish Turkey. On this axis, ITP opposes Turkey’s bid to join the European Union (EU) and the EU is demonized as a part and parcel of globalization project that threatens Turkey’s national security.

The GUP is another extreme right wing party which is ethnic, Turkish nationalist, and state interventionist. GUP did not participate in the last elections as a party. Instead, the leader of the party individually nominated from a city in Anatolia and achieved to gain a seat in national parliament. It was a sensible strategy since the party was not able to pass the 10 percent nationwide electoral support threshold to gain seats in parliament. For instance, in 2002 elections, GUP had only 1.02 percent of the total votes. At first glance, moving from the fact that GUP’s general political attitude is shaped by an ultra-nationalist point of view, we may assume that GUP’s perception on globalization is purely determined by concerns about national integrity. Nevertheless this assumption, which is not totally false, is a little bit reductionist. From GUP’s perspective, globalization is also something to be considered through the lenses of global justice. GUP believes that globalization has been deepening the gulf between the rich countries and the poor ones. GUP sees globalization as clear and present danger for Turkey and holds that “as globalization enmeshes the world” (Yazıcıoğlu, 2006), Turkey is about to face the danger of losing its economic, cultural, and political independence. What GUP emphasizes here is that the more

Turkey integrates global trends, the more Turkey “precipitates into an abyss.” “The United States, the European Union and the IMF are the real scriptwriters of a scenario that has been trying to divide up the country for almost five hundred years” (Yazıcıoğlu, 2006). Democratization programs and adjustment programs are nothing but “lies” to divide up Turkey and to threaten our national security. GUP calls attention to an economic disaster and puts forward that Turkey should be on alert against the risks of globalization. Otherwise, “the country runs the risk of losing everything” (Yazıcıoğlu, 2006). Within the framework of globalization, foreign capital and outside funds in Turkey are increasing day by day. GUP also signalizes that “soon it will be impossible to see a Turkish Bank in Turkey” (Yazıcıoğlu, 2006). GUP believes that as multinational corporations extend the scope of their activities without any restrictions, globalization is to be tantamount to imperialism (Yazıcıoğlu, 2006).

When it comes to the LP, things get a little bit more interesting since the party positions itself in the left spectrum with an ultra-nationalist and anti-European attitude. LP, which had 0.37 percent of the votes in the last elections, tends to evaluate globalization as an instrument as well. As a matter of fact, in the case of LP, globalization is a process mainly carried out by the United States in order to establish a world hegemony. In this context, LP puts emphasis upon non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and claims that NGOs do have to do with global plot which has been woven by the United States. LP also champions that the existence of NGOs in Turkey and all around the world jeopardizes the nation states’ interests (Perinçek, 2007, p. 5). LP underlines that the logic of globalization as a vital instrument, for the U.S. hegemony runs against national interests. In this regard, LP renames globalization as “Super-NATO (Super-North Atlantic Treaty Organization) conspiracy.” LP argues that Super-NATO is a complex informal organization which is governed by the United States. This international organization has also allies in member countries of NATO. Decisions concerning Super-NATO are taken by “states-within-states” or “shadow governments,” that is to say, the elite groups. Super-NATO aims to sustain its global existence by damaging the unitary body of nation-states. LP demonizes globalization not only through its embodied form, Super-NATO or its political dimensions, but also through its social dimensions. For instance, LP states in its party program (article 62 titled “happy family”), that “the effects of globalization which bastardizes family and family values will be rectified.”⁸ It can be seen that globalization for LP is almost a disease which affects all layers in society overwhelmingly.

The fourth party to be mentioned here is the CPT which had 0.23 percent of the votes in the last elections. As can be expected, CPT argues that globalization is synonymous with imperialism. In a globalized world, Turkey and the other developing countries have become dependent on the United States and the member countries of the EU. Globalization goes hand in hand with imperialist power struggles. From war on Iraq to IMF policies which are carried out in Turkey, a set of different political, social, cultural, or purely economic phenomena are seen as different reflections of a holistic paradigm, that is to say, globalization. Nonetheless, it can be said that CPT's attitude towards globalization is more "optimistic" than the other marginal parties' attitudes. Because, CPT asserts that it is not impossible to resist the globalization. At this point, CPT mentions the cases of Latin America countries such as Venezuela, Bolivia, and Cuba as successful examples which have proven that it is really possible to resist the global tendencies. According to CPT, Turkey should cancel hiving off state industries and enclosing common lands. Turkey also should discontinue the membership of NATO, cancel its bid to join the EU and break off economic and political relations with the IMF and the World Bank. According to CPT, Turkey is a dependent country to the extent that even its own economic decisions, which should be taken independently, hangs on money brokers' lips such as George Soros.⁹ Turkey's economic and political dependency is directly linked to "globalization and its discontents" by CPT.

"Making Sense of Fear": Why Are Marginal Political Parties Saying The Same Thing?

Before debating why these extreme right and extreme left wing political parties—in other words marginal political parties—mentioned above have such a common ground in approaching globalization, let us take a concise look at the structural characteristics of these parties. When one looks at the main peculiarities of these parties, it is almost certain that they are all anti-political establishment parties, not only because they have scathing criticisms concerning the existing political establishment, but also because these parties position themselves outside the political establishment. As Andreas Schedler puts it, anti-political establishment parties "draw up a triangular symbolic space by (simultaneously) constructing three actors and their relationships: the political class, the people and themselves. The first represents the malicious rogue, the second the innocent victim and the third the redeeming hero" (Schedler, 1996, p. 293).¹⁰

On this triangular symbolic space, the political class and the other system parties are seen as the “compradors” that serve the purposes of global powers. The anti-political establishment parties see themselves as the enlightened actors that are aware of the risks and jeopardies of globalization. The main goal for these parties is to enlighten the people about these risks and jeopardies. “Anti-political establishment parties describe one specific conflict as society’s fundamental cleavage: the conflict between the ‘ruled’ and the ‘rulers,’ or...silent majority and elite, people and political establishment” (Schedler, 1996, p. 294). In the context of debates on globalization, one of the main conflicts, which is described by anti-political establishment parties as society’s fundamental cleavage, is the conflict between the ones who advocates globalization and the ones who are against this process.

The sententious political style of these parties which is employed in debating globalization is not independent from their political discourses against the “system parties.” Anti-political establishment parties “polemicize against betrayal, corruption, injustice and self-enrichment. According to their indignant rhetoric, public officials spend most of their working time in “selling out” the people, and the only thing they are interested in is “to further their own interest” (Schedler, 1996, p. 296). The fact that one of the main themes used by these parties is that “political parties are only interested in the financial gains and interests of their own” (Mudde, 1996, p. 269) provides a legitimization ground for anti-political establishment parties.

Despite the fact that these parties mentioned here have very different political ideologies and positions from each other, their approaches to globalization can be characterized in the light of some common peculiarities. First of all, globalization is subjected to decontextualization, anachronization, and personification by these parties. Globalization is thought of as an ultimate evil being or presence and evaluated as something associated with privileged countries, or specific international actors. These political parties constitute an error in chronology of globalization. Let us recall the GUP’s argument about the fact that “the United States, the European Union and the IMF are the real scriptwriters of a scenario that has been trying to divide up the country for almost five hundred years” (Yazıcıoğlu, 2006). It goes without saying that this argument is chronologically impossible. Secondly, in this context, globalization is instrumentalized. According to extreme right and left wing political parties in Turkey, globalization is almost nothing but an instrument, an efficient tool for the elites. Thirdly, globalization is seen as world-wide conspiracy. In addition to this “conspiracy theory” that is shared by these parties, what should be stressed here is that from these parties’

point of view, globalization is examined in terms of imperialism. By moving from the explanations we have made so far, it should be pointed out that the term globalization in the vocabulary of marginal parties in Turkey is too reductionist. It seems that in the discourse of extreme right and left wing political parties, globalization is just a kind of Deleuzean “machine” which generates only injustice and inequality. It is certain that globalization is far from being a “magic formula” which leads the way to “heaven on earth.”

Needless to say, there are crucial problems immanent to globalization and, as a process and historical phenomenon, globalization should be viewed in a critical manner. However, the question here is that these political parties’ approaches to globalization are composed of not serious arguments or criticisms but series of attacks which are based on systematic over-generalization. This attitude, which is ill-conditioned, is also compatible with the structural characteristics of these parties and partly political aura in Turkey. Approaching the issue from this angle, it could be put forward that security as a notion is a crucial element for these marginal parties’ perception of globalization. Security problems are seen not seen in the parallelism with a set of technical, political, social, economic problems. For these parties, it goes without saying that security matters. However, they do not pose any concrete proposals for any solutions. They only underline the fact that “security matters.” Any question concerning what is to be done has remained unanswered.

Turkey has been witnessing multi-dimensional debates concerning whether Turkey should “stand alone” against the rest of the world or should engage the globalization process and be a part of it. Nowadays in Turkey, political positionings are taken in accordance with the attitude concerning globalization. However, it would be an oversimplification to claim that the main struggle is simply between the ones who are in favor of globalization and the ones who are against globalization. The ongoing polarization between the nationalist bloc (The Republican People’s Party RPP that is main opposition party now; CHP in Turkish acronyms) and the liberal bloc in Turkey (The Justice and Development Party; AKP in Turkish acronyms)¹¹ is not emanating from antagonistic positions on globalization. The problem is methodological. On the one hand, RPP and the bureaucratic elite advocate being involved in modern world, becoming a developed country. On the other hand, this bloc has fears about losing national identity and characteristics of unitary state. The conservative-liberal bloc dreams of being a developed country in a globalized world as well. Despite this bloc’s economic liberalism compatible with the rules

of global economy, its conservative roots lead them to rethink the risks of globalization. On the one hand, this bloc sees globalization as a set of opportunities, on the other hand, they are ready to mourn the collapse of tradition. While the differences in approaches to globalization are mainly methodological through the lenses of “system parties,” it is not so when it is viewed from the angle of extreme right wing and left parties. In contrast with the attitudes of system parties, for anti-political establishment parties, the problem is not methodological, but essential. These marginal parties totally reject globalization. Their stiff opposition to globalization also derives from Turkey’s historical tensions between the center and the periphery and current political context. It is pertinent to propose to rethink Bourdieu’s habitus as a term that has political connotations. It will be more accurate to mention Turkey’s political habitus instead of Turkey’s political structure. From the 1980s until now, Turkish politics has witnessed intensive efforts to take a position in the center of politics and society. The term center within the set of political dispositions, that is to say, habitus, is blessed within the context of “end of ideology” and “end of history.” The journey to the center of political spectrum has given rise to deepening the existing contradictions between the system parties and the marginal ones. This tendency, which has to do with political conditionings, has also triggered off another significant development. The more the system parties have been tried to position themselves in the center, the more the extreme left and right wing parties have been marginalized. Therefore, the tension between political positionings and discourses of different political parties has been deepened. Keeping in mind that political habitus is an objective basis of regular modes of political behavior, it can be pointed out that the possibility of establishing a congruity—at least concerning some main themes—between the system parties and the marginal ones is totally “melted” and this possibility together with any possibility concerning deliberative democracy got lost in the realm of absolute impossibility. Consequently, approaches of the extreme right and left wing parties to globalization have been determined and characterized by entirely propagandist discourse that is far from any attempt to understand and explain.

Conclusion

As is probably already known, once Robert Frost said in his poem, “The Road Not Taken:” “Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—I took the one less traveled by, And that has made all the difference.” Debates concerning globalization

may learn from the less thought or examined themes and arguments. Macro-level analysis is, needless to say, compulsory to make sense of general dynamics of globalization. However, micro-level analysis which may focus on different experiences in different parts of the world is crucial for understanding the core effects of the globalization process. From the perspective of political science or political sociology, focusing on a set of dispositions what Pierre Bourdieu called as “habitus”¹² may be fruitful. One of the possible ways for making sense of changing “political habitus(es)” in Turkey may be focusing on the existing political actors’ different attitudes towards globalization. Different political contexts from different parts of the world can make significant contributions for rethinking globalization. We need any remarks—even preliminary—as long as these remarks have insights on the less examined dimensions of globalization. Indeed, these remarks may probably be the ones which will “make all the difference.”

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Endnotes

¹ See <http://www.btp.org.tr/index.php?sayfa=icsayfa&sirano=1>

² See <http://www.btp.org.tr/index.php?sayfa=icsayfa&sirano=4> For details of this approach, see also: <http://www.btp.org.tr/index.php?sayfa=icsayfa&sirano=1>, <http://www.btp.org.tr/index.php?sayfa=icsayfa&sirano=2>, <http://www.btp.org.tr/index.php?sayfa=icsayfa&sirano=3>,

³ See <http://www.ip.org.tr/lib/pages/detay.asp?goster=tbelgeler&belgetur=2>

⁴ For details See CPT's propaganda leaflet, "It is not impossible to be an independent country", <http://www.tkp.org.tr/secim2007/pdfler/Bagimsizlik.pdf>

⁵ See also Keren 2000, Capoccia 2002.

⁶ For ideological groups and different political blocs in Turkish political life see Çarkoğlu and Kalaycioğlu, 2007, pp. 22-42. It should be noted that this study only focuses marginal parties' views of globalization. Therefore the system parties' views of globalization is not in the scope of this study. However it can be noted that system parties such as The Republican People's Party and The Justice and Development Party have much more moderate attitude towards the process of globalization.

⁷ Habitus, as the system of dispositions to a certain practice, "is an objective basis of regular modes of behaviour and thus for the regularity of modes of practice, and if practices can be predicted, this is because of the effect of the habitus is that agents who are equipped with it will behave in a certain way in certain circumstances." See Bourdieu, 1990, p. 78.