

Dynamics of Government's Role in Poverty Eradication in Turkey: A Study of the Literature

Türkiye’de Yoksulluğun Yok Edilmesinde Hükümetin Rolünün Dinamikleri: Bir Literatür Çalışması

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ABSTRACT

Until a few decades ago poverty eradication did not feature prominently in the public policy making and discourse of contemporary Turkey. Successive governments engaged and responded marginally to issues of poverty. However, after the post-1980s reorientation of the development pattern of the nation, from centralized protectionist paradigm to free markets systems, poverty eradication gradually started to find space in national public policy agenda, rapidly rising into one of the key national policy issues. Political authority readily acknowledged poverty as a major problem and assumed responsibility for its eradication. Based on desktop review of literature, this article explores the shift in poverty eradication policy agenda of Turkey from a quiescent and neglected phenomenon to an important public policy issue. The article argues that external induced reforms (adoption and implementation of neoliberal policies and measures, reforms to achieve good governance) and internal social structural transformation (erosion in traditional welfare regime) account for the government's increased role in issues of poverty eradication in Turkey.

Keywords: Government, Poverty Eradication, Neoliberalism, Turkey, Welfare Regimes

Öz

Son birkaç on yıllık dönem öncesine kadar yoksulluğun yok edilmesi, modern Türkiye'nin kamu politika yapımında ve söyleminde belirgin bir şekilde yer almadı. Ardı ardına gelen hükümetler, yoksulluk konuları ile daha az önemde ilgilendiler ve karşılık verdiler. Bununla birlikte, 1980'lerden sonraki milli kalkınma modelinin merkezi muhafazakâr paradigmadan serbest piyasa sistemlerine yeni yönelişinden sonra, yoksulluğun yok edilmesi yavaş yavaş ulusal kamu politika gündeminde yer bulmaya başladı, hızlıca temel ulusal politika konularından biri olarak yükseldi. Siyasi otorite, yoksulluğu büyük bir sorun olarak çabucak kabul etti ve onun yok edilmesinde sorumluluğu üstlendi. Literatürün masaüstü gözden geçirilmesine dayanılarak, bu makale, Türkiye'nin yoksulluğun yok edilmesi politika gündeminin, pasif ve ihmal edilmiş olgudan kamu politikasının önemli bir konusu olma yönündeki değişimini araştırmaktadır. Makale, dış kaynaklı yönlendirilmiş reformların (neoliberal politikaların ve tedbirlerin benimsenmesi ve uygulanması, iyi yönetişimin elde edilmesine yönelik reformlar) ve iç sosyal yapısal dönüşümün (geleneksel refah rejiminin aşınması), Türkiye’de yoksulluğun yok edilmesi konularında hükümetin artan rolünün nedenlerini açıklamasını tartışmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hükümet, Yoksulluğun Yok Edilmesi, Neoliberalizm, Türkiye, Refah Rejimleri

Tür: Araştırma makalesi

Gönderim tarihi: 22.09.2018

Kabul tarihi: 12.11.2018

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Introduction

Poverty is no novel phenomenon to the world, it has been an issue of concern and study for several generations. However, over the last three decades poverty has reemerged as one of the major global problems widely discussed in policy and academic circles. The discussions seemingly threaten to sustain into unforeseeable future, particularly, as the phenomenon of poverty is now one of the major yardsticks for evaluating progress of both developing countries and international development (World Bank-WB, 2018; United Nations-UN, 2017). Interestingly, it is quite obvious that the issue of poverty is not only a problem for developing nations, it is a severe challenge for developed nations too; who even after several decades of declaring unconditional war on poverty are still struggling to conquer the foe-poverty (White, 2017; Cancian & Danziger, 2009). Against this backdrop, the poverty debate straddles both developed and developing nations.

As in many other nations, poverty is a major problem in Turkey (Turkish Statistical Institute-TURKSTAT, 2018; Şantaş, 2017; Doğan, 2014). Yet, in spite of the presence of poverty as a social reality in modern Turkey, it had remained a neglected phenomenon over the past decades; which only started to find space in public policy discourse after the reorientation of the development strategy of the nation, from a centralized (protectionist) development paradigm, towards an outward-looking free market perspective (Buğra 2007; Öztürk, 2012). Since the beginning of the Republic of Turkey, poverty alleviation has largely been relegated to the voluntary and charity society to address. Available evidence suggests that successive governments, from the early years of the Republic, have only marginally acknowledged and assumed limited responsibility to address poverty (Yükseker, 2008; Şense, 2008). As Şense (2008:64) noted, poverty was considered a 'soft' and transient issue which negative impacts was less painful to hurt people.

In this way, surreal and impracticable policies were conceived to address it. For instance, at the prime of the modernization era attempts were made to conceal poverty through initiatives targeted at confining the poor to the countryside (Bugra, 2007). In the same context, policy initiatives such as a policy of not only limiting poor and rural Turkish citizens access to major cities, but also envisioned an idea that would demand of the poor to acquire permission (in the form of visa) in order to enter Istanbul and Ankara (Senturk 2016, p.3) .

Fast forward, specifically after 2002, poverty received afresh conception which opened a new chapter in the fight against poverty. Henceforth, political authorities (government) not only acknowledged poverty as a major problem, but also undertook steps and responsibility to combat it (Öztürk, 2012). In this regard, the relevant questions this paper seeks to explore is: Why did Turkey's political authority acknowledge and undertake responsibility to combat poverty after long silence on it? What has led to the explosion in the concern on issues of poverty? Or is it the case that Turkey is just swimming along the global buzz or there are other factors apart from the global campaigns that coalesce to pressure government into action?

To address these questions, the article relied on the academic literature, published and unpublished reports and works from Turkey's public institutions. The paper proceeds as follows: The first section introduces the paper. The second section defines key concepts in the article, and reviews poverty literature in Turkey in a bid to create a conceptual and analytical framework to anchor the paper. The third, fourth and fifth examines the key transformations that have caused government to increase focus on issues of poverty. The sixth section concludes the article.

Conceptual and Analytical Framework

The key concepts germane to this paper-poverty, neoliberalism, welfare regimes and good governance-require definition. In this light, the following section presents definitions of the concepts.

Poverty

Poverty is a multidimensional and complex phenomenon (Alkire et al., 2015), because of this, its definition has evolved over the decades. Basically, poverty is the lack of income to meet ones basic needs. Traditionally, poverty has been defined in absolute and relative terms. Absolute poverty refers to subsistence below minimum, socially acceptable living conditions (TURKSTAT, 2015). This, otherwise known as extreme poverty is the worst form of poverty that not only makes people hopeless but dehumanizes them. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) one was specifically targeted at ending this form of poverty globally. Sadly, it never materialized. By contrast, relative poverty is determined based on economic, social and cultural factors peculiar to a particular society; by comparing the upper class and lower class in the society (Arpacioğlu ve Yıldırım, 2011). In providing a comprehensive definition of relative poverty, Townsend states that:

‘Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the type of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or at least widely encouraged, or approved, in the societies to which they belong’ (1979, p.31).

Relative poverty recognizes the importance of social differences people. Apart from the basic necessities to sustain life, there are things that may be valuable to society A and not country B. Thus, the relativeness of societies are underscored by this definition. While Absolute poverty is typical characteristic of least developed countries, relative poverty is typical of developed countries. Based on this categorization, countries generate incomes and consumption lines to identify poor people, which rely mostly on monetary calculations and basket of food (calores). Indeed, The famous World Bank definition of the poor as persons who live on less than 1.9 US dollar per day emanated from this conceptualization. Although the WB ‘one dollar per day’ definition allows for easy calculation and comparison within nations and across countries, it is simplistic and

fails to capture other important dimensions of poverty. Nonetheless, the WB and other major institutions as well as nation still use the monetary measurement.

Improving on the understanding of poverty, Sen's (1983) conceptualization of poverty deepened the poverty debates. It inspired toward indepth conception of poverty. For Sen, poverty means deprivation in capability to a good life, where capabilities are resources, goods and services to empower a persons to attain their full potentials. Sen's approach revolutionalised understanding of poverty; it inspired the United Nations Development Program to broadened its views about poverty. In this regard, the United Nations Development Program-UNDP (1997, p.5) defined poverty as 'the denial of choices and opportunities most basic to human development- to lead a long, healthy, creative life and enjoy a decent standard of living, freedom, dignity self esteem and the respect of others'. This definition is quite expansive because it widened the scope of poverty to include dimensions that hitherto was neglected. It attempted to focus on complete wellbeing of humans rather than narrowly on income. Rights-based advocates have also contributed the defition of poverty. In this regard, poverty is human rights issue. Naturally, human are endowed to live in freedom, and pursue happiness. But poverty deprives poor people the opportunities to fulfil this natuaral gift. Yunus (2007, p.104), refers to poverty as the denial of human rights relating to the fulfilment of basic human needs. Thus, for poor person their rights are being trampled upon by the state.

Others, such as Saatci and Akpınar (2007), referred to poverty as a complex, multidimensional phenomenon that is an amalgam of adverse conditions and events that creates severe hardship. In more elaborate analysis by WB from the voice of the people, poverty is hunger. Poverty is lack of shelter. Poverty is being sick and not being able to see a doctor. Poverty is losing a child to illness brought about by unclean water. Poverty is powerlessness, lack of representation and freedom. Poverty is vulnerability. Poverty is insecurity. Poverty is being ashamed and excluded from normal societal life (WB, 2000). These two conceptualizations attempt to capture the subtlety of poverty.

Furthermore, the most recent view of poverty now emphasized multidimensional deprivation people encounter. This led to the emergence of the Multidimensional Poverty Index that sees poverty as deprivation in health, education, living standard (Alkire et al., 2015). The multidimensional approach is now the measure used by the UNDP ascertain human development of nations. Like other measures, it is adjusted to suit the development level of a country. For instance, the deprivation indicators of developed nations are quite different from those of undeveloped nations.

These various definitions demonstrate that, the sheer complexity of poverty makes it an issue that cannot be addressed simply. It also tacitly points out the central role of government has to play to eradicate poverty. It is insufficient for government to focus only on economic issues, but has to tackle from all spheres, including social, political, cultural and environment. For instance, government has to enact laws to protect vulnerable people and corrects ills of society, provides necessary infrastructure and social services and includes the citizenry in the governance and decision making. Government has a social contract with its people to ensure their welfare, therefore the

onus lies much on government to address poverty. It is not simply a technical issue that can be solved through technical measures. It is widely recognized to be a political problem that can be addressed with appropriate public policies, choices and implementation.

Neoliberalism

The concept of neoliberalism is a dominant politico-economic ideology and policy measures ruling the present world (Eagleton-Pierce, 2016; Özkazanç, 2005). To this, we live in the 'age of neoliberalism' (Saad-Filho and Johnson, 2005, p.1). It is an ideology as well as an economy and political policy model that advocates the superiority of 'free market' and individual liberties (Craig and Porter, 2006). The key principle of neoliberalism is that, the private sector provides goods and services, whereas the state provides the enabling environment as well as supervising it. In other words, neoliberalism advocates a minimalist role of the state in economic interexchange (Brenner and Theodore, 2002). In this context, Harvey defines neoliberalism as:

“... the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices” (2005, p.2).

Some basic tenets of neoliberal policies and measures include: human interaction must be based on free market principles, allow market forces to determine prices and cost of goods and services, limited state's intervention in the market, privatization of market public economic enterprise, liberalization and deregulation of economy and financial markets, privatization or contracting-out of social services (Electricity, health and water services), expansion of tax base and strengthening of the rule of law.

The promise of the neoliberal orthodoxy is that its application would engender socio-economic benefits such as availability of essential goods and services at prices that would be affordable to all, since producers will be in competition. It would spur economic growth, abundant investments and jobs, to which people can work to improve their lives. Overall, it would ensure prosperity, and eventually leads to the eradication of poverty.

Good Governance

Good Governance (GG), identified as a normative concept defies precise definition; for which reason it connotes different meanings to different institutions and people. The WB which first introduced the term in its 1989 report focuses on the way governance which the WB defined as power exercised in the management of a country's political economic and social resources for development (1993), could be a conduit to economic success. Following this, the WB identifies GG with a public sector that is effective and

efficient, transparent, accountable and grounded on rule of law and respect for human rights. Hence the WB overly concern about reforms to revitalized public institutions (public and civil service and the judiciary) to deliver economic progressive- a prerequisite to poverty reduction.

The UNDP which viewed governance as “the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country’s affairs at all levels (1997, p.22), refers to GG as governance that is participatory, transparent and accountable, effective and efficient, equitable, responsive and promotes rule of law. ‘GG ensures that political, social and economic priorities are based on broad consensus in society and that the voices of the poorest and the most vulnerable are heard in decision making over the allocation of development resources’ (ibid, p.22). In the context of Turkey, Toksöz (2008, p.6) stated that good governance can be found at four levels: the public level, private sector level, Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) level and individual level. Like other conceptualizations, he defines GG to include consistent, participation, transparent and accountable public administration that guarantees fairness and effectiveness of decisions and their implementation. According to Toksöz, the totality of problem society’s face (including poverty-my emphasis) can be ameliorated with the practice of the principle of GG. He concludes good governance improves quality of life for all. Although good governance is no automatic panacea to eradicate poverty, it stimulates efforts to fight it. In fact, there is an undeniable truth that high poverty and weak governance are directed correlated.

Welfare Regimes and Systems

Welfare regimes in a common parlance refer to institutions, rules or structures upon which the society, states and markets interacts to protect and promotion the socio-economic welfare of citizens in a country. Welfare regimes, according Wood and Gough (2006, p. 1696) is the provision of the security needs of citizens through formal welfare states comprising an aggregate of pensions and social protection benefits, social services and labor market regulation; for Bugra and Keyder, welfare regimes are defined as the different roles that institutions such as the states, the family and the labor market play in sustaining the livelihood of the individual in society (2003, p.12). Besides these formal systems, there are an informal support systems which is referred to as traditional welfare regime in this study. This is conceived here as an unofficial support systems in which the family (both nuclear and external) and social relations have important role to ensure the security and wellbeing of its members. Importantly, welfare regimes play crucial roles in the fight against poverty. Without doubt, welfare regimes impacts significantly on how people experience poverty.

Poverty Literature in Turkey

The acknowledgement of poverty and its associated problems as important public policy issues by political authority in Turkey over the past few decades opened avenues for wider public discourse and debates on the subject; and this has engendered large swathes of literature in both academic and policy circles, which has attempted to

comprehend and explicate poverty. Academically, among the earlier studies of poverty included Dumanlı (1996) and Erdoğan (1996) who in separate specialized studies tried to measure poverty in Turkey. While the study of Dumanlı focused on poverty and its dimensions, Erdoğan's paper looked at poverty and its appearance in various regions of Turkey. Both studies to a significant extent were conducted at the time when poverty was limitedly conceived as the insufficiency of income to meet one's basic needs. In this light both papers captured no other relevant dimensions of poverty.

Since the commencement of the new millennium, more studies have emerged (Şantaş, 2017; Buğra and Keyder, 2003; Adaman and Keyder, 2007; İncedal, 2013; Karakoyun, 2013; Ramazan & Şahin, 2012). Here, the focus of the poverty discussions is broadened to encompass human development, social policy and welfare. For instance, under this rubric, Buğra and Keyder explored the transformations in the welfare systems of Turkey. They argue that the changes in welfare patterns in Turkey had resulted in the emergence of the 'new poor' in urban areas. In their contribution too, Pınarcıoğlu and Isik (2008) opined that the poor who they referred to as the underclass were not only helpless but hopeless because socio-economic conditions that had aided first rural migrants to cities to uplift themselves out of poverty gradually disappeared with the passage of time; denying the 'late comers' to urban centers the opportunity to move out of poverty. This was because they could no longer acquire free government lands to erect temporary houses (gece kondu) or find jobs in factories that were available to the 'first urban comers'. They stressed.

Şantaş (2017), found that, although welfare has increased in Turkey, poverty has become youth problem. Specifically, he noted that, the age group (15-19) from rural areas particularly those from the south-east are more prone to poverty, because they lack welfare improving indicators such as education and health insurance. İncedal's (2013) study elaborately underscored various poverty dimensions and social interventions implemented by Turkey to eradicate poverty. However, observations suggest the policies and programmes targeted to end poverty are woefully inadequate. The policies fail to appreciate the intensity of the level of poverty. The present policies only aid poor people to manage their circumstance, but do not tackle the root causes of their impoverishment (Şense, 2008).

The spatial (rural and urban) form of poverty and regional distribution of poverty are largely discussed. Within this purview, analysts (Erdoğan, 2016; Isik and Pınarcıoğlu, 2012; Duran, 2015; Pamuk, 2002; Atahan, 2006; Doğan, 2014) explored rural and urban poverty and the linkages between the two spaces. In addition, Yalman (2006) and Aran, Demir, Sarıca and Yazıcı, (2010), in separate studies, based on household data attempt to espouse the higher incidence of poverty in least developed regions of the country. For instance, Yalman observed that the high incidence of poverty in southeast was accounted for by the higher numbers of family depends (mostly many children and wives) with less sources of livelihood (most a single provider-the head of the household). Moreover, studies have also been undertaken to explore poverty and social exclusion Adaman and Keyder, 2007; Şahin, 2010; Erkul and Koca, 2016). Adaman and Keyder (2007), found that social exclusion was increasingly becoming a huge challenge

in Turkey's societies. In a study covering six metropolitan cities in Turkey, they argued that the poor in cities were excluded from jobs, incomes, education and skills training opportunities. This was compounded also by their inaccessibility to power and decision-making bodies. The consequence of this is the widening inequality between the rich and the poor and what they described as the intolerant attitude of the poor towards others.

On women's poverty in Turkey or feminization of poverty as widely referred in the literature, is yet another direction to which the poverty studies have extensively explored (Topgöl, 2013; Şengül & Fisunoğlu, 2014; World Bank and Department of Planning Turkey, 2009; Sallan Gül, 2005; Şener, 2009; MDGs-Turkey, 2005 & 2010). The World Bank and the Department of Planning (2009) in a comprehensive research in almost a decade ago tracked women poverty and its underlying causes. The report stated that female poverty was higher relative to male, the major cause of which it attributed to low female participation in the labor market. Moreover, it fundamentally identified low levels of women education, inadequate support policies for women and mothers and cultural barriers discouraging women from work and be independent as the underlying obstacles militating against women's active participation in all spheres of public life.

The causes enumerated above were reiterated by Sallan Gul (2005) and Sener (2009) in their respective works. Unfortunately, women poverty remains critical even after several gender empowerment interventions. Apart from equality in basic schools which has been achieved, gender gap in other several areas: politics, public services and even the private sector is pointedly clear. Turkey was unable to achieve the gender targets of the MDGs (MDGs- Turkey, 2010). Although in comparison to other Middle East countries, women in Turkey are better positioned. On the other hand, relative to EU, women in Turkey lags far behind.

Furthermore, the emergence of the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) measure has inspired more studies (Acar, 2014; Karadağ & Saraçoğlu; Karaca & Gökçek 2014). Acar (2014) employing the MPI framework attempted to identify poor people and dynamics of multidimensional poverty. She found that the poverty incidence was severe under this measure. In the same vein, Karadağ and Saraçoğlu (2016), also under the same MPI framework, measured Turkey's poverty levels and juxtaposed their findings to multidimensional poverty averages in the European Union (EU). They concluded that despite the significant decline of poverty in Turkey between 2006 and 2012, poverty remained far above the EU average. The findings are unsurprising because the level of social interventions to the poor are more comprehensive than those provided in Turkey. Besides, the structural challenges are lesser than Turkey's.

In the policy arena too, it is relevant to mention that, officially, the government of Turkey independently and in collaboration with international institutions such as the World Bank has commissioned researches aimed at comprehending poverty in order to develop appropriate policies to fight it. The debut of these studies was a study published with the titled Turkey: economic reforms, living standards and social welfare, which was the synergy of TURKSTAT and the WB. The study was the result of household income and consumption questionnaire in 1987 and 1994. Another notable research on

poverty is the 2005 Department of Planning and WB study; the 2005 and 2010 MDGs local reports of Turkey.

The 2005 joint poverty assessment report was in-depth and presented insightful poverty findings. First, the report spelled out indices influencing household poverty in Turkey. It noted that poverty in Turkey was highly depended on family size- larger families had high poverty rates than smaller families. It revealed further that child and aged poverty were on the rise and that the two groups (children and aged) were influencing factors determining poverty rates in households. Families with many children and aged were poorer than families with no children. Second, the report stated that poverty was directly correlated with an individual's level of education. Persons with higher education were less poor than persons with little education. Third, on regional distribution of poverty, the report maintained that the South-Eastern region of Turkey had the highest rates of poverty which was attributable to factors including, large family size, less economic opportunities, low levels of education and unprogressive practices such as denying girls of education, early marriage and young mothers and keeping women out of the labor market. Unfortunately the situation remains unchanged and there is no optimism for change in the near future. Poverty the region (South-Eastern) is even more serious now because it is virtually becoming widespread among youth in region (Şantaş, 2017; Duran, 2015)

The most recent WB's study titled 'Turkey's Future Transitions: Republic of Turkey Systematic Country Diagnostic' focusing on sustainable poverty reduction and shared prosperity, presents current poverty levels and how poverty might trends in the near future. Acknowledging impressive poverty reduction records of Turkey, the report reiterates that poverty remains a fundamental development challenge to which government must increase its focus on. It noted further, that the decline in poverty in Turkey is 'because 'the pie' got larger and not because of changes in how 'the pie' is shared' (2016, p.3). Which implies the drop in poverty was due to economic growth and not because of the poverty policies instituted by the government. Challenges such as the influx of Refugees and teeming youth could worsened the poverty state of the country if appropriate measures are taken to engage them in productive activities for them to be grow into self-sufficiency, before they become burden in old age. Poverty outcomes would depends of the ability of Turkey to sustain growth which highly rely on inflows from external investor. To keep attracting investors the study argues Turkey has to strengthen its good governance especially economic institutions and judiciary systems as investor confidence in these institution lowered.

In an independent capacity TURKSTAT has produced relevant literature on poverty in Turkey. Since 2002 TURKSTAT has independently published on yearly basis state of poverty of Turkey.

Although the literature has explored extensively several dimensions of poverty, a palpable gap is exposed, that there is inadequate studies elucidating the rise and increased government's role on issues of poverty both in policy and academic arenas.

This article intends to plug this gap by attempting to proffer a comprehensive study of the trend of increased Turkey's government role in the fight against poverty.

The remaining sections turn to focus the dynamics that have pushed poverty to the fore of policy public. However, before proceeding it is significant to point out this caveat, that the study is no oblivious to the fact that the rise in the interest on issues of poverty in Turkey coincided with the global campaign (Launch of the Millennium Development Goals) to eradicate poverty. However, inasmuch as the global appeal has contributed to the zest to combat poverty in Turkey, the study is convinced that besides the global campaign, 'other forces' have inspired government to take more interest in poverty eradication. These 'other forces' are what this study intends to explore. The next section focuses on change in development paradigm as one of the key dynamics that prompted Turkey's political authority to appreciate the seriousness of poverty in Turkey and the commitment to combat it.

Change in Development Paradigm from Centralized Planning to Free Markets Orientation

One key development which has influenced state authorities to assume interest on issues of poverty eradication is the transition to embrace a development paradigm from centralized planning to free markets (neoliberal orthodoxy) commencing in the late 1970s to early 1980s. The Republic of Turkey upon the institution of modern Turkey, through the vision of the founding father-Mustafa Kemal-denuded the newly established republic of its Islamic conservative past and embark on the policy of modernization based on secularization aimed to converge with the 'West'. During this modernization period there were inadequate pellucid policies to combat poverty. Significantly, most of the policies were mainly geared towards industrialization with less social policies (Pamuk, 1981). The seemingly only dominant apparent social policy was the strong condemnation of begging which was conformation to a prevailing policy in Europe at the time. In fact, until late 1940s efforts were targeted at keeping poverty outside major cities. Government took little interest in the problem of poverty and for dealing with poverty, (particularly urban poverty which was visible) charitable societies under the supervision of state were mostly left with responsibility to combat poverty (Bugra, 2007). However, change in development direction to free markets engendered transformations that pushed government to take up the responsibility to eradicate poverty. The dynamics that emerged under the new development trajectory are underscored below.

Neoliberal Orthodoxy and Awakening of Poverty Consciousness

Prior to the adoption of neoliberal measures and policies, precisely from the 1950s to the 1960s, like the era preceding it since the commencement of the Republic of Turkey, had no direct cogent policies to fight poverty. Issues of poverty were not important and therefore less urgent issue to attract adequate public policy attention. Political authority were preoccupied with consolidating political power and legitimacy as the internal politics was turbulent and fragile coupled with incessant geopolitical tensions in which

Turkey was deeply enmeshed. In this context therefore, development policies were inward looking, favoring states over markets, and mostly were premised on closed economy measures (Heydemann, 2007). During this period, although there was mass poverty in Turkey, the experience of mass poverty never reflected the kind of despair that was experienced in European countries in the aftermath of the World War II (Bugra, 2007).

The economic crises coupled with hikes in oil prices of the late 1970s and 80s that swept across the globe destabilized economies of countries including Turkey. In attempts to fix the economy Turkey turned to the Bretton Wood Institutions- International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank- for support and assistance. The Bank and IMF in return proffered structural adjustments policies loaded with neoliberal measures and policies: economy liberalization, privatization, outward-looking economic and free market economic policies and deregulation (Şense, 2008; Griffin 2006). Left with limited options the political authority wholeheartedly embraced and commenced implementation of neoliberal panacea, and this marked a watershed in development trajectory of the nation. This saw the disengagement of Turkey from the 'protectionist', centralized planning model of development that had been prioritized by political elites and sped towards the neoliberal orthodoxy of development which advocates markets' rationality. The transition to the neoliberal orthodoxy of development revolutionized, exposed and engendered effects including mass poverty that could no longer be neglected (Öztürk, 2012).

Like Turkey, the neoliberal logic, as shown in other Middle East countries, where it is implemented, has left consequences that make people vulnerable and more poor (Kienle 2003; King and Murphy, 2006). In fact, unfavorable effects of neoliberal policies perhaps partly accounts for the uprising that blew across the Middle East. Although poverty had been a social fact in contemporary Turkey (Yükseker, 2008), the change in development pattern ripped and spread widely severe hardship awakening the consciousness of 'not having'. In Turkey the adverse consequence of the implementation of neoliberal policies on poverty was so severe to the extent that, political authorities could no longer derelict responsibility towards poverty eradication (Öztürk, 2012). Poverty, thus, became a scathing problem demanding urgent attention.

As in all other countries that adopted neoliberal orthodoxy, in Turkey the implementation of the new development paradigm generated poverty and sense of deprivation, which triggered rural people trying to find alternative sources of livelihoods. Particularly as the implemented policies failed to create 'inclusive neoliberalism' (Bergh, 2012, p.316). While urban people were enjoying fruits of economic boom in cities, rural folks were struggling to live. In this, came the exclusion of several groups, making neoliberalism inimical to the welfare of these masses. For instance, neoliberal measures directed by the WB and IMF, recommended the removal of subsidies and support to certain sectors including the agriculture sector which employs majority of the people in Turkey. The resultant effect of this was the collapse and alienation of smallholder farming. These smallholder farmers, mostly the poor, were thrown out of employment. This then accelerated migration of people to urban

areas in search of better livelihoods. Although rural-urban migration started as far back as the 1950s, the transition to neoliberal orientation saw the influx of large numbers of people to cities to seek participate in the opportunities that had emerged. Unfortunately, the migrants soon outnumbered job opportunities. Subsequently, urbanization of poverty set forth; and this brought along the 'new poverty' phenomenon in cities, as the number of unemployed spiraled (Buğra & Keyder, 2003, p.19).

In addition, the unemployed masses in the cities were to now deal with the privatized institutions as customers rather than needful consumers. These same services when provided by the state were heavily subsidized, however, when operated by private individuals service charges become exorbitant, because private providers are driven by profit motives, relative to affordability and accessibility concerns, which the state is obliged to observe. Thus the vulnerability and penury of citizens upsurge.

Furthermore, the neoliberal systems prioritize capital owners to the detriment to workers, otherwise referred as 'accumulation by dispossession' (Bergh, 2012, p.314). Neoliberal systems ensure workers unity are diluted making it cumbersome for workers especially unskilled workers to rally together to press for better conditions to guard against poverty. Workers are treated to unfavorable market conditions which makes workers vulnerable to poverty. More so, neoliberal system liberalizes and encourages capital movement but restricts labor movement in search of better working conditions. And in view of the fact that capital holders are in constant search of cheap labor to maximize profit, the negative effect is that people are working but at the same time are wallowing in poverty because they are paid paltry salaries and wages (Chossudovsky, 2012).

Specifically in the case of Turkey, transition to neoliberal systems inspired distributional dislocations (widened inequality between the wealthy and the poor) as the system re-engineered to produce new crop of local capitalist through new political alliances and networks with political authority (Şense, 2008). In another dimension, the inequality occurred because neoliberal policies led to growth of the informal sector of the economy with inadequate legal protective measures to curtail ills associated with informal sector. This left the poor and underprivileged in society working under detrimental conditions to make ends meet. The informal sector, driven by profit motive always work to minimize cost and one of the ways to achieve this is suppressing of labor cost. In this way, smaller entrepreneurs employ people minus social and poverty cushioning support. They neither pay social security of personnel, health insurance nor holiday benefits, yet personnel are subjected to long working hours. The implication of not entitle to this support benefits means workers in the informal sector are vulnerable and expose to high risks of insecurity. Plus, there are no job security even though workers earn paltry wages and salaries. Thus conditions in the informal sector allows for the creation of permanent underclass with no hope of rising out the gloomy conditions.

Neoliberalism further advocates free trade and deep integration into the global economy through promises of prosperity and better welfare for all. However, it appeared to be

delivering the reverse-poverty and sufferings for the majority, especially for people in developing economies such as Turkey (Stiglitz, 2003). The stories always say that free trade and more globalization lead to access to larger markets and competitive prices that would inure to the benefit of the masses. Yet it has been noted to be romanticized reality, it has hurt and is hurting more the poor in developing economies. While the developing nations are pressured to open up their borders eliminating trade barriers, the developed countries still have stringent barriers locking out produces from developing economies; and this makes the mantra of free trade and easy access to bigger market a façade. Meanwhile, the developed economies are able to dump their goods and services in the developing economies with less restrictions. For instance, Turkey's market is flooded with big brands such as Nike, Apple and so on, which edge out and kill growth of local brands. One of the implications is that the masses are losing out on jobs. And overall unfortunate effect of these neoliberal measures is the further impoverishment of the masses of the people in developing economies like Turkey.

High Economic Growth, Less Poverty Reduction

Government of Turkey increased concern on issues of poverty can also be explicated within the model of economic growth that the economy has experienced over last couple of decades. Turkey is hailed as a success in view of the impressive economic growth it achieved. The economy sustained a resilient economic growth rate over the last one and have decade (table 1). The growth demonstrates Turkey's sustained growth since 2002, clocking higher rates of above 9 percent in 2004 and 2010; and spectacular rate of 11 percent in 2011. It however dipped into negative growth rates of 6.00 and 4.70 percent in two years, 2001 and 2009 respectively. Importantly, this impressive performance was happening under a world reeling under crisis. Although the global crisis, somehow affected growth (in 2008 and 2009), the strong growth recovered afterwards. The robust economic growth undoubtedly catapulted the Turkey's economy from a Lower to a Higher Middle Income Economy, and consequently led to some reduction in poverty. However, the benefits of the economic growth has not been broad-based enough. The recent economic growth under the neoliberal economic policies has not benefitted the poor much. The poor even experienced decline in real incomes (Şeker & Jenkins, 2015). As mentioned earlier, the growth benefitted more capital owners to the detriment of the labor providers who are mostly the poor (Adaman, et al., 2017).

This is no peculiar to Turkey. A cursory look across the globe, there abound swathes of evidence showing that countries have achieved unprecedented growth without concomitant growth in the living standards of the masses. The growth benefits more the already wealthy group of people. In Latin America, for instance, Cruces, et al. (2017), have posited that although the continent achieved sustained growth over the past few decades, the growth has only succeeded in widening the gap of inequality making inequality as the defining characteristic of the continent. Similarly, evidence from Sub Saharan Africa indicates growth has been resilient over the last two decades yet poverty has in real terms has increased (Sembene, 2015).

Trickle-Up Rather Than Trickle-Down Growth Effect

The 'trickle-down effect' (deemed the magic bullet of economic growth) which is that benefits of growth would eventually flow the poor has proven to be an overhyped reality (Chossudovsky, 2012). On the contrary, growth unaccompanied by pro-poor policies excluded the poor. In such situation, the state would have to increase efforts to prop and ensure the welfare of the masses, who are benefiting little from the benefits of economic growth, do not deteriorate. Hence the rise in interest in poverty by political authorities. This is true of Turkey. In Turkey, market forces have not been efficiency in the redistribution of the benefits of the growth. This is evident by the widening gap in inequality between the rich and the poor. For instance, evidence from 2015 report of TURKSTAT indicates that while the 20% of the upper population had annual average income of 30, 889 Turkish Liras, 20% of the lower population annual average income was 4, 515 Turkish Liras. What this portrays is that the recent sustained growth is not pro-poor enough. But this is no new phenomenon. In fact, the literature cautions that, although rapid and sustained economic growth is critical condition to poverty reduction, it is not sufficient to eradicate poverty (Sembene, 2015).

Table 1: Economic Growth of Turkey, 2000-2017

Years	Annual Economic Growth Rate (%)
2000	6.60
2001	-6.00
2002	6.40
2003	5.60
2004	9.60
2005	9.00
2006	7.10
2007	5.00
2008	0.80
2009	-4.70
2010	8.50
2011	11.10
2012	4.80
2013	8.50
2014	5.20
2015	6.10
2016	3.20
2017	7.40

Source: T.C. Hazine ve Maliye Bakanlığı, Aylık Ekonomik Göstergeler, 17 Ekim 2018, p. 3.

It advocates that the extent to which growth would great positive impact on poverty depends on the degree to which the underprivileged participate in the growth process and also share in the benefits of the growth. The above income disparities indicate the poor have benefited less from the recent resilient growth.

Jobless Growth in Turkey

Economic growth, unanimously, is agreed to be a necessary, but not sufficient condition for far-reaching poverty reduction. Recent impressive growth achieved by Turkey could possibly be described as jobless growth (Bugra and Keyder, 2003, p.11); driven by technological transformation that falls perfectly under post-ford production model, in which less labor is indispensable, contrary to ford production, where mass labor was pre-requisite and central to production. In line with this new trends (post-ford tenets), new investments do not generate high rates of employment. Coupled with this is the fact that, job opportunities created are in specialized fields which require special skills. Unfortunately, those special skills are out of reach of the ordinary people. In addition, the strong growth of Turkey was also driven by the export sector. And because the exports are mostly primary commodities they are susceptible to global price fluctuations. In this regard, the kind of employment practices in this sector is highly informal. Thus, even if people are employed, they are engaged without poverty protection conditions: social security, health benefits, accidents benefits, and holidays. Clearly, employment without welfares benefits cannot move the poor out of poverty or protection ordinary people from falling into poverty.

Unsurprisingly, the paradox of growth without corresponding jobs experienced in Turkey is no peculiar to Turkey alone, rather, it is a global phenomenon characteristically associated with growth under neoliberal orthodoxy. Even in the developed industrial countries standards of living are retrogressing, for the simple reasons that new investments are sent to developing economics where profits are high, as a result of abundance of cheap labor and lax regulatory standards compared to developed countries. By this, jobs in developed nations have depleted and disappearing and more so wages of available jobs are stagnant and not commensurate with the living standards. The phenomenon of the poor hanging on to several jobs in order to make ends meet is widespread. In USA it is only the top one percent who have benefitted in income growth; and this has enlarged the already existing income inequality; the underclass and the middle class are actually worse off compared to earlier periods (stiglitz, 2012).

Again, too, jobs that are transported to developing countries, which have become destinations for some jobs formerly done in developed, are not aiding in poverty reduction either, because workers are paid paltry wages. Thus, the spiraling of working poor in developing countries. We now turn to discuss the contribution of declining traditional support systems in instigating government to step up its roles to poverty eradication.

Decline of Traditionally Welfare Regime

Welfare regimes and systems are important poverty mitigating mechanisms that impact on the way the poverty is experienced by people. Prior to the introduction of formal welfare institutions to assume responsibility of providing social and economic security, traditional welfare regimes undergirded traditional societies. Primarily, traditional

system of welfare revolved around the communities with the family as pivot. Members of a community or a family were morally responsible for the economic and social needs of its members. Family members rallied together to enhance and support its poor members withstand poverty, shocks and risky conditions. This not only promoted sense of belongingness but also guarded against social exclusion of weak and vulnerable members in society.

In Turkey's social structure the family has always played the important role of providing social protection and welfare. In view of this, Bugra and Keyder (2003, p.18) argue that "the reason that poverty was not considered as a problem requiring political intervention in Turkey is that the country's [traditional] welfare regime included a set of mechanisms preventing poverty from becoming frozen." In general poverty was viewed as a transient phenomenon that traditional welfare support regimes could address. Even after the institution of formal welfare regimes and social protection systems, the role of the family as the primary pillar of welfare and social support has not declined (Buğra & Keyder, 2006).

However, the centrality of the family as the pillar of social protection for individuals has been questioned following social structural transformation over the decades. De-ruralization and urbanization, changing family structure and above all economic transformations have coalesced to erode the traditional social protection system upon Turkish society was anchored (Bugra and Keyder, 2006). In view of the fading of the traditional welfare system the state had no other option than to step up efforts to institute formal state welfare regime to replace the supporting role of the family or complement the fast ebbing traditional system in Turkey's case. The formal welfare regime of Turkey is broadly identified under the Southern European welfare regime, which exhibits:

'an elaborate but highly fragmented and hierarchical system of corporatist character that provide combined health and pension benefits to formal employed heads of household according to their status at work. This system coexists with a labor market structure in self-employment, unpaid family labor and informal employment practices are key in the welfare regime' (Bugra & Keyder 2006, p.212).

These characteristics reflect features in the Southern European states welfare regime model. The worrying problem emanating is that the formal social protection system is utterly insufficient to provide social protection, however, in retrospect it is far better than erstwhile periods where social protection was only limited to people with white color jobs. Moreover, the symbolic important cannot be overlooked. It sends clear message that the state is concerned about the welfare of its citizens. The state takes upon itself not to allow the citizenry relapse into poverty.

In addition, the emergence of 'new poverty' in urban Turkey has further induced significant changes ruining the mechanisms of integration and communal spirit in Turkish society (Pinarcioglu & Isik, 2008). The new poverty phenomenon engendered

significant threat of social exclusion especially in urban Turkey. The phenomenon manifested as a result of transformations experienced in last three decades. Particularly for Turkey, the redirection of the country development strategy away from a paternalistic and protectionist regime towards an outward-looking free market-system led to massive retrenchment and redundancy following privatization of state-owned enterprises. The aftermath of the processes led to deterioration in the economic and social conditions of families. And this piled a lot of pressure on people's ability to extent helping hand to people outside the nuclear family. This is contrary to practices in the distant past, where people could count on their distant relatives or community member when faced with economic problems.

The Bretton Woods Institutions played a significant role in Turkey's transition to free markets systems. They were the brainchild behind it. In this context, they also recommended the setting of social protection measures to absorb the negative impacts the reforms had heaped on the masses. Against this, the state was left with no option but to prepare itself to parry the negative effect (increased poverty) emanating from the reforms. This was not limited to only Turkey but all countries who had implemented the free markets package provided by the IMF and WB. Social policies to alleviate the negative impacts of neoliberal policies and measures were a global phenomenon as International Financial Institutions- IFIs (IMF and WB) who superimposed the structural and economic adjustment policies came to the realization that it had worsened plights of citizens. Thus, under their directives uniform global social programmes were rolled out across the board to oversee people through the bitter consequence of markets reforms that were been vigorously propagated. With the aid of WB, Turkey initiated the Social Risk Mitigation Project to support people who were exposed to challenges resulting from the implementation of IFIs recommended policies.

As mentioned earlier, a deep-seated social class divisions emerged as the result of the economic growth, and this was pitching these social classes against one other. Particularly in slums of metropolitan cities in Turkey poor people are excluded from actively engaging in several areas including education, job market, housing markets and social activities. And this is further ruining the social capital and support that characterized Turkey's society. Also, the poor are also inaccessible to political power and public authority. This has left Adaman and Keyder (2007) to conclude that slum dwellers are bitter and resentment towards others outside their environment. As they put it slum dwellers are intolerable to other people. Social exclusion has compelled the poor to recoil which is breeding hopelessness and promoting crimes (Özer & Çolak, 2015). In this context, the state was compelled to intervention to help the poor manage their plights in order to pre-empt class war as the poor could engage in all sorts of violence acts undermining peace and security.

Besides neoliberal policies and declining role of traditional welfare support, good governance concerns are other drivers that pushed the government to take action on poverty eradication. The next section focuses on good governance concerns.

Reforms for Good Governance

After the republic period under the aegis of inspirational leader Mustafa Kemal, Turkey descended into abysmal governance fraught with intermittent coup d'états until the end of the 1990s. The tenets of good governance mentioned earlier was conspicuously missing throughout the tempestuous periods. Although at the time, issues of poverty episodically emerged for public discussions, formal welfare systems were limited and catered only for people in formal employment (Bugra and Keyder, 2006). The remaining public (farmers and the informal sector) was never featured in any significant way in social policy issues. Government did not respond to the need of the underclass or poor. However, after the nation transitioned to embrace and implement institute democratic governance fundamentals (which good governance was a central policy in the new policy agenda) the outlook towards citizen's welfare utterly transformed. The government could no longer derelict its responsibility for the welfare of the general public. Good governance advocates for citizen's active participation; leaders accounting to the citizens in a transparent manner and upholding fundamental human rights of citizens which include political social and economic rights. People in poverty are being denied of their rights (UNDP, 2003, p.iv). In this light, political authority had to fulfil the rights of the poor by focusing on issues to poverty. Particularly, this was executed through broad public reforms.

UNDP and EU Inspired Good Governance Reforms

Turkey has been implementing public sector reforms under the support of major international institutions (Gül and Kiriş, 2015). The promotion of democratic governance across developing countries by the UNDP has aided powerholders to particularly deepened concern on the welfare of citizens. Turkey benefitted from this support. The UNDP governance reform package focuses on areas such as the rule of law, making justice accessible to all, human rights and security sector governance, local governance and civic engagement and youth empowerment, public sector reforms and anti-corruption, gender equality and women empowerment (UNDP, 2013). The reforms support is intended to strengthen democratic governance to establish set of values and principles to anchor state-society relations, enabling citizens especially the poor and marginalized to actively participate in how they are governed and in how decisions are made and implemented (ibid, 2013, p.6). The institution of democratic governance also would lead to efficient, inclusive and beneficial public policies that are transparent and accountable. The crux of which is to reduce inequalities and exclusion and subsequently eradicate poverty.

Another driver that has carted Turkey towards good governance and ultimately increased focus on issues of poverty is the intention to join to the European Union. In 1999, Turkey gained EU candidate status after series of initial expert evaluations of the economy, political and social indicators of the state. Upon the attainment of candidature status, the country was required to undertake series of recommended reforms: the Maastricht or Convergence criteria, which is the economic and financial standards of the union, and the Copenhagen (Accession) criteria, which also contains basically the

political and other conditions of the union. In brief, these two broad set of conditions include: a robust free market economy, stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human right and protection of minorities and the ability to assume obligations of membership, including the capacity to implement the rules, standards and policies of the EU.

The EU reforms dictate that Turkey's public authorities assume political responsibility to ensure better welfare of the citizens. The reforms also intend to transform the nation to achieve European standards and values of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law and human rights, which would in no small way compel public policy makers to grant relevance to issues of poverty. It is no doubt that the EU has high standards for its citizens and therefore Turkey undertaking reforms to reflect the EU standards would definitely raise Turkish authorities' interest on conditions and standard of living and by extension issues bordering on poverty.

Internal Engineered Governance Reforms

Government's increased interest towards poverty was spurred by reforms engineered by the need to attain internal institutions and climates that was compatible with global democratic and economic tenets. In Turkey, the last major constitution was enacted in 1982 under the aegis of military rule; clouded with undemocratic culture. And in autocratic regimes leaders care little about citizens' wellbeing but more on legitimizing their power. Therefore, in view of the circumstances of its emergence it was critiqued as embodying the authoritarian and statist dogmas of its military founders; that was intended to restore authority of the state and to ensure the public succumb to political authority rather than protect rights and freedoms of citizens (Özbudun, 2007, p.179-180). When the nation restored stable democratic rule, calls for constitutional reforms to reflect social and political conditions under stable democracy, where leaders work for the betterment of the citizenry were mooted. In response to these demands, reforms were undertaken to achieve amendments that would improve the protection of fundamental human rights, rule of law and to redefine military-civil relations as regards governance of the country. Besides these amendments, large number of common laws were also amended. The import of these amendments were to harmonized the laws of the country to reflect its new development path of an outward free markets practices to which the nation had embarked on. The overall aim was to have human-centered institutions around which state's power revolves.

CONCLUSION

The paper has focused on government's changed role, from dormant to active, on issues of poverty and poverty eradication in Turkey, by exploring key dynamics that have significantly influenced government to take the lead role in the fight against poverty. The discussion has pointed out that besides the global campaign urging countries to focus and assume important roles on poverty eradication, redirection of development strategy away from closed protectionist inward looking orientation towards free markets outward looking paradigm nudged poverty into center stage in public policy in Turkey.

Under the closed economy governments could manipulate and control poverty with the implementation of paternalistic policies to appease the people. However, after taking a different development paradigm, the government could no longer implement populist policies for it was required to adjust to reflect the tenets of the new paradigm.

Undoubtedly, the new development paradigm, under which neoliberal orthodoxy was implemented has led to unprecedented economic growth, generated wealth and reduced poverty in process. However, the poverty reduction resulting from growth is questionable, because societal inequalities and skewness in resource redistribution remained unchanged. The poor have not benefited like the upper class people. This implied the strong economic growth was devoid of pro-poor policies, that is, policies that would enable ordinary people share actively in the fruits of economic growth. Although poverty has become an integral part of Turkish development plans, this paper confirms poverty still remains a critical issue debilitating against overall development of Turkey.

Government's role as the ultimate power to lead towards effective poverty eradication is less disputed. Experience has shown that economic growth is necessary, but insufficient condition to achieve effective poverty eradication. Government of Turkey would therefore need to blend its economic policies with social policies in order to attain far-reaching poverty reduction that would address inequality and promote justice in society. The mere acceptance of responsibility is a step in the right direction, but sustaining the zest and implementing transformative initiatives is the central issue that would determine how successful Turkey can achieve in the struggle against poverty.

Going forward the government would need to refocus on these areas in order to effectively fight poverty in Turkey. First, women poverty. The challenges against women are formidable and this debilitates against their effort to move out of poverty. Thus government must introduce not only women empowerment policies, but also initiatives to address social structural challenges women encounter. When women are empowered, it could push down women poverty. And lower women poverty has multiplier effects: it leads to additional income, better catered children and quality family life that would translate into high standards welfare. The paper surmises that government's ability to address women poverty is one of the effective steps towards winning the fight against poverty. Second, it is indispensable for government to increase interventions to bridge the regional disparities if it intends to effectively combat poverty. The South-Eastern poverty gap is not closing; thus interventions that can address the root causes of poverty have to be enacted and implemented. Third, the government needs to develop more universal welfare policies and programmes to guard against people falling into poverty. The present welfare regimes favor more the formal workers. Majority of the informal sector are not captured. Steps must be made to embrace all sectors. Without addressing these issues, the government commitment to eradicate poverty would appear elusive.

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