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BOOK REVIEWS

Passive revolution: Absorbing the Islamic challenge to capitalism, by Cihan Tuğal, Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 2009, xii + 306 pp., €28 (paperback), ISBN: 9780804761451, 2019, 4th edition.

Modern Turkey was founded by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk as a secular country, with the military serving as the last bastion of secularism until recent years. After the establishment of the Republic, political Islamism was banned and suppressed, and from the 1950s to the 1970s, politicians advocating Islamism could do so only under the umbrella of centre-right parties. Although Islamist politics emerged in the 1970s, it did not rise to prominence until the 1990s, when the WP (Welfare Party) challenged the established secular political order (Dağı, 2008, p. 26). After the WP was banned by the Constitutional Court in 1998, its successor, the VP (Virtue Party) was formed. Due to political disagreements, this new party split into two: the FP (Felicity Party) a party of traditionalists, and the JDP (Justice and Development Party), a reformist party that advocated a 'conservative democracy', in opposition to religiously inspired Islamist policies (Dağı, 2008, p. 25). When the JDP won the 2002 general elections, however, Islamists took over the political stage for the first time in the history of the Republic.

In the first term of JDP's rule (2002–2007), the steps taken towards European Union membership, economic growth and democratisation were perceived as signs of progressive change, not only in the political sphere but also in broader society. Islamist sympathisers turned their backs on fundamentalist views and lifestyles, becoming more liberal, moderate, and modern. Kemalists and secularists still harboured fears that the JDP might gradually Islamise Turkish society, but these fears were partially alleviated by the party's largely pragmatic policies (Solomon, 2019, p. 129). Nevertheless, these concerns were not entirely unfounded: during the JDP's first tenure, hundreds of senior military officers were tried and jailed for conspiracy against the Turkish government and, consequently, the tutelary capabilities of the military were curtailed; Islamic teachings played an increasing role in education and a new conservative capitalist class emerged, consisting of Islamist businessmen with ties to the party. At the same time, traditional and radical Islamists accused the JDP of corrupting religion.

The ideology of the JDP as well as the social and political conditions of its rise have been the subject of many studies, all of them addressing the question of whether the party can be called a democratic, secular Islamist movement. Some have claimed that the JDP is an 'anti-democratic' Islamist party (Eligür, 2010), while others see the JDP as a secular, conservative-democratic party that disapproves of Islamism as a political ideology (Hale & Özbudun, 2010). A third group of scholars describes the JDP as a neoliberal party (Atasoy, 2009) or as a liberal-Islamist party (Yavuz, 2009), respectively, with Islamism

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as its ideological core but capable of adopting liberalism as a means of integration into the neoliberal world economy.

Passive Revolution: Absorbing the Islamic Challenge to Capitalism (2009, 4th edition 2019) by Cihan Tuğal, a sociology professor at the University of California, Berkeley, explores and explains the rise of the JDP within the context of neoliberal restructuring in Turkey. Unlike other scholars, he studied the rise of the JDP at a micro level. The book is based on ethnographic studies conducted between 2000–2002 and in 2006 in the Sultanbeyli, an Istanbul neighbourhood, which was populated largely by radical Islamists at the time. Tuğal examines the transformation of Islamism in Turkey through the lens of Antonio Gramsci's hegemony concept, rejecting the deterministic economic interpretation of history while focusing on cultural, moral, and ideological aspects of power. He criticises contemporary approaches for being fragmentary and one-sided, arguing for a more holistic and theoretically sophisticated approach.

Tuğal embraces Gramsci's concept of 'passive revolution', that is, the achievement of hegemony by consent. Writings on the moderation, rationalisation, and secularisation of Islam have previously suggested a 'healthy evolution', claiming that the accommodation of Islam to market forces is based on the teachings of Islam itself. In contrast, Tuğal asserts that the chief reason for the rationalisation or moderation of radical Islam, in the case of Turkey at least, is to be found in the transformative pressure of civil and political society that integrates radical groups into the market economy.

The monograph consists of six chapters divided into three parts. Tuğal discusses his theoretical approach and rivalling conceptualisations of Islamic mobilisation in the first chapter, suggesting hegemony theory as an alternative to modernisation, political-economic, social movement, and civil society approaches to Islamism (p. 14). The second chapter discusses the rise and absorption of Islamism in light of historical processes. Chapters three and four analyse the development of political society[1] and civil society within the Islamic transformation framework – absorption of radical Islamist into the market-economy – from the 1980s until 2002 in *Sultanbeyli*. These chapters portray this process at the everyday level through his long-running ethnographic field research. The last two chapters argue how neoliberal conservatism took over parts of Islamic political and civil society after 2002, thus reconstructing the linkages between economy, civil society, and political society. In the conclusion, the author explains the peculiarity of the Turkish case in a comparison with Iran and Egypt. He speaks of an interrupted passive revolution in Egypt, where the efforts of the regime to democratise and moderate radical Islamist groups from the 1970s and 1980s onwards were blocked by Islamist groups. An unsuccessful passive revolution took place in Iran because Iranian Islamism, with its weak political organisation, was not able to integrate political society with civil society at large. In Turkey, 'due to differences in hegemonic strategies' (p. 15), civil and political societies were merged successfully.

One of the primary queries of the book is: How did the JDP manage to convert radical Islamists to a more moderate yet conservative way of life? According to Tuğal, the JDP drew and expanded on neoliberal policies that

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were already put into practice by centre-right governments in the 1980s, during which the organised working class and the left had already been neutralised. This meant that radical Islamists were the only remaining obstacle standing in the way of the progress toward neoliberalism. Ultimately, the JDP was able to amalgamate the radical Islamist masses into the secular state by transforming their daily and economic lives as well as public spaces. In doing so, the JDP brought Islamism in line with the neoliberal order, in *Sultanbeyli* and elsewhere in Turkey (p. 9). Tuğal argues that moderate Turkish Islam, which is at present market-oriented, partially democratic, and rationalised, originated from a complex process of the absorption of radical Islamists into the extant hegemony. In other words, Islamists no longer oppose the capitalist system and the secular state as before; rather, they have been able to transform the existing secular order without overthrowing it through participating in institutions.

Since the study has been first published in 2009, there have been many social and political changes in Turkey which make a reevaluation of the book's thesis necessary. For example, following the June 2011 elections, significant social unrest emerged as the JDP was moving closer to Islamism and implementing more conservative social policies along with harsh neoliberal economic policies that were perceived as a threat to the secular state, the modern Turkish lifestyle, and to the environment. In particular, the Gezi protests that erupted in May 2013 set the whole country on fire for over a month.

Another development after the book's publication was that the discontinuation of the peace process, initiated in 2009 between the PKK (Kurdistan Worker's Party) and the government, the summer of 2015 due to the intensifying war in Syria and the former's cooperation with Kurdish forces therein. Furthermore, the JDP lost its majority in the 2015 elections; however, unwilling to accept the election results, the party prevented the formation of a coalition government and new elections were held in November 2015. The JDP retained power through their alliance with the radical MHP (Nationalist Movement Party). Subsequently, the leaders of the Kurdish HDP (Peoples' Democratic Party), which passed the electoral threshold and entered the parliament in the 2015 June elections, were imprisoned and the government exerted serious pressure on the opposition. After the failed coup in July 2016, human rights violations, mass imprisonment, and the prolonged state of emergency undermined the JDP's commitment to democracy. During a two-year-long state of emergency, violence and oppression became part of daily life in Turkey. In this environment of turmoil and pressure, the JDP held a successful referendum in April 2017 changing the political system from a parliamentary to a presidential system, concentrating powers of the judiciary, executive and legislature in the hands of the President (Solomon, 2019, p. 132).

Tuğal addresses these developments in his preface for the 4th edition, published in 2019, claiming that his core thesis still holds after more than a decade. The JDP, the party of the passive revolution, has maintained its regime by intensifying, normalising, and reverting to old political practices that date back to the neoliberal policies of the 1980s, albeit with occasional

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interruptions and crises, aiming for an integration with the market economy. Yet, following the global economic crisis in 2008, Arab spring, and the Gezi uprising, the regime abandoned its liberal-democratic claims. Tuğal argues that the 2016 coup attempt, and the ensuing state of emergency, deepened their resolve for power and resulted in purges. He writes that, at this time, 'violence has started to spread throughout the country by becoming civilized, tamed and professionalized' (p. 10). Tuğal clearly shows that the aim of the JDP is the inclusion of Turkey in the established world economic system and to transform Turkish society politically and socially to support the realisation of this goal. Now at a crossroad, Turkey will have to take a new route in parallel with the world economy. And at this point the question should be: will the radical right or left or centre-powers determine the direction?

In retrospect, radical Islamists made a dramatic transition into modern and market-oriented, even somewhat secular lifestyles during the JDP rule, as Tuğal emphasised in the first edition of the book. What Tuğal did not touch upon in the original edition was that the JDP was concurrently trying to lure the secularists into a more oppressive and conservative space while pulling Islamists into a more modern and liberal way of life. Nonetheless, after 2011, especially in the post-Gezi period, the JDP has been characterised by nationalism, authoritarianism, illiberal democratic ideas and Islamic politics. From the 2010s to 2022, JDP politics have changed drastically; therefore, the so-called Passive Revolution now seems like a controversial thesis.

Overall, *Passive Revolution* offers a substantial and elaborate account of the transformations of the Islamist movement in Turkey over the past two decades. The book argues that while engaging in a struggle for hegemony, Islamist activism has shifted from a counter-hegemonic project to a new hegemonic project that has been absorbed by the dominant political structure. Although there are many studies that have examined the JDP's political path and neoliberal policies, Tuğal's work still maintains its originality both in terms of his ethnographic contribution, and in terms of demonstrating how the radical Islamic lower classes were integrated into the larger political system.

Note

1. According to Gramsci, 'political society consists of actors and organizations that have comprehensive social visions and try to regulate the whole of social life, unlike civil society actors who pursue specific interests or specific issues' (Bates 1975, p. 353).

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Hannah Arendt's uneasy relationship with sociology

The Anthem Companion to Hannah Arendt, edited by Peter Baehr and Philip Walsh, London, Anthem Press, 2017, 284 pp., £70 and $115 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-78308-185-1

Given the plethora of books on Hannah Arendt's work since the collapse of communism in 1989, it is often difficult to sort through the growing amount of secondary literature about her. *The Anthem Companion to Hannah Arendt* is neither an overview nor critical introduction to her ideas. Rather this timely volume offers a perspective on her work from within the very discipline that she held is such low esteem – the social sciences. Skilfully edited by Peter Baehr and Philip Walsh, *The Anthem Companion to Hannah Arendt* offers a refreshing focus on the connection between her work and 'fundamental sociological problems' (p. 2). Divided into two parts, authors in Part I address books written by Arendt germane to sociology: *The Origins of Totalitarianism, The Human Condition, Eichmann in Jerusalem, On Revolution* and *The Life of the Mind*. Part II reflects on selected themes within her work and draws from a wider range of publications including her early book review of Karl Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia*, *On Violence* and *Responsibility and Judgment*.

In their thoughtful 'Editors' Introduction: Arendt's Critique of the Social Sciences', Baehr and Walsh outline how Arendt challenges the social sciences not only at the time of her writing (1930s–1970s) but also in the 21st century. As they write: 'Hannah Arendt (1906–1975) was a determined foe of the social sciences. She lambasted their methods and derided their objectives. Sociology was a particular target of her ire' (p. 1). Why then, did Baehr and Walsh, two notable sociologists who have written excellent books about Arendt's uneasy relationship with the discipline decide to dedicate an entire anthology to that

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