

BOOK REVIEW

Gönenç Uysal. *Class, Capital, State, and Late Development. The Political Economy of Military Interventions in Turkey* [Studies in Critical Social Sciences, Vol. 276/27 [and] New Scholarship in Political Economy, Vol. 276/27.] Brill, Leiden [etc.], 2024. xv, 253 pp. € 146.06. (E-book: € 146.06.)

One of the defining dynamics in late Ottoman and Turkish history, manifesting at various intervals, has been military intervention. The seizure of political power by force entails not just a change of rulers, but also a rupture that radically transforms the logic of governance. Military coups signify not only the termination of an administration, but also historical turning points that generate transformations in state governance and economic-political orientations. Gönenç Uysal's *Class, Capital, State, and Late Development: The Political Economy of Military Interventions in Turkey* adopts a historical materialist and political economic perspective on military interventions in Turkey, thereby offering an alternative to the existing literature in this field. The work transcends conventional political science methodologies, evaluating military coups not merely as political events, but also within the frameworks of economic transformation, capitalist development, capital accumulation, state restructuring, and class struggles. The book is presented as an expanded version of the author's Ph.D. research conducted at King's College, London.

Uysal's study draws upon Marxist state theory and dependency theory to interpret military interventions in Turkey as outcomes of the capitalist development process. The study goes beyond modernization theory and liberal democratic approaches by examining the connection between capital accumulation crises and military interventions, and how such interventions are shaped within the context of state, class, and capital relations. The book evaluates Turkey as a late-developing capitalist economy and argues that military interventions should not be regarded solely as political events, but rather as reactions to crises generated by capitalist production and struggles for class hegemony. In this context, while the book undertakes an analysis of state economic policies and civil-military relations in both the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey, it places particular emphasis on the influence of global capitalism through a Marxist lens. However, in making this emphasis, the text does not neglect Turkey's own specific conditions in its integration into global capitalism. This approach facilitates a more nuanced understanding of the intertwinings of political economy and military history.

The book is divided into eight chapters. The military interventions addressed in these chapters are examined not only in relation to domestic political developments, but also through the lens of transformations in the international capitalist system. The opening chapter posits that any examination of military interventions in Turkey must

be conducted from the vantage point of a political economy perspective. The author emphasizes that, in order to comprehend such interventions, it is essential to direct one's attention not solely to political events, but also to domestic and international economic transformations and class dynamics. The theoretical framework of the book is set out in this chapter. The second chapter examines the foundations of the state, the military, and capitalist development in the Ottoman Empire and the Republic. This chapter discusses the relationship between the military and the economy during the reform movements of the late Ottoman period. The impact of the military class on capital accumulation processes and economic policies during the 1908 Young Turk Revolution and the foundation of the Republic in 1923 is also addressed. The work emphasizes that, in both the late Ottoman period and during the foundation of the Republic, the military acted not only as a security force, but also as one of the main actors in the state's economic transformation.

The third chapter of this study examines the 1960 military coup, the subsequent restructuring of the state, and the adoption of developmentalist capitalism. The chapter meticulously outlines the ten-year economic policies of the Democratic Party prior to the 1960 coup, and the crises that emerged in connection with these policies. The author contends that, in the aftermath of World War II, the capitalist order in Turkey underwent further consolidation under US hegemony and the prevailing Cold War conditions. The chapter further argues that the 1960 coup was precipitated by the ascendance of the bourgeois class and the concomitant crises in capital accumulation. The military's restructuring of the state was reportedly driven by the objective of safeguarding the interests of the bourgeoisie and resolving the inherent conflicts between the bourgeoisie and the state. The following chapter explores the advent of neoliberal transformation in Turkey in conjunction with global trends, and the claim that the military executed the 1980 coup to enable this transformation. The author asserts that the 1980 coup was driven by the process of neoliberal transformation, with the objective of implementing a structural transformation to ensure Turkey's integration into the neoliberal economic model. The coup is said to have led to the growing influence of institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank on Turkey's economic policies. In these chapters, the military is portrayed not only as a balancer of domestic politics but also as an actor redefining Turkey's mode of integration into global capitalism.

Chapter Five examines the military intervention that occurred in 1997, frequently referred to as the "postmodern coup", and the economic and political pressures it engendered. In contrast to the military takeovers of 1960 and 1980, the 1997 intervention did not involve a direct seizure of power by the military. Instead, the military intervened in the political arena by forcing the Welfare Party from government. This chapter contends that the military intervention took place within the context of the Welfare Party, a political movement with pronounced Islamic orientations, which rose to power in the 1990s alongside the strengthening of Islamic capital. The military, emphasizing secularism, sought to curb the economic power of the newly emerging Islamic capital, and the intervention is portrayed as a response to demands from the secular capitalist bloc. The sixth chapter examines the consolidation of the neoliberal order by the Justice and Development Party (AKP), which came to power in 2002 with a parliamentary majority and sought to weaken and eliminate military tutelage, thereby establishing a new balance of power. The subsequent legal actions initiated against the

military, and the resultant weakening of its political influence, are discussed in this section, as are the concurrent processes of strengthening neoliberal authoritarianism in Turkey. In addition to ideological and economic struggles among elites within the state, this chapter introduces a class-based realignment into the discussion.

Chapter Seven examines the background to the failed coup attempt in 2016, and how this attempt led to a renewed and more authoritarian restructuring of the Turkish state, including the replacement of bureaucratic and military elites. In the aftermath of the 2016 coup attempt, the state underwent a comprehensive restructuring that encompassed not only security-related aspects, but also significant political and economic shifts, thereby marking the onset of a new era of transformation. The eighth and final chapter offers an assessment of how military interventions in Turkey should be analysed from a historical perspective, with particular emphasis on the significance of their economic dimensions. The book emphasizes that military interventions in Turkey are not merely responses to national security crises, but are also connected to processes of capitalist development and transformation, and that they have been used as tools to accelerate structural transformations deemed necessary within the state.

The chronological analysis of military interventions in Turkey, beginning with the late Ottoman period, is a central theme of the book. These interventions are examined within the broader context of the economic and social conditions prevailing during each period. The late Ottoman era and modern Turkey are conceptualized as late-developing capitalist economies, and military coups are presented as phases in capitalist development, playing an instrumental role in structural transformation and the reorganization of hegemony. A notable strength of the book lies in its theoretical foundation, which is built upon Marxist political economy. Moreover, the comprehensive historical perspective of the work, extending from the Ottoman period to modern Turkey, demonstrates its ability to provide strong analytical continuity from past to present. Conversely, given that the book is shaped within a Marxist theoretical framework, some of the topics it addresses may be perceived as controversial by researchers aligned with different theoretical perspectives. Furthermore, the relatively minor emphasis placed on the role of civil society and trade union movements in military interventions could be regarded as a prospective avenue for future expansion and development. In conclusion, this work constitutes a fundamental resource for academics, researchers, and readers interested in understanding military interventions in Turkey. It is notable for its use of historical materialism and dependency theory, and for its examination of the role of military tutelage in the context of late capitalist development. The book thus stands as a significant point of reference for researchers in these areas.

B. Mert Demir

Department of Political Science and Public Administration,
Istanbul Gelişim University, Istanbul, Turkey
Email: bmdemir@gelisim.edu.tr