# DISPOSSESSION AS A MANIFOLD

## Frontlines of Authoritarian Populist Politics in Turkey

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### Introduction

On the evening of 15 July 2016, jet planes started to circle over the roofs of Istanbul and Ankara. At the time, the sense of crisis was already profound. War in the southeast of Turkey had been ongoing for about one year. The Kurdish population was dispossessed when their cities were turned to rubble. Academics had been persecuted, as alleged supporters of terrorism, for signing a petition that denounced the violence. Various bombings in the urban centers, attributed to ISIS or the PKK, had cost hundreds of lives; among them was an attack on a peace demonstration in October 2015, organized by Kurdish and leftist organizations, where more than one hundred people died. The jets circling over our heads were in a sense an extension of that experience of violent crisis. It soon turned out, however, that they formed part of something that few, if any, had expected, as the military was presumed to be have been weakened: a coup. Thousands of people followed the call by President Erdoğan to take to the streets, and hundreds were killed that night. The coup failed.

The Turkish government attributed the coup attempt to the Gülen movement—now termed FETÖ (Fethullahist terror organization).[1] The state of emergency declared shortly thereafter, and renewed periodically until July 2018, was presented however as part of a more general fight against terror, and for national security. This opened the door for the persecution not only of Gülenists, but also

the wider opposition. The Kurdish political movement in particular was targeted, but also various others on the socialist or liberal Left, as well as Kemalists.[2] More than 130,000 people were dismissed from the public sector, and thousands of institutions were closed down by state of emergency decrees, with tens of thousands arrested on terror charges.

While the state of emergency seemingly instituted a 'state of exception,' it was far from exceptional. For one, it formed part of a longer history of state violence, governance by decree, and state remaking in Turkey (Akça 2014; Bodirsky 2021; Gökarıksel and Türem 2019; Jongerden 2018; Küçük and Özselçuk 2019). Moreover, its governance by decree was rendered permanent by the institution of a presidential system in 2018, when the state of emergency formally ended.

The Turkish state of exception was also not exceptional when viewed against international developments. Illiberal governments in countries such as Hungary and Poland engaged in similar practices of repressing the opposition, exchanging state personnel, and remaking the state. New illiberal alliances have been forming in Europe (Kalb 2018) and beyond (Öniş 2017; Öniş and Kutlay 2020) in the context of a crisis of (neo)liberalism. Turkey is thus a frontline space that exemplifies more general political tendencies in contemporary capitalist societies.

Political scientists have thus discussed in recent years whether Turkey is now best seen as an instance of a broader shift to competitive authoritarianism or illiberal democracy (among other terms). In contrast to their focus on political institutions and practices in the narrower sense (e.g., Arat and Pamuk 2019; Castaldo 2018, Esen and Gumuscu 2016), Stuart Hall's perspective on authoritarian populist hegemony lends itself to an anthropological analysis of the wider social field in which such political developments are embedded, and the frontlines of value that drive them. It focuses attention on the valuation-based alliances underpinning a hegemonic project, and its attempts to generate consent to an encompassing strategy of social transformation and state remaking, and helps us unearth the politics of a contemporary authoritarian populist value regime.

When using the term 'authoritarian populism' in the contemporary conjuncture that brought a populist, illiberal right to the fore (Scoones et al. 2018), I do not seek to establish a historical parallel with Thatcherism, which inspired Hall's coining of the term. While Thatcherism is generally associated with the rollout of neoliberal policy and politics, contemporary populist projects are in part a

reaction against it. They gain their specificity from a conjuncture that is defined by a neoliberal global capitalism in and of crisis, and a pushback against former, often (neo)liberal, state elites. In that sense, they involve and seek to construct different value regimes. What I am interested in is thus not historical comparison in view of the substance of particular policies, but in highlighting a particular *kind* of hegemonic strategy that harnesses frontlines of value in specific ways.

In examining contemporary politics within a broader field of force, I build on a substantive literature that analyses politics in Turkey through a Gramscian lens (Akça et al 2014, Balkan et al 2015, Bozkurt 2013), but focus to a greater extent on the manifold practices of dispossession that go into the shoring up of a hegemonic project. Contemporary authoritarian populist hegemonic projects employ both economic and wider social forms of valuation for alliance formation. The politics of dispossession in this context targets in particular those outside the alliance at any point in time. I use the term 'dispossession' to refer to the act of taking away or withholding something that is of value to the dispossessed.[3] This includes but is not limited to the material. Thus, anthropologists have highlighted multiple dimensions of dispossession—economic, political, social— and examined how they come together in the shaping of political processes (Carbonella and Kasmir 2015, Kalb 2009). Dispossession in this regard encompasses both social reproduction and social worth; processes of expropriation, stigmatization, and disenfranchisement.[4] It is a "manifold": it comprises "a totality of interconnected processes" or "bundles of relationships" (Wolf 1982: 1).[5] Practices of dispossession are thus generally tied into long-standing histories of (de)valuation—of capital as well as the state (Bodirsky 2021)—that hegemonic projects can activate for their strategies of generating consent, establishing control, and achieving social transformation. For instance, experiences—or fears—of dispossession have played an important role in constituting support for the illiberal Right in Europe (Edwards et al. 2012; Edwards et al. 2017, Gingrich 2006, Gökarıksel 2017, Kalb and Halmai 2011, Koch 2017, Szombati 2018). In turn, authoritarian populist projects actively engage in new and intensified acts of dispossession.

The value(s) dispossessed serve(s) the enrichment of others. Just as dispossession is manifold, so is the resulting enrichment: it encompasses not only material wealth and opportunities for accumulation but also a recalibration of the scales of hierarchical social worth and the means to realize particular 'civilizational' values through

state-led social transformation. In that sense, the current hegemonic project analyzed is also a project of manifold enrichment of (new) elites that partially extends to allied subordinate populations. The following first lays out the conceptual framework of the argument, and then outlines the manifold practices of dispossession during the state of emergency in Turkey. It situates these within the longer historical trajectory of frontlines of value leading up to the recent use of dispossession as a political tool. The latter serves to shore up the authoritarian populist hegemonic project, it is argued, but it also entails contradictions that constitute a challenge for its continuity. Future hegemonic projects will have to contend with the residues of state remaking and polarization that authoritarian populist politics leaves behind.

## Authoritarian Populism, Hegemony, and Dispossession

In developing the notion of authoritarian populism, Stuart Hall's objective was to analyze

> the *new form of hegemonic politics* which emerged on the British scene with the formation of the 'new right' in the mid-1970s. It described a *shift in the balance of social and political forces* and in the forms of political authority and social regulation institutionalized in society through the state. It involved an attempt to shift the gravity in society and the state closer to the '*authoritarian*' *pole of regulation.* . . . However, the 'populist' part of the strategy requires that this move to new forms of social authority and regulation 'above' should be *rooted in popular fears and anxieties 'below'*. Central to this movement . . . was that the shift to greater social discipline should be made while *retaining intact the formal paraphernalia of the liberal-democratic state*. (Hall 1988: 84, emphasis added)

When using the term 'authoritarian populist' as a qualifier for a particular kind of hegemonic project, I pick up on these key elements of the definition: the authoritarian move in remaking the state while maintaining the semblance of representative democracy, as well as the populist consent sought of (only parts of) the population, in our case particularly by activating histories of dispossession, all within a project of gaining and maintaining power by a particular, and partially shifting, alliance of social forces.

My interest in the term thus derives primarily from a concern with political strategy, not with Thatcherism as such, which differed in important ways from the contemporary populist Right. Most notably, the Thatcherite project of state remaking served a project of

neoliberalization. In turn, the populist Right today rose to power in a context where neoliberalism seemed firmly entrenched, albeit in crisis. The continuous production of crisis and of dispossession that neoliberalism entailed for large parts of the population contributed to an anger against (neo)liberal state elites which the populist, illiberal Right could canalize (Kalb 2011; Maskovsky and Bjork-James 2020). Thus, contemporary authoritarian populisms can be seen as a partial reaction to the world that Thatcherism helped to build. It involves a value regime that entails hybrid strategies of engagement with neoliberal global capitalism, including measures of state capitalism according to some analysts (e.g., Öniş 2019), within a project of social transformation and enrichment that harnesses multiple value(s) in the making of alliances, and builds to a greater extent on state– rather than market-driven dispossession.[6]

Hall emphasized that the term 'authoritarian populism' needed to form part of an analysis of hegemonic politics (1988: 150, 154). He described political projects as "hegemonic" if they seek "to renovate society as a whole" (ibid.: 91). This requires making (and at times breaking) strategic alliances with different social forces, dominant and subordinate ones, through political and ideological as well as economic means, building on various markers of valuation, not only class (ibid.: 7–8). Such a hegemonic project requires an economic nucleus (Gramsci 2000: 212); that is, a degree of control over (capitalist) forms of value accumulation and distribution. And it requires control over the state apparatus, which is "clearly absolutely central in articulating the different areas of contestation, the different points of antagonism, into a regime of rule" (Hall 1988: 168). A hegemonic project is thus also a project of state remaking. Here, Gramsci's differentiation (Gramsci 2000: 234–36) between the state in the narrow sense (institutions of the political system so-defined) and in the general sense (encompassing the wider realm of civil society) is relevant. A successful hegemonic project targets both the narrow and the integral state. This has been a hallmark of recent authoritarian populism not only in Turkey, but also in countries such as Hungary, Poland, and, to lesser extent, the United States.

In coining the notion of authoritarian populism, Stuart Hall modified Poulantzas's notion of authoritarian statism, which referred to the "intensification of state control over every sphere of economic life combined with radical decline of the institutions of political democracy and with draconian and multiform curtailment of so-called 'formal liberties'" (Hall 1988: 126), while maintaining the appearance of the liberal-democratic state (ibid.: 84). The political science notion

of competitive authoritarianism today captures some of this: it refers to an authoritarian state (merely) legitimized by regular elections. In replacing Poulantzas's "statism" with "populism," Hall in turn wanted to highlight the crucial role of popular consent in this process. Thatcherism, he noted, was able "to harness to its project certain popular discontents" (ibid.: 6; see also pp. 50, 55) and "aligned itself with 'what some of the people really want', while at the same time continuing to dominate them" (ibid.: 6). This connects concretely to the various senses of value involved in contemporary frontlines, and would also ring true if we replaced Thatcherism with Trumpism, Orbánism, or the like.

Popular consent for Hall does not mean the absence of coercion. Rather, coercion can become "the natural and routine form in which consent is secured" (Hall 1988: 30). This is a particularly prominent feature of authoritarian populist projects, which aim at only a *strategic* measure of consent (ibid.: 7), partly achieved through coercion. It helps to explain the use of dispossession as a political tool within a hegemonic project. Authoritarian populist politics works through an active process of polarization that separates the 'true' people presumably consenting from various internal and external Others to be disciplined by force. In the case of Turkey today, the language of anti-terror brands nearly half of the population as potential or actual terrorists, including but also extending beyond the Kurdish population, who had long been devalued and violently repressed in the Turkish state (Aras 2014, Yonucu 2017).

Such political polarization is in fact the surface appearance of a particular process of making and breaking alliances that underpins a struggle for hegemony. Value and values play a central role in this (Bodirsky 2021). As Gramsci (2000: 211–12) pointed out, hegemony has both "ethico-political" and "economic" dimensions. Both economic value and ethico-political values play a role in sustaining the alliance that carries the hegemonic project at any given point in time. In turn, those outside the alliance—in particular in authoritarian populism—are subjected to devaluation and dispossession.

A key dimension of recent practices of dispossession in Turkey is economic: they produce wagelessness and enable the accumulation of capital. A duality of dispossession and accumulation is of course fundamental to any capitalist social order (Marx [1867] 1990), and renders the specter of "wagelessness" (Carbonella and Kasmir 2015: 45) a fundamental problem for those without means of production. David Harvey (2003) highlighted that such practices of "accumulation

by dispossession" often involve state law and coercion, and are central to neoliberal capitalism. The Turkish case shows that practices of dispossession generate resources for the state that can then be redistributed strategically to maintain alliances underpinning the hegemonic project. While this indirectly serves capital accumulation and also produces wagelessness, its immediate purpose is political. It serves the redistribution of resources within relations of clientelism and for popular support. This in turn helps buttress a broader project of enrichment, including material wealth, but also social worth and political power.

Just like enrichment, dispossession also goes beyond the economic. As Carbonella and Kasmir (2015) point out, economic dispossession has manifold repercussions for the production of difference and for related processes of disorganizing the working class. Practices of dispossession can also *directly* target values that organize the attribution of social worth and shape social relationalities (Bodirsky 2021). That is, people can be dispossessed of the capacity to live positive social relations through practices of stigmatization, isolation, hierarchy and domination, or experiences of alienation. Ethnographic studies have examined, for example, the loss of socialist forms of sociality and the devaluation of related subjectivities in the supposed transition to a capitalist modernity (Berdahl 1999; Dunn 2004), which entailed large-scale accumulation by dispossession. As Don Kalb (2009) has shown, the dispossession of workers in postsocialist Poland jointly entailed economic deprivation, denial of social worth, and loss of political control.

Practices of dispossession thus also target people's capacity to shape the conditions of their lives politically, be this in the work environment, through formal political institutions, or through social organization and mobilizations of various sorts (Gill 2016). Such processes of dispossession are not limited to violent states. The experience of being dispossessed of any real influence or say in the political process in liberal democracies has also been important in the success of the populist Right. This success in turn has paved the way for a further narrowing of the political space, and another round of political dispossessions.

Economic, social, and political dimensions of dispossession are variously imbricated in the political process of constituting hegemony and, in that sense, "manifold." Authoritarian populist hegemonic projects politically activate histories of devaluation and dispossession for the generation of consent and their own agenda of dispossession (Bodirsky 2021). They actively employ dispossession

for shoring up the hegemonic project in moments of crisis and in remaking the state for their purpose of enrichment.

## Manifold Dispossession

Umut was no longer able to sleep at night, as the emergency decrees were often published in the middle of the night. They carried lists with names, national ID numbers, and workplaces of people to be dismissed from their state jobs: barred from any other state employment, deprived of a livelihood. Those on the list were accused of being a security threat to the country. Umut was afraid that her husband might be on the next list. Or the list thereafter. He was one of the more than one thousand academics who had signed a petition condemning the violence against the Kurdish population in the Turkish Southeast in the fall and winter of 2015, and requesting the Turkish government to re-enter negotiations. Unlike many of his colleagues in other universities, he had not lost his job yet in the backlash against the petitioners, who were publicly branded as supporters of terror. He suffered from being disinvited from conferences, and taken out of shared research projects as a consequence of being an *imzacı*, a signatory of the petition. He had not lost his job yet, but that might still happen. Many of the *imzacı* were on the lists. Umut's salary from her work at an NGO was not sufficient for the family to get by, let alone to get the kids through high school. And who knew whether the institution she worked at would be closed by emergency decree in the next weeks or months? If her husband's name appeared on the next list, there might be a short window of opportunity to try and get to the airport in time before their passports were canceled. Their suitcases were packed just in case. But they did not want to leave—did not want to leave family and friends behind, home, the shared struggle.

Every day, at around the same time, Mustafa got dressed for work. But instead of leaving the house, he would sit in the living room, waiting. He waited for someone to come by—former colleagues, possibly—and arrest him for something that he had not done, though he did not know what exactly that might be. He had already lost his job by emergency decree. Now he was branded as a terrorist and traitor, despite serving as policeman for the past twenty years and more. If they thought him guilty, he demanded to at least be arrested and charged. Then he could have an opportunity to defend himself—if he could learn in the first place what exactly he was accused of. But

no one came. Day after day he sat and waited; dressed, shaved, so that his children would not see him letting himself down. His wife left for her cleaning job each morning. He stayed. His options were limited. He was prevented by decree from working in the private security sector. And who would hire him anyway, marked out as he was? Their savings would not last much longer. Family was helping out as much as they could. But how long could this last?

Umut and Mustafa are fictitious—but their experiences are not. The experiences attributed to them here are the experiences of hundreds of thousands of people in Turkey in recent years that are all different and unique, but nonetheless shared: experiences of dispossession; the loss of political say, livelihood, home and hope; the fear for family and friends.

These experiences had precedents in the preceding years and even decades, even though on a narrower scale. The state of emergency generalized this experience to a large part of the population. Only about a week after the coup attempt, a first emergency decree—KHK 667[7]—was issued that closed over two thousand institutions: schools and dormitories, universities, hospitals and health centers, associations from areas such as culture, education, and social work, and unions. A few days later, KHK 668 dismissed close to seventeen hundred state employees from their posts, and closed about 130 media institutions. This happened so quickly that it was rumored that the lists—each about fifty pages long—must have been prepared before the coup.

The publishing of KHKs, often with similar lists, continued periodically during the state of emergency. Thousands of institutions, in particular from the areas of education, health, culture, and media, were closed down.[8] By the end of the two-year period, 49 private health-care institutions such as hospitals, 15 universities, close to 1,500 private educational institutions for children and youth, 847 private student dormitories, 178 media outlets, close to 1,500 associations,[9] 145 foundations,[10] and 19 workers' unions had been shut down by KHK.

Among the total of about 130,000 public sector employees dismissed by KHK were teachers, professors, medical doctors and other health personnel, judges and prosecutors, employees of various ministries, and of course military and police.[11] The last list, attached to KHK 701, dismissed a record eighteen thousand workers. By that time, the international media were not even reporting on it anymore. The exception had become routine—not, however, for those affected. The threat of dispossession that the KHK lists embodied had been

hanging over the heads of a large part of the Turkish population for years, setting a mood of anxiety and hopelessness. This dispossession was manifold: it not only threatened to take away livelihoods, social standing, and a social and cultural infrastructure, but also political say and control, not least through the far-reaching legal changes that resulted from the KHKs.

A dismissal or closure by KHK entailed no legal proceedings, only a general claim that the respective person or institution had links to a terrorist organization or constituted any other threat to national security. There was no formal accusation, no evidence, no trial—just the appearance of one's name on a list. The closed-down institutions and the dismissed personnel—popularly called *KHKlı*—never learned the exact grounds of suspicion (if there were any), so they could not formally defend themselves or remedy their situation by legal means. While, presumably under pressure from the Council of Europe, the government eventually set up an inquiry commission to which the *KHKlı* could submit their complaints, that agency was severely understaffed.[12]

The closures by KHK enabled the generation of funds for the state: assets, land titles, real estate, movables, and documents of foundations closed by KHK were transferred to the General Directorate of Foundations. The property of other institutions went to the Treasury. What then happened to those assets is obscure. KHK 670 mentions that private education institutions can be allocated to public ones, and there is anecdotal evidence suggesting that, for example, the equipment of health centers went to state hospitals. But there is no public information available on the details of these transactions or on the value that accrued in the Treasury in consequence.

In addition to the institutions closed down by KHK, more than a thousand private companies with a total value of reportedly over 60 billion lira, and the individual property of 125 individuals, were confiscated and handed over for trusteeship and possible sale to the Savings Deposit Insurance Fund (TMSF), again based on the suggestion that their owners had links to terror organizations. The TMSF has been selling off many of these assets, achieving sales prices from several tens of thousands to more than one billion Turkish lira.[13] The revenues obtained through such sales go to the Ministry of Finance (KHK 674). There is no transparency as to the total amount of revenue generated in this way, or as to what happens to the funds subsequently.[14]

Many livelihoods were affected by these closures and confiscations. The dismissals by KHK targeted them even more directly. To

understand their political effects, it is important to see that these were not the kind of dismissals that are 'normal' in a market economy. As they took place under the heading of "fight against terror and for national security," they stigmatized the dismissed as (supporters of) terrorists. Appearing on the list also had consequences beyond losing one's public sector job, as the *KHKlı* were barred from working in the private sector too: dismissed judges and prosecutors were not allowed to work as independent lawyers; dismissed security personnel were barred from working in the private security sector; and thousands of teachers lost their work permits. Retirement pensions were revoked. The dismissed were to be evicted from public housing. Their personal property could be confiscated. Their passports—as well as at times the passports of their spouses—were revoked. And so on.

Barred from state employment, not being able to rely on any state benefits, and hindered in finding a job in the private sector, among other reasons because of the stigma of being thought a traitor and terrorist, the *KHKlı* were also prevented from leaving the country in search for a livelihood. The specter of wagelessness that always haunts those who need to sell their labor power in a capitalist market economy was here particularly harrowing. The *KHKlı* were clearly to be dispossessed of any means of livelihood and thrown back on the support of family and friends. Some, such as teachers, received aid via institutions such as the union *Eğitim Sen*. Others found informal channels of employment such as cab driving or doing translations. All of this required stable social relations and networks preceding the dismissal. This was not in all cases available, as economic dispossession could go hand in hand with social dispossession.

Social dispossession was not a mere side effect of economic dispossession but was probably intended: the dismissed appeared on the publicly published lists with full name, place of work, and often even their complete national ID number. Everyone could access this information.[15] While many in urban centers could indeed find solidarity and support among oppositional circles, those in social environments that were largely supportive of the government experienced ostracism due to the stigma of being *KHKlı*. Some suicides were attributed directly to this stigma and harassment, and the social isolation it produced.

In addition, the *KHKlı* were threatened with political dispossession. Ahead of the municipal elections of 2019, key political figures demanded to bar *KHKlı* from voting. After the elections, several of the successful candidates (often from the pro-Kurdish HDP/BDP)

were not allowed to take office because they were *KHKlı*. Instead, the candidates who were second in line—often from the nationally governing Justice and Development Party (AKP)—took office. This chimed with a wider process of dispossession in the form of disposing elected mayors on terror charges. During the state of emergency, about a hundred elected mayors, mostly in the southeast and from the pro-Kurdish HDP, had already been replaced by trustee governors, a practice that continued after the state of emergency ended. Many oppositional politicians, in particular from the HDP, were imprisoned on terror charges.

Thus, the *KHKlı* were dispossessed from their livelihoods and sometimes from their savings and assets. They were dispossessed from any opportunity to remedy their situation, be it by seeking other formal employment or by leaving the country legally to try their chances elsewhere. Many were dispossessed socially—avoided, harassed, stigmatized. Given that many of the *KHKlı* worked in occupations that traditionally have been held in high regard in Turkey, this also meant a new denial of status. People were unmoored, many experienced a kind of social or civic death (Özyürek and Özdemir 2019). And they were dispossessed politically, lacking recourse to legal action. Both their passive and active rights of representation were challenged and in part revoked.

Beyond the political effects of dismissals and closures, the state of emergency also allowed for other processes of political dispossession that affected all, not only the *KHKli*. For instance, KHK 678 made it possible to forbid any strike if it was considered bad for public health, national security, public transportation, services of the municipality, or economic and financial stability in the banking system.[16] Not coincidentally, workers protesting their work conditions during the construction of Istanbul's third airport were called traitors and terrorists. Critical journalism was undermined by legal changes that forbade reporting on terrorist acts in a way that would serve the interest of the terrorists (KHK 680)—a notoriously wide field of possible accusations. And looming above all of this was the longer-standing goal of the government to effect a change to a presidential system, which was now pushed through during the state of emergency, institutionalizing governance by decree. All of this contributed to a frequent experience of being dispossessed of one's country and one's future.

# The Longer Historical Trajectory

The politics of dispossession in contemporary Turkey is not unprecedented. Nonetheless, the question arises why we see such stark practices of dispossession at this point in time. To address this, we need to take a look at the frontlines of value shaping Turkish politics in the preceding decades.

The AKP, with Recep Tayyıp Erdoğan at its head,[17] came to power in 2002 on the back of a period of political and economic instability in the 1990s and the economic crisis of 2001. The Turkish population experienced insecurity and dispossession in this period, such as through inflation. This provides one explanation for why people in the subsequent decades have valued the promise of security and economic growth by a strong, one-party government (Kurt 2018). In this context, the AKP intensified—with the help of the IMF and the EU—a pre-existing neoliberalizing agenda that also appealed to the more established Kemalist capital, even though the AKP was primarily associated with a rising conservative Muslim bourgeoisie (Akcay 2018: 5; Akça 2014: 31; Balkan et al 2015; Bozkurt 2013).

This was also a period of public polarization between secularism and Islam. This divide—however much constructed (Arat-Koç 2018; Demiralp 2012; Navaro-Yashin 2002)—expressed grievances of conservative populations, who felt discriminated against by a Kemalist state[18] and in everyday interactions (Shively 2014); and self-identified seculars had fears of an Islamic takeover. The AKP here initially promised a politically liberalizing agenda. This appealed not only to conservative Muslim populations, but also to some on the liberal Left who had been critical of the Kemalist state; others continued to fear a hidden agenda of Islamization. The promise of liberalization was also key to entering the EU accession process. A central issue here was 'the Kurdish question' in the wake of the violence of the 1990s. The Kurdish population had historically been devalued in the Turkish state, and were subject to violence in an extended state of emergency before the AKP came to power. Even though the AKP initially accorded some cultural rights, the AKP continued to sideline the Kurdish political movement, and differentiated between the 'good Kurd' to be included in citizenship on the basis of Sunni-Islam, and the 'bad Kurd' to be targeted for repression (Akça 2014: 43–44).

Toward the end of the 2000s, the relation with the EU and the liberal Left cooled, and it became apparent that a longer-standing project of 'reversal' (for Turkey, see e.g., White 2002; Tuğal 2009) had been in full swing. This involved first and foremost the unmaking of

the Kemalist state (Esen and Gumuscu 2016; Jongerden 2018; Küçük and Özselçuk 2019), including an exchange of state elites and the further concentration of power in the executive. It also entailed a social project promoting conservative values (Bozkurt 2013; Yazıcı 2012) that undid some elements of Kemalist secularism, and transformed welfarism. Lastly, the neoliberal agenda was appropriated selectively, with considerable state power wielded through institutions such as the state housing agency TOKI, and the newly instituted and highly untransparent Sovereign Wealth Fund (Öniş and Kutlay 2020). This project of state remaking was framed as a reunion of the people and the state, in opposition to the previous government by elites, at the same time as it harked back to an imagery of Ottoman greatness.

The project of reversal was to entrench new elites and relations of power, and was carried by a shifting alliance underpinning the ongoing hegemonic project. The AKP, with charismatic leader Erdoğan as political head of the alliance, was very apt at making and breaking ties as the exigencies of the moment required, such as with parts of the liberal Left, the Gülen movement, some elements of Kurdish politics, and most recently far-right nationalists (Toktamis 2019). It was able to strengthen its ties both with sectors of capital and with parts of the working classes, in particular in the informal sector, through 'neoliberal populism' (Akcay 2018; Bozkurt 2013). This concept refers to a combination of 'neoliberal' elements such as tight monetary policy, fiscal austerity, the privatization of state enterprises, and the liberalization of labor markets with 'populist' improvements in access to health care, conditional cash transfers to poor households, and improved access to credit. The conservative middle classes in turn were brought into the alliance not least through measures such as the lifting of the headscarf ban in universities, and related promises of upward mobility. The close links between some sectors of capital and the government were no secret: companies with family links to government figures received valuable tenders and the like (Arat and Pamuk 2019: 157; Esen and Gumuscu 2016, Jongerden 2018:7; Öniş and Kutlay 2020).

The construction business was an 'engine' (Balaban 2016) of this process: it quite literally contributed to the construction of hegemony. First off, construction was central to the economic growth that had initially propelled Erdoğan's popularity. It increased within a few years from around 5 percent to nearly 9 percent of GDP in 2017 (Öniş and Kutlay 2020: 18); some argue that if directly related industries are also taken into account, it could be closer to 30 percent.[19] Moreover, market research emphasizes that the sector has been

growing continuously since 2009, after a brief slump during the 2008 global financial crisis.

Moreover, it is no secret that there are close relations between the construction and real estate sector and the AKP government. Öniş and Kutlay (2020: 18) note among others that "the construction sector has become a key area of rent extraction, which helped enormously to create a new economic elite loyal to the government." Çavuşoğlu and Strutz (2014: 151) similarly point out that major subcontracting construction firms, the "TOKI princes," have "close ideological and family relations to the AKP." State investment in the urban environment and rural infrastructure benefited them directly. Thus, the construction-urbanization-financialization complex was central to the economic 'nucleus' of hegemony, and underpinned the formation of alliances with dominant social forces.[20]

This complex, moreover, served to create links with subordinate populations, and exemplifies the workings of insidious capital. State investment in infrastructure and mega-projects such as Istanbul's third airport undergirded the—always contested and fragile—claims of Turkey to belonging to (a developed capitalist) modernity. Financial inclusion (Güngen 2018) and debt-financed construction (Balaban 2016) produced a general sense of economic development under the AKP government. More people were able to afford housing via mortgages, and the market share of the residential construction sector was above 50 percent.[21] The state institution TOKI was a major actor in this process, providing housing for low-income and mid-income families. Critical scholars have highlighted the debt traps that TOKI schemes involved for precarious populations, and the multiple ways in which their lives were curtailed by the TOKI 'coffins' (Eraydin and Taşan-Kok 2014; Karaman 2013). But this was not a universal rejection. Some residents were happy to buy into the TOKI schemes because it promised a 'modern' lifestyle beyond the rural stigma and inconveniences of squatter settlements (Civelek 2019: 8). Still others were able to profit from them financially (Eraydin and Taşan-Kok 2014: 121–22).

Nonetheless, the AKPs 'cement economy,' as critics called it, has been a major bone of contention in Turkish politics over the last years, as the Gezi protests (Kuymulu 2018) showed among others. The protests had erupted in opposition to urban renewal plans for a central park in Istanbul that would have involved cutting trees for an Ottoman-era-style building to house a shopping mall and luxury flats. The protests soon spread out across the country—in part because the government sanctioned a violent police response—as an

oppositional movement that denounced among others an increasingly authoritarian state and neoliberal urban politics. The government reaction to Gezi was one of the early cases that highlighted the process of alliance-formation via active polarization that the government would increasingly engage in (Bodirsky 2016), dividing the roughly 50 percent that supported the AKP in elections from the others that were soon defamed as terrorists and traitors. Even before the 2016 coup attempt, anti-terror discourse and related repression targeted not only socialists and Kurds but also Kemalist elites on the basis of a very broad legal definition of support for terror (Akça 2014: 38). This worked not only as a political strategy of repression, but also as a means of generating consent by activating complex histories of state devaluation and dispossession in political rhetoric and practice (Bodirsky 2021).

Election results were often taken as a proxy for consent to government politics. In fact, the constantly invoked 'fifty percent' of electoral support for the AKP was important not only for purposes of legitimacy, but especially also for the ongoing project of state remaking. It provided the parliamentary majority required to push through far-reaching constitutional changes. Elections—or majoritarianism—provide the means and a screen for hollowing out democratic institutions, as Öniş (2017: 12) notes for recent right-wing populisms more generally. Of course, one should not overstate this recent development, as the Turkish state has long had authoritarian dimensions (Bedirhanoğlu 2021; Yilmaz 2019), and the AKP's project of state remaking was a long-standing one (Hoşgör 2015). Nonetheless, recent years have seen a ratcheting up of authoritarian statism, in particular with the state of emergency and the transition to a presidential system. To be dismantled was the Kemalist state and its elites. Early on, and with the support of the EU, the AKP government succeeded in reducing the institutional power of the military, which had in the past acted as a safeguard of the Kemalist order. Power struggles with Kemalist elites in the state were expressed in conflicts such as the so-called 'postmodern coup' of 2007 and the Ergenekon trials, which also opened up space in the state bureaucracy that could be filled by Gülenists (Akcay 2018; Akça 2014). While the AKP presented its constitutional reform of 2010 as a break with the undemocratic order of post-1980-coup Turkey, it soon became clear that it presented a stepping stone in the push for a presidential system that would dominate the agenda in the 2010s.

These political developments took place within shifting international alliances. While the EU had initially provided support for

(neo)liberalizing policies, it was seemingly no longer needed by the late 2000s. In the wake of the financial and Eurozone crisis, it was far from inspiring economic or political aspirations. Moreover, the EU wanted Turkey to retain refugees from Syria and thus muted its response to repressive politics. Alliances between illiberal states were forming in this period (Kalb 2018; Öniş 2017)—a new frontline space in the making. As Öniş and Kutlay (2020: 6) point out, countries such as Russia and China not only provided inspiration for a "top-down state capitalism," but also held out the promise of alternative financing, reducing dependence on potential Western sources such as the IMF.

Thus, by the mid-2010s, a polarizing strategy of alliance-formation combined with a project of state remaking to complete the longer-standing process of 'reversal' had led to hardened fronts. At the same time, however, the alliance of the hegemonic project was fraying while the opposition was in a process of alliance-formation across former divisions. This was when dispossession came to the fore as a tool for shoring up the hegemonic project.

## Dangers to the Alliance and the Use of Dispossession

Let us first have a look at the danger posed to the hegemonic project by alliance-formation in the opposition. In 2015, the pro-Kurdish HDP won more than 10 percent of the votes in the national elections—and thus passed the threshold that is widely considered to be in place to prevent Kurdish parties from entering parliament. Non-Kurdish Leftist voters were also among the supporters of the HDP at the time. The election result was greeted with much hope among some oppositional circles, because it promised "the possibility of breaching the entrenched barriers between the Turkish Socialist Left and the Kurdish autonomy movement" (Küçük and Özselçuk 2019: 5). For the governing AKP, this success constituted a major problem, because it undercut its absolute majority in Parliament, which was needed to push through the change to a presidential system with Erdoğan at its head.

The 'solution' to the problem was violence and dispossession, which served the dual purpose of forming an alliance with the far-right nationalist MHP[22] and sharpening long-standing divisions among the opposition based on the 'Kurdish issue.' The government dragged out coalition negotiations during a flaring up of violent conflict in the Kurdish southeast. Many southeastern cities were under

curfew, and there were reports of tremendous violence against the civilian population. The nationalist politics of war mobilized histories of devaluation and dispossession of the Kurdish population and the long-standing discourse of anti-terror. In the new elections proclaimed when coalition formation failed (or, rather, was made to fail), the AKP indeed regained a parliamentary majority in its alliance with the MHP. With the suppression of *imzacı*, many of whom had lost their jobs and were subject to disciplinary proceedings and stigmatization (Baser, Akgönül, and Erdi Öztürk 2017; Tören and Kutun 2018), the politics of dispossession that was to be generalized during the state of emergency had one more precedent.

But the hegemonic project was not only under threat from the 'outside.' Already in the mid-2010s, the continuity of the economic performance on which ties with both capital and some subordinate populations had been built was in doubt. Economic growth slowed in the 2010s, current-account deficits widened, and there was a significant outflow of capital once the United States ended its policy of quantitative easing (Akcay 2018: 19; Akcay and Güngen 2019). The AKPs appeal had rested to a good extent on the sense of economic improvement that came with its rule. While in some of this, the government benefited from preceding factors such as macroeconomic reforms and increased foreign investment (Akcay and Güngen 2019; Arat and Pamuk 2019: 145), it largely rested on growth through debt-financed and state-managed construction (Balaban 2016; Çavuşoğlu and Strutz 2014), and on the wider availability of consumption credit as well as corporate loans in foreign currency (Akcay 2018; Akcay and Güngen 2019). This, however, contributed to increased indebtedness of companies and households alike. The Turkish lira had steadily lost value against the US dollar since 2013. Outflow of capital was a problem for an economy highly indebted in foreign currency, including the construction sector, thus placing a direct strain on the 'economic nucleus' of the regime.[23] Repeated terrorist attacks moreover injured the tourist sector and supporting industries. A deepening economic crisis was likely to strain ties in the alliance both in the form of popular support and in view of key factions of capital.

Last but not least, by the mid-2010s the AKP had lost a strategic ally in the state apparatus. By 2013, the alliance with the Gülen movement had already ruptured (Akcay 2018). Corruption accusations of key AKP figures—Erdoğan and his family included—were leaked to the public, presumably from 'inner circles.' The AKP reacted with a first round of purges in the police and military. The coup attempt,

which Erdoğan reportedly called a 'gift from God,' opened the path for more of this to come.

## Dispossession as a Political Tool

Dispossession during the state of emergency served multiple purposes within the overall goal of shoring up the hegemonic project as one of enrichment. Most obviously, dispossession was a means of controlling the opposition, including former allies, through repression and intimidation. Dispossession by KHK during the state of emergency was both targeted and partly arbitrary, and both aspects are important to understand how it could serve political control. It was targeted, because it affected particular kinds of people disproportionately—those who were considered oppositional; and it was partly arbitrary, because it was unpredictable who among the potential targets would actually be dispossessed. Moreover, some of the dispossessed were not particularly active politically, and some even seemed allied with the government.

In this way, dispossession served as a strategy of control and intimidation not only vis-à-vis those who were political activists, but also to a lesser extent toward everyone else who opposed the politics of the AKP—roughly 50 percent of the population, if election results were an indicator. Initially not everyone was equally apprehensive when the state of emergency was declared. Some felt that it would be just 'the Gülenists'[24] or the 'terrorists' who would be affected. But soon the glaring arbitrariness of dispossession contributed to a widespread mood of apprehension and waiting for the next turn. KHKs were published successively, without announcement; combined with the continuous renewal of the state of emergency, this produced a general sense of vulnerability. Many lived with the constant fear of being dispossessed, and prepared accordingly: some lived with cash in a suitcase under their bed in case their bank account was frozen, others sold their companies, or took precautions so that their family would not be dispossessed too. Many tried to develop a 'plan B' for leaving the country, while others knew that they had no legal way of going abroad, because they lacked the skills needed for a work permit.

Weighing heavily on people was not only the fear of being dispossessed of their livelihoods and social environments, but also the sense of political dispossession. For a while, there was a noticeable quieting of public protest. In NGO activism, fears of reprisal could lead to self-

censorship. As one advocate for human rights put it, the result was a "more silent society"—even though some still showed tremendous courage in speaking out and staying politically active. While the politics of dispossession sometimes served to reinforce divisions among the opposition, it also contributed to the forging of new solidarities. Thus, it is unclear whether a politics of dispossession can actually succeed as a means of control in the mid-to-long run.

Beyond targeting the opposition, dispossession likely strengthened the ties with both dominant and subordinate social forces in the alliance. First off, it engendered resources for the state that could be used to buffer the 'economic nucleus' of the regime. The value that passed hands here as a consequence of the closure of institutions and confiscation of private companies is likely tremendous, even though we cannot be fully sure about its extent. This is a political case of "accumulation by dispossession," where funds first flow to the state, and only second, and obscurely, to the private economy.[25] While dispossession in this case clearly led to the appropriation of capital, it generated resources for the state that could then be redistributed strategically and thus, at most, only indirectly served accumulation. Appropriated funds likely served distribution along established lines within the alliance, as there are strong reports of close links between the government and *yandaş sermaye* (partisan capital), which is being "consistently favored in public-sector projects" (Arat and Pamuk 2019: 148), as well as of the importance of public services and handouts for maintaining the support of poorer sections of the population.

However, the generation of funds for distribution and, possibly, accumulation was likely not the primary rationale but rather a welcome side effect of the politics of dispossession within a larger project of enrichment. Possibly more important for the shoring up of the alliance and further recalibrating the scales of social worth was the resonance of a polarizing and nationalist discourse of anti-terror that was promoted through the politics of dispossession, in the context of a long history of devaluation, dispossession, and violence in Turkey. People could be mobilized around the protection of the nation, and long-standing injuries and resentments were played upon for that. The coercive means of dispossession thus became a means to generate consent.

Dispossession also furthered the hegemonic project's long-standing attempt at remaking the state in both its narrow and its general sense. Dismissal by KHK allowed for the exchange of state personnel, likely putting in place people who were supporting the regime. Moreover, the state of emergency enabled changes in the legal

framework of the state, as many KHKs were rendered permanent by later parliamentary approval. According to Akça et al. (2018: 7), more than a thousand amendments were made to national legislation in this way, most of which were "in no way related to the reasons prompting the declaration of the State of Emergency [and] introduced changes in order to restructure state–society relations in such diverse areas as national defense, internal security, state personnel regime, economy and social security, administrative structure, education and health." The pinnacle of this process of state remaking was the introduction of a presidential system, which was voted on during the state of emergency in a referendum overshadowed by accusations of fraud and the repression of the opposition. The new system allows for governance by presidential decree, and is widely criticized for ending separation of powers (Jongerden 2018: 6–7; Küçük and Özselçuk 2019: 14–15).

These are all far-reaching changes of the state in the narrow sense. But the state in the general sense was also targeted concretely through dispossession. The closure of media, universities, and other institutions dispossessed parts of the population from established means of social and cultural support and expression. It was clearly meant to streamline civil society, to control the kinds of information and knowledge produced and disseminated (Abbas and Zalta 2017; Kandiyoti and Emanet 2017), and to deepen the project of 'reversal' in the nooks and crannies of society.

The remaking of the state was to institutionally entrench the authoritarian populist hegemonic project that enriched new elites. This was not without contradictions. Reports suggested that the state bureaucracy was stretched dangerously thin as a consequence of the dismissals. Also, not all AKP supporters were comfortable with the far-reaching changes of the presidential system—for example, because they did not want any successor of Erdoğan to have so much power. Nonetheless, the referendum was narrowly successful, and it created a state that later hegemonic projects will be at pains to transform.

## Contradictory Effects

Dispossession ended up constituting not only a means of shoring up the hegemonic alliance but a potential threat to it as well. For one, the experience of dispossession was in fact not limited to the opposition: political and economic instability, depreciation of the

lira, and tremendously increased inflation de facto dispossessed much of the population. The politics of dispossession during the state of emergency likely contributed to this development, even if it was not its main cause. The economic situation deteriorated rapidly in the period after the coup attempt. Economic growth slowed further. Capital outflow reached tremendous proportions (Akcay and Güngen 2019: 15; Arat and Pamuk 2019: 149). And while the lira had steadily depreciated against the dollar and euro in preceding years, it went into free fall repeatedly during and after the state of emergency. In particular since 2018, increased inflation has put a considerable strain on household consumption. Issues such as the rising price of onions, a staple food necessary for nearly all Turkish dishes, scandalized the public.

The importance of this is not to be underestimated, as is shown by the political responses to this crisis. Already in the fall and winter of 2016, the government mobilized a national response to currency depreciation: the people were called upon to exchange foreign currency savings into Turkish lira. Holding back on foreign currency reserves was in turn framed as an act of treason. Government-affine media followed suit. Somewhat amusingly, such media kept entirely silent on the free fall of the Turkish lira against the US dollar in summer of 2018 (even though it reported on what President Erdoğan called the "economic war" with the United States), only to eventually run the headline that the "US dollar tumbles more than 5 percent against the Turkish lira."[26]

The stylized fight against inflation involved similar tropes of national struggle. Supermarkets put up signs next to price tags that read *Enflasyonla topyekün mücadele, #Türkiye kazanacak* (All-out struggle against inflation, #Turkey will win). The government blamed dispossession on outside forces, and presented itself as taking care of the nation. Leading up to the municipal elections of spring 2019, the local AKP government distributed vegetables at low prices in tents set up for this purpose in central places, called *halk sebze* (vegetables for the people).[27] Shortly after the elections, the tent in one central square that I had often passed was gone (though inflation was not). Asking a friend about it, she told me that the tent had vanished the day after elections.

The frantic attempts of the government to mobilize national sentiment against currency depreciation and inflation, and to blame the dispossession of households on foreign forces, clearly showed how important this was for maintaining ties with subordinate populations. At the same time, the ongoing economic crisis placed strains

on the 'economic nucleus' of the hegemonic project: companies were struggling with a debt burden tremendously increased through the appreciation of the dollar. The government sought to buffer this effect through a two-pronged strategy. First, measures such as debt restructuring or state credits were to redress the problem of increased corporate debt (Akcay 2018; Akçay and Güngen 2019: 13, 17; Öniş and Kutlay 2020: 23). Second, President Erdoğan insisted on keeping interest rates low, with the heterodox argument that this would reduce inflation, putting pressure on the Central Bank—against the demands of international capital (Demiralp and Demiralp 2019; Öniş and Kutlay 2020: 17). This was in fact an attempt to maintain economic growth and demand for the key allied sector of construction and real estate, but it led to further depreciation of the lira and capital outflow (Akcay 2018: 24; Öniş 2019: 9; Öniş and Kutlay 2020).

For international investors, the sense of economic and political instability was compounded by actions of Erdoğan such as making his son-in-law the minister of treasury and finance, appointing himself as head of the new Sovereign Wealth Fund, repeatedly replacing the head of the Central Bank by presidential decree, and fueling political conflict with the United States. Here, the politics of dispossession in Turkey likely added to a suspicion of the state, straining ties with international finance.

The politics of dispossession also may have contributed to an internal split of the political forces in the hegemonic alliance. The former key AKP figures Ali Babacan and Ahmet Davutoğlu founded their own political parties, and mounted criticism of the centralization of power. Whether their split was due to a real discomfort with an increased authoritarianism or to other power games, the choice to play publicly along those lines suggests that a perceived growing discomfort in Turkish society with the politics of dispossession could be politically mobilized.

Lastly, while the government has succeeded in narrowing the political space, it has not immobilized oppositional social forces. The politics of dispossession, even as it divides, also opens up new relations of solidarity (Carbonella and Kasmir 2015) and concerted efforts at 'repossession' (Salemink and Rasmussen 2016). This is also the case for Turkey, where oppositional parties as well as wider social movements developed new alliances. The municipal election success in 2019 of the oppositional CHP in urban centers such as Istanbul and Ankara was a beacon of hope for many. In recent months, students have protested against the government imposition of an AKP-affine rector at Bosphorus University, despite repressions. Those outside

the alliance have not ceded hopes of repossessing their futures, and they may in fact be increasing in number.

## Residues of the Past, Perspectives on the Future

The politics of dispossession plays a prominent role in authoritarian populist hegemonic projects: activating past injuries for a strategic measure of consent to a project of 'reversal,' making and breaking alliances, pushing along a project of state remaking. The particular social values promoted by a hegemonic project are important for constituting alliances, and in terms of their political effects. However, the key issue driving authoritarian populism seems to be the securing of control of particular politico-economic elites over the accumulation and distribution of value(s). The project of reversal here entails changes in relations of power and domination between different social forces.

To emphasize the role that dispossession plays in frontline spaces of authoritarian populism is not to say that liberal hegemonic projects do not work through dispossession. Plenty of studies on the exclusions of liberalism and on the repressive side of neoliberalism have shown otherwise. While dispossession here is often less starkly visible, frequently taking place through market mechanisms and being flanked by formal rights and liberties, its effects have played an important role in the success of the illiberal Right today and their authoritarian populist hegemonic projects. In turn, the latter's intensified state-led politics of dispossession leaves its own marks and injuries, as well as new enrichments that are likely to shape politics for years to come. While it entails contradictions and therefore does not work unequivocally for the continuity of a hegemonic project, the latter is far from approaching an automatic end. The unraveling of existing hegemonic projects requires both the fracturing of the existing alliances underpinning them, as well as effective counter projects.

As Gavin Smith (2004: 100) has remarked, "hegemonic formations need to be secured for the future and yet carry with them residues of past hegemonic work." In this light, in Turkey and elsewhere, the securing of authoritarian populist hegemonic projects through dispossession creates residues in the present that opposed hegemonic projects will have to contend with in the future. Those residues concern, of course, the state structures that the project of state remaking has put in place; but it also concerns landscapes of differential and unequal distribution of value and values, and the frontlines these

help to shape. If the processes of active polarization that authoritarian populisms promote in their strategies of alliance-formation are to be transformed by a new hegemonic project, the latter will have to actively intervene in the past and ongoing politics of (de)valuation and dispossession, enrichment, and accumulation.

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## Notes

1. FETÖ is short for *Fethullahçı Terör Örgütü*, a term that became popularized only after the coup attempt, and it refers to the Islamic movement led by the imam Fethullah Gülen.
2. The term Kemalism refers to the political vision that is attributed to the founder of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, which involved among others the principle of secularism. The term Kemalist is used for those who identify with this legacy, currently often in explicit opposition to a more religious-conservative vision of the state and society.
3. There is an important experiential dimension to dispossession: if I individually do not value something that however is of value to others, I cannot be dispossessed of it, even if I end up not having it. This experiential dimension of dispossession—the

experience of being deprived of something that one values—is, for example, important for understanding the "politics of affect" (Bangstad, Enge Bertelsen, and Henkel 2019) of contemporary populisms.

4. I use the term 'dispossession' for these manifold experiences of oppression because they come together for many in this historical moment as one unitary (even though multistranded) experience of being deprived of the kinds of value(s) that make life worth living.

5. Wolf began *Europe and the People Without History* with the following statement: "The central assertion of this book is that the world of humankind constitutes a manifold, a totality of interconnected processes, and inquiries that disassemble this totality into bits and then fail to reassemble it falsify reality. Concepts like 'nation,' 'society,' and 'culture' name bits and threaten to turn names into things. Only by understanding these names as bundles of relationships, and by placing them back into the field from which they were abstracted, can we hope to avoid misleading inferences and increase our share of understanding" (Wolf 1982: 1). My thanks to Don Kalb for reminding me of this connection.

6. This binary is of course somewhat overdrawn, as market dispossession is generally also state-enabled.

7. KHK is short for *Kanun Hükmünde Kararname*, a "decree having the force of law" or an executive order.

8. Numbers are taken from the IHOP report (2018) and updated with the numbers from the remaining KHKs during the state of emergency.

9. These were, among others, human, women's, or children's rights organizations or associations working towards poverty alleviation or the protection of cultural heritage.

10. Many of the foundations were active in the areas of culture and education.

11. Numbers taken from the IHOP report, and updated with the numbers from the remaining KHKs during the state of emergency. Dismissals were not the only form of dispossession. The work permits of over twenty-two thousand teachers were cancelled. About three hundred graduate students studying abroad on state scholarships lost their scholarships as well as the right to accreditation of academic titles in Turkey. Workers who lost their employment in the private sector because of being accused of having links to terror organizations were barred from employment by companies where the state had any shares, and from jobs in the public sector (KHK 673).

12. As lawyer Kerem Altıparmak (2017: 13) points out—among other concerns about the legal setup, independence, and workings of the commission—if the commission was to review the expected one hundred thousand applications within a period of two years, each member of the commission would be "required to be a rapporteur for 35 files per day as well as to debate and sign at least 100 decisions."

13. The most expensive sales at the time of writing (October 2020) are the sale of a factory areal (*Ufuk Boru Osmaniye Tesisi*) at 89 million lira, and of another (*Naksan Plastik Ticari ve İktisadi Bütünlüğü*) at 1 billion 126 million lira.

14. The TMSF website lists companies under trusteeship as well as ongoing sales; it also publishes regular reports, but these are very brief and lack transparency. There is no record of conducted sales or obtained revenues in areas other than the media. As regards the latter, a total value of 44 million lira seems to have been obtained through sales so far.

15. This had a precedent in the public branding of the *imzacı* before the coup attempt, when nationalist newspapers published names and often even photographs of academics who had signed the petition, the latter often finding red crosses on their office doors, and being subjected to other forms of harassment.

16. To be exact, lawful strike could be suspended for sixty days by council of ministers.

17. The AKP first won the national elections shortly after its foundation within a legacy

of Islamist and conservative political parties. Recep Tayyıp Erdoğan, who had been mayor of Istanbul since 1994, was its key political figure from its inception. Describing itself as conservative-democrat, its initial support included liberal sections of the population who hoped, among other things, for a liberalization of a repressive secularism. Erdoğan served as prime minister in the years 2002–14. While he had already been president since 2014, his official powers were significantly increased with the 2019 adoption of a presidential system that was pushed through in the wake of the coup attempt.

18.  Kemalism (see Note 2) can be understood as the ideology of a previous hegemonic project remaking the state that was central to the Turkish republic. The Kemalist state thus refers to both key principles of statehood, such as secularism, and to the ideological outlook and political alliances of many state personnel.

19.  See, e.g., Oxford Business Group, https://oxfordbusinessgroup.com/overview/turkeys-construction-sector-maintain-its-significant-role-economy-several-large-projects-under-way, last accessed 30 June 2021.

20.  It also supported the "construction of consent" by ideological means: as the Media Ownership Monitor Turkey (MOM) shows, the construction and media sectors are fundamentally intertwined and tied to state elites: http://turkey.mom-rsf.org/en/findings/business-interests/, last accessed 30 April 2021.

21.  Figures by market research organization Mordor Intelligence: https://www.mordorintelligence.com/industry-reports/turkey-construction-market, last accessed 29 June 2021.

22.  The MHP is a political party that takes a hard-line stance against the Kurdish political movement.

23.  Various market research agencies see a contraction in the construction sector during the time of currency volatility because of the increase in construction and borrowing costs. See, e.g., Mordor Intelligence: https://www.mordorintelligence.com/industry-reports/turkey-construction-market, last accessed 29 June 2021.

24.  Many in the opposition had been highly critical of the Gülen movement, its alliance with the government, and the takeover of state positions in previous years. From this vantage point, the dispossession of Gülenists was often not considered problematic.

25.  While David Harvey (2003) has pointed to the role that "accumulation by dispossession" has always played in capitalism, and more so in neoliberal capitalism, the term "political accumulation" used by Gledhill might be more akin to what is going in authoritarian populism. Gledhill (1999: 212) refers with this notion to a "political class's ability to exploit the tributary mechanisms of the state apparatus for private purposes." If we include the maintaining of political power into the definition of a private purpose—enrichment through political control—we are close to what one could recently observe in countries like Turkey.

26.  Article in the English language *Daily Sabah* from 14 August 2018: https://www.dailysabah.com/finance/2018/08/14/us-dollar-tumbles-more-than-5-percent-against-the-turkish-lira, last accessed on 14 August, 2018.

27.  The term *halk sebze* references the established institution of *halk ekmek* (bread for the people): bread sold at low prices by municipalities.

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