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Double Sided Analysis in The Knowledge Society: Class and Elite Theories*

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Abstract

For the last two and a half decades, not only Turkey but also all developing countries have faced very important structural reforms, which include: Legal and institutional changes, internationalization of internal capital accumulation. Our main task is to figure out all these changes, which expose the reconfiguration of power relations with the emphasis on “power to” and “power over” (Thernborn, 1977).

We strongly argue that historically accumulated and structured overcome of capitalism and its reproduction mechanism are both one of the most threshold of understanding necessary relation between class and elite analysis. In our view, on the one hand the concept of class is related to historically accumulated and structured overcome of capitalism, on the other the concept of elite is connected with its reproduction mechanism.

In spite of their very distinct historical and theoretical legacies, both elite and alternative types of analyses have shared same epistemological premises: Overgeneralization, outside-in models, empirisist and positivist or neo-positivist or critical empirisist approaches, economic policy oriented analysis¹.

* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, June 1-3, 2006, York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Please do not cite or quote without author’s permission.

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¹ Reading list for elite and alternative analyses: Pareto, V. (1968), “The Rise and Fall of the Elites”, An Application of Theoretical Sociology Introduction by Hans L. Zetterberg, The Bedminister Press; Mosca, G., (1939), “The Ruling Class”, McGraw-Hill Book Company Inc.; Bottomore, T.B., (1964), “Elites and Society”, A Pelican Book; Parry, G., (1977), “Political Elites”, Studies in Political Science, London/George Allen&Unwin; Mills, W., (1974), “The Power Elites”, Bilgi Press; Bob, S., (2001), “Managing Mexico: Economists From Nationalism to Liberalism”, Princeton University

On the other hand, *“it (elite theory) has also included important contributions from Marxist authors, who have basically confined themselves within this framework, accepting battle on the terrain chosen by the enemy.”* (Therborn, 1977) Therefore, we attempt to bring elite analysis into the Marxist terrain. Because Marxist legacy provides us with valuable epistemological and conceptual tools.

In their discussion, Miliband and Poulantzas argue about the state issue in capitalist societies. Although their approaches contribute to each other as two distinct parts of a totalizing epistemological analysis, Poulantzas and Miliband insist of advocating historically accumulated and structural dynamics of capitalism and reproduction mechanism respectively².

Later, Laclau contributed to the argument, which had risen between Poulantzas and Miliband: Laclau argues that Miliband’s whole analysis remains on an empirical plane: *“it starts with assertions referring to reality and it proves that reality is in contradiction with those assertions.”* Laclau also criticizes Poulantzas’s theoretical approach: *“Without abstraction scientific knowledge is not possible, but my argument is that abstraction, such as practiced by Poulantzas, has gone in the direction of formalism.”*³

Above all, unfortunately Marxist analyses, which focus on the connection between class and elite, could not be actualized at all. At this point, Our main aim is to provide connection between current structural dynamics and Marxist theoretical framework. Thus, we can observe class and elite analyses within a broad picture.

Our approach has also some similarities with the “structural-processual or dialectical-materialist approach”, which is mentioned by Göran Therborn⁴. Here the primary focus is on the historical social context and modalities of power, and the first question is: What kind of society is it? Then: What are the effects of the state upon this society, upon its reproduction and change?

Press/Princeton and Oxford; Camp, R.A., (2002), “Mexico’s Mandarins : Crafting A Power Elite For the Twenty First Century”, University of California Press; Camp, R.,A., (2003), “Informal and Formal Networking Among Elite Mexican Capitalists and Politicians”, Comparative Sociology, Volume 2, Issue 1; Case, W., (2003), “Interlocking Elites in Southeast Asia”, Comparative Sociology, Volume 2, Issue 1; Chibber, V., (2002), “Bureaucratic Rationality and the Developmental State”, AJS, Volume 107, number 4, p.951-89; Dogan, M., (2003) “Introduction: Diversity of Elite Configurations and Clusters of Power”, Comparative Sociology, Volume 2, Issue 1; Graz, J., C., (2003), “How Powerful are Transnational Elite Clubs? The Social Myth of the World Economic Forum”, New Political Economy, Vol.8, No: 3; Harris, J., (2003) “Communications: The Conflict For Power in Transnational Class Theory” , Science and Society – Vol.67, No:3, s. 329-339; Robinson, W.I., (2005) “A Global Perspective on Social Activism and Democracy in South Africa”, in Richard Callard and Paul Graham (eds.), IDASA Democracy Index, Cape Town: IDASA; Scott, R., (2003), “Transformations in the British Economic Elite”, Comparative Sociology, Volume 2, issue 1.

² For the discussion between Miliband and Poulantzas: Miliband, R., (1983), “State Power and Class Interests”, New Left Review, 138: 57-68; Miliband, R., (1973), “Poulantzas and the Capitalist State”, New Left Review, 82: 83-92; Miliband, R., (1970), “ The Capitalist State: Reply to Poulantzas”, New Left Review, 59: 53-60; Poulantzas, N, (1969), “The Problem of the Capitalist State”, New Left Review, 58: 67-78.

³ Laclau, E. (1977), “Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism, Fascism, Populism”, Verso, p.51-71.

⁴ Therborn, G., (1976), “Who Does The Ruling Class Do When It Rules? Some Reflections on Different Approaches to The Study of Power In Society”, Critical Sociology, 25, 2/3.

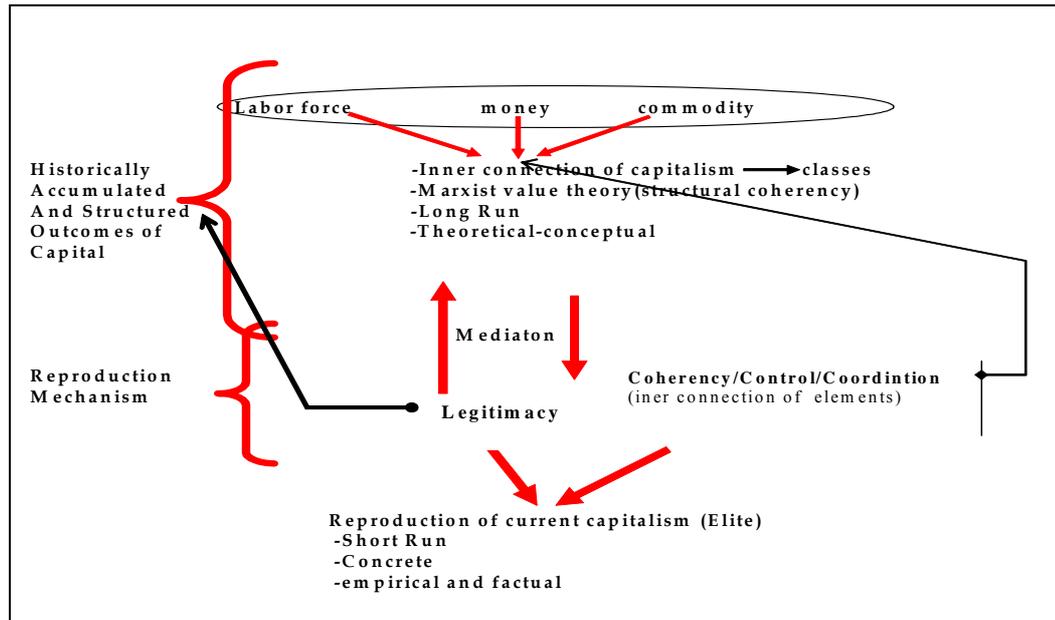
The central task of Capital was not to identify those who have the wealth and those who are poor, nor those who rule and those who are ruled, but to lay bare the economic law of motion of modern society. The basic focus of the approach is on neither property nor the property owners but on capital, that is, on (particular historical) relations of production and their relationship to the productive forces and to the state and the system of ideas.

In order to illuminate our approach, we occupy four concepts, which are described below⁵:

- (i). **Elite**: This concept is related to the structure and therefore indicates long run, theoretical and not homogeneous abstractions.
- (ii). **Class**: This concept is related to the reproduction and therefore points out short run, empirical, concrete, not structural and not homogeneous abstractions.
- (iii). **Historically Accumulated and Structural Outcomes of Capital**: This concept of a given society first of all focuses on its mode(s) of production, its system(s) of relations and forces of production. By determining the relations of production this concept also determines if there are classes in a given society, which classes there are. This connection between relations of production and classes can be founded in the description of classes. Classes in the Marxist sense are people who occupy certain positions in society as basically defined by the relations of production.
- (iv). **Reproduction Mechanism**: Capitalist production, under its aspect of a continuous connected process, of a process of reproduction, produces not only commodities, not only surplus- value, but it also produces and reproduces the capital relation; on the one side the capitalist, on the other the wage-laborer. This reproduction mechanism provides coherence, control, and coordination for classes and legitimacy for the structural accumulation process. The mechanism also aims to decrease risk and uncertainty, which are created by the structural dynamics of accumulation process.

For the study of power in society the perspective of reproduction, these questions should be asked: What kind of society, what fundamental relations of production, are being reproduced? By what mechanisms? What role do the structure and actions and non-actions of the state (or of local government) play in this process of reproduction, furthering it, merely allowing it, or opposing it?

⁵ This approach and its application to Turkey are based on the theoretical arguments, which are discussed by the following articles: Ercan, F. (2003), "Neoliberal Orman Yasalarından Kapitalizmin Küresel Kurumsallaşma Sürecine Geçiş-1", İ.U. İktisat Dergisi, sayı: 435, (in Turkish); Ercan, F., (2003), "Neoliberal Orman Yasalarından Kapitalizmin Küresel Kurumsallaşma Sürecine Geçiş: Hukuk-Toplum İlişkileri Çerçevesinde Türkiye'de Yapısal Reformlar -2, İ.U. İktisat Dergisi, sayı: 437, (in Turkish); Ercan, F., & Tuna, G., (2006), "İç Burjuvazinin Gelişimi: 1960'lardan Günümüze Bakış", "İktisat, Siyaset, Devlet Üzerine Yazılar: Prof. Dr. Kemali Saybaşı'ya Armağan" içinde der. Burak Ülman, İsmet Akça, Bağlam Yayınları, (in Turkish); Ercan, F., & Oğuz, Ş., (forthcoming), (2005), "Rethinking Scale As A Class Relationship and Process: The Case of The Public Procurement Law in Turkey", Political Geography.



In our model, knowledge elite has occurred as a mediator between structural and concrete levels of accumulation process for the last two and a half decades in late developed countries. The knowledge elite owes its existence to the following circumstances: At the beginning of this period, the interior bourgeoisie, who is neither comprador nor national bourgeoisie, has become dominant significantly. Distinct fractions of capital have also matured considerably. Change in scale and rhyme of the accumulation process has also resulted in the expansion of risk and uncertainty.

In these circumstances, in contrast to previous period, distinct fractions of capital have demanded projects, which provide them with the ease of risk and uncertainty and therefore unable them to reach their final goals hastily. In the marketplace, different projects have been supplied by the knowledge elites, who are forced to compete each other due to aim of employing best project by the fractions of capital. Preparing these projects, the knowledge elite has also reproduced the structural dynamics of capital accumulation in the long run.

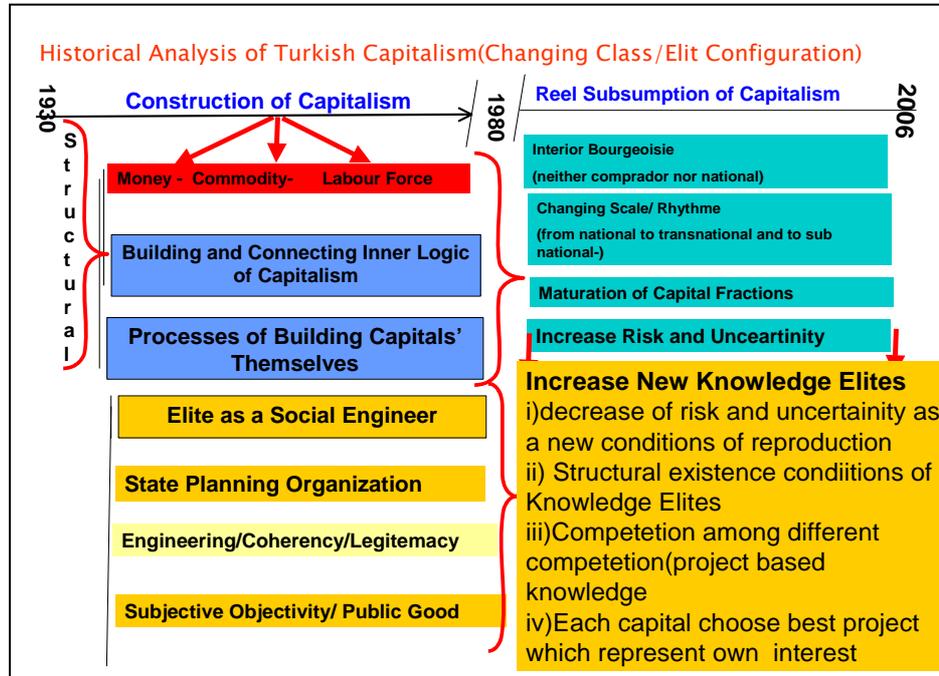
After these explanations, we would like to examine Turkey's accumulation processes in two consecutive periods:

1) Construction Period (1923-1979)

As considered the historical conditions of Turkey, the structural level of capitalist accumulation process was established and organized by the state, which had been acted on behalf of classes due to incapacities of newborn internal bourgeoisie.

In concrete level, reproduction mechanism of capitalist accumulation process was operationalized by elites, who were employed largely by the state institutions. Therefore, the long run structural accumulation projects of classes were drawn by the elites, who were the architects of short run, concrete outcomes of state centered development strategies.

For instance, during the 1960s and 1970s Turkey adopted import-substitutions policies, which aimed at improving domestic accumulation process efficiently. One of the key actors of this process was an industrial capitalist, who were supported by the legal efforts of the DPT (state planning agency) planners.



2) Reel Subsumption Period (1980- ...)

This period has marked by relatively high-speed pace of accumulation process. The scale of capital has been enhanced by the shift from local to transnational level of certain capitals. The conflicts between different fractions of capitals have increased in accordance with the international pressures, which have brought risk and uncertainty. With the increasing level of risk and uncertainty, the state has become much more significant area of conflicts and compromises, which have occurred among different fractions of capitals.

Under these circumstances, elites have attained crucial importance and developed certain characteristics, which enable them to survive in this extremely competitive environment. With their specified educational background such as in the field of engineering and economics, they have become the central point of producing and marketing knowledge, which has turned into a highly commercialized commodity.

Conclusions

In the light of the Marxist legacy, we have placed the knowledge elites as mediators of strong connection between historically structured and accumulated overcome of capitalism and its reproduction mechanism. Their existence are legitimized by requirements of different fractions of capital such as domination of internal

bourgeoisie, fierce competition among distinct fractions in order to reach their certain goals in the long run, increasing level of risk and uncertainty, which is created by the structural dynamics of accumulation process and so on.

A new knowledge market has been constructed by the very efforts of knowledge elites. This market is based on competing projects, which aim to provide secure conditions for capitals in the long term. Consequently, having become more commercialized commodity, knowledge will be bought and sold by capitals and knowledge elites largely. Therefore, in accordance with their enhancing skills of/on competing and marketing, knowledge elites will be likely the new entrepreneurs of the knowledge market.

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