



How 'social' is Turkey?

blickwechsel
Contemporary Turkey Studies **Türkei**
A Programme by Stiftung Mercator



Universität Bielefeld

Working Paper No. 3

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Explaining the Belated Introduction of Unemployment Insurance in Turkey: A Political History

2020

This paper is the third working paper of the research project 'How "social" is Turkey? Turkey's social security system in a European context'. The project is part of the programme 'Blickwechsel. Contemporary Turkey Studies', funded by Stiftung Mercator.

The author would like to thank Tolga Bölükbaşı for conducting interviews with policymakers (which informed this study); Cansu Erdoğan for helping to compile data; and Lutz Leisering, Tobias Böger and Emine Bademci for in-depth feedback on earlier versions of the paper.

Abstract

Unemployment insurance was introduced in Turkey in 1999, more than six decades after the idea of creating such a programme was first put on the table by policymakers. In these six decades, a dozen or so governments had promised to enact the policy and more than two dozen bills had been prepared. So, why did it take so long for Turkey to create an unemployment insurance programme?

This puzzle is explored in this paper. We trace debates on and attempts to introduce the policy from the 1930s until the end of the century. We do so through a qualitative analysis of newspaper reports, parliamentary debates and official reports. We identify four separate windows of opportunities during which governments (both centre-right and centre-left) appeared seriously committed to enacting the policy. Two of these windows passed due to political instability, as the respective governments were prematurely pushed out of power. In the other two cases, governments decided to postpone the introduction because they were unwilling to adjudicate between the diverging interests of labour unions and business groups. Labour unions consistently demanded unemployment insurance but only on the condition that severance pay provisions would not be retrenched. Severance payments are benefits paid by employers when workers are laid off, serving as a functional equivalent of unemployment protection. By contrast, business opposed unemployment insurance unless severance pay was simultaneously retrenched. In the face of these diametrically opposed interests, successive governments refrained from taking the initiative. This deadlock between labour and business was only overcome when a centrist coalition government – with the aim of appeasing labour – introduced an unemployment insurance scheme as part of a major cost-cutting social security reform.

Situating the Turkish case within the larger comparative literature on the introduction of unemployment insurance programmes, we find that the case partly confirms expectations from the literature. First, arguments about partisan politics are relevant: Centre-left parties, which have rarely been in power in Turkey, more consistently supported the enactment of the policy. Second, processes of diffusion played an important role: Western technocrats were involved in drafting legislation, and the well-institutionalized unemployment protection policies in neighbouring Europe served as a model. Yet, the most important factor in the Turkish case was the institutional context in which the introduction of the policy took place. The prior institutionalization of an alternative instrument – severance pay – had a huge impact on how business and labour positioned themselves towards the creation of unemployment insurance. This shaped the approach of governments towards the policy, and led to a particularly late introduction.

Table of contents

1. Introduction	5
2. Unemployment Insurance Introduction Around the World	7
3. Planning the Introduction of Unemployment Insurance in Turkey (1935-1999).....	9
3.1. The One-Party Era (1924-1946).....	9
3.2. The Early Multi-Party Era (1946-1960)	10
3.3. The Planning Era (1960-1980)	12
3.4. The Neoliberal Era (1980-1991)	17
3.5. The Populist Era (1991-2002)	18
4. The 1999 Law on Unemployment Insurance	22
5. The Role of Social Partners, Political Parties and Governments	25
5.1. Social Partners	25
5.2. Political Parties	26
5.3. Governments.....	27
6. Implications for Comparative Research	31
7. References	34

List of Tables

Table 1. Milestones in the Development of Unemployment Insurance in Turkey.....	13
Table 2. Characteristics of some Unemployment Insurance Policy Drafts	23
Table 3. Position of Leading Political Parties on Unemployment Insurance.....	26
Table 4. Government Declarations on Unemployment Insurance	28

1. Introduction

Unemployment insurance was introduced in Turkey in 1999, with the first benefits paid out in 2002. This is puzzlingly late for three reasons. First, Turkey's Southern European neighbours and even some of its Middle Eastern neighbours introduced the program far earlier. In this sense, the country is clearly a latecomer in international comparison. Second, Turkey had enacted nearly all standard social security policies soon after the Second World War. Thus, unemployment insurance was introduced very late in comparison to other social security programs. Third, insuring employees against job loss was first debated in Turkey in the first half of the twentieth century. At least 11 governments promised to introduce the policy in their government programmes (Neziroğlu and Yılmaz 2013) and more than two dozen separate draft laws were prepared (Toruner 1991: 39). Clearly, the policy could have been implemented far earlier. Yet, it was not.

So, why did it take Turkey around half a century to introduce unemployment insurance? This is the puzzle that this paper is going to explore. We trace debates on and attempts to introduce the programme from the 1930s until the end of the century. Moreover, we try to understand how political parties and the social partners positioned themselves with regards to this issue. For this purpose, we systematically analysed news reports from two leading Turkish newspapers¹, parliamentary debates², development plans, government programmes as well as secondary sources. Through this analysis we aim to provide a comprehensive description of how policymakers tried to introduce the policy. Based on this description, we then discuss what factors led governments to postpone and what factors eventually drove the introduction of the programme.

We divide the roughly six decades during which the introduction of unemployment insurance was discussed into five periods that represent distinct eras in terms of politics and political economy. In the one-party era (1924-1946), the policy was first mentioned by policymakers, but there were no serious plans to introduce it. In the early multi-party era (1946-1960), labour unions put the issue on the agenda and the first draft legislation was prepared. In the planning era (1960-1980), unemployment insurance became a bipartisan policy goal promised by successive governments and mentioned in all development plans. Yet, the policy was not implemented due to a deadlock between labour unions and business groups. Business groups accepted the creation of an insurance programme only if an alternative instrument of protection against job loss – severance pay – was shelved. Labour unions, on the other

¹ We used the archives from *Cumhuriyet* and *Milliyet* newspapers, which go back until 1930 and 1950, respectively. The archive from *Milliyet* has been accessed through: <http://gazetearsivi.milliyet.com.tr/> The archive from *Cumhuriyet* has been accessed through: *Cumhuriyet Gazetesi*: <https://www.cumhuriyetarsivi.com/monitor/index.xhtml> We used the following keywords: “işsizlik sigortası”, “işsizlik yardımı”, “işsizlik ödeneği” and “işsizlik fonu”)

² We focussed on yearly budgetary legislation, labour law and unemployment insurance legislations. We conducted a keyword search on debates on these legislations. In addition, we also searched the archive of the parliament for references on unemployment. This archive (*Cumhuriyet Dönemi Meclisleri Genel Kurul Tutanaklarına Erişim Sistemi*) has been accessed through: https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/kutuphane/tutanak_sorgu.html (We selected Fihrist Bilgileri Üzerinden Erişim and used the keyword: “işsizlik”).

side, called for the introduction of unemployment insurance but were adamantly opposed to severance pay retrenchment. In the face of this deadlock successive governments postponed the policy. In the neoliberal era (1980-1991), governments opposed the policy and thus dropped it from official plans. In the populist era (1991-1999), the issue was reintroduced on the agenda, mainly by centre-left parties. However, in the face of serious opposition by business groups it took another eight years and several government initiatives until the policy was passed by parliament in 1999. Curiously, unemployment insurance was eventually legislated only as a side note of a comprehensive social security reform, which was passed by government without much consideration of business and labour demands.³

The paper aims to make two main contributions. First, through an in-depth analysis of the history of unemployment insurance introduction we aim to contribute to the growing literature on Turkey's social protection system. Within this literature, specialist accounts on the subject exist. Yet, these accounts mostly focus on the eventual program introduction in 1999 (Özbek 2006; Özkan 2011; Özkan 2013). Those studies that look at the earlier period mainly focus on the bureaucracy (Toruner 1991; Andaç 1999). This means that the politics behind the belated creation of unemployment insurance remains somewhat unclear. With this paper we thus aim to offer a more comprehensive account of the history of unemployment insurance in Turkey. Second, by analysing case of Turkey, we aim to contribute to the comparative literature on unemployment insurance programs throughout the world. So far, this literature has mostly focussed on cases in Western Europe and North America, revealing when and why the policy was enacted there (Flora and Alber 1981, Mares 2003; Sjoberg et al. 2010; but see Hort and Kuhnle 2000 for Southeast Asia). By offering an account of the Turkish case we aim to understand whether the dynamics identified in this literature on classic welfare states also help to explain the emergence of the policy in new cases.

The paper is structured as follows. In section 2, we discuss what is already known about the introduction of unemployment insurance throughout the world. When did countries create unemployment insurance and why did they do so? Based on this, we derive some hypotheses on the drivers and obstacles for unemployment insurance introduction in Turkey. In section 3, we trace the debates on unemployment insurance in Turkey from the 1930s until the end of the century. In section 4, we discuss the eventual policy enactment in 1999. Based on this historical analysis, we then explain how the social partners, political parties and governments positioned themselves vis-à-vis the policy over the decades in section 5. In the concluding section, we discuss the implications of our findings for the comparative literature. In a nutshell, the Turkish case at least partly confirms expectations from comparative research on partisan politics and diffusion effects. Yet, above all the case is testimony to the importance of the institutional context in which the policy introduction takes place. It shows that the prior institutionalization of an alternative instrument – severance pay – defined the interests of business and labour towards the

³ The fact that the programme was only a side note of a much larger reform is even reflected in the very name of the legislation, which reads (in Turkish): *İşsizlik Sigortası Kanunu (Sosyal Sigortalar Kanunu, Tarım İşçileri Sosyal Sigortalar Kanunu, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Emekli Sandığı Kanunu, Esnaf ve Sanatkarlar ve Diğer Bağımsız Çalışanlar Sosyal Sigortalar Kurumu Kanunu, Tarımda Kendi Adına ve Hesabına Çalışanlar Sosyal Sigortalar Kanunu ile İş Kanununun bir Maddesinin Değiştirilmesi ve bu Kanunlara Ek ve Geçici Maddeler Eklenmesi, İşsizlik Sigortası Kurulması, Çalışanların Tasarrufla Teşvik Edilmesi ve bu Tasarrufların Değerlendirilmesine Dair Kanunun İki Maddesinin Yürürlükten Kaldırılması ile Genel Kadro ve Usulü Hakkında Kanun Hükmünde Kararnamenin Eki Cetvellerde Değişiklik Yapılması Hakkında Kanun).*

creation of unemployment insurance. This, in turn, shaped the approach of governments towards the policy, thus deciding its fate.

2. Unemployment Insurance Introduction Around the World

Unemployment insurance is one of the key policies of modern welfare states. Through the provision of regular cash benefits to the unemployed the policy directly intervenes into a central institution of the market economy: the labour market. The policy insulates workers to some degree from the vagaries of the labour market, hence de-commodifying their labour power (Esping-Andersen 1990) and providing them with what is widely accepted as the ‘core of the modern welfare state’: social rights (Korpi 1989).

Given that it directly intervenes into the balance of power between employers and employees, it is no surprise that unemployment insurance has been a source of intense political conflict (Sjöberg et al. 2010). Around the world, protection against joblessness remains one of the most contentious areas of the welfare state. Among the standard repertoire of modern social security policies recommended by the ILO, unemployment insurance remains the least widely diffused policy, with the lowest number of adoptions by countries (ILO 2014: 4). Moreover, most adopters introduced the policy only after they had introduced other main social security programs, such as old age, sickness and work injury insurances (Schmitt et al. 2015).

Despite the contested nature of the programme, an estimated 92 countries throughout the world have implemented unemployment insurance in one form or the other (ILO 2017). On a nationwide level, the policy was first introduced in 1905 in France, in the form of a voluntary state-subsidized programme. The diffusion across Europe was fairly quick. In Southern Europe, Italy and Spain already introduced the program in 1919. In the interwar period, the policy travelled beyond Europe, as Uruguay, South Africa and New Zealand, among others, created programmes. In Southern Europe, Greece adopted the policy in 1945, Cyprus in 1957 and Portugal in 1975. In the Middle East, some countries enacted programs in the second half of the twentieth century; Israel in 1970 and Iran in 1987 (Sjöberg et al. 2010, Pierson 2004, Schmitt et al. 2015; SSA 2016). Independent of whether we compare Turkey’s welfare regime to its Southern European or its Middle Eastern neighbours (Grütjen 2008; Aybars & Tsahouras 2010; Powell and Yörük 2017), it is thus clear that the country remains a latecomer by regional standards.⁴

So, why did nearly half of all countries in the world build an insurance against job loss? What drives countries to introduce this programme? Relatively little research has been devoted to the specific study of unemployment insurance introduction around the world (Flora and Alber 1981; Mares 2003; Kim 2010). Far more attention has been paid to the broader dynamics of welfare state building, of which the introduction of protection against joblessness has been a key part (Mesa-Lago 1978; Kaufmann 2003; Pierson 2004; Haggard and Kaufman 2008). From this research, we can derive the following assumptions regarding the driving forces behind the creation of unemployment insurance programmes.

First, in terms of economic factors, industrialisation appears to be a key factor. As the size of the industrial sector and the level of economic development increases, the likelihood of building an unemployment insurance system increases (Kim 2010; Schmitt et al. 2015). Furthermore, as all social

⁴ In recent years, the policy expanded to a number of low- and middle income countries such as Laos (2015), Cabo Verde (2016), Jordan (2011) and Morocco (2014) (ILO 2017: 53).

insurance programmes, unemployment insurance is crucially about risk sharing (Baldwin 1990). Therefore, in terms of labour market structure, increasing risk of unemployment increases the likelihood of introducing the policy (Kim 2010). This explains why many countries built unemployment protection systems after economic crises (Carter et al. 2013).

Second, the position of labour and business vis-à-vis unemployment protection is more complicated than one might assume. Unemployment insurance is at first glance very much a pro-employee policy. In fact, in many European countries, labour unions built unemployment protection programs before the state did (Flora and Alber 1981: 152). Therefore, one would assume that workers pushed for the introduction of the policy (Esping-Andersen 1990; Hicks et al. 1995). In some countries, however, labour unions, for various reasons, opposed the creation of publicly-administered unemployment insurance programmes (Flora and Alber 1981: 153-154).

The position of business is similarly ambivalent. At first glance, one would expect employers to oppose the programme. After all, it increases non-wage labour costs and – even worse from the perspective of employers – increases the bargaining power of labour. Yet, the role of employers is not straightforward. In some cases, there has been inter-sectoral conflict between producers in high risk sectors, who support the programme and producers in low risk sectors, such as agriculture, who oppose it (Mares 2003). Moreover, the policy has been associated with gains in productivity, hence also benefitting employers (ILO 2017: 41-42). In sum, business might also support the creation of unemployment insurance.

Third, with regard to political factors, the findings are also somewhat ambivalent. Concerning regime type, research indicates that democracies are more likely to introduce the policy than non-democracies (Kim 2010; Schmitt 2015). However, some scholars also argue that, outside of classic welfare states, it was mostly authoritarian regimes that established key social security legislation (Mares and Carnes 2009). A glance at the most recent adopters supports this view: in the 2010s, Laos, Kuwait, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Jordan created unemployment insurance programmes (SSA 2016). This shows that not only democracies adopt this policy.

With regard to partisan politics, research indicates that left-of-centre or labour parties are more prone to introduce the policy when in power (Flora and Alber 1981: 170-173) and push other parties to introduce it when in opposition (Hicks 1999). Yet, these arguments are largely based on studies of classic welfare states. Outside of these cases, it cannot be taken for granted that left-right-cleavages matter.

Fourth, with regards to role of diffusion, the literature is rather straightforward. From the beginning of welfare state building in the late nineteenth century countries have been influenced by what policies other (particularly neighbouring) countries implemented (Flora and Heidenheimer 1981). This has also been the case for unemployment insurance. For instance, membership in the International Labour Organization (ILO), which has long been an advocate of unemployment protection, increases the chances of creating unemployment insurance. Similarly, the existence of comprehensive social security systems in neighbouring countries increases the likelihood of enacting the policy (Schmitt et al. 2015).

So, based on this comparative research, what can one expect for the Turkish case? With regards to the economy, over the twentieth century, Turkey turned from a largely agrarian country into a largely industrialised country. This process was accompanied by frequent economic crises which increased the risk of job loss. With regards to political factors, despite repeated military interventions, the country

remained mostly democratic after 1950 and was mostly ruled by centre-right governments. With regards to the balance of power between business and labour, the latter became increasingly powerful after 1945. Yet, the repression by the military regime in the early 1980s led to a period of prolonged decline. Finally, in terms of diffusion processes, Turkey has long been an ILO member. Moreover, Western European countries with their comprehensive social security systems constituted an ideal that many policymakers aspired to achieve. In a nutshell, many – but not all – factors that the comparative literature sees as conducive for policy adoption were in place in Turkey. All this suggests that the policy should have arrived far earlier than 1999. In the following section, we will explore how and why it took so long for the programme to be introduced.

3. Planning the Introduction of Unemployment Insurance in Turkey (1935-1999)

3.1. The One-Party Era (1924-1946)

The first references to unemployment insurance that our research uncovered date back to the time of the one-party rule of the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP*), which lasted from 1924 until 1946. The one-party era was characterised by a broad push for modernization and state-led development. At that time, Turkey was largely an agrarian economy with a small industrial labour force, making it an unlikely country to adopt unemployment protection. However, as early as 1935, during discussions about a comprehensive labour law that was to be introduced, legislators first raised the idea of creating an unemployment insurance programme.

The initial version of the labour law legislation included several articles in which the first nationwide social insurance policy for private sector workers was outlined. The last paragraph of the first article on this insurance clarified that this programme would only apply to work accidents. It stated that for sickness, occupational illnesses, disability, old age, unemployment and survivors' insurances separate legislations would be written.⁵ However, the provisions on work accident insurance were dropped by the respective parliamentary commission working on the legislation. The commission argued that it was insufficient to just have work accident insurance. Instead, other social risks would also have to be covered and the insurance would have to be administrated by a new state institution. Therefore, a separate legislation should be drafted, it suggested.⁶ To ensure, that such legislation would be drafted, the parliamentary commission inserted a new section on 'social assistance' (*sosyal yardımlar*) into the legislation. The first paragraph of this section specified that the state would provide social assistance to protect against a number of social risks and that for this purpose a Workers' Insurance Institution would be created within one year after the legislation was passed. Curiously, in the list of social risks, unemployment was no longer mentioned.⁷ Apparently, this was not an accident as the parliamentary commission also did not list unemployment among the social risks in its justification for shelving the section on work accident insurance.

The 1936 Labour Law, however, did introduce an instrument which offered some protection against the risk of job loss: severance pay. The severance pay provisions in the legislation consisted of a mandatory

⁵ Büyük Millet Meclisi (1936): 35 (Article 45 of the draft law 'iş kanunu layihası').

⁶ Büyük Millet Meclisi (1936): 52-53 ('iş kanunu layihası Muvakkat encümeni mazbatası').

⁷ İş Kanunu, *Resmî Gazete No. 3330*, Article 100.

lump-sum payment of the employer to the employee in the event of a termination of contract. It is doubtful whether policymakers devised this policy with the intention of creating an instrument to protect against unemployment. The legislation only made workers, who had been in continuous employment for at least 5 years, eligible for severance pay. The benefit amount was fairly low at only half a month's wage for each year beyond the first 5 years. So, for instance, an employee who got fired after six years of employment would receive severance pay amounting to only half a month's wage. Furthermore, severance pay was only paid under certain specific circumstances. Overall, it seems that policymakers aimed to provide an incentive for continuous formal employment, as much as they envisioned creating a form of protection against joblessness. Yet, over the following decades the policy was massively expanded in scope and generosity. As a result, it acquired more and more the status of a functional equivalent to unemployment insurance (Başterzi 1995, Gürsel and İmamoğlu 2012, Limoncuoğlu 2010, Holzmann 2011).

In some ways, the developments surrounding the Labour Law in the 1930s illustrate the ambivalent status of unemployment insurance in the development of Turkey's social security system. On the one hand, unemployment was listed among the social risks, against which the state would eventually have to provide protection. On the other hand, it was clearly not an immediate concern of policymakers to pass the respective legislation. Instead alternative instruments, such as severance pay, were created. The experience with the Labour Law legislation thus foreshadowed that it would take decades before unemployment insurance was implemented in the country.

At the same time, however, insuring workers against job loss continued to be discussed in the public sphere. Social policy scholars were, at first, reluctant to suggest such a policy for Turkey. For instance, Gerhard Kessler (1939: 126), a German émigré who was one of leading figures behind the institutionalization of social policy research in Turkey, argued that, for the time being, an insurance programme was not necessary. In his view, the country could easily provide jobs to the unemployed through public works programmes in road and railway building. Similarly, Ekmel Zamil (1950: 51) advocated that unemployment protection was not an urgent matter in Turkey. Indeed, urbanization and the share of the labour force working outside of agriculture were quite low, which meant that few people would be effectively covered by insurance. To conclude, no concrete plans to introduce unemployment insurance were made in the one-party era.

3.2. The Early Multi-Party Era (1946-1960)

In the mid-1940s, the one-party era ended with the establishment of the Democrat Party (*Demokrat Parti, DP*), an offshoot of the CHP. The ensuing multi-party era saw the first serious attempts to introduce unemployment insurance in Turkey. Until 1950, the CHP continued to govern, within an increasingly democratic framework. In line with this trend towards democratisation, the government allowed the creation of labour unions in 1946. At that time, Turkey remained a largely agrarian country, with 75 per cent of the population living in rural areas. Yet, immediately workers created unions and became more active in the political realm. From the onset, one of their demands was unemployment protection. For instance, in 1946 the Kocaeli labour union (*Kocaeli İşçi Sendikaları Birliği*) called for the

introduction of unemployment insurance.⁸ As early as 1947, the issue was discussed during the First Labour Parliament (*Birinci Çalışma Meclisi*), a tripartite forum where state, employees and employers convened (Tuna 1952: 210). In these years, accident, sickness, maternity and old age pension insurances were legislated, but no legislation for unemployment insurance was drafted.

In the early 1950s, a journalists' union asked scholars to prepare a report on the possibility of introducing unemployment protection. Already in 1940, there had been reports about plans to introduce an unemployment support fund or insurance for this occupational group.⁹ Prepared by Orhan Tuna, a colleague of Gerhard Kessler at Istanbul University, the report for the journalists' union was apparently the first comprehensive study on the creation of unemployment insurance in Turkey. The report, however, did not propose a program and instead suggested that unions should create their own unemployment funds as long as there was no statutory programme. A more positive assessment was provided by another scholar, Cahit Talas (1955: 98), who believed that there was a clear need for an unemployment insurance program in Turkey.

Possibly as a result of labour demands, the issue started to be more intensively discussed by policymakers in the 1950s. In that decade, the Democrat Party governed the country facing few veto points. The party sought to take into account the interests of more conservative, rural areas without giving up the overall modernisation path set out in the one-party era. At least initially, the Democrat Party also appeared to be more sympathetic to worker's demands. Yet, successive Democrat Party governments were ambivalent towards the policy, as is visible in the contradictory statements from the party on this issue.

During a parliamentary debate on unemployment in 1951, a Democrat MP Abdürrahman Boyacıgiller proposed the introduction of unemployment insurance.¹⁰ The same MP put the issue again on the agenda in the same year, when he asked Nuri Özsan, the Minister of Labour, whether there were any plans to adopt the policy.¹¹ The Minister responded by pointing out that it was impossible at this point, because the state lacked the necessary statistical infrastructure, in terms of knowledge about the number of unemployed. In an interview in 1952, however, the same minister stated that the policy remained, in principle, 'an aspiration'.¹² In 1953, the head of the Workers' Insurance Institution publicly stated that, for the time being, it was impossible to implement the policy.¹³

In the same year, the new Minister of Labour Samet Ağaoğlu gave a more outspoken answer to another question by Boyacıgiller on the same issue. According to Ağaoğlu, instead of providing unemployment insurance, the state would focus on providing employment opportunities he argued.¹⁴ By 1956, the government had become even more critical of the policy. Responding to a question by Bursa MP Sabahattin Çıracıoğlu, the Ministers of Labour and of Economy and Commerce claimed that joblessness

⁸ Sendika 7.9.1946: 4

⁹ Cumhuriyet 25.02.1940 *Basın Birliği Kartları*.

¹⁰ T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 5.1.1951: 32.

¹¹ T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 3.8.1951: 568-569.

¹² Cumhuriyet 5.9.1952 *Çalışma Bakanı ile bir mülakat*.

¹³ Cumhuriyet 13.07.1953 *İşsizlik Sigortası Meselesi*.

¹⁴ T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 14.1.1953: 182-184.

did not exist in Turkey. Therefore, the government would not create an unemployment insurance programme.¹⁵

Overall, it appears that in the early 1950s, the government had no concrete plans to insure employees against job loss. Yet, from the mid-1950s onwards policy plans began to appear in newspapers. In late 1955, the Minister of Labour Hayrettin Erkmen announced that it had prepared a draft legislation that would soon be discussed with the other ministries.¹⁶ Curiously, in the discussions on this draft legislation we already find references to the severance pay programme. In the 1950s, severance pay was still of limited scope and generosity. Yet, it was apparently already perceived as some sort of functional equivalent to unemployment insurance. Opponents of the draft law claimed that the new policy would replace severance pay, a criticism which the Ministry strongly denied. This connection between the two protective policies against unemployment remained one of the key themes in discussions over the next decades. Notably, while unemployment insurance was postponed by successive governments, severance pay was repeatedly expanded in terms of scope and generosity between the 1950s and 1970s. With these changes, severance pay acquired more and more the status of a protection against job loss (Başterzi 1995; Limon 2015).

In the late 1950s, the creation of unemployment insurance was more seriously contemplated. The opposition CHP started to bring the issue more frequently on the table.¹⁷ Even business representatives were at times positive towards the policy.¹⁸ In 1959, the Minister of Labour Ahmet Haluk Şaman announced that a programme would be legislated soon. For this purpose, the government invited an expert from the International Labour Organization (ILO) to help working out the details of the legislation.¹⁹ In early 1960, a draft law was sent to the prime ministry.²⁰ Yet, before the legislation was passed to parliament, a military coup d'état on 27 May 1960 removed the Democrat Party government from power and closed down parliament.

3.3. The Planning Era (1960-1980)

The short-lived military regime that ruled the country until late 1961 re-shaped Turkey's political landscape. It prepared a new constitution which allowed for a greater role of state-led development. This set the stage for the planning era, which lasted until 1980 and saw increased urbanization. Crucially, the constitution defined the country as a welfare state (*sosyal devlet*) and provided more extensive social rights. The 1960s also saw the rise of a left-right cleavage in Turkish politics, as left-of-centre political groups became ever more powerful. Overall, in the planning era, the political climate for welfare

¹⁵ T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 26.12.1956: 301-302.

¹⁶ Milliyet 27.12.1955 *İşsizlik Sigortası kanun tasarısı hazırlanıyor*. In early 1957, the Public Employment Agency announced that it also worked on preparing draft legislation (Cumhuriyet 15.01.1957 *İşsizlik Sigortası mevzuunda çalışmalara başlandı*).

¹⁷ Cumhuriyet 23.12.1958 *Tekstil sanayiindeki buhranın sebepleri*. T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 27.2.1957: 1086; 27.2.1958: 1039;

¹⁸ Cumhuriyet 28.7.1959 *İşsizliğe çare nasıl bulunacak?*

¹⁹ Milliyet 24.9.1959 *İşsizlik Sigortası Derhal çıkarılacak*. In the secondary literature, this is described as the first serious plan to enact the policy (Toruner 1991: 39; Andaç 1999: 169; Özkan 2011: 131).

²⁰ Milliyet 2.4.1960 *Sigortadan Bütün İşsizler Faydalanacak* and Cumhuriyet 7.3.1960 *İşsizlik Sigortası Kanunu Meclise sevk ediliyor*.

state building became far more positive (Özbek 2006). In this context, discussions about unemployment insurance resumed quickly after the coup, with labour unions again putting it on the agenda.²¹

In the volatile early 1960s, different Ministers of Labour, such as Cahit Talas, who as a scholar had supported the introduction of unemployment insurance, and Bülent Ecevit, who would champion the cause throughout his political life, repeatedly vowed that the policy would be implemented ‘next year’.²² Various draft legislations were prepared, sometimes with the support of foreign experts.²³ Although details are unclear, it is safe to say that at least Ecevit’s draft mainly catered to labour market insiders, as contribution periods were set high. Moreover, the draft foresaw a very gradual implementation with key industrial sectors in big cities covered first.²⁴

In these years, five-year development plans that aimed to guide policymaking were started to be made. Looking at these plans and statements by political parties, it is safe to say that from the early 1960s onwards, the creation of unemployment insurance became a bipartisan development goal. The first five-year development plan covering 1963-1967 stated that a programme for ‘permanent workers’ would be created within 15 years. For this purpose, research into the feasibility of such a policy would be conducted (DPT 1962: 110-111). These aims were also mirrored in the yearly programmes based on the five-year plan.

Table 1. Milestones in the Development of Unemployment Insurance in Turkey

1935	Unemployment insurance is mentioned for the first time in the draft labour law legislation
1955	Ministry of Labour announces work on unemployment insurance legislation
1959	Ministry of Labour prepares draft legislation with ILO support
1960	Draft legislation sent to prime ministry; plans to send it to parliament disrupted by coup d’état
1961	Constitution describes Turkey as welfare state (<i>sosyal devlet</i>)
1963	First five-year development plan includes aim to create unemployment insurance; new draft legislation by Ministry of Labour
1965	Unemployment insurance mentioned for the first time in government programme
1968	Ministry of Labour prepares draft legislation with support of an American bureaucrat
1979	Ministry of Labour prepares draft legislation
1983	Unemployment insurance legislation passed by the counselling parliament, but not implemented
1992	Ministry of Labour prepares draft legislation; tripartite Labour Parliament convenes to discuss unemployment insurance
1994	Unemployment compensation for workers affected by privatization legislated

²¹ Milliyet 22.11.1960 *Mensucat işçileri M.B.K.’e başvurdu*.

²² Milliyet 22.9.1961 *İşsizlik Sigortası önümüzdeki yıl kısmen tatbik edilebilecek* and Milliyet 2.8.1962 *İşsizlik Sigortası 1963’de uygulanacak*.

²³ Milliyet 20.4.1961 *İşsizlik Sigortası kurulması için tasarı hazırlandı* and Milliyet 22.3.1962 *İşsizlik Sigortası için çalışıyor*.

²⁴ Milliyet 15.4.1963 *İlk tatbikat üç büyük şehirde*.

1995	Minister of Labour proposes to connect unemployment insurance introduction with comprehensive social security reform
1999	Unemployment insurance legislation passed as part of comprehensive social security reform
2002	First unemployment benefits paid out

The status of unemployment insurance as bipartisan development goal is also reflected in the fact that different parties with conflicting ideological positions all vowed to enact the policy (Andaç 1999: 179-181). From 1965 onwards, the issue was even regularly featured in government programmes (see Table 3). The short-lived Ürgüplü government promised to look into the possibilities of creating unemployment insurance (Neziroğlu and Yılmaz 2013: 1955). However, its Minister of Labour İhsan Sabri Çağlayangil voiced concerns over the policy's feasibility in Turkey, while claiming that 'unemployment insurance is a thing we all want'.²⁵

In 1965, the Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi, AP*), a successor of the Democrat Party (which had been banned by the military regime in 1960) led by Süleyman Demirel, won elections, setting the stage for six years of one-party government. The first Demirel government was outspoken in claiming that the policy would be realized 'as soon as possible' (Neziroğlu and Yılmaz 2013d: 2193). This was reflected in the 1966 yearly plan, which optimistically claimed that work on draft legislation would be soon finished.²⁶ Indeed, in 1966, the Ministry of Labour presented a draft to be discussed in a tripartite commission consisting of representatives of Ministries, labour and business. It did not cover high income workers and featured low benefit duration. Yet, eligibility conditions were quite loose so that seasonal workers would be in principle also eligible for benefits in case of job loss.²⁷ In this respect, the draft was quite different from previous drafts, which had focussed on labour market insiders. Moreover, the government planned for a tripartite financing structure, a novelty in Turkey's social security system at that time.²⁸ However, this first draft was not put to vote in parliament and the 1967 yearly plan just noted that work on the policy was 'not sufficiently developed'.²⁹

The second five-year development plan covering 1968-1972 reiterated the aim to introduce unemployment protection (DPT 1967: 209). While the 1968 yearly plan did not refer to the issue, the Demirel government continued to work on draft legislation with the help of an American bureaucrat. The new draft foresaw that with the enactment of unemployment insurance, severance pay would cease to exist.³⁰ By the mid-1960s, severance pay had become more generous and eligibility had been loosened so that more workers received benefits. Therefore, it is no surprise that the idea of scrapping the policy was strongly opposed by labour unions, which were very vocal in their demand that unemployment

²⁵ Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi, 26.5.1965: 56.

²⁶ 1966 Yılı Programının Uygulama Esaslarına Ait Karar (Karar Sayısı: 6/5769), Resmi Gazete No. 12216, p.14.

²⁷ Cumhuriyet 12.10.1966 *60 yaşını doldurmamış olanları işsizlik ödeneği verilecek*. In the same year, the opposition leftist Turkey Labour Party (*Türkiye İşçi Partisi*) also presented draft legislation to parliament.

²⁸ Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi, 4.2.1966: 414.

²⁹ 1967 Yılı Programının Uygulama Esaslarına Ait Karar (Karar Sayısı: 6/7413), Resmi Gazete No. 12477, p.14.

³⁰ Cumhuriyet 24.1.1968 *İşçilerin kıdem tazminatı kalkıyor*.

insurance should not be created at the expense of severance pay.³¹ Business groups on the other hand, supported the idea that severance pay should be merged with the new programme.³² In the face of this disagreement, the government decided to shelve the plan.³³

After the backlash to its plans in 1968, the right-of-centre Justice Party government apparently became more lukewarm towards unemployment protection. Torn between labour unions, which demanded the creation of unemployment insurance, but only if severance pay remained in place, and business groups, which accepted the policy only on the condition that severance pay was retrenched, the government chose to postpone the issue. The 1969 yearly plan emphasized that the policy would be introduced only very gradually and that the 'economic burden' of the policy would first be researched in detail.³⁴ In line with this, the second Demirel government that came into power in 1969 only promised to look into the possibilities of introducing the policy (Neziroğlu and Yılmaz 2013: 2606) and the 1970 yearly plan did not refer to the issue. The third Demirel government, formed in 1970, did not even mention it in its government programme. The 1971 yearly plan revived the issue, arguing that statistical research that was necessary to do actuarial calculations would be conducted.³⁵ It is unclear how seriously the government thought about creating unemployment insurance when the military intervened on 12 March 1971 to end Demirel's rule.

Unemployment protection continued to be debated in the autocratic interlude between 1971 and 1973. In this period, the military did not directly rule the country, but put a technocratic government in charge. The new Minister of Labour Atilla Sav quickly vowed that draft legislation would be presented to the cabinet.³⁶ In 1972, a policy draft from the Ministry of Labour, which appears to be quite similar to the failed 1968 draft, was presented to the media.³⁷ This is somewhat surprising as the then Minister of Labour Ali Rıza Uzuner had earlier argued that he did not believe that the country was ready for unemployment insurance.³⁸ Yet, his draft did not really appear to have had the blessing of the powers. Accordingly, the policy was not mentioned in the government plans of the time. Moreover, the yearly plans between 1972 and 1974 also did not mention it. In contrast, the third five-year development plan covering 1973-1977 did foresee the eventual introduction of the policy, even if only very gradual (DPT 1973: 150).

With the return to democracy in 1973, the issue of unemployment protection again gained prominence. The highly volatile years until the 1980 coup witnessed a political polarisation along the left-right axis. Left-of-centre political forces as well as labour unions reached the peak of their political power. In the 1973 elections, the left-of-centre CHP made the policy an election promise (CHP 1973: 131) and thus it

³¹ Cumhuriyet 25.1.1968 *İşçi teşekkülleri sert tepki gösterdi* and Milliyet, 4.2.1968 *Türk-İş: 'Kıdem tazminatına dokundurulmayacak'.*

³² Milliyet 14.2.1968 *Kıdem Tazminatına dair odalar birliğinin görüşü.*

³³ Cumhuriyet, 10.2.1968 *İşçi kıdem tazminatıyla ilgili tasarı geri alındı.*

³⁴ 1968 Yılı Programının Uygulaması Koordinasyonu ve İzlenmesine Dair Karar (Karar Sayısı: 6/10999), Resmi Gazete No. 13075, p.110.

³⁵ 1971 Yılı Programının Uygulaması Koordinasyonu ve İzlenmesine Dair Karar (Karar Sayısı: 7/6742), Resmi Gazete No. 13720, p.233-234.

³⁶ Cumhuriyet 30.3.1971 *İşsizlik Sigortası kanunu çıkacak.*

³⁷ Milliyet 26.12.1972 *İşsizlik yardımı yılda 18 haftayı geçmeyecek.*

³⁸ Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi, 24.2.1972: 221-222.

became part of the government programme of the CHP-led first Ecevit government in 1974 (Neziroğlu and Yılmaz 2013: 3978). While labour unions, such as the Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions (*Türkiye İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu*, TÜRK-İŞ) continued to call for the policy,³⁹ business groups continued to oppose it.⁴⁰ Possibly this opposition was part of the reason why the short-lived CHP-led government failed to introduce a concrete policy draft. However, during its eleven month in power, the Ecevit government invited foreign experts from the OECD and from West Germany to work with the Public Employment Service on statistical research necessary for creating an unemployment protection system (Andaç 1999: 170-171). Its successor, the interim Irmak government, also mentioned the policy part in its government programme (Neziroğlu and Yılmaz 2013: 4387) and referred to it in the 1975 yearly plan⁴¹, but did not start any new initiatives.

The fourth Demirel government, which followed the Irmak government in 1975, appears to have had an ambivalent stance towards the issue. In its programme, the centre-right government referred to the policy, without promising its implementation (Neziroğlu and Yılmaz 2013: 4622). Yet, its Minister of Labour Ahmet Tevfik Paksu surprisingly pledged to adopt the policy within 30 days after coming to power.⁴² In 1976, the Minister of Social Security of the same government, Ahmet Mahir Ablum, did present a draft legislation, which foresaw relatively high benefits and short benefit duration.⁴³ Yet, these plans did not materialise. This is not too surprising given that the yearly plans of the time only referred to 'data collection' for unemployment insurance.⁴⁴ However, while the centre-right Demirel government did not act on unemployment insurance, it bowed to the pressure of the opposition and unions and increased the generosity of severance pay further.

In the politically and economically volatile late 1970s, the policy apparently ceased to be a bipartisan goal as the centre-right no longer supported its enactment. Whereas the centre-left governments vowed policy adoption in their government programmes (Neziroğlu and Yılmaz 2013: 4958 and 5411) and shared their plans with the media, the centre-right governments remained rather quiet on the issue.⁴⁵ Work on unemployment insurance resumed in earnest when a CHP-led coalition government ruled the country from early 1978 to late 1979. The implementation of the policy (this time alongside a severance pay reform) was again promised in the fourth five-year development plan covering 1979-1983 (DPT 1979: 283). Moreover the Minister of Labour Ahmet Bahir Ersoy prepared draft legislation in 1979. This draft, however, was only presented to parliament after the centre-left Ecevit government had been replaced by another centre-right Demirel government (Andaç 1999: 172), which did not show much interest in enacting the policy. On 12 September 1980, another military coup d'état closed down parliament, banned all political parties and put an end to the planning era.

³⁹ Milliyet 28.12.1972 *Melen, 22 yılda*.

⁴⁰ Milliyet 10.4.1974 *İşverenler işsizlik sigortasına karşı çıktılar*.

⁴¹ 1975 Yılı Programının Uygulanması Koordinasyonu ve İzlenmesine dair Karar (Karar Sayısı 7/9105), Resmi Gazete No. 15135, p.88.

⁴² Cumhuriyet 21.4.1975 *Çalışma Bakanı, sendika seçme özgürlüğünden yana*.

⁴³ Milliyet 2.5.1976 *Ablum: Yabancı ülkelere 100 bin işçi göndereceğiz*.

⁴⁴ 1977 Yılı Programının Uygulanması Koordinasyonu ve İzlenmesine dair Karar (Karar Sayısı: 7/12814), Resmi Gazete No. 15786, p.90.

⁴⁵ Milliyet 1.3.1979 Çalışma Bakanı Ersoy: *'İşsizlik sigortası 2 aya kadar parlamentoya sunulacak'*.

3.4. The Neoliberal Era (1980-1991)

The military regime, which ruled the country between 1980 and 1983, aimed to re-orient the country towards a more export-oriented pro-business economic model. This set the stage for a decade guided by neoliberal ideas of decreasing the state's role in the economy. At the same time, urbanization continued so that by the late 1980s, for the first time, most of the population lived in urban areas. Yet, in this period, unemployment insurance was no longer mentioned in the development plans. Insuring employees against job loss seemed to be off the table.

While governments opposed the policy, some lawmakers still pushed for unemployment protection. In 1983, the military regime found itself in a difficult spot when the Counselling Parliament, which was supposed to act as the legislative of the regime, but lacked much real power, passed unemployment insurance legislation. The legislation had been prepared by three MPs, who had been selected for the Counselling Parliament as labour representatives on account of their background as labour union leaders. The legislation relied on a proposal from the pre-coup period, which Ecevit's Minister of Labour Ahmet Bahir Ersoy had presented to parliament in 1980 (Akkoç 1994: 78-79; Sofracı 1999: 54-57). In line with the political climate of the era, the legislation was justified with reference to unemployment as a threat to the social order, as 'one of the main reasons for anarchy and terror [...] in our country.'⁴⁶ The draft legislation provided an in-depth analysis of all unemployment insurance programmes around the world. This showed how far advanced the studies on introducing the policy had already been. Based on this comprehensive analysis, the legislators proposed to provide eight months of unemployment benefits for workers who had paid insurance contributions for one year. Benefits would be forty per cent of the gross wage for singles, but slightly higher for workers with dependants. Financing of the insurance would be tripartite. Overall, the 1983 proposal thus stroke a middle ground between the proposal from the early 1960s, which had focussed on protecting labour market insiders, and the proposal from the late 1960s which had aimed to include also seasonal workers.

The draft legislation received much support by MPs. Nearly half of all MPs signed the legislation to present it to parliament. However, it was discussed in the Counselling Parliament only in October 1983, immediately before the 1983 elections. Although the parliament passed the legislation, the National Security Council, which governed the country, did not put the legislation on its agenda. Therefore, it was not implemented. Critical voices argued that legislators were quite aware that the policy would not be enacted and simply wanted to have something to show off to the voters before the 1983 elections.⁴⁷

After the elections, plans to introduce unemployment insurance were shelved. The Motherland Party (*Anavatan Partisi*, ANAP), which won the 1983 elections and ruled the country until 1991, generally aimed to reduce the role of the state and increase the role of the market. Accordingly, the government was quite outspoken in its opposition to unemployment protection. While all development plans since the early 1960s had suggested that the policy be eventually introduced, the issue was not even mentioned in the fifth five-year plan covering 1985-1989. It was also not mentioned in the yearly plans of the ANAP era. When asked about the subject, the Minister of Labour Mustafa Kalemli bluntly responded

⁴⁶ Danışma Meclisi (1983), p.1.

⁴⁷ Cumhuriyet 10.10.1983 *DM'de giderayak*.

that 'we are trying to find work for the unemployed. We won't pay anyone for sitting around'.⁴⁸ In this sense, the ANAP government returned to the stance of the early 1950s Democrat Party government, according to which the state should aim to increase employment opportunities instead of providing unemployment protection.

While the ANAP government was strongly opposed to the policy, labour unions and opposition parties, such as the centre-left Social Democrat Populist Party (*Sosyal Demokrat Halkçı Parti*, SHP) and the Democratic Left Party (*Demokratik Sol Parti*, DSP) as well as the centre-right True Path Party (*Doğru Yol Partisi*, DYP) re-iterated their support for the policy (Andaç 1999: 181-183).⁴⁹ As the opposition became more powerful from the late 1980s onwards, the government slowly shifted its discourse. In the sixth five-year development plan covering 1990-1994 the policy was again mentioned (DPT 1989: 305). Moreover, the Minister of Labour İmren Aykut started to argue that she was not opposing unemployment insurance per se, but that it was impossible to introduce it as long as severance pay existed.⁵⁰ By 1989, she started to promise the introduction of the programme, but emphasized that it would replace severance pay.⁵¹ Unsurprisingly, as in the planning era, labour unions strongly opposed any plans to replace severance pay with unemployment insurance.⁵² In any case, the ANAP government did not make any concrete plans to enact the policy.

3.5. The Populist Era (1991-2002)

In the 1991 elections, ANAP lost power to a coalition composed of Demirel's centre-right DYP and the centre-left SHP. This marked the beginning of a decade of frequently changing populist coalition governments. In this decade, unemployment insurance was first rediscovered as a political issue and then, finally, legislated in 1999.

Both the DYP and the SHP had consistently called for the creation of unemployment insurance when they had been opposition and made the issue an election promise. In line with this, for the first time in the post-1980 era, the policy was featured in a government programme in 1991. However, the programme cautiously pointed out that the introduction would be gradual (Neziroğlu and Yılmaz 2013: 6536). The DYP-SHP coalition ruled the country for four years. Driven by the Minister of Labour and Social Security Mehmet Moğultay (from the SHP) this period saw the most serious attempt to enact the policy up to this point. However, eventually the coalition government did not implement it.

Two weeks after the coalition government took power an MP for the SHP presented draft legislation to parliament. This draft appeared to be close to the failed 1983 legislation, which the SHP had continued to advocate throughout the 1980s.⁵³ The government immediately faced resistance from the centre-right

⁴⁸ Milliyet 21.04.1984 *Çalışma Bakanı: "Ek zammı gidin Şevket Yılmaz'a sorun"*. See T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 19.12.1984: 491 for a slightly more detailed explanation.

⁴⁹ Milliyet 5.8.1988 *Grev Dalgası*; Milliyet 14.8.1986 *DSP İşsizlik sigortasını getirecek*; 31.10.1987 *Vaat yağmuru*; Milliyet 20.02.1987 *Partilerin farklı bakış açıları*.

⁵⁰ Milliyet, 16.12.1988 *Çalışma Bakanı: "Karşı değilim ama kıdem tazminatıyla olmaz"*.

⁵¹ Milliyet 4.2.1989 *Çalışma Bakanı İmren Aykut*.

⁵² Milliyet 24.7.1989 *Ek zamda uzlaşma*.

⁵³ The SHP had been spearheading demands for unemployment insurance throughout the 1980s. One of the three legislators behind the failed 1983 legislation, Feridun Şakir Ögünç, had become an MP for the SHP after the 1983

ANAP, which argued that the plans were too expensive.⁵⁴ Moreover, business warned of the economic burden⁵⁵ and argued that the policy would make it harder for the unemployed to find jobs⁵⁶, thus increasing unemployment.⁵⁷ In the face of this opposition, disagreement arose in the coalition. While the SHP continued to push for the swift introduction, the DYP preferred a slow introduction, starting in the rural south-east, where presumably few people would fulfil the contribution requirements.⁵⁸

In April 1992, the Labour Parliament was convened to discuss the policy. This gave the social partners an opportunity to put forward their views on the matter. Business, represented by the Turkish Federation of Employer Associations (*Türkiye İşveren Sendikaları Konfederasyonu*, TISK) was naturally lukewarm. It advocated that if the insurance was to be introduced it should not lead any increases in employers contributions. Moreover, together with the creation of unemployment insurance severance pay should be retrenched. Furthermore, agricultural workers and seasonal workers should be excluded from the programme. The policy should not be gradually introduced but be introduced nationwide at the same time. Finally, with regards to the benefit level, business proposed that they be capped at half the minimum wage for single workers and two thirds of the minimum wage for married workers.⁵⁹

In contrast, labour, represented by the Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions (*Türkiye İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu*, TÜRK-İS), wholeheartedly supported the introduction of the programme. Still, it strongly opposed the idea that severance pay should be cut if unemployment insurance was implemented. Moreover, it did not want benefits to be capped below the minimum wage, but opted for benefits of at least forty-five per cent of the last wage. Only with regard to the question of contributions, labour could agree with business: both asked for state contributions to the system.⁶⁰

At the Labour Parliament, the government also presented its own policy proposal. This draft had been prepared by an expert team, which had been appointed by the Minister of Labour Mehmet Moğultay. The expert team was predominantly composed of bureaucrats with an economics background from the Public Employment Service (Özkan 2011: 157-159). The new draft differed from the earlier proposal that the SHP, to which Moğultay belonged, had advocated. It foresaw a gradual introduction, starting first in the south-east and the industrial centers. The benefit duration was to be tied to the contribution period, with longer contributions leading to longer benefits. Employees, who worked for 20/30/36 months of the last three years, could receive benefits for 6/7/8 months.⁶¹ In addition, employees had to have contributed continuously for the last six months in order to receive benefits. In sum, this meant that the

elections and continued to campaign for his draft legislation (Milliyet 22.1.1984 *HP'li Ögünc yasa önerisi hazırladı*) albeit without much success (Milliyet 2.11.1984 *İşsizlik sigortası komisyonda reddedildi*). His proposal apparently continued to be the basis on which the SHP modelled its policy proposal in the 1991 elections. According to this draft, the contribution period would be set at one year, benefits would be paid for a maximum of nine months and funding would be tripartite (Milliyet 22.7.1991 *SHP'nin ulusal sosyal güvenlik sistemi* and Milliyet 5.12.1991 *İşsizlik sigortası için ilk yasa tasarısı SHP'den*).

⁵⁴ Milliyet 17.11.1991 *Demirel'e güvenoyu yok*.

⁵⁵ Milliyet 30.11.1991 *İşadamlarından programa farklı tepkiler*.

⁵⁶ Milliyet 20.12.1991 *İşsizlik sigortası iş bulmayı zorlaştırır*.

⁵⁷ Milliyet 13.11.1991 *İşsizlik sigortası işsizliği arttırır*.

⁵⁸ Milliyet 22.01.1991 *İşsizlik sigortası için her bakan ayrı tarih veriyor*; Milliyet 25.1.1991 *2 müjde*.

⁵⁹ Milliyet 30.4.1992 *TISK'in önerileri*.

⁶⁰ Milliyet 30.4.1992 *Türk-İs'in görüşleri*.

⁶¹ Milliyet 30.4.1992 *Bakanlığın Modeli and İşsizlik sigortası şart*.

new proposal was geared towards labour market insiders with a continuous contribution history. Seasonal workers and workers with intermittent employment had few chances of receiving benefits.

In the following months, Moğultay's proposal was slightly refined. Benefit durations were decreased to four, six and eight months for workers with 20, 30 and 36 months of contributions in the last three years, respectively. The benefit level was set at 45 per cent of the net wage, with a benefit floor of 50 per cent of the minimum wage. Finally, the financing would come from employers, employees and state contributions.⁶² Overall, the proposal thus attempted to strike a middle ground between business and labour demands. The benefit level reflected labour demands, while contributions were so high that only labour market insiders would be covered, as business demanded. However, employer demands for severance pay retrenchment were not incorporated.

The policy proposal had been devised under the guidance of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security. In late 1992, the Minister, Mehmet Moğultay, sent the draft legislation to the cabinet. However, he could not convince the coalition partner, the centre-right DYP, to support the proposal.⁶³ Therefore, the draft was not sent to parliament. One point of contention in the draft legislation was the question of financing. The proposal followed the demand of social partners that, for the first time in Turkey, the state should make direct contributions to a social insurance programme. However, the proposal still envisioned additional contributions for employers and employees. In response, labour unions demanded that there should be no additional contributions. To ensure the financial viability of the insurance, other funds should be diverted to the new programme.⁶⁴ By 1993, Moğultay, supported this demand, so that there would be no new burdens for employer and employees.⁶⁵ This was to be achieved by reducing other contributions that employers and employees had to make.⁶⁶

However, this change was apparently not enough to change business' views.⁶⁷ Employer organizations continued to argue that the establishment of unemployment insurance had to go along with changes in severance pay legislation (and now also job security provisions).⁶⁸ This put the government in a difficult position as labour unions continued to oppose severance pay retrenchment. While the precise political dynamics within the coalition government remain unclear, it appears that overall the DYP was unwilling to adjudicate between the opposing interests of labour and business. Thus, it was reluctant to implement the draft proposal, while the SHP continued to push for it. Eventually, the centre-right DYP, which was the more powerful party in the coalition, ensured that the draft proposal was not realized.

Instead of Moğultay's proposal, a much more limited 'pilot unemployment insurance' (Neziroğlu and Yılmaz 2013: 6725) programme, focussing on workers from state-owned enterprises, was implemented. The privatization of state-owned enterprises had been a central issue on the political agenda since the 1980s. The World Bank, which pushed for privatizations, proposed to provide unemployment benefits

⁶² Cumhuriyet 19.9.1992 *İşsizlik Ödeneği son ücretin %45'i*; Milliyet 15.12.1992 *İşsizlik Sigortası bakanların masasında*.

⁶³ Milliyet 22.02.1993 *Koalisyonunda sorun yumağı*.

⁶⁴ Cumhuriyet 11.3.1993 *İşsizlik sigortası*.

⁶⁵ Cumhuriyet 2.8.1993 *İşsizlik sigortası kesintisi kaldırılсын*.

⁶⁶ Milliyet 15.10.1993 *İşsizlik parası işçiden*.

⁶⁷ Milliyet 21.2.1994 *TISK de acil istikrar programı istedi*.

⁶⁸ Milliyet 30.7.1994 *Hükümeti Demirel'e şikayet ettiler* and Milliyet 4.7.1994 *Baydur'dan yanıt*

for workers affected by privatization. The SHP wanted this programme to be part of a comprehensive unemployment insurance policy⁶⁹, yet it failed to convince the DYP. Thus, a special scheme for workers of state-owned enterprises who lost their job in the course of privatization was launched (Law No. 4046).⁷⁰

In July 1994, the Minister of Labour and Social Security Mehmet Moğultay resigned without having achieved his goal of passing unemployment insurance legislation. In 1995, the new Minister of Labour Aydın Güven Gürkan (from the SHP) started a new effort to pass legislation. His draft was close to Moğultay's but included a lower benefit level at 41 per cent of the net wage.⁷¹ More importantly, in contrast to previous Ministers of Labour he linked the introduction of unemployment insurance to a comprehensive social security reform, which would increase the retirement age and create job security legislation. Increasing the retirement age had become a favoured solution to fight the deficits of the social security system. These deficits were partly the result of the ample opportunities for early retirement that observers described as a functional equivalent to unemployment protection (Özkan 2011: 136). However, labour unions adamantly opposed increasing retirement age. Hence, Gürkan aimed to win the support of labour by connecting retirement age increases with the creation of unemployment insurance. Yet, this attempt was unsuccessful, as labour unions still opposed the planned increase in retirement age.⁷² Business representatives, on the other hand, opposed the proposal as they wanted additional changes in the reform that would increase labour market flexibility.⁷³ In the face of this opposition, Gürkan's proposal, failed.⁷⁴

While the DYP-SHP government thus did not implement unemployment insurance it successfully brought the issue to the political agenda. By the mid-1990s nearly all parties featured the policy as an election promise. Moreover, the seventh five-year development plan covering 1996-2000 (DPT 1995: 56) and all yearly plans of this era mentioned the policy as an aim. Despite this apparent consensus, however, successive governments did not pursue the issue as eagerly as the DYP-SHP government. Two short-lived centre-right governments that followed it did not mention the issue in their government programme.⁷⁵ Their Ministers of Labour made promises, but did not present concrete plans.

In 1997, a minority government composed of the centre-right ANAP and Democrat Turkey Party (*Demokrat Türkiye Partisi*, DTP) and the centre-left Democratic Left Party (*Demokratik Sol Parti*, DSP) came to power. The new government vowed that 'efforts would be made' to introduce unemployment insurance (Neziroğlu and Yılmaz 2013: 7588). The new Minister of Labour and Social Security İbrahim Nami Çağan from the DSP was acutely aware that previous drafts had mainly failed due to the deadlock between labour and business. His plan to overcome this impasse was clear: he simply 'would not accept

⁶⁹ Milliyet 21.2.1994 *Önce işsizlik sigortası sonra özelleştirme tazminatı*.

⁷⁰ Only a few thousand beneficiaries per year benefited from the programme (ISKUR 2005: 66). Moreover, benefit duration was limited, between three to eight months. In contrast, benefit levels were quite high as the programme paid benefits that were on par with previous wages of employees. Overall, the policy thus cushioned the effects of privatization on a small sub-group among the labour market insiders.

⁷¹ Milliyet 19.4.1995 *Gürkan, uyuyan devi uyandırdı*.

⁷² Milliyet 18.5.1995 *Çalışma Meclisi'ne şartlı destek*.

⁷³ Milliyet 11.6.1995 *Batı'daki kadar olsun, fazlası değil*.

⁷⁴ Milliyet 12.6.1995 *Sosyal paket rafa kalktı!*

⁷⁵ Milliyet 7.4.1996 *İşsizlik sigortası yolda*; Milliyet 15.5.1996 *Önce iş güvencesi, sonra işsizlik sigortası*.

objections, neither by business nor by labour'.⁷⁶ In terms of its characteristics, Çağan's draft was close to Moğultay's ill-fated proposal. The new draft set benefit levels slightly higher, at fifty-five per cent of the previous wage. Moreover, it increased benefit duration to up to ten months. Contribution periods, however, remained unchanged and thus the new draft again catered to labour market insiders. Financing of the system would be achieved by shifting some employer and employee contributions, which were made to a fund to encourage savings, to the new programme.⁷⁷ However, the government did not implement Çağan's proposal.

4. The 1999 Law on Unemployment Insurance

In the beginning of 1999, the centrist minority government was replaced by a caretaker minority government led by Bülent Ecevit's centre-left DSP, which would govern the country until the April 1999 elections. Notably, this was the first time after the 1980 coup that the country was ruled by a leftist prime minister. Ecevit had championed the cause of unemployment insurance already during his terms as Minister of Labour in the early 1960s and Prime Minister in the 1970s. In the election campaign in 1999 virtually all parties, again, promised to build a programme to insure employees against job loss.⁷⁸ After the elections, Ecevit's DSP formed a centrist coalition government together with the centre-right ANAP and the Nationalist Action Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*, MHP). This government, which came to power in the midst of a deep economic crisis, would finally adopt the policy.

In the 1990s, the social security system had started to run increasing deficits, mainly due to the maturing of a pension system with ample opportunities for early retirement. Plans to ensure the sustainability of the system through an increase in the retirement age had been on the agenda of virtually all governments in that period. As described above, in 1995 the proposal to introduce unemployment insurance had been connected to these social security reform plans. Yet, the reforms did not materialize and therefore the deficits continued to increase. By the late 1990s, the central government had to spend around 2 per cent of GDP just to finance the deficits of the social security institutions (Yentürk 2018), with deficits projected to drastically increase. This was seen as a big-risk for the economy as a whole and thus the perceived need for reform became ever more pressing (Özkan 2011).

The government's new Minister of Labour and Social Security Yaşar Okuyan immediately began to work on a comprehensive social security reform proposal.⁷⁹ Initially, however, he did not attach unemployment insurance to the social security reform. Anticipating strong opposition from labour unions, he presented the policy only after labour unions voiced their opposition in order to soften their stance. However, Okuyan failed to change the mind of labour representatives with this manoeuvre (Özbek 2006: 350-351). Moreover, by attaching the policy to the social security reform, he drew the ire of business representatives, who opposed the new programme, unless severance pay was retrenched at the same time.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Milliyet 11.12.1997 *Kafaya koydum*.

⁷⁷ Milliyet 28.8.1997 *Ücretten İşsizlik Payı*; Milliyet 28.11.1997 *İşsiz kalana çalışırken aldığı ücretin yüzde 55'i verilecek*.

⁷⁸ Milliyet 17.4.1999 *Vaatlere bakın*.

⁷⁹ Cumhuriyet, 29.5.1999 *İlk demeçlerde 'yapısal reform' sözü*.

⁸⁰ Milliyet 17.5.1999 *Patronlar işsizlik sigortasına karşı*; Milliyet 17.7.1999 *İşveren de tasarıya karşı*.

As Table 2 below shows, the draft unemployment insurance legislation that the new government devised deviated slightly from the earlier proposals. It marginally reduced the contribution period by changing the requirement of continuous contribution in the last six months to four months. However, the focus on workers with ‘stable and continuous’ employment remained.⁸¹ The benefit level was set at fifty per cent of the previous net wage, which was slightly higher than in Moğultay’s (1992) and Gürkan’s (1995) proposal, but lower than in Çağan’s (1997) proposal. Yet, while Moğultay’s and Gürkan’s proposal retained a benefit floor that ensured that minimum wage earners would receive a slightly higher replacement rate, Okuyan’s proposal introduced a benefit cap. This cap was set at the net minimum wage. Hence, medium and high income earners would have a lower replacement rate. The instrument of a benefit cap had been demanded by business groups as early as 1992, but had apparently not played a role in any previous draft laws.

Table 2. Characteristics of some Unemployment Insurance Policy Drafts

Minister of Labour responsible for the draft	Year	Benefit level (replacement rate)	Benefit duration	Qualification Period	Benefit floor or cap	Note
Ecevit	1963			3 years		Gradual introduction starting in key industrial sectors in biggest cities
Erdem	1966	60% of wage (higher for families)	3 months	180 days in last year (+ 120 days each in previous three years)		High income earners excluded
Erdem	1968	50% of wage (higher for families)	18 weeks			
Ersoy	1980 (1983)	40% of gross wage (higher for families)	8 months	356 days		
Moğultay	1992	45% of net wage	4-8 months	600 days (+ last 180 days)	Floor (50% of minimum wage)	Gradual introduction starting in key industrial sectors in biggest cities and south-east
Gürkan	1995	41% of net wage	4-8 months	600 days (+ last 180 days)	Floor (50% of minimum wage)	
Çağan	1997	55% of net	Up to 10	600 days (+ last		

⁸¹ T.B.M.M. (1999), p.12.

		wage	months	180 days)		
Okuyan	1999	50% of net wage	6-10 months	600 days (+ last 120 days)	Cap (minimum wage)	

Source: Danışma Meclisi (1983), T.B.M.M. (1999) and various newspaper reports in *Milliyet* and *Cumhuriyet*.

Business and labour representatives had long complained that unemployment insurance should not create any additional burdens for employers and employees, respectively. In principle, this had been accepted by previous governments and was also accepted by the new government. To account for this demand, the draft legislation cancelled other contributions which employers and employees had to make to a 'Mandatory Savings Fund'. Employer and employee contributions to unemployment insurance equalled these contributions and thus no new financial burdens were created for employers and employees.⁸²

Both, business and labour voiced their concern towards the reform proposal. Yet, instead of seeking consensus with employers and employees, the Ecevit government simply chose to push through the reform despite all opposition. The draft legislation that included pension reform and unemployment insurance was discussed by the cabinet on July 9, 1999. On July 12, it was sent to parliament. From mid to end-of-July it was discussed in parliamentary commissions, with the participation of business and labour representatives.

On August 12 parliament began debating the draft legislation. The focus of these debates was mainly on pension reform. Yet, there were also some discussion on unemployment insurance. In general, government and opposition were in agreement that the programme should be introduced.⁸³ However, they clashed when it came to the specific characteristics. The centre-right DYP mainly criticised two aspects. First, its MPs argued that the workings of the unemployment insurance fund were insufficiently specified and not transparent. Considering the negative experiences with such funds in Turkey, the MPs argued that it was likely that the Fund would go bankrupt and had to be bailed out by the government.⁸⁴ A second point raised by the DYP MPs was that without sufficient job security provisions, the legislation would make it easier for employers to fire their employees and thus increase unemployment.⁸⁵

The Islamist Virtue Party (*Fazilet Partisi, FP*) mainly agreed to these criticisms.⁸⁶ In addition it voiced concern that the policy would only protect labour market insiders: employees with stable contracts and continuous employment. Temporary workers, who were arguably more in need of protection, would be

⁸² *Milliyet*, 27.7.1999 *Devlet tasarruflara el koydu*.

⁸³ Apparently only one MP from the Islamist FP differed on this account, describing unemployment insurance as having failed in the West and arguing that it thus should not be adopted by Turkey (T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi 25.8.1999: 589).

⁸⁴ T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi 12.8.1999: 531, 14.8.1999: 279, 24.8.1999: 355, 372 and 390, and 25.8.1999: 493-494 and 504.

⁸⁵ T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi 14.8.1999: 320, 16.8.1999: 765 and 767 and T.B.M.M. (1999), p.23 and p.54.

⁸⁶ T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi 24.8.1999: 359, 406-407, and 25.8.1999: 505 for the first issue. T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi 25.8.1999: 515 for the second issue.

left unprotected.⁸⁷ Finally, MPs from the FP also repeatedly demanded that the creation of an unemployment insurance programme should be coupled with severance pay reform⁸⁸ – a longstanding request from business groups. Furthermore, a few MPs also found benefit levels too low⁸⁹ and argued that the Public Employment Service lacked the capacity to administer the programme.⁹⁰

Finally, opposition MPs were also in agreement that the government had not carefully prepared the bill, that the legislation was presented to parliament ‘without any preparation’ having been made. This, in the eyes of the opposition politicians, was the reason for the legislation’s numerous shortcomings.⁹¹ Despite these various points of criticism, the government rushed the bill through parliament and thus in late August 1999 the legislation was passed. The main provision of the policy came into effect on June 1, 2000 and the first benefits were paid in March, 2002. Unemployment insurance was finally introduced in Turkey, even if only as a side note of a comprehensive social security reform.

5. The Role of Social Partners, Political Parties and Governments

Based on the description of the history of unemployment insurance in Turkey, we will now explain how important actors positioned themselves regarding the policy. Hence, this section will provide an overview of the changing views of governments, political parties and social partners vis-à-vis unemployment insurance.

5.1. Social Partners

Considering that unemployment protection directly intervenes into the labour market, the role of the social partners is important. In the Turkish case, the role of labour unions and business groups has been crucial for the late policy introduction. They held fundamentally opposing views on the issue and successive governments were unwilling to take sides.

Labour unions called for unemployment insurance from the outset. In fact, the policy was among the demands of the first unions created in the mid-1940s.⁹² These demands continued, as unions became more powerful over the next decades.⁹³ Furthermore, this view also transcended the deep divisions between the centrist Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions (*Türkiye İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu*, TÜRK-İŞ), the leftist Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (*Türkiye Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu*, DİSK) and the Islamist Confederation of Turkish Real Trade Unions (*Hak İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu*, HAK-İŞ).⁹⁴ In this sense, unions were one of the driving forces behind the policy. However, it is also true that unions were generally unwilling to retrench severance pay – a policy

⁸⁷ T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi 13.8.1999: 67, 24.8.1999: 329, 403 and 406-407 and 25.8.1999: 596.

⁸⁸ T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi 24.8.1999: 317 and 406-407 and T.B.M.M. (1999), p.56, 57 and 60.

⁸⁹ T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 24.8.1999: 404 and 25.8.1999: 515.

⁹⁰ T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi 24.8.1999: 355 and 406-407 and 25.8.1999: 537.

⁹¹ T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi 12.8.1999: 531, 24.8.1999: 333, 355 and 390.

⁹² Sendika 7.9.1946: 4

⁹³ Milliyet, 21.8.1952 *İşçilerin dilekleri*, Milliyet, 1.2.1959 *Sendikalar Grevi Çıkar Yol Görüyor* and Milliyet 6.5.1974 *Kundura İşçileri çok zor koşullarda çalışıyor*, Milliyet 1.12.1982 *Denizci: Bazı çevreler ekonomideki olumsuz gidişin suçunu KİT'lere yüklüyor*.

⁹⁴ Milliyet, 2.5.1976 *Türkler: 'DİSK'in sağdan ve soldan alacağı hiç bir ders yoktur'*, Milliyet, 5.1.1982 *Yatırımların hızlandırılması gerektiği savundu* and Milliyet 4.1.1986 *Türk-İŞ'in yedi beklentisi*.

that assumed an unemployment protection function, among other things – in exchange for unemployment insurance. Arguably, with this stance labour unions prioritised severance pay and were unwilling to show the necessary flexibility that would have facilitated the creation of unemployment insurance. This made labour unions part of the policy deadlock, which led to the postponement of the policy.

In contrast to labour unions, business mostly opposed the policy.⁹⁵ Yet, this opposition was neither unconditional nor uniform. At times, parts of business also voiced their support for unemployment protection⁹⁶ or criticising the official line of business groups, such as the Turkish Federation of Employer Associations (*Türkiye İşveren Sendikaları Konfederasyonu*, TİSK).⁹⁷ Moreover, at least from the 1960s onwards the official position of business was quite complex. It repeatedly asked for severance pay retrenchment as a condition for unemployment insurance. Later, it also added that job security provisions would have to be reformed if unemployment insurance were to be created.⁹⁸ This meant that business was not opposed to the policy per se. One could even make the claim that business prioritised an insurance-based system over alternative means of unemployment protection, such as severance pay. Yet, with this stance business effectively blocked the policy for decades. Governments proved unwilling to introduce a new social security policy against the expressed interest of business. At the same time, they were also unwilling to antagonise labour unions by shelving severance pay for unemployment insurance, as desired by business. Therefore, the disagreement between labour and business was a key reason behind the late policy introduction.

5.2. Political Parties

With regards to the position of political parties, it makes sense to differentiate between right and left-wing parties.⁹⁹ Table 3 below summarizes the position of leading political parties since the 1950s.

Table 3. Position of Leading Political Parties on Unemployment Insurance

	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s
Centre-right parties	DP: Ambivalent (support in the late 1950s)	AP: Support (ambivalent after failure of policy proposals)	AP: Support in rhetoric only	ANAP: Opposition	ANAP and DYP: Support in rhetoric only
Centre-left parties	CHP: Unclear	CHP: Support	CHP: Support	SHP: Support	SHP, CHP and DSP: Support

Source: Various newspaper reports in *Milliyet* and *Cumhuriyet*

⁹⁵ *Milliyet* 10.4.1974 *İşverenler işsizlik sigortasına karşı çıktılar*

⁹⁶ *Cumhuriyet* 28.7.1959 *İşsizliğe çare nasıl bulunacak?*

⁹⁷ *Milliyet*, 21.4.1974, *İşverenler: Hükümet işçi lehine taraf tutuyor.*

⁹⁸ *Milliyet*, 4.7.1994, *Baydur'dan yanıt.*

⁹⁹ In Turkey, the left-right cleavage became more salient only in the 1960s. Yet, it has been common to label parties as right- and left-wing even for the periods before that. In line with this tradition we describe the DP as centre-right and the 1950s CHP as centre-left. Note that we only focus on the main parties here.

Since 1950, Turkey has mostly been ruled by centre-right parties. The DP governed the country in the 1950s. While it was ambivalent towards the policy at first, it appears that it changed its mind in the late 1950s to support the enactment of unemployment insurance. In the 1960s and 1970s, the AP was the main force of the centre-right. The AP seems to have been supportive of the policy in the 1960s (AP 1961; AP 1965; AP 1969). However, after the failure of its policy proposals in the late 1960s, the party shifted its stance. While it continued to express support in official discourse, it does not appear to have actively worked for the enactment of the policy. In the 1980s, ANAP represented the centre-right. In contrast to the other leading centre-right parties in Turkey's political history, ANAP was outspoken in its opposition towards the introduction of the policy. This finding lends supports to the view that ANAP has been different from other centre-right parties (Bugra 2008). Its embrace of neoliberal ideas has been more wholehearted than it was the case for other dominant centre-right parties. Curiously, it was a Minister of Labour from ANAP who eventually introduced the policy in 1999. In the 1990s, the DYP was the second main party representing the centre-right. While officially supporting the implementation of the policy, it appears to have been blocking it when in power, most importantly between 1991 and 1995. To conclude, the position of centre-right parties can best be described as ambivalent.

In contrast, centre-left parties generally supported the creation of an unemployment insurance programme. Yet, centre-left parties were rarely in power in democratic Turkey and when they governed, they were part of coalitions that at least partly bridged the left-right divide. For most of the time, the CHP represented the centre-left. The party started to be clearly supportive of the policy from the 1960s onwards. In the 1980s, when the CHP was banned, the SHP was the main centre-left party and it also clearly supported the policy. In the 1990s, the centre-left was split between CHP, SHP and DSP, but all three parties supported policy adoption. Eventually, it was a DSP-led government headed by Bülent Ecevit that implemented unemployment insurance. In sum, the centre-left was consistently pro-unemployment insurance.

5.3. Governments

Based on our analysis of news reports and government programmes, we find that most governments from the 1950s onwards supported policy adoption. Only few governments directly spoke out against unemployment protection. For instance, in the early 1950s, a Minister of Labour of the Democrat Party government argued that the government would create employment opportunities instead of unemployment insurance. In a similar vein, in the 1980s, a Minister of Labour of the ANAP government stated that the government tried to find work for the unemployed and would not pay them unemployment benefits. Yet, these are exceptions. Most governments, even those which were not actively pursuing the implementation of the policy, maintained their support in their official discourse.

As Table 4 below shows, between 1965 and 1999 11 governments mentioned the policy in their government programmes with the eventual goal being – in most cases – its introduction (Neziroğlu and Yılmaz 2013). In total, these governments ruled the country for more than one and a half decade, which makes it all the more puzzling why the policy was not introduced. To be sure, some of these statements might just have been made to distract from the fact that the respective governments had no intention to really implement the policy. However, several governments did actively pursue the creation of an

unemployment insurance programme. In this sense, there had been several windows of opportunity for the policy to be introduced before 1999.

Table 4. Government Declarations on Unemployment Insurance

Government name	Time in power	Government parties	Unemployment insurance in the government programme
Ürgüplü	20.2.1965 - 27.10.1965	AP YTP CKMP MP IND	"[...] possibilities to create unemployment insurance will be seriously looked into [...]" (<i>"İşsizlik Sigortasının kurulması [...] imkânlarını ciddiyle aramaktayız."</i>)
Demirel I	27.10.1965 - 3.11.1969	AP	"We are firmly resolved to start working on implementing unemployment insurance as soon as possible." (<i>"İşsizlik sigortasının biran evvel gerçekleştirilmesi için çalışmalara derhal başlamak karındayız."</i>)
Demirel II	3.11.1969 - 6.3.1970	AP	"Possibilities to implement unemployment insurance will be looked into" (<i>"[...] işsizlik sigortasının gerçekleştirilmesi imkânları aranacaktır."</i>)
Demirel III	6.3.1970 – 26.3.1971	AP	
Erim I	26.3.1971 - 11.12.1971	AP CHP MGP IND	
Erim II	11.12.1971 – 22.5.1972	AP CHP MGP IND	
Melen	22.5.1972 – 15.4.1973	AP CHP MGP IND	
Talu	15.4.1973 - 26.1.1974	AP CGP IND	
Ecevit I	26.1.1974 - 17.11.1974	CHP MSP	"The creation of unemployment insurance for workers [...] will begin." (<i>"Ülkemiz şartları göz önünde tutularak belli bir zaman süresi içinde bütün ülkeye yaygınlaştırılmak üzere, işçiler için işsizlik sigortası kurulmasına başlanacaktır."</i>)
Irmak	17.11.1974 - 31.3.1975		"Work on creating unemployment insurance for [...] workers will be sped up." (<i>"Ayrıca ülkemiz şartları gözönünde tutularak, giderek bütün iş kollarını içine almak üzere işçiler için işsizlik sigortası kurulması çalışmaları hızlandırılacaktır."</i>)

Demirel IV	31.3.1975 - 21.6.1977	AP MSP CGP MHP	"Work on unemployment insurance will be conducted" (<i>"İşsizlik sigortası ile ilgili çalışmalar yapılacaktır."</i>)
Ecevit II	21.6.1977 - 3.7.1977	CHP	"[...] unemployment insurance for workers will be created. Unemployment insurance for self-employed [...] will also be created" (<i>"[...] işçiler için işsizlik sigortası kurulacaktır. [...] Belli durumlarda esnaf ve sanatkarlar için de işsizlik sigortası kurulacaktır."</i>)
Demirel V	21.7.1977 - 5.1.1978	AP MSP MHP	
Ecevit III	5.1.1978 - 12.11.1979	CHP CGP DP IND	"[...] the gradual creation of unemployment insurance will begin" (<i>"[...] işsizlik sigortası kurulmasına kademeli olarak başlanacaktır"</i>)
Demirel VI	12.11.1979 - 12.9.1980	AP	
Ulus	21.9.1980 – 13.12.1983		
Özal I	13.12.1983 – 21.12.1987	ANAP	
Özal II	21.12.1987 – 31.10.1989	ANAP	
Akbulut	9.11.1989 – 23.6.1991	ANAP	
Yılmaz I	23.6.1991 – 20.11.1991	ANAP	
Demirel VII	30.11.1991 - 16.5.1993	DYP SHP	"An unemployment insurance system will be created and gradually implemented." (<i>"İşsizlik sigortası sistemi tesis edilecek ve aşamalı olarak uygulamasına geçilecektir"</i>)
Ciller I	25.6.1993 - 5.10.1995	DYP SHP (CHP)	"An 'unemployment insurance' system will be created and gradually expanded. In the first phase, priority will be given to workers who lost their job due to [...] privatisation." (<i>"'İşsizlik Sigortası' sistemi kurulacak ve aşamalı olarak yaygınlaştırılacaktır. İlk uygulamada KİT reformu ve özelleştirme nedeniyle işsiz kalan işçilere öncelik tanınacaktır."</i>)
Ciller III	5.10.1995 - 30.10.1995	DYP	
Ciller III	30.10.1995 - 6.3.1996	DYP CHP	

Yılmaz II	6.3.1996 - 28.6.1996	ANAP DYP (DSP)	
Erbakan	28.6.1996 - 30.6.1997	RP DYP	
Yılmaz III	30.6.1997 - 11.1.1999	ANAP DSP DTP	"Efforts will be made to realize unemployment insurance [...]" (<i>"İşsizlik sigortasının bir program dahilinde gerçekleştirilmesine [...] çaba gösterilecektir"</i>)
Ecevit IV	11.1.1999 - 28.5.1999	DSP	
Ecevit V	28.5.1999 - 18.11.2002	DSP MHP ANAP	"An unemployment insurance programme, which for a certain amount of time replaces the loss of income of people who lost their jobs, will be started." (<i>"Çalışırken işsiz kalanların gelir kaybını belirli bir süre telafi etmek amacıyla işsizlik sigortası programı başlatılacak [...]"</i>)

Abbreviations: AP: Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi*); YTP: New Turkey Party (*Yeni Türkiye Partisi*); CKMP: Republican Peasant's Nation Party (*Cumhuriyetçi Köylü Millet Partisi*); MP: Nation Party (*Millet Partisi*); IND: Independents; CHP: Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*); MGP: National Reliance Party (*Millî Güven Partisi*); MSP: National Salvation Party (*Millî Selâmet Partisi*); CGP: Republican Reliance Party (*Cumhuriyetçi Güven Partisi*); MHP: Nationalist Action Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*); ANAP: Motherland Party (*Anavatan Partisi*); DYP: True Path Party (*Doğru Yol Partisi*); SHP: Social Democrat Populist Party (*Sosyal Demokrat Halkçı Partisi*); RP: Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*); DSP: Democratic Left Party (*Demokratik Sol Partisi*); DTP: Democrat Turkey Party (*Demokrat Türkiye Partisi*).

Source: Neziroğlu and Yılmaz (2013).

The first window of opportunity appeared in the late 1950s, when the Democrat Party government showed a serious interest in policy adoption. It invited the ILO to help prepare a draft legislation and it seems entirely possible that this draft would have been eventually passed by parliament had the 1960 coup not swept away the government. Throughout the 1960s, changing governments were also positively inclined towards the policy. The second window of opportunity occurred in the second half of the 1960s, when the Justice Party government created new draft legislation and invited an American bureaucrat for technical support. Yet, the Justice Party government refrained from enacting its draft due to the deadlock between labour and business which had opposing views on the issue. In the 1970s, it appears that the short-lived Republican People's Party-led governments were seriously pursuing the creation of unemployment insurance. Thus, the third window of opportunity was in 1978-1979, when a CHP-led government resumed work on the policy and developed new draft legislation. Yet, these years were marked by deep political and economic instability, and so it is no surprise that the government was forced from power before the policy could be enacted. After a decade of governmental hostility towards the policy, the DYP-SHP government coming to power in 1991 represented a fourth window of opportunity. However, the government eventually failed to implement a programme because the DYP opposed the policy drafts prepared by the SHP (which controlled the Ministry of Labour and Social Security). The underlying reason appears to be the conflicting views of labour and business on this issue. Instead of unemployment insurance, the coalition government prioritized a very limited unemployment protection scheme for employees of state-owned companies.

In sum, most governments since the 1950s supported the introduction of unemployment insurance, at least in their official discourse. At least four different governments seriously pursued the creation an unemployment protection programme. Yet, two of these governments failed as they were prematurely pushed out of power. The other two governments appeared unwilling to break the deadlock between the opposing interests of business and labour.

6. Implications for Comparative Research

In this paper, we explored why it took more than half a century for Turkey to introduce unemployment insurance. The policy was first mentioned by policymakers as early as 1935. However, it was only implemented in 1999, after countless Ministers of Labours of changing governments had failed to realize their policy proposals. Our historical analysis showed that there were at least four windows of opportunity, during which the government of the day seriously aimed to adopt the programme and were close to doing so. Yet, they failed either because of political instability or because of an unwillingness to adjudicate between deeply conflicting goals of labour and business.

From the 1950s onwards, successive governments worked on drafting unemployment insurance legislation. In the late 1950s, the Democrat Party government planned to introduce legislation to parliament. Yet, it was swept from power by a military intervention. This intervention, however, did not do away with plans to insure employees against job loss. On the contrary, in the 1960s the policy became a bipartisan development goal. In the mid-1960s, the Justice Party government prepared legislation, but found itself in a difficult spot when labour and business expressed conflicting views on the issue. The former wanted unemployment insurance, but only on the condition that severance pay was not retrenched, whereas the latter only accepted unemployment insurance if severance pay was retrenched. In the face of this disagreement, the Justice Party government chose to postpone the policy and the centre-right became more lukewarm towards policy adoption. The centre-left, however, continued to support the policy. Thus, when the Republican People's Party led a coalition government in the late 1970s, it resumed work on the policy in earnest. However, the government faced deep economic and political instability and was swept from power before it could implement the policy.

The 1980 military intervention put unemployment protection off the table for a decade. The Motherland Party governments even openly expressed their opposition to the programme. In the early 1990s, however, the issue was brought back on the table, when a centrist coalition government formed by the True Path Party and Social Democrat People's Party promised to enact unemployment insurance. However, this government was, again, torn between the conflicting goals of labour and business and was unable or unwilling to adjudicate between them. Instead, it implemented only a very limited scheme for workers form state-owned enterprises affected by privatization.

Eventually, in 1999 a coalition government headed by a left-of-centre Prime Minister passed unemployment insurance legislation. It did so without reforming severance pay, thus adhering to the demands of labour. However, the legislation was watered down compared to previous drafts. More importantly, it was essentially a fig leaf for labour in a comprehensive cost-cutting social security reform that fulfilled key demands of business. In this sense, the deadlock between labour and business was only resolved by making unemployment insurance a relatively unimportant part of a much bigger deal.

So, what implications can be drawn from the case for the comparative literature? At least some of the key findings from comparative research on unemployment insurance introduction around the world are confirmed. Yet, others appear to be less relevant in the Turkish case. With regards to economic factors, the comparative literature highlights two factors: industrialisation and the risk of unemployment (Kim 2010). First, concerning industrialisation it is true that the importance of unemployment protection increased as the country became increasingly industrialised. However, the policy was first discussed and nearly implemented while Turkey was still a very rural country with a small industrial workforce. Thus, industrialisation does not seem to be a precondition for programme adoption. This is confirmed by the experience of other countries in the Global South. Among the recent adopters, Vietnam (2006) and Laos (2013) implemented the policy at relatively low levels of economic development.

Second, concerning the risk of unemployment, the comparative literature stresses that many countries introduce the policy after economic crises. This was also the case in Turkey, which was in the midst of a deep recession in 1999. The crisis increased social security deficits and thus made reforms more urgent. In this sense, it probably facilitated the passing of unemployment insurance legislation. Yet, this point remains somewhat speculative.

With regards to the role of business and labour the comparative literature arrives at mixed findings. On the one hand, labour is assumed to support the policy because it clearly protects the interests of workers. On the other hand, in some countries labour opposed unemployment insurance at first (Flora and Alber 1981). In the Turkish case, the picture is similarly mixed. From the beginning, labour unions consistently demanded unemployment protection and thus kept the issue on the political agenda. However, they also balked at any attempts to combine the policy with a severance pay reform. In this sense, their support was not at all unconditional.

Concerning the role of business, the comparative literature argues that under certain circumstances business groups support insuring employees against job loss (Mares 2003). In the Turkish case, in some instances business representatives did call for the policy to be implemented. However, all things considered, business effectively blocked the policy by making its implementation conditional on severance pay retrenchment. Still, this means that it preferred insurance over other instruments to protect the unemployed, such as severance pay.

With regards to political factors, the comparative literature is divided. Concerning regime type, there are diverging views whether this factor matters and, if it does, what kind of regime type makes policy adoption more likely (Schmitt et al. 2015, Mares and Carnes 2009). In the Turkish case, one could make a case for democracy for three reasons. First, it seems likely that without the military coup the Democrat Party government would have introduced the programme around. Second, the 1980 military intervention changed the political economy in such a manner that the policy was off the table for a decade. Third, it was a democratic government which eventually introduced the policy. However, this evidence should not be stretched too far, considering that Turkey was ruled mostly by democratic governments after 1950.

Concerning partisan politics, the comparative literature largely agrees that centre-left parties have generally been more supportive of unemployment protection (Flora and Alber 1981, Hicks 1999). This is clearly confirmed in the Turkish case. Centre-left parties have consistently called for the policy to be

enacted and (in their admittedly short spells of power) tried to implement it. In contrast, the position of centre-right parties was more ambivalent. Yet, one should not overlook that at various points, centre-right parties also voiced their support for the policy. Moreover, in the end it was a Minister of Labour from the Motherland Party, which had most consistently opposed unemployment insurance, who was able to push his bill through parliament. Therefore, one should be cautious to not overemphasise the role of partisan politics.

With regards to diffusion, the comparative literature found that both membership in the ILO and the existence of comprehensive social security systems increase the likelihood for program adoption in a country (Schmitt et al. 2015; Usui 1994). Both arguments are clearly supported by the Turkish case. In fact, the ILO even participated in early work on drafting legislation in the late 1950s. Moreover, in policy debates Western European welfare states were repeatedly referred to as an ideal that Turkey should strive to achieve. Therefore, the process of unemployment insurance adoption can be very much seen as a process of diffusion, as previous research indicates (Özkan 2011).

While the case thus confirms many, but not all, expectations of the comparative literature, it needs to be pointed out that the most important factor for late policy adoption was the existing institutional system of unemployment protection in the country (Özkan 2011). It was the existence of an increasingly generous severance pay programme, perceived as assuming an unemployment protection function (Basterzi 1995), that led to the belated policy adoption. We have seen that from the first policy proposals in the mid-1950s, plans to implement unemployment insurance have always been connected to the question of what would happen to severance pay legislation. This issue had a crucial impact on how labour and business positioned themselves towards the new policy. And this, in turn, shaped the position of political parties and thus governments. Had there been no well-institutionalized severance pay provisions in place, it is very likely that unemployment insurance would have been implemented decades earlier. Successive governments simply proved unable or unwilling to break the deadlock between labour and business. Therefore, we conclude that the existing institutional setting of unemployment protection was the most important reason behind the late introduction of unemployment insurance in Turkey.

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