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

Universität Bielefeld

Working Paper No. 2

Kerem Gabriel Öktem and Cansu Erdoğan

Between Welfare State and (State-organised) Charity:

How Turkey's Social Assistance Regime Blends Two Competing Policy Paradigms

2018

Abstract

It is little known that over the last four decades, Turkey has built an elaborate social assistance regime, which provides extensive coverage of the poor but lacks some of the key characteristics of European minimum income protection systems. In this paper, we trace the historical and ideational roots of this regime and argue that the structure and design of the regime embody an uneasy synthesis of two competing policy paradigms: a welfare state paradigm and a state-organised charity paradigm. These paradigms can be identified in two key statutes – the Social Pensions Act of 1976 and the introduction of the Fund for the Encouragement of Social Cooperation and Solidarity in 1986 – and ensue from distinct broader discourses, namely a welfare state discourse and a re-interpretation of what was perceived as Turkish-Islamic traditions.

Social pensions for the aged and the disabled were introduced in 1976 as 'an important step towards becoming a welfare state'. Delivering cash benefits regularly and based on clear eligibility criteria, the social pension programme aimed to provide social rights to a significant section of the poor. By contrast, the Fund for the Encouragement of Social Cooperation and Solidarity was created in 1986 explicitly as an antithesis to rights-based social pensions. Aiming to side-line the bureaucracy associated with modern welfare state policies, the Fund provided irregular cash and in-kind benefits to the poor through a network of para-statal charitable foundations (*vakıf*) established all over Turkey. Re-interpreting Turkish-Islamic history and charitable foundations as an 'example of deep-rooted and long lasting social cooperation and solidarity', the Fund and its associated Foundations were designed to build on and foster widespread charitable practices rooted in Islam (*zekat*). Thus, the goal was to ensure that 'state and nation work hand in hand for the destitute'.

Today, Turkey's social assistance regime blends these two contradicting views on social assistance. The establishment of this synthesis is connected to a World Bank project in the early 2000s that started a popular conditional cash transfer programme and strengthened the institutionalization of the Fund and the Foundations. Today, in line with the state-organised charity paradigm, most social assistance in Turkey is provided by the Foundations and does not confer legal entitlements to beneficiaries. At the same time, social assistance is today mostly provided in the form of regular cash benefits with clear eligibility criteria, just as the welfare state paradigm envisioned. The new hybrid approach to social assistance policy thus leaves Turkey between aspirations to become a modern welfare state and notions of a developed charity state.

Table of contents

List of Figures

1. Introduction

It is little known that over the last four decades, Turkey has built an elaborate social assistance regime, which provides extensive coverage of the poor but at the same time lacks some of the key characteristics of European minimum income protection systems. It is a complex and idiosyncratic regime, featuring both, well-institutionalized, regular and rights-based benefits, and irregular, non-rights based, in-kind and cash transfers. While the former are grounded in codified legislations and regulations (what is called 'social' cash transfers in the global social policy literature), the latter are based on opaque legal foundations and appear at times to be little more than convenient tools for clientelism. Within the area of social cash transfers, some programmes have clearly established eligibility criteria that are assessed through sophisticated means-tests, whereas for other programmes eligibility criteria are not even fully made public. On the administrative level, the regime is perplexing as well. It features a Ministry for Family and Social Policies that is supposed to have centralised the policy area under one roof, but most benefits are provided through a network of para-state charitable foundations, which are neither fully public nor private institutions (Öktem 2018).

In this paper, we aim to make sense of this puzzling social assistance regime. Following increasingly vocal arguments that ideas are crucial in explaining social policy (Béland 2005), we argue that the structure and design of the regime embody an uneasy synthesis of two competing 'policy paradigms' (Hall 1993): a welfare state paradigm and a state-organised charity paradigm. These paradigms can be identified in two key statutes – the Social Pensions Act of 1976 and the Act that established the Fund for the Encouragement of Social Cooperation and Solidarity in 1986 – as well as in the discourse surrounding the introduction of these two laws. These two policy paradigms themselves ensue from distinct broader discourses, on the one hand, a welfare state discourse, which is itself embedded in broader discourses of modernization and development, and, on the other hand, a re-interpretation of historical Turkish-Islamic practices of poor relief.

Social pensions for the aged and the disabled were introduced in 1976 as 'an important step towards becoming a welfare state'.[1] Delivering cash benefits regularly and based on clear eligibility criteria, the programme aimed to provide social rights to a significant section of the poor. By contrast, the Fund for the Encouragement of Social Cooperation and Solidarity was created in 1986 as an antithesis to rights-based social pensions. Aiming to overcome the bureaucracy and inflexibility associated with modern welfare state policies, the Fund was designed to provide irregular cash and in-kind benefits to the poor through a network of para-state charitable foundations (*vakıf*) established all over Turkey. Re-interpreting Turkish-Islamic history and charitable foundations symbols of social cooperation and solidarity, the Fund and its associated Foundations were designed to build on and foster widespread charitable practices rooted in Islam (*zekat*). With the creation of the Fund and the Foundations, the government aimed to ensure that 'state and nation work hand in hand for the destitute'.[2]

Today, Turkey's social assistance regime blends these two contradicting paradigms. The establishment of this synthesis is connected to the World Bank's Social Risk Mitigation Project in the early 2000s that started a popular conditional cash transfer programme and strengthened the institutionalization of the

---

[1] Millet Meclisi 1976: 1.
[2] T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi 28.5.1986: 511.

Fund and the Foundations. Today, most social assistance in Turkey is provided by the Foundations and is not based on legislated social rights. In these respects, it follows the state-organised charity paradigm. However, most social assistance takes the form of regular cash benefits with clear eligibility criteria, like the welfare state paradigm envisioned. We argue that the new hybrid paradigm leaves Turkey between aspirations of becoming a modern welfare state and notions of a developed charity state.

The paper is structured as follows. In section 2, we discuss how and why ideas and policy paradigms matter for social policy and particularly for social assistance. Combining a policy analysis of key legislations with a qualitative content analysis of parliamentary proceedings surrounding these legislations and development plans of the era, we show in section 3 and 4 how these two policy paradigms are captured in two key policies of Turkey's social assistance regime: the Law on Social Pensions of 1976 and the Law that established the Fund for the Encouragement of Social Cooperation and Solidarity in 1986. This analysis of the policy paradigms is followed by a discussion of how the contemporary social assistance regime in Turkey blends these paradigms to produce a hybrid regime, in section 5. In the conclusion, we situate our findings in the nascent literature on how social assistance regimes beyond the classic welfare states are created by 'synthesizing disparate ideas' (Leisering et al. 2017).

2. The Role of Ideas and Policy Paradigms in Social Assistance

To understand and explain policy change, scholars increasingly turn to the roles of ideas and discourses (Béland 2005). Labelled ´discursive institutionalism´ (Schmidt 2008 and 2011) or ´constructivist institutionalism´ (Hay 2006), this scholarship puts emphasis on the *dynamism* of institutions. It focuses on the question of 'how ideas and institutions interact to shape the behavior and decisions of key policy actors' (Béland 2010: 626). In this literature, discourse is used as a 'generic term that encompasses not only the substantive content of ideas but also the interactive processes by which ideas are conveyed' (Schmidt 2008: 304). One of the best-known frameworks to study the role of ideas in policy change is Peter Hall's policy paradigm approach. Adapting Kuhn´s paradigm theory, Hall aims to explain the radical economic policy change from Keynesianism to neoliberalism in the UK during 1970s and 1980s by arguing that:

> […] policy makers customarily work within a framework of ideas and standards that specifies not only the goals of policy and the kind of instruments that can be used to attain them, but also the very nature of the problems they are meant to be addressing. Like a Gestalt, this framework is embedded in the very terminology through which policymakers communicate about their work, and it is influential precisely because so much of it is taken for granted and unamenable to scrutiny as a whole. I am going to call this interpretive framework a policy paradigm (Hall 1993: 279).

Hall indicates three types of policy changes. According to him, first order change refers to adjustments in policy instruments; second order change signifies change of instruments without altering the logic behind the policy; while third order change is 'marked by radical changes in the overarching terms of policy discourse associated with a "paradigm shift"' (Hall 1993: 279). This paradigm shift also correlates with a change of the very actors and institutions of the policy field. While Hall's framework has been criticised for downplaying the dynamism of ideas (Carstensen 2015; Blyth 2002) and the role of 'power'

in the ideational realm (i.e. 'ideational power', Carstensen and Schmidt 2016), it does provide an 'excellent understanding of why policies change so little most of the time but can sometimes change so dramatically' (Baumgartner, 2012: 242). In this paper, we follow Hall's policy paradigm approach to explore the policy paradigms underlying Turkey's social assistance policies. By doing so, we seek to understand the ideational and historical foundations of Turkey's social assistance regime.

Social assistance policy reflects deeply rooted understandings of the relationship between state and citizens. First of all, the policy area presupposes the recognition of poverty as a social problem (Leisering, 2019: 2). Do policymakers perceive poverty as a social problem and do they see it as the responsibility of the state to care for the poor? This question is closely related to the overall assumption of 'collective responsibility for the well-being of the entire population', a key characteristic of welfare states (Kaufmann 2013: 35). In case the state does recognize poverty as a social problem and social assistance policy as the solution to this problem: to which institutions in the 'welfare sector' – public and private – does it assign the responsibility to ameliorate the situation of the poor? These issues show that social assistance policymaking is not merely of a technical nature but is connected to ideas about the relationship between state and citizens. Hence, it is no surprise that scholars have increasingly studied the role of ideas in social assistance (Somers and Block 2005; Seekings 2007; Leisering 2019). They have found that in some cases social assistance does not simply reflect a certain policy paradigm. Instead, as a case study of the Chinese model showed, social assistance regimes can constitute a synthesis of 'disparate ideas' (Leisering et al. 2017), sometimes the result of 'diffusion processes' (Sugiyama, 2011).

In this paper, we show how the development of Turkey's social assistance regime has been shaped by two competing policy paradigms. These policy paradigms are encapsulated in the social pension legislation from 1976 and the legislation that established the Fund for the Encouragement of Social Cooperation and Solidarity from 1986. Within this framework, we also trace discursive strategies which actors pursue to push for the policy paradigms they adhere to. We trace these paradigms by analysing the respective legislations in-depth. Furthermore, we conduct a qualitative content analysis of the surrounding parliamentary debates and of official reports, such as development plans, in which much of the state elite's reasoning on policymaking is captured. In an analysis of social assistance policies, primary legislation and official reports, we aim to trace how policymakers in the 2000s have come to synthesize these contradictory approaches to social assistance policy to develop a hybrid social assistance regime.

With this analysis we aim to contribute to the growing literature on social assistance in Turkey. Much of this literature traces the expansion of this policy area over the last decade, tying it to the politics of the governing Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) (Urhan and Urhan 2015; Metin 2011), to the changing mode of 'capitalist accumulation' (Kutlu 2014), to the withering of the old welfare regime (Buğra and Keyder 2006). Some scholars also focus on political aspects of the benefit distribution of social assistance programmes (Yörük 2012; Aytac, 2014) and explore links between social assistance and clientelism (Urhan and Urhan 2015). These themes broadly resonate with the emergent literature on social assistance in the Global South, which identifies a massive expansion of social cash transfers over the past two decades (Barrientos 2013) yet diagnoses persistent clientelism in the provision of social cash transfers (Leisering 2019). In this sense, the Turkish case appears to mirror developments in the Global South. However, the case also features a puzzling internal heterogeneity

within the regime, which cannot be easily explained. Rights-based programmes seem to coexist with charity-like transfers making broad-brushed assessments of the case difficult (Öktem 2018). To make sense of Turkey's puzzling social assistance regime, we believe that one needs to focus on the historical and ideational roots. Therefore, we build on existing research on the history (Baytal 2009; Düzgün 2009; 1999 and 2006), and particularly the discursive history of poor relief in Turkey (Buğra 2008), to make sense of Turkey's puzzling social assistance.

3. The Welfare State Paradigm: The Introduction of Social Pensions (1976)

The introduction of social pensions in 1976 marks a turning point for Turkey's modern social assistance system. Social pensions are non-contributory pensions, which are usually means-tested. Most social pensions in low and middle-income countries are means-tested, i.e. they are social assistance for older persons (Böger and Leisering 2017). In the early 1970s, social assistance was arguably a neglected policy area in Turkey. There was only one longstanding small social cash transfer administered by the General Directorate for Foundations (*Vakıflar Genel Müdürlügü*, VGM), the Indigent Benefit, which provided decent benefits to around 1000 persons in need, besides various in-kind transfers with limited scope (Öktem 2018: 19-24). Thus, the central government did not seriously assume a more far-reaching responsibility for the well-being of the poor through social assistance. Instead, poor relief was mostly outsourced to local administrations and the voluntary sector (Bugra 2008; Özbek 2006). This changed with the introduction of social pensions, which were introduced under a *welfare state paradigm*.

3.1. Modernization, the Welfare State and Social Pensions

The Turkish state had declared itself to be a welfare state (*sosyal devlet*) in its 1961 constitution. Becoming a welfare state was part of the broader goals of modernization and development, which were encapsulated in Atatürk's well-known slogan that Turkey should aim to catch-up to the level of contemporary, i.e. Western civilization. If Turkey was to keep up with modern countries, it needed to become a welfare state. In line with the constitution's welfare state clause, the first five-year development plan in 1963 set out the goal of universalizing social security by creating 'a general social security system that includes old age and sickness insurances for everyone' (DPT 1963: 109-110). From 1945 onwards, Turkey had introduced social insurance programmes against key social risks, such as old age and sickness, yet coverage remained limited. In light of these problems with social insurance, the second five-year development plan in 1968 came to the conclusion that 'social security cannot be provided by social insurances alone' (DPT 1968: 209). The third development plan in 1972 spelt out the implication of this assessment when it framed social assistance for the first time unequivocally as an integral part of the overall social security system that complemented social insurance *(*DPT 1972: 795). Accordingly, the plan evaluated the social assistance system in Turkey and proposed new policies. 'In the development of social assistance policies', it argued, 'priority should be given to children, women and *older persons in need who are outside of the social security system*' (DPT 1972: 808, emphasis added).

In 1973, the Republican People Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, CHP) proposed to introduce social pensions to 'all people with a low income above a certain age, who are not protected by any social security institution' in its election campaign (CHP, 1973, p. 130). Under the leadership of Bülent Ecevit, the party was in the midst of redefining itself as a centre-left party along the lines of European social democracy. Although this promise to introduce social pensions drew public interest and made headlines

(Milliyet 1973), the CHP did not implement its proposal when it governed the country in a short-lived coalition government with the Islamist National Salvation Party (*Milli Selamet Partisi*, MSP) in 1974. A proposal to create a social assistance system for those who are not protected by social insurance still found its way to the coalition protocol. This system was to pay special attention to the aged, children in need of protection and the disabled. Yet, this proposal was not implemented by the CHP-MSP government.

The CHP's main rival, the centre-right Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi*), which came to power in 1975 heading a coalition government, was quick to seize the opportunity and drafted a social pension law that it brought to parliament in 1976. The preamble of the draft law, which was signed by Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel, is testimony to the influence of the welfare state paradigm. Starting with a reference to the welfare state clause of the constitution, it explained that the constitution provided everyone the right to social security and gave the state the duty to provide every human being with a life in dignity. It continued to argue that old-age poverty was shameful for mankind and that the law was drafted to remedy this problem. The preamble concluded with the assertion that the draft law constituted an important step towards becoming a welfare state.[3]

This framing of social pensions as integral to welfare state aspirations also abounds in the parliamentary debates on the legislation. Both opposition and government repeatedly brought up the constitutional clauses that referred to the welfare state and social security and tried to make sense of these concepts. This shows a surprising consensus about the aim to become a welfare state in a politically polarised era. In thinking about the meaning of welfare state and social security, MPs linked the proposed law to these concepts. Reflecting upon the changing nature of social assistance in the modern era, Coşkun Karagözoğlu, an MP for the opposition CHP, argued that 'in our age social assistance has stopped being charity'.[4] Instead, the provision of social assistance was now a responsibility of the state, Karagözoğlu concluded. Similarly, Mehmet Altınsoy from the centre-right opposition Democratic Party (*Demokratik Parti,* DP) reflected upon the concepts of welfare state and social security. Defining the welfare state as 'a state that realizes social justice and social security', he argued that 'social security means that all citizens have social security'. Blurring the lines between 'welfare state' and 'modern state' he concluded that state support to poor older persons should be 'one of the most important features of the modern state'.[5]

The issue was framed in a very similar manner by government representatives. Mirroring the opposition's view on state responsibility for the poor, a senator of the Justice Party, Cevdet Aykan, argued that it was the duty of the state to take care of people in need.[6] The government's viewpoint was most clearly formulated by the Minister for Social Security, Ahmet Mahir Ablum. In two similarly long speeches in the lower and the upper houses of parliament, he went to great length to integrate the proposed social pension legislation to the government's other social security reforms and showed how the government aimed to realize the vision of universal social security, which was first laid out in the five-year development plans. Musing about the idea of the welfare state, he claimed that 'a welfare state

---

[3] Millet Meclisi 1976: 1.
[4] Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi 3.6.1976: 79.
[5] Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi 25.5.1976: 667.
[6] Cumhuriyet Senatosu Tutanak Dergisi 24.6.1976: 624.

is a state that guarantees humane living standards to citizens living in the country and takes measures to ensure that citizens have no fear of the future'. In his view, the proposed legislation had been 'prepared based on this principle'.[7] To conclude, both opposition and government clearly discussed the introduction of social pensions in the context of the welfare state discourse.

3.2. The Welfare State Paradigm in the Legislation and in Parliamentary Debates

The welfare state discourse was also reflected in the legislation itself. Representatives of the government claimed that this law would give Turkey – in the words of Hasan Tosyalı from the Republican Reliance Party (*Cumhuriyetçi Güven Parti*, CGP) – 'the most progressive social security law in the whole world'. In their view, it was unparalleled throughout the world.[8] However, the design of the legislation was quite similar in key respects to non-contributory means-tested pensions widespread in Western welfare states. The legislation thus put into practice the welfare state discourse in several ways. First, it put the responsibility of providing social assistance squarely to the state bureaucracy. The social insurance institution for civil servants, *Emekli Sandığı*, was put in charge of providing social pensions. This meant that social pensions were an integral part of the social security system and that voluntary organizations, which previously played an important role in poor relief, were not included in the welfare provision. Thus, the bureaucracy was responsible for providing social assistance.

Second, the legislation clearly defined the target groups that would receive benefits: over 65 year-olds and disabled persons. To be eligible, people from these groups had to fulfil strict criteria such as being unable to work, having no social protection and having a low income. Furthermore, claimants had to obtain a report from a hospital showing inability to work (and in case of disability: their degree of disability). Eligibility would be assessed by the bureaucracy based on the criteria laid out in the legislation and further details regarding the bureaucratic procedures were to be specified in a separate regulation.

Third, the legislation specified a fixed monthly benefit for social pensions. The benefit level was tied to an indicator used in the calculation of civil servant wages. Thereby, policymakers presumably aimed to ensure that the real value of social pension benefits was protected against inflation. In addition, pensioners would also have access to free healthcare in state hospitals. Overall, the legislation thus clearly stated who would get what under which circumstances by whom and how. In essence, it thus gave a well-defined segment of the population specifically circumscribed social rights that would be implemented by the state.

The parliamentary debates on the social pension legislation reflected this approach. To be sure, some lawmakers criticized the idea of providing cash benefits to the poor and feared that these benefits would constitute perverse incentives.[9] Yet, most accepted that aspirations to become a modern welfare state meant that the state was now responsible for the well-being of the poor, which included providing cash benefits. Accordingly, they argued about technocratic details of the law, such as the strictness of eligibility criteria and the generosity of cash benefits, and bureaucratic details of the implementation of the law, such as how to best assess eligibility. Yet, they generally agreed that it was the state's

---

[7] Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi 25.5.1976: 673.
[8] Ibid: 666.
[9] Ibid: 676.

responsibility to provide social assistance and that, therefore, it was up to the state bureaucracy to implement social pensions.

Among the most important points of contention were the eligibility criteria set out in the legislation. Opposition MPs and also some government lawmakers repeatedly complained that the legislation was too restrictive and that due to this only few people would benefit from social pensions.[10] For instance, Hasan Yıldırım from the CHP voiced his concern that of the 2.5 million older persons only five hundred or a thousand would benefit from the law if the conditions of access were not changed.[11] One criterion that parliamentarians severely criticized was that beneficiaries had to have no-one, who is by law required to take care of them. In accordance with this, even potential alimony claims could be taken into account when assessing eligibility, according to these lawmakers. Thus, only those poor elderly and disabled, who had no relatives, would be eligible for benefits. Similarly, opposition MPs also criticized that a doctor's report would have to be obtained from a state hospital. Poor people in remote regions like Eastern Anatolia, they argued, would have a hard time obtaining such medical reports as there were simply no hospitals in their places of living.

Government representatives responded that these fears were exaggerated and that strict eligibility criteria were necessary. They justified this with the experiences with non-contributory veteran's pensions for participants of the War of Independence. This legislation had been passed in 1968 and did not contain clear and specific criteria that would restrict access to benefits because legislators at that time believed that restrictions, such as means-tests, would be an insult to the 'heroes' of the Independence War.[12] As a result of this lack of access restrictions, many people, who should not have been eligible for benefits, were able to claim benefits, government lawmakers argued. In an interesting case of policy learning, the strict eligibility criteria of social pensions were thus formulated as a response to the negative experiences with veteran's pensions.[13] In any case, lawmakers from the government claimed that a regulation would specify eligibility criteria in more detail to overcome problems, such as the alimony issue.

A second crucial topic in the parliamentary debates was the generosity of benefits. Opposition lawmakers repeatedly argued that low benefit levels showed that the government was only paying lip service to its welfare state aspirations. If the rhetoric of a minimum income guarantee was to be taken serious, they argued, social pension benefits would have to be raised to the level of the minimum wage.[14] However, government MPs defended the benefit level by recurring to a constitutional clause on social security according to which the state would need to take into account its limited resources when

---

[10] Several lawmakers proposed to vastly increase the scope of the legislation. For instance, initially, the draft law did not include the disabled, but after many complaints from both government and opposition MPs, the law was amended to include this group. Other proposals, such as to establish non-categorical social assistance were not accepted.

[11] Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi 3.6.1976: 78.

[12] This argument was made, among others, by Hüseyin Ataman from the People's Party (Millet Partisi), Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi 19.1.1968: 489.

[13] This is suggested by the head of the Budget and Planning Commission Ahmet Demir Yüce, from the AP, Cumhuriyet Senatosu Tutanak Dergisi 30.6.1976: 697.

[14] For instance Coşkun Karagözoğlu from the CHP made this point, Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi, 25.5.1976: 679.

aiming to fulfil its social aims.[15] Thus, even restrictions in social rights were justified within the discourse of constitutional welfare state provisions.

In fact, the way benefit levels were defined was actually a policy innovation, according to government politicians. In the draft law, the benefit had been simply stated as an absolute number. This had been customary in some earlier legislation, such as veteran's pensions. This meant that the real value of benefits quickly eroded within a few years due to inflation. To protect beneficiaries from inflation, the parliamentary commission decided to tie benefits to an indicator used in the calculation of civil servant wages. The amount calculated in this manner was initially equal to half of the lowest civil servant wage. In this sense, the parliamentary commission had implicitly established a benefit standard, even if this standard was far below the minimum wage. In the time until the legislation was put to the vote, civil servant wages were significantly increased in nominal terms. A senator from the opposition CHP, Hasan Güven, proposed to adjust social pension benefits and set them directly at half the level of the lowest civil servant wage. Yet, parliament shied away from doing so and thus did not establish a clear benefit standard.[16] Still, even without the establishment of a benefit standard, the fact that benefits were tied to an indicator meant that, within the context of bureaucratic rules and procedures, an innovative mechanism for automatic benefit adjustment had been established.

To conclude, the social pension legislation and the surrounding parliamentary debates were deeply influenced by the welfare state paradigm.[17] Both government and opposition discussed the legislation in the context of Turkey's welfare state aspirations. In fact, opposition lawmakers mostly attacked the government based on allegations that social pension legislation provided insufficient social rights. In their view, this showed an insufficient commitment to the welfare state clauses in the constitution. These allegations made sense considering the strict eligibility criteria and limited benefits generosity. Yet, despite limitations the legislation provided social rights to a part of the poor. Focussing on the dimension of 'ideational power' (Carstensen and Schmidt 2016) one can claim that through the welfare state paradigm, the respective actors exerted power through ideas. They aimed to represent a systematic ´road map´ and coherent ideas in line with welfare state aspirations. To this end, referring to the constitution, discussing benefit levels and coverage indicate efforts to persuade other policy actors to acknowledge this new policy through the welfare state discourse.

---

[15] Cumhuriyet Senatosu Tutanak Dergisi, 30.6.1976: 680.
[16] ibid: 694.
[17] A similar framing is also visible in other social policy legislation of that era. For instance, the draft law of the Social Services and Child Protection Services law passed in 1983 described the law as a requirement of the welfare state:

> 'In our age, with the embrace of the concept of the "welfare state", social services have become the responsibility of the state. Social services under state responsibility play an important and effective role in national development of the countries. […] In the field of social services, the provided services [in Turkey] are insufficient in terms of quality and quantity. […] For that reason, and in line with the notion of the "welfare state", it is necessary to establish a new institution in the field of social services and alleviate the related problems.' (Milli Güvenlik Konseyi 1983: 2-8)

4. The State-organised Charity Paradigm: The Fund for the Encouragement of Social Cooperation and Solidarity (1986)

The creation of the Fund for the Encouragement of Social Cooperation and Solidarity (*Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışmayı Teşvik Fonu*, SYDTF) in 1986 marks a second turning point for Turkey's social assistance system. By that time, the power of the welfare state paradigm, which had shaped the introduction of social pensions in 1976, had waned. Although nearly a million people received social pensions, their real value dropped in the face of high inflation, revealing both, the inadequacies of the policy design and successive government's unwillingness to commit to welfare state principles. Moreover, with the coup d'état in 1980 and the ensuing military regime, the ideational foundations of economic and social policymaking had changed. Instead of looking for statist solutions, governments now saw the state as the very problem. The dominance of this anti-statist approach was very pronounced during the Motherland Party (*Anavatan Partisi*, ANAP) governments headed by Turgut Özal (1983-1989). Moreover, the 1980s saw the rise of a new nationalist worldview, the Turkish-Islamic synthesis (*Türk-İslam sentezi*) that emphasised the role of religion in Turkey's society and drew inspiration from the Ottoman Empire legacy. These two ideational underpinnings, anti-statism and the Turkish-Islamic synthesis, were fused in a unique manner in the legislation that established the Fund for the Encouragement of Social Cooperation and Solidarity to constitute a state-organised charity paradigm.

4.1. The Ottoman Legacy and the Rediscovery of Charitable Foundations

This paradigm is characterized by an incorporation of Islamic practices, such as *zekat*, a 2.5 per cent tax over one's wealth in a year, and charitable foundations (*vakıf*) in social assistance provision. These practices play an important role in providing social security and socio-economic development in many Muslim-majority countries through alleviating income asymmetry and poverty and providing welfare (Ahmad 1991; Heyneman 2004; Jawad and Yakut-Cakar 2010). During the Ottoman Empire, social assistance and poor relief had been largely left to these foundations, which fulfilled a variety of social functions, including supporting the poor. This situation changed in the nineteenth century, when the state created a central administration for foundations and the foundations 'lost their relative independence and their capacity to care for the needy' (Özbek 1999: 8). In the Republican era, the Ottoman legacy was generally viewed critically and thus, unsurprisingly, foundations did not regain their historical significance. Still, memories of these foundations lingered in the political discourse of centre-right and Islamist parties which re-imagined a glorious Turkish-Islamic history.

This new perspective on Turkish-Islamic history and the role of foundations was reflected in official documents. The fifth five-year development plan published in 1984 emphasized the role of charitable foundations in society. For social assistance, the plan saw foundations, which were 'functioning based on the principle of voluntariness', as having an important place. Therefore, they would be supported by the state. The plan understood social assistance as dominated by charity and envisioned supporting 'traditional social assistance institutions' (DPT 1984: 155-156). In a nutshell, the development plan shifted from the earlier emphasis on state responsibility for the provision of social assistance towards a model, in which the state facilitated and fostered social assistance by voluntary organizations, i.e. charity.

The change from the welfare state paradigm to a state-organised charity paradigm was reflected in the Fund's legislation. The aim of the Fund was to support citizens in need and ensure a fairer income distribution. Regarding the administrative structure, the legislation established an extra-budgetary Fund, meaning that revenues and expenditures would be free from parliamentary scrutiny. The Fund would be under the control of the prime ministry. Regarding revenues, the legislation allowed for a diverse funding structure. The Fund would receive its income from various state sources, such as traffic fines and advertising revenues of the public broadcasting system. At the same time, the legislation allowed for private donations to the Fund. With regard to the scope of benefits, the legislation remained vague. The Fund was to have two main target groups. First, poor people, who 'are economically in need, are not covered by social protection and do not receive any social security benefits'. Second, a more vaguely defined group of people, who 'could be made useful, productive members of society' if they were provided 'a temporary, small support or education'. These descriptions show that the Fund had a dual approach: To activate people, who were close to the poverty line, and to support the poorest members of society. No further specifications regarding eligibility criteria were made. Moreover, the legislation also did not specify benefit amounts.

In fact, the Fund would not provide social assistance directly. Instead, for the provision of social assistance, the legislation stipulated the creation of charitable Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations (*Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Vakfı, SYDV*) in each district. These Foundations would be nominally private and independent, but would be governed by a Board of Trustees, consisting of local high-level bureaucrats, the local mayor and local philanthropists. This Board would be headed by the district governor, a bureaucrat appointed by the central government. The budget of the Foundations would mainly come from the Fund, but Foundations would also be able to obtain various other revenues. For instance, Foundations would obtain a share of the budget allocated to local administrations and would also receive funds from Islamic-motivated donations (*fitre*, *zekat*). Thus, both the Fund and the Foundations had a dual funding structure, consisting of state-based and private revenues.

Overall, the legislation establishing the Fund had thus a very different approach than the social pension legislation. Instead of putting the responsibility for social assistance provision squarely to the state, the new approach aimed to combine public and private efforts. Instead of providing support through the state bureaucracy, poor relief would be provided by nominally private foundations. Instead of establishing clear conditions of access, the scope was left intentionally broad. Instead of providing regular and fixed cash benefits, benefits would be irregular, variable and could take the form of in-kind and cash benefits. To conclude, benefits would be no more rights-based than charity.

The rationale behind this new approach was explained in the preamble of the draft law. The preamble, which was signed by Prime Minister Turgut Özal, did not frame the legislation in the context of the welfare state but emphasized the Turkish-Islamic ideational roots of the legislation. Arguing that due to its 'religion, traditions and values, Turkish society' was giving 'utmost importance to social solidarity and assistance' it described social solidarity as one of the basic elements of 'our religion', i.e. Islam. Foundations were portrayed as 'the most deep-rooted and long lasting institution of assistance and solidarity of the Islamic-Turkish culture that has existed in Anatolia for a thousand years'. It reiterated the Turkish-Islamic synthesis' perspective according to which foundations had been crucial economic and social institutions that 'protected people in need' and lamented their weakening. Accordingly, the

legislation would not just ameliorate the social problem of poverty, but would also re-invigorate the institution of Turkish foundations as such.[18]

4.2. The New Paradigm in the Parliamentary Debate

In the parliamentary debate, the government did not refer to the welfare state clauses in the constitution.[19] Neither did it make much of an effort to frame the legislation as part of its social security agenda. In fact, neither the Minister of Social Security, nor the Minister for Health and Social Assistance got involved in the parliamentary debate on the Fund's legislation. Yet, the debate contained an illuminating comparison of the old and the new policy paradigm. Arguing against the proposed legislation, Ahmet Memduh Yaşa, an opposition MP for the opposition True Path Party (*Doğru Yol Partisi*, DYP, successor party of the AP, which had introduced social pensions in 1976 stated that 'there is no need for a new system'. According to him, one could simply reform the existing social pension legislation, by changing benefit generosity, lowering the age limit or loosen the eligibility criteria.[20] This argument was countered by Lütfullah Kayalar, a government MP, who summarized the new paradigm. In his view, the social pension legislation and the new legislation were completely different in key respects. First, the two legislations featured completely different benefits types. Social pensions provided regular, clearly defined cash benefits, whereas the Foundations would 'not provide regular benefits that are continuous and within limits'. Implicit in this argument was the idea that standardized monthly benefit rates were too rigid and did not allow for flexible support. That is why the legislation specifically mentioned people who just needed 'a temporary small support'.

Second, benefit access was regulated very differently. Social pensions required claimants to apply for benefits, whereas Foundations would not just accept applications, but would identify eligible beneficiaries even without applications. Underlying this idea was a classic paternalist image of the state as a father ('*devlet baba*'), widespread in Turkey's public discourse. Instead of a modern relationship between state and citizen regulated by rights and duties, a 'loving' and 'compassionate' state would take care of his 'destitute' subjects, according to Kayalar. Third, the financial sources also differed. Social pensions were financed through the general budget of state, whereas the new system would combine resources from taxes and levies with cash or in-kind donations from citizens and thus ensure that 'the state and the nation provide assistance together'. In the case of social pensions, the amount of resources devoted to the programme was also dependent on the number of people that were entitled to and claimed benefits. In the case of the Fund, however, the amount of resources was unrelated to entitlements or benefit claims. Fourth, the welfare sector was envisioned differently. Social pensions were devised with the state at the centre of the system and voluntary organizations were kept outside. In the new legislation, however, the state's role would be to encourage non-state social assistance and

---

[18] Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi, 1986: 1-3.

[19] Only the centre-left *Halkçı Parti* (People's Party, HP, successor of the CHP) referred to these clauses and tried to relate the new legislation to the welfare state principle. In their perspective, the new legislation deviated from the modern, rights-based approach to social assistance and returned to an anachronistic charity approach, which was 'inappropriate for the state', in the words of MP Hüseyin Avni Sağesen (Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi 28.5.1986: 516.

[20] T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 28.5.1986: 506.

coordinate public and private support mechanisms. In Kayalar's words, through the Fund and the Foundations, 'state and nation work hand in hand for the destitute'.

Last, the role of the bureaucracy was also very different. Whereas the social pension legislation gave the state bureaucracy the responsibility to implement the policy, the Fund was to rely on a network of para-statal foundations. In Kayalar's view, social pensions were devised with a centralist mind-set, whereas the new legislation would by-pass bureaucratic obstacles and provide on-site help very fast.[21] This contrast hints at the ambivalent stance of the government towards the bureaucracy and bureaucratic rules. In the welfare state discourse, the bureaucracy had been seen as a solution for a social problem. In order to ensure that benefits would be given to the right persons, lawmakers heatedly discussed how to best formulate eligibility criteria. With the right legislation, they believed, the bureaucracy would be able to ameliorate poverty. Accordingly, the social pension legislation had clearly laid out conditions of access and spelled out which documents were required to check eligibility. In the 1986 debate, bureaucratic procedures were understood as obstacles for the poor to receive benefits, not just by the government, but also by some opposition lawmakers, who applauded the government for not having prepared the legislation with a 'bureaucratic mindset'.[22] This understanding of bureaucratic rules and procedures as a problem instead of a solution was connected with the widespread reservations toward centralism. To provide just one example, the preamble of the draft law evoked the image of 'a bureaucrat who resides in Ankara' and cannot help 'a peasant in Siirt', a remote province in Eastern Anatolia, fast enough.[23]

However, hostility towards bureaucratic principles did not mean hostility towards bureaucrats. Although not state agencies in the strict sense, the Foundations that would provide social assistance were to be headed by bureaucrats appointed by the central government. Moreover, funds from local administrations, which were not headed by bureaucrats, but by local, elected politicians, would be transferred to the Foundations which were governed by bureaucrats. However, these bureaucrats, appointed by the central government, would no longer be tied to rules and principles laid out in legislations and regulations. Instead, they could by-pass, for instance, the local branches of the social security bureaucracy, to provide assistance as they see fit. Thus, in the new paradigm the problem does not appear to be bureaucrats as such, but rather bureaucratic principles and procedures – part and parcel of the modern state.

Considering this very different approach to social assistance, it is only logical that the parliamentary debate did not focus on issues such as benefit generosity or access conditions, which had been crucial in the social pension debates. Rather, opposition lawmakers criticized the new institutions, the Fund and the Foundations, due to their non-transparent nature, which could lead to the misuse of funds, clientelism and corruption.[24] The establishment of Foundations proved to be controversial also in other respects. Government representatives, such as Lütfullah Kayalar, reiterated the Turkish-Islamic synthesis' view:

---

[21] Ibid: 511.
[22] Ibid: 505.

[24] Ibid: 505, 507 and 537 (for the Fund) and Ibid: 504, 515 and 537 (for the Foundations).

'Foundations, which have been one of the most important social assistance and solidarity institutions of the Turkish-Islamic world, continue to exist in our days. As institutions with strong religious beliefs and thoughts, Foundations have been created everywhere in the Turkish-Islamic world as embodiments of compassion and kindness, and have made a huge progress in the Ottoman Empire. [...] Sadly, foundations have been neglected for a long time. However, a nation cannot deny its essence for a long time. In the end, a nation returns to its essence. In today's Turkey [...] the spirit of foundations has started to awake.'[25]

One ANAP MP, Ahmet Karaevli, connected this view to the discourse on modernization and development that had underpinned the welfare state paradigm:

'Of course we aim to catch-up with Western countries in terms of material welfare [....], but with regards to social solidarity we want to surpass them. Because there are examples in our history for this. The Foundation system is really a system that stems from Turkish-Islamic culture and civilization and the Westerners copied this from us. I am asking you, should we not take our own history as an example? Should we instead regard the West or socialists as an example?'[26]

Whereas the welfare state paradigm had drawn inspiration from modern policies in the West, the new paradigm drew inspiration from Turkish-Islamic history and culture, which it saw as superior to the West. Underlying this perspective was presumably the long-held belief of conservative circles in Turkey that in order to catch-up with the West it was paramount to copy only the West's technological innovation, while staying true to one's own cultural traditions. However, opposition lawmakers, particularly from right-wing parties, argued that the legislation, in fact, deviated from Ottoman historical practices of charitable foundations. They held that the Foundations to be created for social assistance provision had nothing to do with Ottoman history, because throughout history, the state had never created foundations. Foundations had always been private institutions established by philanthropists.[27] In light of these arguments, one can conclude that by creating this vast network of charitable foundations, the legislation did not simply revive Turkish-Islamic traditions but re-interpreted them to create a novel kind of institution. This was implicitly accepted by the government. Emphasising that citizens could make religious (Islamic) donations to the foundations, Lütfullah Kayalar argued that this example of charity was 'similar to the solidarity found in our deep-rooted history, but in line with the necessities of our age'.[28]

To conclude, with the Fund's establishment a new policy paradigm eclipsed the old paradigm. Having its ideational roots in a Turkish-Islamic synthesis as much as in anti-statist sentiments, this approach can be best summarized as state-organised charity. In this perspective, social assistance is perceived primarily as voluntary social assistance and more specifically as religiously-rooted charity. Therefore, the state's role is to foster and coordinate charity. For this purpose, the government established an extra-budgetary Fund and a network of para-state Foundations that both relied on public and private financial sources.

---

[25] Ibid: 510.
[26] Ibid: 520.
[27] Ibid: 523.
[28] Ibid: 511.

Although nominally private, these Foundations were to be headed by bureaucrats. In contrast to the former social assistance policy paradigm, actors did not try to persuade others systematically of 'cognitive validity' of their ideas. Rather, they aimed to 'depoliticize ideas' (Carstensen and Schmidt 2016: 329) through emphasizing the duties of Islam, i.e giving zakat and solidarity within a Muslim community. Therefore, the establishment of para-state Foundations are justified on the grounds of Islamic traditions and principles.

5. Blending the two Paradigms: The Emergence of a Hybrid Policy Paradigm (2001 -)

Over the past decades, social pensions and the Fund shaped Turkey's social assistance regime. Although new programmes were established, most social assistance expenditure was devoted to and most beneficiaries received transfers through social pensions or through the Fund and the Foundations. However, from 2000 onwards this uneasy co-existence began to change as a new hybrid approach that merged both paradigms became dominant. In a nutshell, the new approach builds on regular social cash transfers with clear eligibility criteria, as in the welfare state paradigm. Yet, these benefits are provided by para-state Foundations, which are the trademark of the state-organised charity paradigm and are mostly not based on legislated social rights and entitlements.

5.1. The World Bank's Social Risk Mitigation Project

The establishment of the hybrid paradigm is closely connected to a World Bank initiative in the early 2000s. In the midst of a deep economic crisis in 2001, the World Bank launched the Social Risk Mitigation Project, which aimed at 'alleviating the impact of current economic crisis on the most vulnerable population' through developing the capacity of institutions responsible for providing social services and social assistance, and initiating a social assistance programme (Legal Dept of World Bank 2001: 15). The cornerstone was the establishment of a conditional cash transfer (CCT) programme, one of the World Bank's favourite policy models in the 2000s that tied the payment of benefits to the poor to their participation in health and education systems (Leisering 2019). In addition, the assessment of poverty would be connected to a sophisticated means-test to ensure that only the poor would be eligible for benefits.

Among the different institutions that were providing social assistance in Turkey at that point in time – the Fund and the Foundations, the social insurance institution for civil servants (*Emekli Sandığı)*, the Social Services and Child Protection Institution (*Sosyal Hizmetler ve Çocuk Esirgeme Kurumu*) and the General Directorate for Foundations (*Vakıflar Genel Müdürlügü*) – the World Bank chose to work with the Fund and the Foundations. According to the loan agreement, the 'overall Project oversight and management' was to be 'under the responsibility of the SYDTF' (Legal Dept of World Bank 2001: 19). In terms of legal foundations, the CCT was to be simply based on a Fund Committee decision, so no separate legislation was required.

While deciding to work with the Fund and the Foundations, the World Bank was by all accounts acutely aware of the limited institutionalization of these organisations. Given that they had been established with the explicit aim of bypassing the regular bureaucracy, it is no surprise that bureaucratic capacity was initially perceived to be insufficient for the proper implementation of the CCT. Thus, in addition to conducting the institutional strengthening component of the project, the World Bank made the passing

of an 'improved organizational framework law for the SYDTF and SYDVs […] a condition of disbursement for the CCT' funding (World Bank 2001: 27). In line with this demand, the AKP government created the General Directorate for Social Solidarity and Assistance (*Sosyal Yardımlar ve Dayanışma Genel Müdürlüğü*, SYDGM) in 2004 to manage the Fund. The previous coalition government had already drafted a law to create such a General Directorate in 2001. Yet, it did not implement this draft law.

The preamble of the draft law creating the SYDGM reflected a change in the way the Fund was perceived. This preamble was in fact mainly copied from the preamble of the draft law that the previous government had written in 2001 and that had been signed by the then Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit. While the Fund had been created as an antithesis to the welfare state paradigm in 1986, the preamble began with the assertion that the 'Fund is one of the key social service and social assistance institutions that implements the welfare state principle of the constitution'.[29] Thus, the Fund was now understood as part and parcel of the welfare state.[30] The preamble lamented the lack of bureaucratic capacity and the unclear legal status of the Fund and aimed to integrate it into the bureaucracy. Hence, the World Bank not just strengthened the capacity of the Fund and the Foundations but also apparently helped to trigger a new understanding of these institutions.

5.2. From Irregular Support to Regular Cash Transfers

The World Bank's Social Risk Mitigation Project was highly successful. Within a few years, the CCT it reached more than a million beneficiaries. After the project was finished in 2007, the AKP government continued the programme with domestic funding. The programme's legal foundations, however, remained vague. Instead of creating a separate legislation or incorporating the CCT into the Fund's legislation, the programme remained simply based on a decision by the Fund Committee. This decision, as all decision by the Fund Committee, was not public. Thus, even though the CCT provided regular cash-transfers based on clear eligibility criteria, the program was not necessarily rights-based, given that the legal texts specifying how the program works were not even publicly available. Yet, although the CCT did not grant beneficiaries any entitlements in a strict sense, it signified a clear departure in the approach of the Fund. When the Fund was initially created, the government had aimed to ensure that it would 'not provide regular benefits that are continuous and within limits'. Still, that was exactly what the CCT did: to provide regular benefits that are continuous and within limits. Moreover, to assess eligibility, the CCT relied on a sophisticated bureaucratic procedure: a means-test similar to the one applied in the social pension programme. Such instruments had been perceived as 'bureaucratic hurdles' in 1986, leading the government to eschew them in the Fund's legislation.

Before the World Bank-sponsored CCT, the Fund and the Foundations mostly provided irregular support, just as the ANAP government had envisioned. For this purpose, the Fund transferred a certain share of its revenues to the Foundations. One exception was the Student Grants programme, which from 1992 onwards provided grants to poor university students and assumed the status of a social cash transfer, with fixed monthly benefits. However, Student Grants constituted only a small share of the overall Fund

---

[29] Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi, 2004: 1.
[30] In the parliamentary commission, where the draft law was discussed, opposition MPs voiced their disapproval by arguing that the draft law was against the welfare state principle of the constitution (Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi, 2004: 7).

expenditures. A far larger share of revenues was actually spent not just on irregular social transfers, but also on non-social assistance related items. Although the regulation that specified the details of the Fund's workings clearly stated that the Fund's revenues were to be transferred to the Foundations, it has become customary to transfer part of the revenues to other institutions. Throughout the 1990s, a sizeable share of the overall Fund revenues was, in fact, transferred to other non-social policy related funds or was used to fill holes in the general government budget (Gök 2000). This tendency to use the Fund's resources for non-social assistance related purposes first abated in the late 1990s, when Hasan Gemici from the Democratic Left Party (*Demokratik Sol Parti*, DSP) was in control of the Fund. This trend continued afterwards. The figure below shows how the share of the Fund's expenditure that is transferred to the charitable Foundations developed between 1986 and 2017.
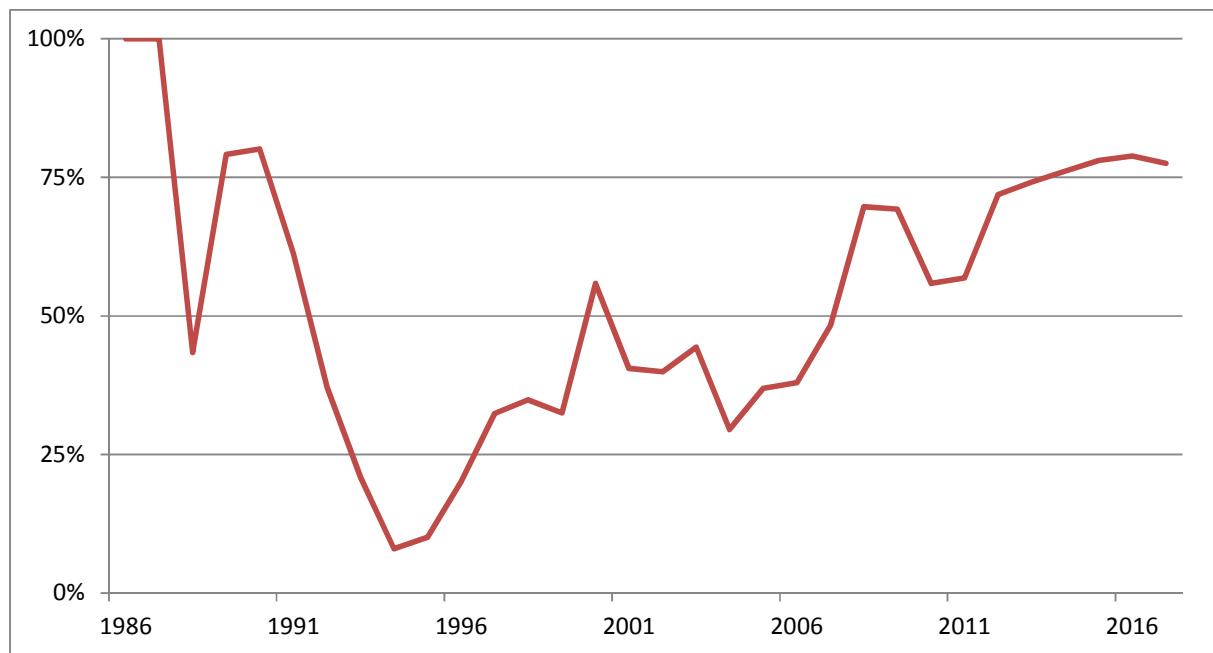

Figure 1. Proportion of SYDTF expenditure transferred to the Foundations

Source: Own calculations based on data from Gök (2000), Hünler (2005), Yay (2015) and various government reports. Data for 2014 is estimated.

The gradual departure from irregular, non-bureaucratic transfers continued in recent years. In 2012, the Fund's legislation was reformed to make all people with a household per capita income below one-third of the minimum wage, in principle, eligible for benefits. Thus, the reform established a clear eligibility criterion for obtaining any kind of support – regular or irregular – from the Fund and the Foundations. Moreover, new social cash transfers for different categorically-defined target groups, such as widows, families of military recruits, orphans and children of military recruits were established. Just as the CCT, these new programmes were based on Fund Committee decisions, thus not conferring legal entitlements to beneficiaries. Yet, they all relied on sophisticated means-tests.

With these new programmes, an ever larger share of the Fund's expenditure was devoted to social cash transfers. The figure below shows how the share of the Fund's expenditure spent on regular, social cash

transfers developed between 1992 and 2016. Between 1986 and 1991 we assume that expenditure on social cash transfers is zero, because the first social cash transfer administered by the foundations, the Student Grants programme, started only in 1992. The figure visualizes how, in recent years, an ever increasing share of the Fund's expenditure is devoted to social cash transfers.
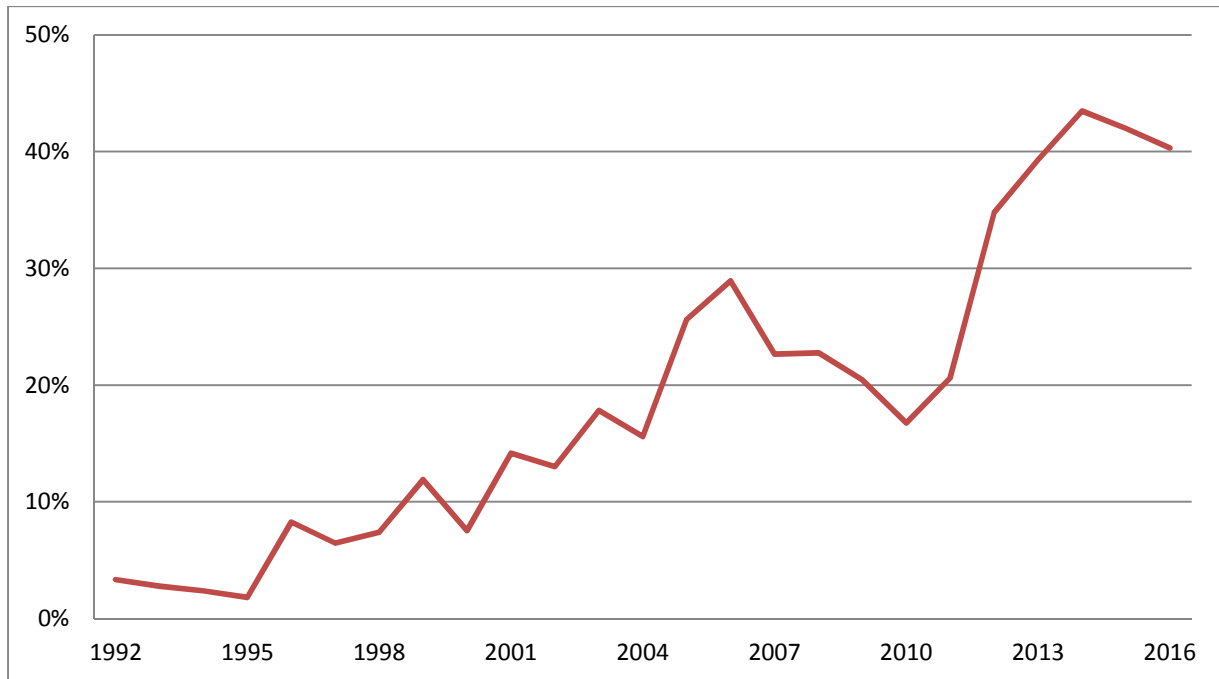

Figure 2. Proportion of SYDTF expenditures devoted to social cash transfers

Source: Own calculations based on data from Gök (2000), Yay (2015) and various government reports.

5.3. Reliance on Public Funding

In addition to the nature of the expenditures of the Fund and the Foundations, their revenue structure also revealed a shift away from the charity paradigm. One of the key tenets of the state-organised charity paradigm had been the idea that the provision of social assistance was not exclusively state responsibility. Instead, voluntary social assistance was seen as crucial. The role of the state was to make public and private social assistance work together, so that 'state and nation work hand in hand for the destitute'. This would be achieved by gathering private donations from individuals, particularly Islamic charity donations. To achieve this, the legislation made it possible for citizens to donate to the Fund and to the local Foundations. Thus, on both levels, revenues combined public and private resources.

While it is difficult to trace the exact revenue structure of the Fund and the Foundations existing data appears to show that efforts to gather revenues through private donations were not too successful. In the 1980s and 1990s, less than one per cent of the Fund's revenues appeared to have come from private donations (Gök 2000). In recent years, the situation appears similar. In 2015, for example, the Fund appears to have gathered no private donations at all. In 2016, private donations constituted less than 0.1

per cent of all revenues.[31] For Foundations, the limited data we have for Bursa and Denizli provinces suggests a similar picture (Alper 1991: 87; Güngör 2014: 135). To conclude, it seems that the Fund and the Foundations did not fulfil policymakers' expectation in gathering private donations. Instead, they remained overwhelmingly publicly-funded institutions.

This does not mean, however, that successive governments gave up on the aim of bringing together public and private efforts in the provision of social assistance. On the contrary, successive governments have been eager to work with non-state welfare producers. For instance, in the 'Grandmother Project', a pilot project which gave grandmothers who help to take care of their grandchildren a monthly cash benefit, was co-financed by the state and employer's organizations, individual firms and labour unions.[32] Yet, in terms of scope and expenditure, such projects combining public and private funds appear to pale into insignificance compared to the purely publicly funded social assistance programmes.

The main institutions of the state-organised charity paradigm thus significantly shifted their approach over the past two decades. However, they did not become obsolete. On the contrary they only have become more important. In recent years, the Foundations have even started to administer programmes that are not related to the Fund. The most striking example for this is that even social pensions, the cornerstone policy of the welfare state paradigm, are today no longer administered by the regular state bureaucracy but are managed by the foundations. This development, more than anything, signifies that the two distinct paradigms have been merged in today's social assistance regime. Notwithstanding severe differences among different programmes, we can state that in contemporary Turkey, social assistance mostly takes the form of regular cash benefits with a fixed amount and based on clear eligibility criteria. However, most programmes are not explicitly rights-based and thus beneficiaries do not have a legal entitlement to receive support. Nevertheless, there is evidence of an increasing 'welfare consciousness' (Marshall 1981) that points to a perception of social assistance as a social right among beneficiaries (Kutlu 2014). Thus, Turkey's social assistance regime today combines key tenets of both, the welfare state paradigm and the state-organised charity paradigm, amounting to a new hybrid policy paradigm.

6. Conclusion

We have explored the historical and ideational foundations of Turkey's social assistance regime showing how the creation of a puzzlingly heterogeneous regime, which provides extensive coverage of the poor but at the same time deviates from some of the other key characteristics of developed welfare states, is connected to two competing policy paradigms. The welfare state paradigm, which was dominant when social pensions were passed in the mid-1970s, saw the state as being responsible for the amelioration of poverty. It envisioned regular and rights-based cash transfers to people in need that would be carried out by the state bureaucracy based on transparent criteria. Despite restrictive access conditions, social pensions largely put into practice this paradigm. In contrast, the state-organised charity paradigm, which

---

[31] Note that for some years, private donations appear higher because supportive payments from other institutions of the central state ('*Merkezi Yönetim Bütçesine Dahil İdarelerden Alınan Bağışlar*') are listed under 'donations and support' ('*Alınan Bağış ve Yardımlar İle Özel Gelirler*'; Sayıştay 2017).
[32] See Sözcü (2017). In a similar vein, in 2016, the Ministry of Family and Social Policies and the Istanbul Stock Exchange (Borsa Istanbul) provided gift checks to poor families of martyrs and veterans (ASPB 2017: 111).

was dominant in the mid-1980s, put voluntary social assistance at the centre of poor relief. Therefore, the provision of social assistance was not exclusively the responsibility of the state. Instead, the state was to foster charity and ensure that 'state and nation work hand in hand for the destitute'. For this purpose, the government of the time established an extra-budgetary Fund and a network of para-state Foundations that would gather public and private resources to provide flexible support to people in need.

In the 2000s, the two competing paradigms were merged in a hybrid approach to social assistance. This development was connected to the World Bank's Social Risk Mitigation Project, which ran from 2001-2007. This project established a popular social cash transfer programme, the Conditional Cash Transfer, which provided regular cash benefits, based on clear eligibility criteria, yet without providing legislated social rights to beneficiaries. The World Bank chose to work with the Fund and the Foundations for the CCT's administration and successfully demanded the institutionalization and bureaucratization of the two institutions. After the end of the project, the government largely continued the path set out by the project. It established new social cash transfers, which provided regular cash benefits, while at the same time eschewing legal entitlements. Moreover, policymakers defined eligibility criteria for all social assistance benefits provided by the Fund and the Foundations and put the Foundations in charge of providing social pensions, which was the key domain of the welfare state paradigm.

While the new hybrid approach thus merged the two policy paradigms, it is possible to find traces of the old paradigms in the different kinds of social assistance that exist in Turkey today. For instance, Turkey's oldest cash transfer programme, the Indigent Benefit, appears to continue the charity tradition. Similarly, most social assistance provided by local administrations appears to be rather non-programmatic, without clear legislative foundations. In contrast, the Social Cash Transfer for the Home Care of the Disabled continues the welfare state paradigm in key respects. It is grounded in a legislation (that was passed by parliament in 2005) to guarantee social rights for the disabled, and provides generous benefits to poor people who provide full-time care for their severely disabled relatives (Öktem, 2018). We aim to have shown that such bewildering diversity within Turkey's social assistance regime, the co-existence of rights-based and charity-like social assistance reflects the existence of two competing policy paradigms that have shaped the regime.

From an international perspective, Turkey's regime has both similarities and dissimilarities to regimes in other countries. In both the global North and South, most countries have fragmented social assistance regimes (Bahle et al., 2011; Leisering, 2019) and Turkey's ranks among the most fragmented ones. The absence of a full statutory base for social assistance is no exception: most programs in the global South have weak legal base (Leisering 2019: 165). Turkey also stands out by combining heterogeneous welfare traditions. Scholars have recently shown how China's social assistance regime has been 'synthesizing disparate ideas': the ideational roots of its flagship social assistance policies partially lie in European welfare state traditions that espouse universalism, and partially in North American workfare paradigms. China thus not simply copied existing policy models (Leisering et al., 2017). In the case of Turkey, the country blended contradictory policy paradigms from its own history – the welfare state paradigm and elements of traditional Islamic charity – and additionally took World Bank concepts, linking them to domestic institutional traditions. This hybrid approach to social assistance leaves present-day Turkey

between long-held aspirations to become a modern welfare state and notions of a developed charity state that harbours elements of Islamic traditions.

References

Ahmad Z (1991) *Islam, Poverty and Income Distribution*. Leicester, U.K.: The Islamic Foundation.

Aytac ES (2014) Distributive Politics in a Multiparty System: The Conditional Cash Transfer Program in Turkey. *Comparative Political Studies* 47(9): 1211–1237.

Bahle T, Pfeifer M and Hubl V (2011) *The last safety net: A handbook of minimum income protection in Europe*. Bristol: Policy.

Barrientos A (2013) *Social assistance in developing countries*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Baumgartner F (2012) Ideas and Policy Change. *Governance* 26(2): 239–258.

Baytal Y (2009) Atatürk Döneminde Sosyal Yardım Faaliyetleri (1923-1938). Ph.D. Thesis, Ankara Üniversitesi. Ankara.

Béland D (2005) Ideas and Social Policy: An Institutionalist Perspective. *Social Policy & Administration* 39(1): 1–18.

Béland D (2010) Policy Change and Health Care Research. *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law* 35(4): 615–641.

Blyth M (2002) *Great Transformations: Economic Ideas and Institutional Change in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Böger T and Leisering L (2017) *Social Citizenship for Older Persons? Measuring the Social Quality of Social Pensions in the Global South and Explaining their Spread*. Social protection & labor discussion paper no. 1703. Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group

Buğra A (2008) *Kapitalizm, yoksulluk ve Türkiye'de sosyal politika*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları.

Buğra A and Keyder Ç (2006) The Turkish welfare regime in transformation. *Journal of European Social Policy* 16(3): 211–228.

Buğra A and Keyder Ç (2003) *New poverty and the changing welfare regime of Turkey: Report prepared for the United Nations Development Programme = Yeni yoksulluk ve Türkiye'nin değişen refah rejimi*. Ankara: UNDP.

Carstensen MB and Schmidt, Vivien, A. (2016) Power through, over and in ideas: Conceptualizing ideational power in discursive institutionalism. *Journal of European Public Policy* 23(3): 318–337.

Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (1973) *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi 1973 Seçim Bildirgesi*. Available at: https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/eyayin/GAZETELER/WEB/KUTUPHANEDE%20BULUNAN%20DIJITAL%20KA YNAKLAR/KITAPLAR/SIYASI%20PARTI%20YAYINLARI/197600453%20CHP%201973%20SECIM%20BILD IRGESI/197600453%20CHP%201973%20SECIM%20BILDIRGESI%200000-0019%20GIRIS.pdf (accessed 29 June 2018).

Dodurka BZ (2014) Institutionalization of Social Assistance and Means Testing Mechanisms in the post-2001 Period. M.A. Thesis, Bogazici University. Istanbul.

Düzgün MA (2009) Sultan II. Abdülhamid Döneminde Muhtacin Maaşı Uygulaması. M.A. Thesis, Marmara Üniversitesi. Istanbul.

Gök M (2000) Türkiye'de Bir Sosyal Devlet Uygulaması Olarak Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışmayı Teşvik Fonu. *Sosyal Siyaset Konferansları Dergisi* (43-44): 189–233.

Güngör A (2014) Sosyal Yardımlaşma Ve Dayanışma Vakfı'nın Gerçekleştirdiği Sosyal Yardım Ve Hizmet Uygulamaları: Denizli İlinde Bir Araştırma. M.A., İstanbul Üniversitesi. Istanbul.

Hall PA (1993) Policy paradigms, social learning, and the state: The case of economic policymaking in Britain. *Comparative politics* 25(3): 275–296.

Hay C (2006) Constructivist institutionalism. In: *The Oxford handbooks of political science:* Oxford [u.a.]: Oxford Univ. Press, pp. 56–74.

Heyneman SP (ed) (2004) *Islam and Social Policy*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.

Hünler A (2005) Yoksullukla Mücadele–Yoksulluk Yönetimi Ayrımında Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışmayı Teşvik Fonu. Türk İdaresinin Güncel Sorunları Seminer Çalışması, Ankara Üniversitesi. Ankara.

Jawad R and Yakut-Cakar B (2010) Religion and Social Policy in the Middle East: The (Re)Constitution of an Old-New Partnership. *Social Policy & Administration* 44(6): 658–672.

Kaufmann FX (2013) *Variations of the Welfare State: Great Britain, Sweden, France and Germany Between Capitalism and Socialism*. Heidelberg, New York: Springer.

Kutlu D (2014) Türkiye'de Sosyal Yardım Rejiminin Oluşumu. Ph.D. Thesis, Ankara Üniversitesi. Ankara.

Legal Dept of World Bank (2001) *Conformed Copy - L4638 - Social Risk Mitigation Project/Loan - Loan Agreement*. Washington, DC: World Bank. Available at: http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/627901468119938088/Conformed-Copy-L4638-Social-Risk-Mitigation-Project-Loan-Loan-Agreement (accessed 2 July 2018).

Leisering L (2019) *The Global Rise of Social Cash Transfers: How States and International Organizations Constructed a New Instrument for Combating Poverty*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Leisering L, Liu T and Brink T ten (2017) Synthesizing disparate ideas: How a Chinese model of social assistance was forged. *Global Social Policy*.

Metin O (2011) Sosyal Politika Açısından AKP Dönemi: Sosyal Yardım Alanında Yaşananlar. *Çalısma ve Toplum*(1): 179–200.

Milliyet Gazetesi (1973) CHP yaşlılara maaş verilmesini istiyor, 18 August, available at: http://gazetearsivi.milliyet.com.tr/Arsiv/1973/08/18 (accessed 02 July 2018).

Öktem KG (2018) Turkey's Social Assistance System in Comparative Perspective – History, Institutional Characteristics and Key Traits. *How 'social' is Turkey Working Paper 1*.

Ozbek N (1999) The Politics of Poor Relief in the Late Ottoman Empire 1876-1914. *New Perspectives on Turkey* 21: 1–33.

Ozbek N (2006) *Cumhuriyet Türkiyesinde Sosyal Güvenlik*. Istanbul: Tarih Vakfi.

Schmidt, Vivien, A. (2008) Discursive Institutionalism: The Explanatory Power of Ideas and Discourse. *Annual Review of Political Science* 11: 303–326.

Schmidt, Vivien, A. (2011) Reconciling Ideas and Institutions through Discursive Institutionalism. In: Béland D and Cox RH (eds) *Ideas and Politics in Social Science Research:* Oxford University Press, pp. 47–65.

Seekings J (2007) 'Not a single white person should be allowed to go under': Swartgevaar and the Origins of South Africa's Welfare State, 1924-1929. *The Journal of African History* 48(3): 375–394.

Somers, Margaret, R. and Block F (2005) From Poverty to Perversity: Ideas, Markets, and Institutions over 200 Years of Welfare Debate. *American Sociological Review* 70: 260–287.

Sözcü (2017) Büyükanne kriz çıkardı, 18 February, available at: http://www.sozcu.com.tr/2017/ekonomi/buyukanne-kriz-cikardi-1686097/ (accessed 29 June 2018).

Sugiyama NB (2011) The Diffusion of Conditional Cash Transfer programs in the Americas. *Global Social Policy* 11(2-3): 250–278.

T.C. Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar Bakanlığı (2017) *2016 Yılı Faaliyet Raporu*, Ankara.

T.C. Başbakanlık, Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı *Birinci Bes Yillik Kalkinma Plani: 1963-1967*, Ankara.

T.C. Başbakanlık, Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı *Ikinci Bes Yillik Kalkinma Plani 1968-1972*, Ankara.

T.C. Başbakanlık, Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı (1973) *Ücüncü Bes Yillik Kalkinma Plani 1973-1977*, Ankara.

T.C. Başbakanlık, Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı (1984) Besinci Bes Yillik Kalkinma Plani 1985-1989, Ankara.

T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Denetleme Kurulu (2006) *Başbakanlık Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Genel Müdürlüğünün Eylem ve İşlemlerine İlişkin Araştırma ve Denetleme Raporu*. Ankara.

T.C. Sayıştay Başkanlığı (2017) *Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar Bakanlığı 2016 Yılı Sayıştay Denetim Raporu*. Ankara.

Urhan G and Urhan B (2015) AKP Döneminde Sosyal Yardım. In: Koray M and Çelik A (eds) *Himmet, fıtrat, piyasa: AKP döneminde sosyal politika*. İstanbul: İletişim, pp. 229–258.

World Bank (2001) *Turkey - Social Risk Mitigation Loan Project*. Washington, DC: World Bank. Available at: http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/163921468761360817/Turkey-Social-Risk-Mitigation-Loan-Project (accessed 29 June 2018).

Yay S (2014) Sosyal Refah Devletinde Sosyal Yardımlar: Türkiye'de Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışmayı Teşvik Fonu Uygulaması. M.A. thesis, Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi. Izmir.

Yörük E (2012) Welfare Provision as Political Containment: The Politics of Social Assistance and the Kurdish Conflict in Turkey. *Politics & Society* 40(4): 517–547.

Laws

Law No 2022 (65 Yaşını Doldurmuş Muhtaç, Güçsüz ve Kimsesiz Türk Vatandaşlarına Aylık Bağlanması Hakkında Kanun)

Law No 3294 (Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışmayı Teşvik Kanunu)

Law No 5263 (Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Genel Müdürlüğü Teşkilât ve Görevleri Hakkında Kanun)

Draft Laws

Millet Meclisi (1976) 65 Yaşını Doldurmuş Muhtaç, Güçsüz ve Kimsesiz Türk Vatandaşlarına Aylık Bağlanması Hakkında Kanun Tasarısı ile İsparta Milletvekili Süleyman Demirel ve 7 Arkadaşının, C. Senatosu Malatya Üyesi Hamdi Özer'in, Konya Milletvekili Necmettin Erbakan ve 13 Arkadaşının, C. Senatosu Diyarbakır Üyesi Sabahattin Savcı ve 4 Arkadaşının Aynı Konudaki Teklifleri ve Plan Komisyonu Raporu (1/398, 2/11, 2/17, 2/539, 2/583) [S. Sayısı: 348]

Milli Güvenlik Konseyi (1983) Sosyal Hizmetler ve Çocuk Esirgeme Kurumu Kanunu Tasarısının Danışma Meclisince Kabul Olunan Metni ve Millî Güvenlik Konseyi İhtisas Komisyonu Raporu. (D. Meclisi : 1/461; M. G. Konseyi: 1/489)

Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi (1986) Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Teşvik Kanunu Tasarısı ve Plan ve Bütçe Komisyonu Raporu [S. Sayısı: 454]

Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi (2001) Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Genel Müdürlüğü Teşkilât ve Görevleri Hakkında Kanun Tasarısı [4/54]

Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi (2004) Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Kurumu Başkanlığı Teşkilât ve Görevleri Hakkında Kanun Tasarısı ve Sağlık, Aile, Çalışma ve Sosyal İşler ile Plan ve Bütçe Komisyonları Raporları (1/644) [S. Sayısı: 649]

Parliamentary debates

Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi: 19.1.1968, 25.5.1976, 3.6.1976.
Cumhuriyet Senatosu Tutanak Dergisi: 24.6.1976, 30.6.1976.
T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi: 28.5.1986.