

# **Agrarian Change and Labour Supply in Turkey, 1950–1980**

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*Agrarian structures based on small peasant property can have two opposite kinds of impact on urban wages. In the first type, stable smallholder farming bringing high returns puts upward pressure on wages. In the second type, smallholder farming that does not bring sufficient returns leads to semi-proletarianization in which workers' access to rural sources of income functions as wage subsidy and puts downward pressure on wages. This paper argues that the situation in Turkey between 1950 and 1980 fits the second type. By pointing out the factors that changed the attitude of the migrant labourers towards class struggle from relative passivity to increasing militancy, it suggests that instead of the rural ties of the emerging working class, the main reason behind the dramatic rise in urban wages in Turkey in the 1960s and 1970s was the working-class struggle throughout the period.*

*Keywords:* Turkey, agrarian change, proletarianization, labour supply, working class

## INTRODUCTION

The existence of an agrarian structure based on small peasant property can have two opposite kinds of impact on urban wages in a capitalist economy. Stable smallholder farming bringing high economic returns usually makes an upward pressure on urban wages, since migration from the countryside will be quite limited unless the migrants 'expect to be at least well off as before migration' (Griffin et al. 2002, 292). The outcome is usually the opposite in the second type, in which economic returns on small-scale farming are not high enough to limit the proletarianization of the peasantry without being so low as to lead to its complete dispossession. The literature on semi-proletarianization<sup>1</sup> in different parts of the world that is discussed in the next

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper, concepts of 'semi-proletarian' and 'semi-proletarianization' exactly refer to what Henry Bernstein terms as 'the classes of labour': the component of the proletariat 'that is neither dispossessed of all means of reproducing itself nor in possession of sufficient means to reproduce itself.' Bernstein explains his preference of the term 'classes of labour' over 'semi-proletarian(s)' by arguing that this term 'is less encumbered with problematic assumptions and associations in both political economy (e.g. functionalist readings of Marx's concept of the reserve army of labour) and political theory and ideology (e.g. constructions of an idealized (Hegelian) collective class subject)' (Bernstein 2009, 73). It seems to me that the concept of 'semi-proletarian (-ization)' better captures the differences within the labouring classes and the relationship between limited access to rural sources of income and the supply of cheap labour power in specific contexts. Bernstein's warning about functionalist readings of the reserve army of labour should also be taken seriously without denying 'the role of the "labour reserves" . . . in relation to the needs of capital accumulation' (Banaji 1977, 13) in various *specific* contexts. In his study stressing the 'functions' of migrant labour (which can be read either as 'semi-proletarian' labour force or 'classes of labour') for capital accumulation, Michael Burawoy underscores the fact that 'the reduction in the costs of reproducing labour power through access to a subsistence economy would be outweighed by the latter's replacement by a

section establishes quite well the fact that by partially covering costs of the labour power and hence subsidizing their wages, semi-proletarianized workers' remaining access to land and other rural sources of income make a downward pressure on urban wages until the point is reached at which that access is limited to an extent that no longer makes any significant impact on urban wage levels.

This paper argues that the case of Turkey between 1950 and 1980 fits this second type of agrarian structure – urban wage level relationship and presents its conclusions as a critique of Çağlar Keyder's influential study entitled *State and Class in Turkey – A Study in Capitalist Development* (1987), which suggests that the Turkish case fits the first type. In his study, Keyder argues that small peasant property in Turkish agriculture was stable and strong enough to potentially enable the recently migrated workers to exit the urban labour market by retreating to small-scale farming in their villages and therefore made an upward pressure on wages in the period under discussion (Keyder 1987, 159–60).

Two main questions can be derived from Keyder's study. First, did rural migrants' rural sources of income enable them to exit the labour market whenever they wished from the early 1950s on? As will be seen in the following sections of this paper, although a significant proportion of the rural migrants had some sort of rural source of income for a certain period, Keyder's claim that these sources were enough to enable them to exit the labour market is not correct. On the contrary, I will try to show that various factors related to the developments that took place before and after the Second World War made an increasing portion of the rural population unable to sustain their agricultural production and *gradually* forced them to proletarianize. This resulted in two important phenomena that are discussed throughout this paper. First, by easing the population pressure in the rural areas, permanent and seasonal migration enabled the remaining rural population to continue farming and delayed the migration and full proletarianization of the small peasantry. Second, by making the income transfer between rural and urban areas possible, it created a substantial number of semi-proletarian, peasant-workers in both the agricultural and industrial sectors.

This brings us to the second question that I derive from Keyder's study: Did these peasant-workers' rural sources of income force the capitalists to increase wages in order to prevent them from leaving the labour market by returning to their villages and retreating to family farming? As opposed to Keyder's claim that existing agrarian structure made an upward pressure on wages, I will argue that without an exit option from the labour market, partially proletarianized peasants' remaining access to land and other rural sources of income made a downward pressure on wages in the period under discussion. Therefore, we need to ask a third question: If the agrarian structure did not exert an upward pressure on wages, what caused the dramatic wage increases between 1963 and 1977 (Boratav 2005, 138–9)? Detailed discussion of this question is beyond the scope of this paper. Therefore, I will restrict myself to giving only a tentative answer to this question, which can be taken as a hypothesis for further research on the subject: instead of the rural ties of the emerging working class, the main reason behind the dramatic rise in the urban wages in Turkey in the 1960s and 1970s was the working-class militancy throughout the period.

This paper consists of six sections. After this introductory section comes the second section, which presents the theoretical foundations of my analysis of the relationship between agrarian

capital-intensive agricultural economy' (Burawoy 1976, 1056). Therefore, rather than presenting semi-proletarianization as the overarching tendency of capitalist development, the relationship between semi-proletarianization and supply of cheap labour power should be understood as a context-dependent aspect of capitalist development, meaning that it can be observed only in specific contexts in which economic and political conditions allow this kind of relationship.

change and the labour market in Turkey in the period after the Second World War. The third section investigates the main factors behind the waves of seasonal and permanent rural-to-urban migration of that era. It refrains from simplistic and linear ‘mechanization–dispossession–migration–proletarianization’ type of causation and underscores the complex results of the agricultural modernization of the 1950s and 1960s. Additionally, it puts forward the population increase since the 1920s and massive development of transportation, especially the highways during and after the 1950s, as parts of the explanatory framework for those migration flows. The fourth section examines the characteristics of the semi-proletarian type and its relationship with the supply of cheap labour power. Since agrarian structure does not seem to explain the upward pressure on wages in the 1960s and 1970s, it becomes necessary to look for an alternative explanation. The fifth section presents the working-class militancy as the cause of the rising wages by focusing on the ways in which working-class struggles eroded the function of the reserve army of labour to regulate the labour market. The concluding section summarizes the main arguments of this paper.

#### MULTIPLICITY OF AGRARIAN CHANGE AND PROLETARIANIZATION

‘Primitive accumulation’, as defined by Karl Marx in the first volume of *Capital*, has been widely used since then as a key concept in the analyses of working-class formation in the transition to industrial capitalism. Although the concept can be used for discussing various forms of ‘accumulation by dispossession’ (Harvey 2003, 137–83), it refers explicitly to the dispossession of large segments of the peasantry from their land as seen in Marx’s explanation of the ‘enclosure movement’ that took place in the English countryside from the last third of the fifteenth to the end of the eighteenth century (Marx 1977, 895).<sup>2</sup>

According to Marx, dispossession of the peasantry was a historically significant process for two main reasons. First, it was a precondition for the accumulation of capital, which was used in the establishment of the first industrial enterprises in England and elsewhere. Marx sees the genesis of the capitalist class in England *partially* in the capitalist farmers who largely benefited from the enclosure movements (Marx 1977, 906). Second, and more important for our discussion in this paper, primitive accumulation paved the way for the making of a class of free labourers in the sense that they were ‘freed’ (i.e. separated) from their traditional sources of livelihood, especially from their land by force and thus possessed nothing for survival except their labour power. For Marx, if ‘the worker can accumulate for himself (and this he can do so long as he remains in possession of his means of production) capitalist accumulation and the capitalist mode of production is impossible. The class of wage-labourers essential to these is lacking’ (Marx 1977, 940). Therefore, primitive accumulation is the only method for providing ‘necessary supplies of free and rightless proletarians’ to urban industries (Marx 1977, 895). In short, Marx sees ‘primitive accumulation’ as a *necessary* process that creates the main classes of modern industrial capitalism: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. It is the ‘pre-history of capital’ (Marx 1977, 875, 928) in the sense that it ‘is not the result of capitalist accumulation; an accumulation which is not the result of the capitalist mode of production but its point of departure’ (Marx 1977, 873).

<sup>2</sup> Marx uses the concept of primitive accumulation as a long process that incorporates ‘the spoliation of the Church’s property, the fraudulent alienation of the state domains, the theft of the common lands, the usurpation of feudal and clan property and its transformation into modern private property’, which resulted in the destruction of the peasants’ access to land (1977, 895).

On the other hand, contrary to many interpretations of his theory of primitive accumulation, Marx *never* presented the English case as the singular path of agrarian transformation that would be followed by all nations uniformly. For Marx, the English case only gives a general picture of the transition to capitalism in the countryside. For one thing, dispossession of the peasantry takes place in multiple forms and with different paces in different geographies over the long process of capitalist development: ‘The expropriation of the agricultural producer, of the peasant, from the soil is the basis of the whole process. The history of this expropriation assumes different aspects in different countries and runs through its various phases in different orders of succession as well as in different historical epochs. Only in England, which we therefore take as our example, has it the classical form’ (Marx 1977, 906). Even if we narrow our focus only to Western Europe, we can see many cases (e.g. France and Switzerland) where the separation of the peasantry from the means of production did *not* follow the English path during the course of capitalist development (Brenner 1982; Arrighi 2007, 91). This difference becomes more evident when we focus on the different consequences of the so-called ‘bourgeois revolution(s)’ in England and France. While the English Revolution moved forward in parallel with the total dispossession of the peasantry, the French Revolution strengthened the economic position of the small peasantry, at least in the medium run.

Despite his stress on the complexity and multiplicity of the dispossession process, Marx did not clearly address the fact that the absence of an English type of transformation in agrarian property relations was neither necessarily an obstacle to capitalist development in general nor to the development of agrarian capitalism. Robert Brenner, whose studies have made the argument for the English path as ‘the rule’ of successful transition to capitalism, needed to make the qualification that

[W]hat was ‘the rule’ in medieval and early modern Europe cannot be taken to hold good for all times and all places. For the relationship between certain property systems and certain paths of economic evolution, especially of the development of the productive forces, are not governed by trans-historical laws. In particular, once breakthroughs to ongoing capitalist economic development took place in various regions, these irrevocably transformed the conditions and the character of the analogous processes, which were to occur subsequently elsewhere. Over time and especially in the course of the nineteenth century, the significance for economic advantage of agriculture based on small owner-operators was altered. The incentives for production for the market grew; the pressures to orient production for subsistence declined; and the technical potential of the small family farm was expanded . . . These developments naturally made much more likely a ‘smooth’ transition from peasant to essentially capitalist farming, without the need for extra-economic processes to separate the direct producer from the means of subsistence – the continuity of the family farm. (Brenner 1982, 109–10)

Similar to the capitalist development in agriculture, proletarianization of the peasantry also has taken place in various forms and different paces in non-European contexts, in close relation to their different crop varieties, which are historically associated with different forms of capital and labour intensity (Palat 1995), different forms of incorporation into the world economy and different trajectories of rural class struggles. It is equally possible to see similar kinds of variation among different regions of a single country as well. In short, while the development of agrarian capitalism accompanied by the separation of the rural producers from the means of production is a general world-historical trend, this trend leads to various complex forms of class formation in different countries, as well as the regions within the same country, in the long run (Byres 1991). One important implication of this diversity is that in many cases, differentiation of the

peasantry has not necessarily seen its pure form characterized by the class polarization among the agrarian big bourgeoisie and the fully proletarianized labourers. Similar to class formation in urban areas, agrarian class formation encompasses not only the contradiction between these two classes but also comprises constantly changing types of petty and middle bourgeoisies and a large segment of the *partially* dispossessed, *semi*-proletarian labour force. These classes are subject to constant transformation in the processes of long-term, large-scale economic change and class struggles at the global, national and regional levels.

In his book entitled *The Agrarian Question* (first published in 1899), Karl Kautsky developed the political economy of agrarian change that Marx never found the chance to fully develop. Kautsky provided a broader analysis, capturing the multiple paths and forms of agrarian transformation under capitalism. Among numerous aspects of his study, four interrelated points seem relevant for analysing our case study on Turkey. First, Kautsky underscores the validity of Marx's point on the proletarianization of the peasantry as a world-historical trend. Second, he points out the multiple causes of dispossession other than the forceful expropriation of the peasantry in its English variety of 'enclosure movement'. For Kautsky, not only open attacks against the peasantry such as enclosures but also economic factors such as high taxes, high levels of peasant indebtedness and the competition of the big capitalist farms constantly added pressure to the dispossession and proletarianization of the peasantry. Third, the secular trend of decrease in the rural population engaged in agriculture, which can be defined as 'depeasantization' (Araghi 1995, 337–68), is the direct result of the processes of dispossession and proletarianization (Kautsky 1988, 13–19, 168–97).

Finally and more interestingly, in many instances the interests of the capitalist class lie in the partial dispossession of the peasantry rather than in its full dispossession. In this case, semi-proletarianization of the peasantry rather than complete proletarianization appears as an important component of capitalist development. Leaving aside the question of whether this is a temporary stage of development or a more durable phenomenon, it is important to assess Kautsky's point on the advantages provided by semi-proletarianization to capital accumulation. Among various factors behind the persistence of small-scale, family farming even in advanced stages of capitalist development, Kautsky singled out the capitalist interests in preserving a semi-proletarian labour force with limited access to farmland instead of totally relying on a dispossessed, fully proletarianized working class. In fact, semi-proletarians, who can also be defined as 'peasant-workers', constitute a certain part of the working class whose remaining access to farmland partially covers the costs of reproduction of their labour power. Partial coverage of the reproduction costs forces them to earn additional income by working on capitalist farms or in industrial enterprises that are established in proximity to the rural areas. By covering a certain part of the cost of reproduction of the labour power, their income from the family plots functions as a wage subsidy. Semi-proletarians therefore are able to sell their labour power more cheaply than the fully proletarianized workers, who are deprived of any other source of income because of their complete separation from the means of agricultural production (Kautsky 1988, 179–97).

It is necessary here to underline the fact that capitalists can only benefit from the existence of a semi-proletarian labour force if that labour force's access to the means of production is limited to a certain degree that is short of providing subsistence income. If their land provides subsistence income or even more than that, peasants cannot be easily – and willingly – employed outside their farms. The failure of the European (mainly the British) capital to establish big capitalist farms in western Anatolia in the second half of the nineteenth century offers a good example to illustrate this point. The absence of adequate labour supply due to the resilience of small peasantry played an important role in that failure:

Perhaps the most important factor was that extracting an agricultural surplus in Anatolia depended more on controlling the peasantry than on owning land. Foreigners had neither the access to the labour of nomadic chiefs, nor the powers of coercion of usurping tax collectors. They had to face extremely high labour costs in the face of low productivity. Daily wages were as high as two shillings for male workers primarily due to the scarcity of population and availability of land for family farms . . . In Anatolia, the situation for colonizers was much worse, for the central authority backed the competitive indigenous system. Colonizers could not create their own labour supply at desired wage rates and in adequate quantities. Consequently colonization failed and a foreign dominated capitalist sector could not survive in Anatolia. (Arıcanlı 1986, 33–4)<sup>3</sup>

In other words, the existence of a strong independent peasantry in most parts of Anatolia inhibited the establishment of a large labour market in the nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, if agricultural means of production provides subsistence outside the labour market, the capitalist system will be likely to face the problem of labour supply.

On the other hand, if peasants are completely separated from land, then it is impossible to externalize the reproduction costs of the labour power and reduce wages below the subsistence level. Full proletarianization would also lead to uncontrollable levels of rural-to-urban migration. Creating a huge reserve army of labour that cannot be absorbed by the existing industries would result in various social problems and political risks for the capitalist system. Complete depeasantization would also cause labour scarcity and hence increase the cost of labour in the agrarian sector and rural industries. For these reasons, the existence of a relatively stable semi-proletarian workforce concurs with the interests of the capitalist class, except for some specific groups whose immediate interests lie in an enclosure movement of some sort:

From the ‘peasant’ perspective, the wage economy offers solutions, however modest, to the social and financial predicaments of small-scale agrarian producers. From the ‘worker’ standpoint, access to an agrarian holding provides subsistence security in the face of chronic uncertainties that circumscribe marginal employment. Obviously, these motives are complementary and rarely exist independently in peasant-worker calculations and outlooks. Unfortunately, these modest protections were not lost on employers, who discovered that they could lower wages without threatening the subsistence of peasant-workers. (Holmes 1989, 206)<sup>5</sup>

In short, complete dispossession/proletarianization is *not* the necessary and universal precondition for successful capitalist development. By lowering the cost of labour power through wage subsidies, accumulation without full dispossession would be compatible and, in specific contexts, even desirable for successful capitalist development. As discussed in the following sections, coeval development of full and partial dispossession/proletarianization patterns is central in order to understand class relations in rural and urban Turkey after 1950.

<sup>3</sup> Also see Pamuk (2008, 388).

<sup>4</sup> Çağlar Keyder points to this historical outcome: ‘Dispossession of the peasantry as an historical possibility was excluded given the political, legal and material conditions of the Ottoman Empire: thus rendering impossible the development of capitalist agriculture with wage labour’ (Keyder 1983, 134).

<sup>5</sup> In his review article on Kautsky’s *The Agrarian Question*, the publication of which he considered as ‘the most important event in present-day economic literature since the third volume of *Capital*’ (Lenin 1960, 94), Lenin confirmed this point by suggesting that ‘it would not even be advantageous for the big landowners to force out the small proprietors completely: the latter provide them with hand! For this reason the landowners and capitalists frequently pass laws that artificially maintain the small peasantry’ (96–7).

Similar to Marx and Kautsky, the link between the agrarian question and labour supply has been brought up by other authors. Karl Polanyi, for example, reframed the agrarian question as a question of wage subsidy and social security of the semi-proletarian labour force as follows:

Both enclosures of the commons and consolidations into compact holdings, which accompanied the new great advance in agricultural methods, had a powerfully unsettling effect. The war on cottages, the absorption of cottage gardens and grounds, the confiscation of rights in the common deprived cottage industry of its two mainstays: family earnings and agricultural background. As long as domestic industry was supplemented by the facilities and amenities of a garden plot, a scrap of land, or grazing rights, the dependence of the labourer on money earnings was not absolute; the potato plot or 'stubbing geese', a cow or even an ass in the common made all the difference; and family earnings acted as a kind of unemployment insurance. The rationalization of agriculture inevitably uprooted the labourer and undermined his social security. (Polanyi 2001, 96)

This mutual and complementary relationship between agricultural incomes, industrial wages and social security was recast again in the 1970s by scholars who dealt with labour supplies in different countries of Southern Africa.<sup>6</sup> They 'correctly defined the role of the "labour reserves" in Africa in relation to the needs of capital accumulation, only to characterize them as distinct "modes of production" perpetuated by capital' (Banaji 1977, 13). Their studies pointed out the significant role played by the African labourers' remaining ties with their small plots in the reproduction of labour force in these countries (Arrighi 1970; Wolpe 1972; Burawoy 1976; Meillassoux 1981). Wolpe clearly explained the close connection between the peasants' access to land and the maintenance of the supply of cheap labour power:

When the migrant labour has access to means of subsistence, outside the capitalist sector, as he does in South Africa, then the relationship with wages and the cost of the production and reproduction of labour power is changed. That is to say, capital is able to pay the worker *below* the cost of his reproduction. In the first place, since in determining the level of wages necessary for the subsistence of the migrant worker and his family, account is taken of the fact that the family is supported, to some extent, from the product of agricultural production in the Reserves; it becomes possible to fix wages at the level of subsistence of the individual worker. (Wolpe 1972, 434)<sup>7</sup>

However, by dispossessing the African peasantry from their land and stripping away other sources of reproduction of labour, the South African capitalist states eroded the very basis of cheap labour that they were relying on. In line with Arrighi and Wolpe, Gillian Hart underlines the fact that in the long run, the South African workforce that was 'expropriated from

<sup>6</sup> Two scholars later on extended their analysis to different regions. While Burawoy made a comparative analysis of the function and reproduction of migrant labour in southern Africa and the United States (Burawoy 1976), Arrighi analysed how labour migration from the countryside of southern Italy impacted the class struggles in northern Italy in the 1950s and 1960s (Arrighi and Piselli 1987; also see Arrighi 2009, 68–9).

<sup>7</sup> In parallel with Wolpe, Arrighi pointed out that access to land allowed the workers to 'rely on the tribal economy for the support of their families and of themselves during their old age, sickness and unemployment. Participation in the labour market thus left the workers' obligations and duties to his rural kinsmen and his general involvement in the tribal system unchanged so as to retain his cultivation rights and to be able to claim support and succour when necessary' (1970, 223). In this context, 'the immigrant worker must preserve his home community, so as to be able to benefit from its produce during his visits and to maintain the economic structures which allow to offer his labour power cheaply to the capitalist sector' (Meillassoux 1981, 129).

the land and thrust into radically commodified forms of livelihood' (Hart 2002, 224) had no choice but to resort to militant class struggle during the process. The working-class struggles played a major role in the increase of South African real wages after 1972 and set the limits to the Apartheid regime in the mid-1970s (Arrighi et al. 2010). By referring to the problems encountered by the Taiwanese industrialists who are operating in South Africa today with regard to the relatively higher wages of South African workers than their Chinese and Taiwanese counterparts, Hart underscores the significant role played by access to land as a wage subsidy whose existence has enabled the capitalists to lower the labour costs in China and Taiwan until recent years, and whose absence has increased the labour costs in South Africa. This is one of the main reasons behind South African capitalism's disadvantageous position against the Chinese and Taiwanese forms of capitalism in global competition in recent decades (Hart 2002, 198–234; Arrighi 2007, 364; Arrighi et al. 2010). By making this comparison in the light of a careful re-reading of Marx and Kautsky, Hart underscores 'the ongoing salience of agrarian transformations in shaping the conditions of reproduction of labour [power]' (Hart 2002, 201).

This paper investigates the relationship between agrarian transformations and changing conditions of the reproduction of labour power in Turkey between 1950 and 1980. An outlook encompassing the links between agrarian change, migration and labour market formation in the rural and urban areas is necessary in order to figure out the applicability of the argument about land ownership as wage subsidy to the case of Turkey. In order to do that kind of analysis, diverging paths of agrarian transformation in which we can find cases of partial or full dispossession in different regions should be investigated. As will be seen below, these diverging paths can be followed in different sorts of labour market formation that have similarities with the East Asian as well as South African cases referred to above.

## THE CAUSES OF RURAL MIGRATION IN TURKEY

Among various factors behind rural to urban population movements since the early 1950s, three factors seem most important: mechanization of agriculture, development of highways and population growth. While the background of the latter goes back further, the first two factors are directly related with the implementation of the Marshall Plan in Turkey. As it is fairly known, soon after the end of the Second World War, Turkey quickly took steps to become a part of the world capitalist system that was undergoing a process of restructuring under US hegemony. Turkey became a member of the International Monetary Fund in 1947. The European Recovery Program was extended to Turkey under the Marshall Plan in 1948. Turkey's membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1952 consolidated the country's position within the capitalist camp under the leadership of the United States.

The Marshall Plan can be seen as a turning point in modern Turkish history because it started the process of large-scale agrarian change, rural migration and proletarianization. Contrary to the conventional reading of the implementation of the Marshall Plan in Turkey which overemphasizes Turkey's role as a producer of agricultural goods within the postwar international division of labour, the actual implementation of the plan, especially after 1954, was more comprehensive and helped to develop not only agriculture but the industrial sector as well (Tören 2007, 270–87). On the other hand, it is true that one of the main purposes of the plan was to develop Turkey's agricultural capacity. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Turkey was conceived as 'the agricultural storehouse of Europe' that should 'especially produce more grains with the help of foreign investment and more liberal credit policies.' Therefore, 'a rapid mechanization of agricultural production was needed and in order to obtain the farm-market



connection new highways had to be constructed' (Yıldırım 2009, 74).<sup>8</sup> Between 1948 and 1959 under the Marshall Plan, Turkey received over US\$1.2 billion from the United States in direct and indirect loans and grants (Tören 2007, 273). Those funds were used to develop the agricultural and industrial sectors. For the purposes of this paper, I will only focus on agricultural modernization and the construction of highways under the Marshall Plan. Following the huge investments linked to the Marshall Plan in the 1950s, the Turkish state continued to invest heavily in these two areas during the 1960s and 1970s. Before discussing their impact on rural migration, we first need to assess the dimension of the changes experienced in agriculture and transportation.

Under the Marshall Plan, over US\$89 million were transferred to the Ministry of Agriculture between 1948 and 1957 (Tören 2007, 195). Most of those funds were spent in agricultural mechanization and other agricultural development projects such as the development of irrigation networks. Animal husbandry and fishing were also supported (Tören 2007, 194–213). The number of tractors increased from 1,750 in 1948 to over 44,000 in 1957. The number of harvesters increased from about 1,000 to more than 6,500 in the same period. Agricultural mechanization continued during the 1960s and 1970s. The number of tractors increased from about 75,000 in 1967 to more than 430,000 in 1980. The number of harvesters increased from less than 8,000 in 1967 to more than 130,000 in 1980 (Gürüz 1974, 88; Doğan 2006, 69, 74). Thanks to agricultural mechanization, the total area under cultivation increased from 14.5 million hectares in 1950 to 23 million hectares in 1962 when the land frontier was reached (Karapınar 2005, 167). The increase in total production between 1948 and 1962 was mainly related to the increase in the total area under cultivation, not to an increase in productivity (Tekeli 1978, 305; Yıldırım 2009, 106). Limited use of irrigation and chemical fertilizers restricted the positive effects of agricultural mechanization on productivity and in some cases even led to decreases in productivity (Yıldırım 2009, 106–7). The use of chemical fertilizers increased ninefold, and the use of high-yielding seeds increased almost three times in the 1960s. The total irrigated area increased from 1.1 million hectares in 1962 to 2 million hectares in 1971 (Tekeli 1978, 306). After reaching the agrarian frontier in the early 1960s, the increases in total production came to depend on the increasing productivity of land and labour (Pamuk 2008, 386).

The total amount of Marshall Plan funds spent in the construction, improvement and interconnection of highways in Turkey was US\$40 million (Tören 2007, 218). The total length of highways increased from 12,000 km in 1947 to 29,000 km in 1955. Highway transportation became much faster (Yıldırım 2009, 121) and cheaper (Tören 2007, 222) during the 1950s. This spectacular increase in highway construction continued after the period of implementation of the Marshall Plan. The total length of the highway network reached 40,000 km in 1960 and 60,000 km in 1980 (İçduygu et al. 1998, 222). The development of highways resulted in the creation of an integrated domestic market in Turkey and pushed the commercialization of agriculture much further. Moreover, as will be discussed below, it made rural to urban migration possible from the early 1950s onwards.

Finally, the increase in population was among the most important factors behind rural migration. Successive wars during the first two decades of the twentieth century halted population growth in Anatolia. After the foundation of the Republic of Turkey, population growth resumed. The new republic encouraged population growth in order to sustain the supply of labour for the agricultural and industrial sectors. Furthermore, Turkey's decision not

<sup>8</sup> For the emphasis on highway construction in the reports written by American specialists during the period, see Tören (2007, 186).

to enter the Second World War protected demographic growth. With the development of public health during the 1930s, the number of deaths caused by contagious diseases such as syphilis and malaria also decreased. Improved child nutrition, made possible by growing agricultural production, lowered infant mortality rates (Yıldırım 2009, 116). As a result of these developments, total population increased by 1.06 per cent in 1945, 2.17 per cent in 1950, 2.77 per cent in 1955 and 2.85 per cent in 1960. The rural population constituted 75 per cent of the total population in 1945 and 68 per cent in 1960 (Turkish Statistical Institute 2007, 9).

The ways in which agrarian modernization and population pressure contributed to the dispossession and proletarianization of the peasantry in Turkey are discussed below. Before that discussion, four important caveats on the irreducibility of the postwar developments to a linear chain of 'mechanization–dispossession–migration' should be mentioned. First, contrary to the numerous academic studies that argue that mechanization of agriculture immediately dispossessed a significant part of the peasantry and became the primary reason of rural migration,<sup>9</sup> agricultural mechanization did not immediately cause dispossession and depeasantization in the 1950s. As mentioned above, the total area under cultivation increased from 14.5 million hectares in 1950 to 23 million hectares in 1962. On the other hand, agricultural mechanization during the 1950s was not fast enough to put all newly gained lands under mechanized cultivation. It was estimated that 8.6 per cent of land was cultivated by tractors in 1950 and 14 per cent in the late 1950s (Yıldırım 2009, 101). Additionally, the amount of land cultivated with help of animal traction increased from 12.5 million hectares in 1948 to 20 million hectares in 1960 (Yıldırım 2009, 101). Although 'large operators, since they started using machinery, had cut down by 6% the number of their year-round hired workers' in the early 1950s, they nevertheless 'increased the number of temporarily hired labourers materially because they have enlarged their operations and because they have been using land resources more extensively and efficiently' (Aktan 1957, 278). In short, although the dispossession of the sharecroppers and some parts of the small peasants started in some regions in the 1950s, the overall need for human power in agriculture did not decrease much during the 1950s (Tekeli 1978, 305; Yıldırım 2009, 101). It started to substantially decrease only when the agrarian frontier was reached in 1962 (Tekeli 1978, 306). Moreover, new jobs related to mechanization, such as tractor driving and repair services, were created in the early 1950s. By allowing the newly proletarianized peasants to stay in the rural areas, this aspect of agricultural mechanization slowed down the pace of rural migration (Karpas 1960, 92–3; Avcıoğlu 1978, 630; Tekeli 1978, 318; Yıldırım 2009, 109, 112). Nevertheless, 'the disappearance of these chances at the end of the 1950s and during the 1960s also meant the disappearance of the retarding mechanisms and due to that, the migrant groups thereafter consisted mostly of sharecropper and landless peasants' (Yıldırım 2009, 112). This phenomenon will be discussed in the section on the proletarianization of the peasantry.

Second, the development of transportation, especially the highways, had a more direct and immediate effect on migration flows than that of the mechanization of agriculture. While the small and landless peasants of the Black Sea region (which was the least mechanized region due to its geographical conditions) were the first to take part in the massive rural-to-urban migration thanks to the development of highways in the early 1950s, former sharecroppers of the Kurdish South-East, whose dispossession was directly related to the mechanization of agriculture, could only participate in migration movements in the second half of the 1950s and mainly in the 1960s (Yıldırım 2009, 113, 124).

<sup>9</sup> For various examples and a critique of this misconception, see Yıldırım (2009, 91–7).

Third, increasing mechanization and commercialization of the Turkish agriculture and the development of transportation affected the class relations in the rural areas differently. While it led to dispossession and proletarianization in many cases, in other cases small peasants were not proletarianized and even transformed themselves into middle farmers. The dominant academic paradigm of the 1960s that predicted that mechanization and commercialization of agriculture would lead to the domination of Turkish agriculture by capitalist farms employing fully proletarianized workers was falsified by later developments (Akşit 1988, 1993). Bahattin Akşit gives the example of two villages in Antalya (in the Mediterranean region) where he conducted research in 1966 and 1979, in order to illustrate the consequences of agrarian transformations that were not predicted by rural studies in the 1960s. While he predicted the dispossession of the sharecroppers of these villages in 1966 (Akşit 1967, 95–6), his observations in 1979 showed that rather than being dispossessed, these sharecroppers were transformed into commodity-producing middle farmers in a process of ‘kulakization’ thanks to the development of irrigation by state investment, a commodities boom in the world market in the early 1970s and class struggles in the context of electoral politics of the multi-party system, which prevented their dispossession by big landowners (Akşit 1988, 182–5; Akşit 1993, 196–7).

Finally, the migration of the peasants to urban areas of Turkey and abroad<sup>10</sup> itself slowed down the process of proletarianization and contributed to the survival of the small peasantry. It eased the population pressure on land. In most cases, rural migrants rented their lands to small and middle peasants at low prices, therefore helping the reproduction of the small and middle peasants. Although the rural migrants in Turkish cities did not have much chance to transfer substantial amounts of cash, the workers abroad transferred significant amounts of cash to their families in the countryside, thus slowing the process of proletarianization and contributing to the survival of many small peasant households during the period (Akşit 1988, 192).<sup>11</sup>

#### PROLETARIANIZATION OF THE PEASANTRY IN TURKEY

In his study, Keyder correctly points out the significance of rural migrants’ remaining access to farmland and other forms of rural income in subsidizing their urban sources of income in the era after the Second World War:

The average migrant had a claim to some land in his village that he had rented out or left to a family member in exchange for some compensation. More often than not he came to the city with sufficient capital to start building a house in the shantytown area already colonized by his co-villagers. After this initial transfer, the migrant almost never lost contact with the village; he returned during annual leave, left his children with their

<sup>10</sup> Between 1961 and 1979, 888,102 workers left Turkey for employment abroad, with 801,264 going to western Europe (Keyder and Koç 1988, 18).

<sup>11</sup> Akşit also points to other policies of the Turkish state to support the division of big capitalist farms into smaller farms after the death of the head of the household as a cause of the reproduction of the small peasantry in different regions of Turkey (Akşit 1988, 187–93; Akşit 1993, 197). Public policy to support agriculture included land distributions and the development of credit mechanisms. The Republican People’s Party government distributed 1.5 million *dönüms* of land to 33,000 peasant households between 1947 and 1950. The Democratic Party government distributed 16.5 million *dönüms* of land to 312,000 peasant households between 1950 and 1960 (Taraklı 1976, 117, 122; a *dönüm* is equal to 1,000 m<sup>2</sup>). The Agricultural Bank of Turkey increased its loans tenfold between 1948 and 1958 (Keyder 1983, 142). Moreover, crop price subsidies and subsidization of inputs for agricultural production were used by successive governments in order to secure the votes of the small peasants in the context of multi-party system after 1946. By supporting the small- and medium-scale farming, these policies slowed down the pace of rural migration. Since this paper deals with agrarian change only in relation to the formation of labour market, it does not discuss other aspects of the agrarian transformations in Turkey in the postwar era. For this kind of analysis, see (Akşit 1988, 1993), Ecevit (1997) and Tekeli (1978).

grandparents and he regularly received supplies in kind. If he remained a landowner he also received rent, or his share of the produce. All this meant that the migrant became part of the consumer market the moment he set foot in the city. Starting with the construction of his dwellings, and as a result of the additional income available to him, he served to expand the internal market to a much greater extent than would have been possible in the case of an urbanization characterized by the migration of the landless poor. (Keyder 1987, 159)

Keyder then makes a broader claim about the relationship between agrarian structure and urban wages in Turkey during the era:

[The] agrarian structure exerted an upward pressure on urban wages. The argument concerning the US during the nineteenth century is well known. In a similar manner, Anatolia had had a high land/labour ratio and a predominance of family property. The marginal product of the rural migrant was certainly not high, but he always had the option of remaining in the countryside with a guaranteed average product and sharing the household's income. Wages in the city therefore had to be high enough to induce the peasant – who was not being pushed out– to accept urban employment. (Keyder 1987, 159–60)

This section of this paper investigates the credibility of Keyder's claim that agrarian structure exerted an upward pressure on wages in Turkey in the postwar period. It answers this question in three steps. It first discusses whether there was a labour shortage problem in the 1950s, which would enable an upward pressure on wages. After that, it illustrates how the factors that are discussed in the previous section played out in the formation of a labour market in rural and urban Turkey. Finally, it investigates how the rural ties of the emerging working class affected the wages in the period under discussion.

Starting with the first question, the sustenance of the labourers' links with the land can exert an upward pressure on real wages if there is an existing shortage of labour in the market. If there is no shortage as such, there will be no reason to believe that labourer's option to remain in the countryside exerts an upward pressure on wages. Reading Keyder's own argument about the existence of a significant industrial reserve army even before the large-scale rural-to-urban migration is enough to criticize his assumption of an upward pressure on wages due to the maintenance of small peasant ownership. Despite the fact that Turkey was the 'only one peasant stronghold' that 'remained in or around the neighbourhood of Europe and the Middle East' (Hobsbawm 1996, 291), in the second half of the twentieth century, 'even without the agricultural transformation of the 1950s, a reserve army of labour would have been available to supply the demands of the urban industrial bourgeoisie' and with the 'liberation of a section of the peasantry from the countryside, the potential labour force available to modern industry attained even greater proportions' from the 1950s onwards (Keyder 1987, 153). Therefore, given the abundant supply of labour, it is hard to claim that the option of remaining in the countryside brought wage increases for the working class in Turkey in that period. On the contrary, similar to the findings of various studies that are discussed in the second section, there are case studies on Turkey that seem to support the existence of a connection between agriculture and industry that is based on cheap wage labour and workers' access to some land in the villages. We shall see in the next section that this type of relationship between access to land and the supply of cheap labour power was an important characteristic in the case of Turkey in the postwar era.

Second, Keyder's claim on the negligibility of the 'push' factors such as landlessness and rural poverty is not convincing. Conversely, the literature on migration in the period under

discussion provides enough material to support the argument that push factors played a critical role in rural migration from the 1950s onwards. For one thing, agricultural modernization intensified the pressure on the sharecroppers and small peasants and led to dispossession of the peasantry in Çukurova and the Southeastern regions. Modernization of agriculture in the postwar era owing to the Marshall Plan aid in combination with the cotton boom during the Korean War matured the conditions for accumulation by dispossession and gradual shift from agrarian to industrial capitalism in Çukurova:

Cheap credit and the imports of machinery led to mechanization of agriculture, but, contrary to what was usual in most of Turkey, the landowners were in a position to eject the sharecroppers from their lands. Cotton needs only seasonal attention and could be tended very well by labour migrants from the surrounding mountains and the north Syrian plain. Thus, the large cotton farmers could maximize their prices (cotton was in fact the only Turkish agricultural produce that profited from the Korean boom). In this way, cotton producers could become very rich very quickly. The more astute among them soon invested their money in cotton-based industries in and around Adana, which became a classic boom town. Several of the 30 or so large family-owned holding companies, which dominate Turkish industry today started out in this way. (Zürcher 1994, 238–9)

In the Southeastern region, ‘in the process that can be defined as the marginalization of sharecropping, both the quantity and the quality of land given to common usage were restricted; some households were expelled from the village due to increasing contradiction between peasants and landlords’ (Akçay 1999, 125). On the other hand, unlike the Çukurova region, the displacement of the former sharecroppers did not develop to its fullest extent in the Southeastern region for economic and political reasons. Peasant resistance against landlords during the 1960s and 1970s (Yalman 1971) played a certain role in this outcome. Zülküf Aydın adds two other reasons. According to Aydın, full-scale dispossession from land would undermine the political power of the landlords, who had been mobilizing the votes of the dependent peasants for their own political interest. Furthermore, there was an economic logic that posed limits to full-fledged dispossession, which confirms our theoretical framework on the relationship between accumulation without full dispossession and the supply of cheap labour power. Big Kurdish landowners largely recognized the function of peasants’ limited access to land in providing a sufficiently large supply of cheap labour. The specific function of small family farms as a form of wage subsidy was evident in those regions:

[Small family farms] exist mainly in the east and south-east as appendages to large estates . . . The peasants’ access to land depends entirely on the landlords’ need for the labour of the peasant family and his political and economic interests. The peasant households cultivate their plots of land in return for a rent in kind and in the form of cheap labour. In certain cases the peasant household is forced by the exigencies of market conditions to produce commodities such as sugar beet and cotton, but in general small plots peasant households opt to produce their staples and animal fodder. In the production of both commodities and consumption goods the household operates with the aim of subsistence. Since the farm is not big enough to provide for the maintenance and the reproduction of the family, a supplementary income is needed. This is obtained by working on the landlords’ estates for very low remuneration. (Aydın 1990, 177)

It is possible to identify the similarity of this type of capital–labour relationship with the cases of nineteenth-century Germany, presented by Kautsky, early twentieth century southern Africa, presented by Arrighi, Wolpe and Hart, and East Asia in the postwar period, discussed by

Hart (2002) and Arrighi et al. (2010). In all cases, allowing the peasant-workers to have limited access to land exerted a downward pressure on their wages. We will return to this issue in the next section.

As mentioned in the section regarding the factors behind rural migration, although former sharecroppers who were expelled from the countryside by the landowners could be employed in newly created jobs in the early 1950s, those chances were significantly diminished towards the late 1950s. As a result, migrating groups mostly consisted of former sharecroppers and landless peasants in the late 1950s and 1960s (Yıldırım 2009, 112). The cases of Çukurova and the Southeastern regions do not confirm Keyder's claim that agrarian structures allowed the rural migrants to exit the labour market and therefore exerted an upward pressure on urban wages.

On the other hand, the Black Sea region, which supplied more rural migrants than any other region in Turkey in the period under discussion, is a more suitable case to understand the process of depeasantization and therefore allows us to answer the question of whether or not the existing agrarian structure had an upward pressure on wages.<sup>12</sup> The process of depeasantization in the Black Sea region clearly delineates the necessity to view the land question in Turkey not only as a question of the dispossession of the sharecroppers by landlords due to mechanization of agriculture, but also as a question of decreasing chances of survival due to population pressure. The Black Sea region is surrounded by high mountains and farmlands that are very fragmented and small. It was the least mechanized region throughout the period. The pressure of the big landowners was also relatively insignificant. Therefore, it was totally different from Çukurova and the Southeastern region. Hence, the land question manifested itself differently. In the presence of increasing population pressure, the small and fragmented land ownership 'did not allow the people even to feed themselves' (Yıldırım 2009, 115; see also Güler 2004, 73–7). Kemal Karpat describes the context of depeasantization in the region as follows:

[L]ack of cultivable land, irrigation, water and the low productivity of the soil, the division of properties into small parcels and, to a lesser extent, the mechanization of agriculture, feuds over land, the pressure of landlords and the use of land for reforestation by the government were cited as the chief shortcomings of agriculture. In many places the need for food was so strong that land that should have stayed fallow one or two years had to be cultivated every year, which further exhausted its productivity. (Karpat 1976, 74)

Nephan Saran's summary of the findings of numerous studies conducted in Zeytinburnu (the oldest shantytown neighbourhood of İstanbul, whose history can be traced back to the mid-1940s) during the 1960s points out to the same fact. The population of Zeytinburnu was composed of two main groups. The first group was the Muslim immigrants coming from the countries that were once within the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire, such as Bulgaria, Greece, Romania and Yugoslavia. The second group was composed of the people who migrated from different regions of Turkey. Almost half of this group came from the Black Sea region, which was deeply affected by the decreasing economic power of the small peasantry as mentioned above. In one study, researchers asked their interviewees whether they considered returning to their villages and 94 per cent of them responded that they did not consider that option. In line with Karpat, Saran singles out the decreasing economic power of the peasants of the Black Sea region as one of the main reasons of rural to urban migration:

<sup>12</sup> Even as early as 1950, 12.5 per cent of the population of İstanbul was of Black Sea origin (Yıldırım 2009, 114). The Black Sea region remained a major regional source of migrant labour to İstanbul. Other regions that witnessed massive labour migration to İstanbul were the Interior and Eastern Anatolia regions (Bulutay 1995, 120).

When they do not have land in their villages, or when the land they have there is not big enough to feed a large village family; when the city offers them better possibilities for earning a living and is much more advanced in several aspects compared to the village, of course they will have no intention to go back to the village . . . The reasons for remaining are the same as those for leaving the villages in the first place. (Saran 1974, 358–9)

In short, lack of sufficient land and other means of agricultural production forced the peasants of the Black Sea region to seek jobs outside agriculture. The living conditions of the Black Sea peasants could not allow them to stay in their villages. Similar to the cases of Çukurova and the Kurdish South-East, by proving the inability of the majority of the migrant labourers to leave the labour market, the case of the Black Sea region also cancels out the possibility of agrarian structures to make an upward pressure on wages. In line with Kautsky, who viewed the diminishing rural population as a manifestation of the decreasing subsistence level of the peasantry, it appears that decreasing economic power stemming from the gradual separation from the agricultural means of production was the main reason behind the migration of one out of every ten villagers to urban areas during the 1950s (Keyder 1987, 137) and the change in the ratio of rural-to-urban population from 75 per cent/25 per cent in 1945 to 44 per cent/56 per cent in 1980 (Turkish Statistical Institute 2007, 9).

Conclusions derived from this discussion can be summarized as follows. First of all, the majority of the rural migrants were composed of former small peasants and sharecroppers who were either partially or fully separated from the means of agricultural production and therefore could not make their living in agriculture. Second, since the new urban migrants entered into the labour market not from a position of strength but from a position of weakness, there is no reason to accept the claim that ‘agrarian structure exerted an upward pressure on urban wages’ (Keyder 1987, 159–60). This conclusion forces us to investigate the actual relationship between the remaining rural ties of the emerging working class and the wages in Turkey. I will argue below that limited access to farmland made the supply of cheap labour to the agrarian and industrial capital possible.<sup>13</sup>

In 1957, one scholar estimated that more than half of all farmers in Turkey owned ‘an insufficient amount of land to use their family labour economically and to produce enough for their own living. Some of these farmers, however, rent[ed] land, sometimes for cash but often on share basis, or they work[ed] in their slack seasons in agricultural or non-agricultural jobs to earn a little more income to support their families’ (Aktan 1957, 275). The agricultural surveys conducted by the Turkish Statistical Institute show that agricultural enterprises owning less than 30 *dönüms* constituted 50.2 per cent of all enterprises in 1963 and 60.4 per cent in 1970. Most of the rural households who owned less than 30 *dönüms* of farmland relied on selling their labour power to make a living and hence constituted the labour reserve of the capitalist enterprises of various sorts. Interestingly, those households were choosing crop types that did not require much labour in the seasons when they were selling their labour power (Tekeli 1978, 318–20). This process determined the household division of labour in rural Turkey:

<sup>13</sup> It is necessary to point out the fact that by reducing the pace of rural-to-urban migration, the agrarian structure also lowered the political risks associated with a much more swift wave of urban migration that would happen in the case of total dispossession of the peasantry. In cases where urban workers retained their ties to a limited amount of farmland in their villages, the consequence was the reduction of the social risks resulting from the worsening working conditions and social insecurity mainly because the farmland provided supplementary income to the workers in the form of cash or foodstuff (Işık and Pınarcıoğlu 2005, 114, 115; Buğra 2008, 167). However, the emergence in major cities such as İstanbul of a rebellious shantytown population who allied with the radical Left in the second half of the 1970s (Aslan 2004) shows that such risks were not altogether eliminated but made relatively more manageable.

Land, under conditions of cash economy, has lost its primacy in providing a livelihood for rural people. In other words, pressure to leave the land has become greater than ever before, but ironically places to go have become scarce . . . Under the pressures created by modernization and globalization smallholder cultivators have responded to diversifying their **resource base** and joined . . . land-base/free-floating labour force. Instead of permanent migration, seasonal/temporary population movements have become the mode of survival . . . While mainly women and the elderly remain on the land, men seek work outside the village. Children, of all ages, play a crucial role as the household's 'reserve army', ready to fill the gap at either end. Consequently, labour is able to maintain its ties with the land – from which basic subsistence is obtained – while at the same time, move around in quest for cash-generating opportunities elsewhere to supplement household income. Thus, a movement back and forth from the land/village has become institutionalized. (Ertürk 1998, 110–1, emphasis in original)<sup>14</sup>

We can now take a closer look at this connection between the agrarian structure and the cheap labour supply by using case studies on different regions. In her case study on a village that is located around the coal mines of Zonguldak (in the western Black Sea region), Suzan Ilcan notes that peasants' access to land contributed to the maintenance of the supply of cheap labour power in the various industries of the city:

Migrant labour not only facilitates industrial labour demands, but it constitutes a workforce that can be called upon during peak demands and let go during slack periods. Saklı men who are employed in Zonguldak's coal mining industry work six months of the year (i.e., one month on, one month off). Non-remunerated labour performed by women and young children is essential for subsistence agriculture and permits male villagers to engage in seasonal migration more frequently. Since urban seasonal employment is poorly paid, it does not enable members of the marginal farming sector to abandon subsistence production or to migrate permanently to urban centres. (Ilcan 1994, 570–1)

Our second case, from two villages around Ergani district of Diyarbakır in the Kurdish South-East, portrays a similar link between the pressure on the small peasants' limited access to

<sup>14</sup> According to a survey conducted in 1970, 28 per cent of all peasant families who were interviewed had members temporarily living outside of their village. Those families sent on average 1.5 persons outside the village: 8.1 per cent of those migrant workers were working in another village, 18 per cent in a nearby town, 29.1 in a city, 39.6 per cent in one of the three biggest cities of Turkey (İstanbul, Ankara and İzmir) and 5.2 per cent abroad (Tekeli 1978, 323). Semi-proletarianization through labour migration had a certain impact on gender relations in rural Turkey: 'The situation is further aggravated in the case of marginal or sub-marginal smallholdings. These are holdings so small that they cannot absorb the totality of available family labour so that other sources of income have to be sought to supplement income from land. These are the cases where the so-called "feminization of agriculture" typically takes place, since it is the men who migrate temporarily or on a longer-term basis to seek alternative sources of income while the women remain totally in charge of agriculture. When this occurs in regions where labour-intensive crops such as tea, tobacco or hazelnuts are cultivated the fact that manual tasks are considered women's work anyway, means that men's failure to secure alternative sources of income and employment does not bring about a more equitable sharing of production tasks since the unemployed men will remain idle while their women carry out their habitual tasks. Similar observations may be made about village crafts, especially carpet-weaving. In many villages of south-western Anatolia full-time, intensive carpet weaving by women constitutes the mainstay of village economy while men have erratic, seasonal incomes from tourism, fishing, sponge diving and small commercial endeavours. Typically, while women in times of need may be called upon to perform tasks which are considered men's work, the reverse is never true. This may lead to extremes of quasi-parasitic dependence on women's labour, a dependence which far from giving women greater autonomy can only be sustained by means of harsher and more violent subjugation of women. It is within such contexts that men will uphold an ideology of their superiority with greatest force, although such defensive patriarchy must not be confused with its traditional form' (Kandiyoti 1990, 191). For substantial analyses of the relationship between agrarian change, proletarianization and transformation of gender relations in Turkey, see Ilcan (1994) and Kandiyoti (1990).



farmland and the supply of cheap labour power through permanent or seasonal labour migration. It also covers the feedback effects of this type of labour migration on the households who remain in the villages:

Once a peasant becomes indebted it is very difficult for him to be able to repay in time, since the farm does not produce enough surplus. Therefore the search for supplementary income becomes an integral part of the survival process of the peasant family farm. This supplementary income is obtained through seasonal or permanent migration . . . Every household in the village had one or more members who had migrated outside the village. Permanent migration has basically been towards the industrialized centres and the Çukurova and Aegean regions, where a large labour force is required for the cultivation of commercial crops such as cotton, tobacco, etc., which are grown for the world market. Those who have left for other areas keep contact with their families by sending money home or by obtaining some of their foodstuffs from the village. The survival of the household production unit is therefore supported by the supplementary income provided by the migrant members of the household. On the other hand, the existence of the household as a safety valve enables the migrant worker to sell his labour power at a lower rate than its market value. (Aydın 1990, 174)<sup>15</sup>

Another study on a village in Ankara-Polatlı (of Central Turkey) in the early 1970s shows a similar link between limited land resources and the supply of mainly unskilled (and therefore, cheap) labour power:

While labour constituted the major limiting factor in the pre-mechanized period, land took on the most critical role after mechanization so that those peasants who had started out with sufficient capital and land resources prospered, while most were either unable to carry on in the face of mechanized competition or unable to meet the ever increasing cost of tractor maintenance under the pressure to pay debts. In the face of new pressures, small landowners increasingly had to supplement their income from land by other additional sources such as wage-labour . . . A whole spectrum ran from those who used side occupations to supplement their income from land to those who used land income as a mere addition to the bulk of their earnings in other occupations . . . The lower stratum is also very homogenous and covers households with very little land, unable to cultivate land by their own resources and relying heavily on unskilled and rarely skilled wage-work. (Kandiyoti 1974, 208–9, 214)

Hence, it appears that there are no sufficient grounds to believe that the situation of the labourers exerted an upward pressure on real wages in the rural regions. The situation does not

<sup>15</sup> In parallel with Arrighi and Piselli's analysis on the place of labour migration in the peripheralization of specific agricultural regions in southern Italy, it is possible to view the migratory flows that linked the rural areas (like the ones in Northwestern and Southeastern Turkey), which provide substantial cheap labour power to nearby and distant labour markets, as the expression of participation in the world division of labour. By largely or entirely covering the costs of reproduction by subsistence-oriented activities, workers of these regions sell their only product that can be sold competitively in the world market: labour power. Therefore, they could only share the 'benefits of the world division of labour' through exporting 'their surplus labour power at the prices that involved extremely unequal distribution of those benefits between themselves and the "importers" of their labour power' (Arrighi and Piselli 1987, 692–3). In his study on the labour market in Turkish agriculture, Keyder refers to the case of seasonal employment of small farmers for cotton production in Söke plain, in order to prove an upward pressure on wages in agricultural employment due to the non-existence of 'abundant supply of wage-dependent landless labour' (Keyder 1989, 742–4). The semi-proletarianization cases of the Black Sea, Central Anatolia and the Southeastern regions that are discussed here show the regionally specific character of the case of Söke and render the generalization of such an argument to argue for the existence of an upward pressure in agricultural wages in Turkey impossible.

change when we focus on the rural migrants in big cities. The absence of labour shortage problems determined the place of the migrant workers in the labour market as suppliers of cheap labour power in the period under discussion:

Only a small proportion of the new urbanites were incorporated directly into the modern industrial sector. Most remained loosely employed in services, small manufactures and petty commerce. The majority of the non-industrial labour force in large urban areas belonged to the so-called marginal sector of unorganized and sporadically employed labour. There was therefore a sufficient labour force in reserve to allow the modern industrial sector to avoid the labour shortage problems faced, for example, by most Western European countries. (Keyder 1987, 153–4)

The relationship between the living conditions of the migrant workers and the supply of cheap labour power should also be stressed. Rural migrants increasingly settled in the shanty-towns known as *gecekondu*s from the early 1950s on (Karpat 1976). In the early 1970s, almost four million people, one third of the total urban population, were living in those settlements (İçduygu et al. 1998, 223). Confirming Michael Burawoy's contention that 'the significance of migrant labour lies in the separation of the processes of maintenance and renewal, so that renewal takes place where living standards are low and maintenance takes place within easy access to employment' and the function of the *ghetto* is 'the allocation of the renewal processes to areas where renewal costs are low' (Burawoy 1976, 1082–3), the *gecekondu* played a critical role in the supply of cheap labour power in the cities:

This housing type eased the settlement of the peasants in the cities at first and also was accepted as a cost-decreasing factor for the industrial sector, as when the peasants found cheaper places to live, their demands from the labour market would be limited. The *gecekondu* settlements, in a way, decreased the cost of shelter in the total costs of industrial production. In this way the proliferation of the *gecekondu* settlements did not bring much burden on the cities' economic development at the first instance. (Yıldırımaz 2009, 132)

By supplying cheap labour power to various sectors in the urban economy, meeting the supply deficit through producing imitated and non-registered products, making the distribution of products cheaper through methods such as street retailing, and transferring their limited accumulation to the cities thanks to their remaining ties with the agricultural production, migrant workers contributed to the implementation of the import substitution industrialization (ISI) in the economy until 1980 (İçduygu et al. 1998, 235; Yıldırımaz 2009, 131).

Our discussion has so far revealed three interrelated facts about the agrarian change and labour supply in Turkey between 1950 and 1980. First, even without facing forceful expropriation, a considerable part of the small peasantry was gradually separated from their sources of livelihood in the villages. Consequently, they did not have much chance of remaining outside the labour market and turn back to agriculture. This brings us to our second point, which is that there was no labour shortage problem for the industrial enterprises in Turkey given the increasing population and growing urban migration without a corresponding level of industrial development. Finally, the majority of the rural migrants who were increasingly settled in the shanty-towns of big cities became a source of cheap labour supply for various sectors in the urban economy. In conclusion, these factors show that an 'upward pressure' on real wages cannot be explained by the incoming labourers' existing access to land and other agricultural sources of income.

## CLASS STRUGGLES AND WAGES IN TURKEY

Therefore, two questions are still waiting to be answered: First, was there a significant increase in the real wages between 1950 and 1980? If so, what factors explain this increase, given the considerable magnitude of the industrial reserve army during that period? Starting with the first question, we must look at the available statistical data on the real wage increases in the period under consideration. The related data shows that the most spectacular real wage increases in Turkey in the postwar period happened between 1963 and 1976. If the wage level in the former year is taken as 100, it increased to 220 in 1976. On average, wages increased 4.9 per cent each year from 1963 to 1976 (Boratav 2005, 138–9). Keyder attributes this increase *partially* to the labourers' strong bargaining position thanks to their ability to exit from the labour market. In the previous section, I have argued that this claim does not reflect the actual situation.

According to another strain of conventional wisdom explaining the wage increases between 1963 and 1976, the import substitution industrialization strategy, which required the expansion of a national market, necessitated that capitalists increase wages in order to sustain the consumption of their products in the domestic market (Keyder 1987; Akkaya 2002). For example, Keyder argues that 'both the agrarian structure and state policy were factors pushing up wage rates and preparing for an industrial development strategy based on mass consumption' (Keyder 1987, 161). This logic even leads to conclusions such as that the working-class movement, socialists, capitalists and the state all together favoured high wages in the ISI period until the late 1970s (Akkaya 2002, 84).<sup>16</sup> This mechanistic understanding of the ISI period is incapable of explaining the impact of class struggles over wages between 1960 and 1980. It also fails to explain why one of the primary objectives of the military junta that stayed in power (in co-operation with an obedient civilian government) between 1971 and 1973 was to suppress the workers' wages through suppressing the workers' movement. Between 1971 and 1973, real wages not only stopped increasing but also decreased by 7 per cent, and these losses by part of the working class would only be regained between 1973 and 1978 (Akkaya 2002, 73), the period that was determined by the militant struggles of the working class. Since there is a broad academic consensus over the fact that the military junta followed policies that were favourable to the capitalist groups of the ISI period, there are no grounds to explain wage increases simply by the requirements of the ISI.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> This problematic assumption is derived mainly from the Regulation Approach, which proposes high wages both as the primary condition for economic expansion in advanced capitalist countries after the Second World War as well as a method to avoid capitalist crises in general. A detailed critique of this approach is beyond the scope of this article. For substantial theoretical critiques of the Regulation Approach, see Brenner and Glick (1991) and Savran (2010a).

<sup>17</sup> Keyder argues that 'growing union strength after the 1974 elections had been prepared by the success of economic regulation under import substituting industrialization. This same strength became dysfunctional when the material conditions of production could no longer be reproduced and when accumulation was not readily feasible' in the late 1970s which 'yielded to first simmering, then galloping, conflict' (Keyder 1987, 192). However, a closer look at the policies of the military junta between 1971 and 1973 reveals the fact that class conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat over wages and other issues made the strength of the unions very problematic for the bourgeoisie much earlier than Keyder assumes. In fact, Halil Kaya, the president of the Turkish Confederation of Employer Associations in that period, demanded that the civilian government (established immediately after the military coup of 1971) should 'remember the importance of the private sector for economy, prevent illegal incidents that disrupt peace in working life, change existing laws of collective bargaining, strike and lock-out' and should 'regulate wages in a way that does not allow the workers to be squashed by inflation but at the same time helps to increase productivity' (*Cumhuriyet* 1971). In short, the Turkish bourgeoisie demanded an iron fist that would effectively discipline the working class, whose struggles resulted in increasing wages from the early 1960s on. Memduh Tağmaç, the Chief of the General Staff that carried out the coup, echoed the same

We have so far seen that limited access to rural sources of income and the requirements of the ISI era do not solve the puzzle of rising wages in the 1960s and 1970s. The answer to this puzzle appears to be that workers' struggles played the key role in increasing wages.<sup>18</sup> The position of the migrant workers changed dramatically in this context. First of all, the increasing impossibility of leaving the labour market by retreating to family farming, deriving the majority of their income from urban wages and the rising working-class movement altogether changed the attitude of the migrant labourers towards class struggle from relative passivity to increasing militancy. As a result, although the various characteristics of the migrant labour force that exerted a downward pressure on wages (discussed in the fourth section) were not eliminated, they became less effective over time to suppress wages and made the wage increases of the 1960s and 1970s possible.

In his analysis on the transformation of migrants from southern Italy from living 'as scabs, in the 1950s and early 1960s' in the industrial regions of northern Italy to being 'class-struggle vanguards' from the 1960s onwards (Arrighi 1987, 2009), Giovanni Arrighi states:

[T]he migrants' disposition towards engaging in working-class struggles in the places to which they had moved depended on whether the conditions there were considered as permanently determining their life chances. It's not enough to say that the situation in the out-migrating areas determines what salaries and conditions the migrants will work for. One has to say at what point the migrants perceive themselves as deriving the bulk of their subsistence from wage employment – it's a switch that can be detected and monitored. (Arrighi 2009, 69)

Similar factors were playing out in Turkey between 1950 and 1980. First of all, as has been argued throughout this paper, the migrant workers' chances to exit the labour market by retreating to family farming were increasingly eroded. In other words, they were increasingly deriving the bulk of their subsistence from wage employment. Second, although most of them constituted the growing reserve army of labour, they were nevertheless joining the ranks of the active army of labour as well. As mentioned above, the ratio of rural-to-urban population varied from 75 per cent/25 per cent in 1945 to 44 per cent/56 per cent in 1980 (Turkish Statistical Institute 2007, 9). Between 1940 and 1960, while the total population increased by 55 per cent, the number of workers doubled. Between 1960 and 1980, while the total population increased by almost 60 per cent, the number of industrial workers increased by 250 per cent (Akkaya 2002, 65). This does not mean that the potential for a division or split of the working class between rural migrants and others was altogether eliminated. The argument developed here is that the increasing participation of the migrants in the active army of labour improved the chances of organizing a broader and more united working-class front against capital, and therefore limited the effect of the reserve army in suppressing real wages in the 1960s and 1970s. It is fairly well known that the impact of increasing unemployment on suppressing labour costs is one of the aspects of the relationship between the reserve and the active army of labour. However, despite increasing rates of unemployment, the labour costs continued to increase between 1974 and 1979. In other words, the working-class struggles eroded the function of the reserve army of labour to regulate the labour market (Onaran 2000, 203–4).

logic by stating in 1971 that 'Social awakening is overtaking economic development, this ought to be stopped' (Can 2010). Therefore, assuming a functional relationship between strong unions and import substituting industrialization in Turkey is hardly convincing.

<sup>18</sup> For an analysis of the relationship between the working-class struggles and wage increases in Turkey in the 1960s and 1970s, see Savran (2010b, 173–7).

Again, what appears to be a central factor behind real wage increases in Turkey in that period is the workers' utilization of the opportunities brought by the Constitution of 1961, especially the right to unionize and to organize collective bargaining for their own class' interests. Of course, the exercise of this right did not take place in a peaceful atmosphere. Class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat intensified. Factory occupations and strikes became daily events in Turkey between 1963 and 1980, bringing steady real wage increases from 1963 onwards. It is obvious that the so-called 'populism' of the ISI strategy had its own limits. Those limits became visible when DİSK (Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu – Confederation of Revolutionary Workers' Unions), which brought significant bargaining power to the workers in the private sector, annoyed the Turkish industrial bourgeoisie.<sup>19</sup> To fix the problem of working-class militancy, plans to restrict trade union organization (which mainly targeted the DİSK) were introduced in the agenda of the Turkish Parliament in 1970. This initiative provoked a two-day working-class rebellion in the industrial heartlands of Turkey around Istanbul and Kocaeli, on 15 and 16 June 1970, an event that took place even without the control of the DİSK. The anti-union plans eventually failed. It became clear that regardless of the so-called 'populism' of the ISI, the working class consolidated its militancy considerably.

As mentioned before, by suppressing the working-class and socialist movements, the military coup of 1971 succeeded in decreasing the real wages by 7 per cent between 1971 and 1973. However, it could not reverse the ongoing trend. The working-class struggle achieved its peak point immediately after 1973, when the political process was normalized through free elections. The profits went down and wages went up in the second half of the 1970s (Boratav 2005, 143).<sup>20</sup> Although the real wages started to be pushed down after 1977 by an intense offensive by the capitalists, this provoked major working-class resistance. The loss of working days due to strike activities increased by a factor of more than two between 1977 and 1980, compared to the previous three years (Boratav 2005, 146). This resistance could only be broken by the military coup of 12 September 1980. Working-class organizations and the political Left were harshly suppressed and real wages were frozen. The counter-attack of the capitalists against labour finally succeeded. The victory of the capitalists over labour facilitated the transition of the Turkish economy from import substitution to an export-oriented and neoliberal economy after 1980.

## CONCLUSION

This paper contributes to the literature on global agrarian change and labour supply by using the case of Turkey between 1950 and 1980. Two conclusions of this literature have framed my analysis of Turkey. First, dispossession and proletarianization of the peasantry can take multiple

<sup>19</sup> It is worth mentioning that almost half of the workers were employed by the public sector in the 1960s and 1970s. Between 1963 and 1977, the number of workers participating in collective bargaining processes increased to 369,324 in the public sector and 220,274 in the private sector. Trade union organization was relatively easier in the public sector than in the private sector, which enabled the public-sector workers to get wage increases and various non-wage social benefits relatively more easily than the private-sector workers, who had to engage in more militant struggles in order to obtain similar rights and benefits. The difference between the militancy of the public and private workers becomes clear when we look at the statistical data on strikes in the second half of the 1970s. Between 1976 and 1979, 124 strikes involving 52,607 workers took place in the public sector. During the same period, 513 strikes took place in the private sector, involving 103,954 workers. The number of working days lost due to those strikes was 2,583,695 in the public sector and 8,778,963 in the private sector (Turan 2000).

<sup>20</sup> Vehbi Koç, the head of the biggest capitalist group in Turkey in that period, complained about rising wages due to the workers' movements: 'Until today, the pressure coming from the trade unions has forced the employers to give what the workers have demanded. This difference was added to the prices which, in turn, further increased workers' wages and created a vicious circle of inflation' (Yankı 1976).

forms that are irreducible either to accumulation by full dispossession or to the persistence of the small peasantry. Second, an agrarian structure based on small peasant property can exert two different types of pressure on urban wages. In the first type, by potentially enabling the small peasantry to stay outside the urban labour markets, the stable smallholder farming bringing high returns makes an upward pressure on wages. In the second type, smallholder farming that does not bring enough returns leads to semi-proletarianization that usually exerts a downward pressure on wages. This downward pressure continues until such time as semi-proletarians' access to rural sources of income becomes so limited that it no longer exerts significant pressure on wages. This paper argues that Turkey between 1950 and 1980 fits the second type.

The main arguments of this paper can be summarized as follows. First of all, it argues that even without forceful expropriation, a considerable part of the small peasantry was gradually separated from the land and other means of agricultural production during the process. In addition to full dispossession and persistent peasantry in different regions of Turkey, semi-proletarianization through partial and gradual dispossession of the small peasantry from the agricultural means of production was a very common pattern of proletarianization in Turkey in the period under discussion.

Second, in confirmation of the theoretical works and case studies discussed in the second section of this paper, the gradual and partial character of dispossession and proletarianization of the peasantry did *not* contradict or limit capitalist development in postwar Turkey. By subsidizing wages, semi-proletarianized peasants' access to a limited amount of land in their villages had the potential to enable the capitalist class to suppress the wages and make the employment process relatively more flexible than that of the fully proletarianized workers.

Third, contrary to the view that the majority of the emerging urban labour force had the option to exit the urban labour market and return to agriculture in their villages, such an option was not available to the majority of the migrant workers. Considering that there was no significant labour shortage problem for industrial enterprises in Turkey in the postwar period, the 'upward pressure' in real wages between 1963 and 1977–80 cannot be explained by the emerging working class' rural background or so-called exit option from the labour market. In fact, the workers' remaining ties to agriculture exerted a downward rather than an upward pressure on wages.

This brings us to our final conclusion: instead of the rural ties of the emerging working class, the main reason behind the dramatic rise in the urban wages in Turkey in the 1960s and 1970s was working-class militancy, as seen in the higher levels of trade union organization, strike activity and other forms of working-class struggle. The impossibility of leaving the labour market by retreating to family farming, the fact that workers derived the bulk of their income from urban wages and the rising working-class movement together resulted in a change in the disposition of the migrant workers, so far displaying relative passivity, towards engaging in working-class struggles of increasing militancy. As a result, although various characteristics of the migrant labour force that exerted a downward pressure on wages were not altogether eliminated, they became less effective to suppress wages over time and made the substantial wage increases of the 1960s and 1970s possible.

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