TRANSFORMATION OF CORE EXECUTIVE IN TURKEY: THEORY AND CURRENT DEBATES

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ABSTRACT

In the post-NPM era, some measures were proposed to cure the fragmentation problems caused by agencification and specialisation. Most governments turned to more integrative practices so as to be able to control and coordinate public institutions, which resulted in the concentration of power at the top, thus, centralization. These reforms were also put into circulation in Turkey, and especially after 2003 reactionary measures were taken against regulations which led to the fragmentation of central authority. Some actions were envisaged in the government's public administration reform programs: independent regulatory agencies were put under tighter control of the government, and prime minister's office and president's office were expanded and reinforced. A closer look at these practices shows that beyond fashioning an integrated administration as a response to the fragmentation in the central government, they were directed at increasing the authority and influence of the core executive vis-à-vis other centres of power.

Keywords: *core executive; centralization; whole-of-government; Turkey*

INTRODUCTION

Some outputs of NPM reforms such as structural devolution, performance management, and single-purpose organizations have urged a number of reactions. Christensen and Laegreid (2006:6) coin this phenomenon as "second generation public administration reforms".Attempts at better coordination of government policies and activities aiming at providing services beyond organisational boundaries are not new (O'Faircheallaigh et al., 1999). Such phenomena as globalisation, increased citizen expectations, complexity of social issues, and budgetary limitations have increased the emphasis on more efficiency, effectiveness and delegation (see Armstrong and Lenihan, 1999; Institute of Public Administration Australia (IPAA), 2002; Mulgan, 2005; O'Faircheallaigh et al., 1999). Single-purpose organizations with diverse functions led to more fragmentation, as a result of which each agency claimed its share on the authority of central government, and problems arose in terms of cooperation and coordination. This, in turn, impaired efficiency and effectiveness (Boston and Eicbaum 2005: 21, State Services Commission, 2001), which was the purpose of such re-organization in the first place.

This article examines the discourse on more integrated government and its reflections on practice in the case of Turkey. The application of the theory in the field will be evaluated against a number of "milestone" developments, such as the announcement of "general institutional review in the government", expansion of the Prime Minister's Office after 2003, redefinition of the relations between independent regulatory agencies and respective ministries, reorganization of the cabinet with executive order no. 643, and fortification of the President's Office after 2014.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The problems mentioned in the introduction above are related to the transformation witnessed from a hierarchical bureaucratic organization to a more fragmented and decentralised structure. Such changes are explained with a number of concepts, including "hollowing-out" of the state, network governance, and fragmentation of the core executive. (Marinetto, 2003: 594; Bevir and Rhodes, 2006; Marsh, 2008; Rhodes, 1997). It is claimed that this process prevented the central governments to perform its holistic coordination duty (Jessop, 2004;

Holliday, 2000; Rhodes, 1994). In addition, some scholars argue that managerialist changes in the last decades have restrained the capacity and opportunities of central governments for cooperation, integration and coordination (Dahlström, Peters and Pierre, 2011; Hamburger, Stevens and Weller, 2011).

The pioneers of the whole-of-government approach, Christensen and Lægreid, discussed that the shortcomings of new public management such as fragmentation of executive power and structural devolution could be healed by a stronger emphasis on and shift towards a more integrated approach that would embrace the whole of government apparatus. This approach could also improve policy making processes and help mitigate the negative effects of NPM on the public as a whole. In the second wave of modern public-sector reforms, the emphasis shifted from such concepts as structural devolution, disaggregation, and single-purpose organizations towards a whole-of-government (WOG) approach Christensen and Lægreid 2006). In the United Kingdom the term used was "joined-up government" (Hood, 2005; Pollitt, 2003; Kavanagh and Richards, 2001) whereas in Canada it was called "horizontalism" (Savoie, 1999; Bouckaert et al., 2010). The common point is that in almost all the forerunners of New Public Management, including Australia and New Zealand (Humpage, 2005, Christensen and Lægreid, 2007) academic interest began to shift towards more holistic, integrated governance based on the belief that "more integrated public entities work better together" (Bissessar, 2009:25). As a result, this approach has advocated the restructuring of central executive and increase in its coordinative and functional capacity. New Zealand and Australia prefer to handle entrenched social problems with whole-of-government approach, which presents an example of the shift in approaching such topics as social policy in several developed countries in the last decade. Although the approach is relatively new and suffering from problems in implementation, it seems that the governments of New Zealand and Australia facilitated cooperation among government agencies.

The economically rationalist approach which dominated the political arena during 1980s and 1990s has now been replaced by a tendency which emphasizes "enabling state" concept. Accordingly, the government acts as a broker between businesses, communities and individuals so that "social partnership" can be established (Jackson, 2003). Such shift of focus can be evaluated as a challenge to established government structures and processes. Government portfolios are mostly structured along sectoral lines, but policies require that targets are shared, interests are blended and hybridized (Jackson, 2003). This change has

produced a "proliferation of initiatives aiming to promote 'joined-up' government or 'horizontal integration' (Bakvis & Juillet, 2004; Mulgan, 2002). The term" whole-of-government" is preferred in Australia and New Zealand, which refers to the development of integrated government policies, programs or public services with a view to transcending organisational boundaries in order to reach a shared goal. Dewan et al. (2015) found that the phenomenon is even relevant for the USA, a country reputable for its separation of powers and checks-and-balances, and that "whole-of-government" approach influenced that polity as well. Shinoda (2005) examined the cabinet secretariat in Japan and explained the reasons of its emergence as a core executive body. Goetz and Margetts (1999) studied "solitary centre" which serves as the core executive in Central and Eastern European Countries and concluded that government centres increasingly resembled the strong centres in Western Europe in structural terms.

Such centralisation is welcomed as the cure for the maladies of new public management by some scholars. Among them Bell and Hindmoor (2009: 86-87) deserve mentioning who argued that while states are adapting themselves to the requirements of the new period, they became more centralised and reinforced their hierarchical authority build-ups. In this process in some countries (i.e. United Kingdom, Australia, Canada) heads of the executive body concentrated central executive powers in their hands, a phenomenon named "presidentialisation of politics" by Poguntke and Webb (2005). Strangio et.al. (2013) used the term "strengthening of culture of command" while referring to the same phenomenon, while Hocking and Lewis (2007) preferred "post-democratic leadership".

All these different namings more or less refer to the same phenomenon: strengthening of the core executive. Centralization of executive power results in the reinforcement and proliferation of units which deal with policy analysis, formulation and advice. Such units usually serve to the prime minister directly; not to the cabinet as a whole or line ministers (see Fobe et al., 2013; Eichbaum and Shaw, 2007; Craft, 2013; Head, 2015). It is conceivable that, as a result of this practice, cabinet-wide consultation and social participation in decision-making processes is damaged.

In addition to the foregoing, according to Loughlin and Scott (1997), McGowan and Wallace (1996) and Jayasuriya (2001), central state powers have been consolidated and insulated, and Moran (2003) heralded the birth of a new and more hierarchical 'regulatory state'. Another

explanation for more frequent application of hierarchical administration practices is that reform efforts made it a more reasonable option. Moran (2002) claims that government structure was seriously damaged by public administration reforms. The rejection of government intervention in the name of public good urged politicians to undertake reforms which increased government capacity (hence, the term "smart government"). In this context, governments are trying to solve principal-agent problems by, among other means, strengthening authority structures, which results in more centralization.

TURKISH EXPERIENCE AFTER 2003

Since the AK Parti came to power in 2003, several steps have been taken to reform the state apparatus. The influence of NPM led to the creation of a whole array of public agencies both within and outside ministerial hierarchy. European Union membership perspective also had critical impact on the reform process. However, in the same period, some centralization tendencies were also evident, as identified in the regular Progress Reports published by the European Commission. The study will examine these tendencies by looking at the following examples: (1) expansion of the office of the prime minister, (2) re-definition of the links between regulatory agencies and the government, (3) re-organization of the cabinet, (4) strengthening of presidential office.

General Institutional Review in the Government

"General Institutional Review in the Government (GIRG)" was one of the most important promises of Public Administration Reform Program which was launched in 2003. In its own words, the program was "prepared in order to display the general framework of the need for restructuring, including its mentality, strategic design and organization perspectives, which is obligatory to meet in the public administration of Turkey based on the management philosophy of and basic management vision of the 21st century, an era of rapid changes, globalisation and increased competition…" With the GIRG initiative, all public agencies other than state-owned enterprises were reviewed. Later in 2003, a draft Public Management Reform Law was passed (which was vetoed by the president), which mentioned that regulatory agencies were established but the previous public bodies which performed similar functions also continued to operate, which caused an overlapping of functions. Thus it was recommended that these institutions should be closed or united with regulatory bodies. For

example, Board for Regulating Energy Markets was founded, but Directorate General of Energy Affairs continued to exist; or Directorate General of Communication performed some functions which overlapped with those of the recently established Telecom Supreme Board.

The primary aim of GIRG was reportedly to deprive the government from its directly intervening and production functions and assigning it new roles such as formulating policies, building infrastructure, creating resources, setting standards and auditing. The duty of the government was defined as securing justice, ensuring internal and external security, developing macro-level, flexible and participatory strategies, and overseeing macro-economic balance and stability. Eliminating the bulky and excessively centralised structure of public administration, adopting citizen-oriented approaches in delivering public services, as well as efficiency and effectiveness, are among the central aims of this paradigm.

According to the GIRG program, ministries would be restructured and the Cabinet of Ministers would be rationalised. The number and nature of ministerial bodies would be reviewed by ministerial restructuring teams which would cooperate with their equivalents in other ministries under the light of the principles laid down by Public Administration Reform Program.

Expansion of the Prime Minister's Office after 2003

Referring to the position of prime minister in the cabinet, it was Sartori who offered to change the phrase "first among equals" to "first above unequals" (1997:139). In Turkey, remarkable expansion was witnessed in the structure of Prime Ministry after 2003, when AK Parti came to power. It is true that the charisma of the leader of the party, the then prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, is one of the reasons for such expansion. But this topic is beyond the scope of this paper, which focuses on institutional aspects. In this context, one factor which reinforced the position of the Prime Minister was the proliferation of public bodies which operated under Prime Ministry only to turn into a gigantic line ministry. In 2014, the structure of Prime Ministry more comprehensive than ever: there were 27 head offices, 12 directorates general and undersecretariats, including Directorate of Disaster and Emergency Management, Directorate of Religious Affairs, Undersecretariat of the Treasury, Secretariat General of National Security Council, Undersecretariat of Public Order and Safety, Directorate of Collective Housing, and Directorate General of Foundations, among

others; in addition, there were 9 related public bodies among which Central Bank, all three public banks, Directorate General of Turkish Radio and Television Agency, and government news agency can be listed. The number of employees rose from some 1170 to 2850 between 2003 and 2014. Today the PM has 27 chief consultants, 3 consultancy offices, private secretariat, housing directorate, press consultancy, inspection board directorate, undersecretariat, public diplomacy coordination office, information acquisition and assessment board, public employees ethical board, state of emergency coordination board, and other directorates and offices, one revolving fund, four boards, and six "associated" public bodies, such as Joint Chiefs of Staff and four regulatory agencies. Today the Prime Ministry is responsible for some 40 public bodies at varying autonomy, which is more than any line ministry.

All these developments mean that, with the vast institutional apparatus that he can mobilize, Prime Minister can interfere in the policies and activities of line ministries. In the end of the decade, the PM's Office emerged as a "super service ministry" instead of a coordinator ministry, which, in turn, resulted in more centralisation of power in the core executive represented by the PM's Office.

Transformation of Independent Regulatory Agencies

Having emerged first in the USA in 1920s, independent regulatory agencies (IRAs) spread to other countries after 1980s. The functions and structures of these agencies vary due to different administrative and political cultures, economic systems and structural features of administrations.[i] With their institutional autonomy and independence of decision-making bodies, and policing functions as regards economic policies, IRAs have a critical role to play in the application of neo-liberal policies. IRAs serve to decrease political influence in decision-making in economic affairs, and help government avoid political responsibility in the application of economic policies. From this perspective, IRAs provide a new model in the organization of government and its (weakened) role in the regulation of markets; thus, they have been introduced as an essential part of decentralisation of government.

In Turkey, IRAs display differences from their counterparts in the West, which can be attributed to centralist tendencies. IRAs in the Western democracies enjoy considerable insulation from elected politicians in terms of party politicization and tenure (Thatcher,

2002); but in Turkey, governments were quick to understand that they were far too important to be left truly "independent". Too many amendments were made in the legislation on IRAs as a result of which they lost much of their independence to centralisation (Sever, 2015):

- Staff of some IRAs were assigned by Cabinet of Ministers while the dismissal authorities were given to the approval of the Prime Ministry,

- The limitation of one-term service on the boards of IRAs, which was imposed in order to ensure higher independency by eliminating the potential "favourable" actions to increase the possibility of a reassignment, was gradually removed in 2011 and 2012; today only 4 of the 11 IRAs preserve the "one-term" rule.

- The independence of the boards of IRAs made executive organ "uncomfortable" (Karakaş, 2008; Sezen, 2007; Sosay, 2009) so that a law was passed which terminated the service periods of Banking Regulation and Supervision Board (BDDK).

- Although by law the decisions of the boards of IRAs are subject to neither hierarchical nor tutelary supervision, it can be seen that relations between IRAs and the central executive resemble that of tutelage. Since 2008, all other than Capital Markets Agency and Bio-Security Board have been "associated" with one ministry or the other by legal amendments or Cabinet of Ministers decisions.

As a result of the foregoing changes in legislation and practice, the autonomy of IRAs has been eroded and central executive organs gained more control on their functioning.

Executive order no. 643

In 2011, as envisaged by the Ninth Development Plan (2007-2013), the executive order no. 643 was passed which led to radical changes in the structure of the Cabinet of Ministers. The executive order redefined the distribution of public services among ministries by amending the basic law no. 3046 which regulated the structuring and functioning of ministries. For one thing, the number of public agencies related or associated to the Prime Ministry was decreased. This looks like a deviation from the previous developments which enlarged the Prime Ministry organisation, but a closer look shows that it is indeed in coincidence with the overall philosophy of strengthening the core executive by imposing deputy prime ministers. Other fundamental changes were the elimination of ministries without portfolio, and introduction of new line ministries and deputy ministers.

The Executive Order no. 643 created new line ministries and renamed some existing ones. Ministry for EU Affairs, Ministry of Development and Ministry of Economy were introduced by reorganizing some public bodies which were previously under the control of the PM or other ministries. The Undersecretariat of EU Affairs under the PM was reorganized as Ministry for EU Affairs; State Planning Organization, which was another undersecretariat of the PM, became Ministry of Development, and Undersecretariat of Foreign Trade of the PM was turned into Ministry of Economy. Ministry of Family and Social Affairs was created by combining a number of public bodies which were previously controlled by different ministries. Ministry of Industry and Trade was divided into two ministries: Ministry of Customs and Trade and Ministry of Science, Industry and Technology. Likewise, Ministry of Environment and Forestry was divided into Ministry of Environment and Urbanization and Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs.

Ministers without portfolio had been members of the Cabinet of Ministers since 1946. The executive order no. 643 replaced them with deputy prime ministers. Several of the public bodies or agencies related or associated with the Prime Minister were transferred to the authority of deputy prime ministers, which explains the simplification of the Prime Minister's organization. The Executive Order defined two types of deputy PMs. The number of the first type of deputy PMs who can be assigned in order to assist the PM in his duties, especially in coordinating the cabinet, is not defined. The second type of deputy PMs is limited with five, and these deputies can be assigned based on the reasons given for ministers without portfolio in a previous Executive Order dated 1983. This means that an unlimited number of deputy PMs can be assigned by the PM, which will give more power to the Prime Minister inside the cabinet. In the current organization[ii], there are 5 deputy PMs who are responsible for a total of 22 related and associated public bodies and boards, including all public banks, public broadcasting agency, Central Bank, Directorate of Religious Affairs, and four IRAs. Through the deputy PMs, these public bodies are also more or less under direct control of the Prime Minister. After all this reorganization, the cabinet today consists of the Prime Minister, 21 line ministers and 5 deputy PMs.[iii]

Expansion of the President's Office

After 2014, some steps were taken to expand the President's Office. The first step was to increase the number of directorates from 4 to 13 with a confidential decree which was not

published in the Official Gazette. However, the change in organization can be traced from the website of the state at www.kaysis.gov.tr, which is given below.

Table 1: Directorates at the President's Office

Directorate of administrative and financial affairs	Previous directorates
Directorate of institutional communication	
Directorate of information technologies	
Directorate of human resources	
Directorate of security policies	New directorates
Directorate of social and cultural affairs	
Directorate of strategy	
Directorate of international relations	
Directorate of economy monitoring and investments	
Directorate of legal affairs	
Directorate of laws and decisions	
Directorate of public relations	

The directorates listed above were distributed to the 3 deputy secretaries general, 4 to each. There are 36 offices under these directorates and a State Information Coordination Centre. With private secretariats of both the Secretary General and the President himself, Safeguarding Directorate which operates directly under the Secretary General, 3 chief-counsellors and numerous counsellors, the President's Office has turned into a vast machinery of policy making and coordination since 2014. With a prime minister totally under the president's control, the Turkish public administration is witnessing a "whole-of-government" process at the top of the executive, which is very similar to the case in Russia.

CONCLUSION:

WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT OR MORE CENTRALISATION?

Expansion of the organization of the Prime Minister, increase of executive control on Independent Regulatory Agencies, reorganization of the cabinet which served to increase the power of the Prime Minister and finally the concentration of several functions at the President's Office as reflected by the enlargement of its bureaucracy are indicators that the

Turkish public administration is moving from a delegated, fragmented and de-centralised pattern, which was the result of new public management reforms in the early 2000s, to a more centralised structure concentrated at the top executive represented by the Prime Minister's and then the President's Office. The extent to which this succession of top executive bodies is affected by the personality of the top political figure, Erdogan, who was prime minister until 2014 and is the President since then, has not been discussed here. Independent from that factor, the institutional analysis shows that the arguments of whole-of-government approach do not explain the recent restructuring of the Turkish core executive.

The tendency in the Turkish polity represents a shift towards a "unified" executive system. It is a twisting of the concept of "transcending organisational boundaries" which was referred to previously: it looks more like "elimination of organisational boundaries" and blending under the roof of a top executive. What it means in terms of efficiency and effectiveness of public services is yet to be seen. Whether it is the cure for the maladies of new public management in Turkey is not clear, either. What is more apparent is that such an approach can bring about centralization of power in the hands of a handful of top executives, and this is clearly not what whole-of-government approach aimed at.

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[i] There is a vast literature on independent regulatory agencies. See, for example, Knill and Lehmkuhl, 2002; Majone, 1997; Gilardi, 2005; Cary, 1967; Thatcher, 2002; Gilardi, 2009.

[ii] As of August 2016.

[iii] After this reorganization, the then Prime Minister still complained about the number of ministries and said: "if you need a minister, this brother of yours is enough for you". See bloomberght.com in the references.