

Democracy, Identity, and Foreign Policy in Turkey: Hegemony Through Transformation

Fuat Keyman & Şebnem GümüŖçü, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2014, 216 Pages.

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Whether Islam is compatible with democracy or not is a hot topic in the Middle East, especially after the Arab Uprising. Correspondingly, curiosity in Muslim-majority Turkey and its secular, constitutional democracy has increased. Besides, since 2002 Turkey has been governed by the AKP, a party which claims to be center-right party and is affiliated with political Islam. Here, *Democracy, Identity, and Foreign Policy in Turkey: Hegemony Through Transformation* written by Fuat Keyman and Sebnem Gumuscu provides significant insight into Turkey's current political atmosphere and its historical transformation with special emphasis given to the country's experience over the last decade under the AKP.

The book mainly focuses on the question of to what extent has Turkey's transformation led to democracy and democratic consolidation within the country. Several issues which have an impact on the consolidation of Turkish democracy such as globalization, the Kurdish question, civil society, a proactive foreign policy, secularism, and identity are examined in the book's ten chapters. The authors argue that especially since the AKP came to political prominence there have been significant transformations in Turkey in the sense that power has shifted from the status-quo holders to the new political elite, thus leading to the emergence of a new hegemony, as suggested in the title of the book. It is worth mentioning that the book, as it should, takes elements of conjuncture and external factors into consideration. Throughout the

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book, the reader's attention is brought to connections between domestic issues in Turkey and international actors as well as circumstances involving the European Union and Arab Uprisings.

In the chapter entitled "Turkey's Transformation", it is argued that the republican elite tried to establish a national identity that was homogenous and organic instead of class-based or individualistic. Kemalist elites aimed to civilize Turkish society through the construction of the nation-state, dismantling notions of an Islamic state which was inherited from the Ottoman Empire. In the 1950s, Turkey started to accept the demands of the people, especially the rural populations, after the republic's peaceful transition to democracy. Later, the 1980s also marked a critical period for Turkey, as globalization and Europeanization as external processes interacted with the internal processes of democratization and modernization. As a result of new political outcomes, the AKP shined as the only party able to facilitate the transformation of Turkey within this context.

The third chapter focuses on how the AKP emerged while also discussing its electoral hegemony. The authors prefer to separate AKP rule into two phases, the first of which saw a struggle between the party and secular state establishments, and the second, an AKP that started to consolidate its hegemonic position. It is posited that the AKP changed the state-centric paradigm and in relation thereto, transformed the periphery into a new center that is no longer represented by the republican state elite. Offering a few final words, the authors argue that despite the successes of the AKP in terms of economic and political globalization and modernization, its performance with regard to democratization has its ups and downs.

In the next chapter, democratic consolidation is examined in relation to AKP hegemony. According to the authors, the AKP preferred to instrumentalize democracy instead of consolidate it, in the sense that by using its electoral hegemony, the AKP has established control over branches of the state and monopolized power in the hands of party leadership. Paradoxically, the AKP facilitated the discussion of several taboos, like the role of the military, the Kurdish issue, and the Armenian issue, yet it also determined the perimeter of the discussions as it saw fit. The Gezi Protests are given as an example to illustrate that if the AKP had not put an end to military tutelage and initiated the pursuit of a solution to the Kurdish issue, most of the Gezi protesters would have preferred not to join the protests out of fear of provoking a military coup or bloody conflict among Turkish and Kurdish activists. On the other hand, the AKP and its authoritarian form of governance was also the main cause of the protests. It is concluded that electoral victory and majori-

tarian understandings of democracy are not sufficient to consolidate democracy, instead there is a need for democratic, just and good governance that attempts to solve problems through democratic consultation and participatory decision-making.

In the fifth chapter, Turkey's proactive foreign policy under the AKP is examined. It is argued that while the emergence of a proactive foreign policy had already begun before AKP rule, it has become consolidated under the AKP government. Not only the successful management of processes of globalization, but also changes to the security-based perceptions of Turkey's relations with its neighbors have facilitated the country to follow a proactive foreign policy in its neighborhood. The authors claim that the suitable environment and the country's capacity and strategy are the three key elements of this proactive and multidimensional foreign policy. Here, global turmoil and the Arab Uprisings have constituted the appropriate environment, whereas Turkey's identity-based perceptions and multidimensional roles are the key components of its capacity. However, it is underlined that there is a need for a realistic strategy to make this proactive foreign policy effective and sustainable.

Turkish foreign policy in the aftermath of the Arab Uprisings is discussed in the sixth chapter of the book. Here it is mentioned that severe economic crisis in 2008 and the Arab Uprisings were the two critical developments that have challenged Turkey's proactive foreign policy. The authors highlight the fact that Turkey's foreign policy is anchored in personal relations, giving the example of how Erdogan's relationships with Assad and Qaddafi, which were once amicable then dramatically destroyed, demonstrate the fragility of Turkish foreign policy. Thus, it is argued that there is a need for institutionalized means and mechanisms to make Turkey's foreign policy sustainable. In addition to this point, the authors also draw a connection between identity politics in Turkish domestic politics and Turkish foreign policy.

The following chapter links the Kurdish question with Turkey's proactive foreign policy and process of transformation by arguing that without solving the Kurdish question, it is not possible to transform Turkey into a modern, multicultural, democratically consolidated and economically sustainable country. Also, as the authors argue, "the Arab uprising exacerbated Turkey's already complex Kurdish question with its multidimensional nature that connects democracy and security in domestic and regional politics." Later on, it is suggested that new alliances between the Turkish government and the Kurds could generate domestic and regional outcomes from which both sides could benefit. The chapter also analyses the AKP's effort to solve the Kurdish issue and concludes that the AKP's attitudes towards solving the problem hover between democratic resolution of problem and nationalist authoritarian re-

treat. The authors posit that while ending the violence is necessary, it is not sufficient for a long-lasting solution without the drafting of a new constitution that prioritizes the idea of equal citizenship.

In the eighth chapter entitled “Democracy, Secularism and Identity”, the authors mainly concentrate on the discussion of Turkish secularism in relation to Islamic resurgence. It is pointed out that in the Turkish context secularism has turned into laicism, which not only requires the official disestablishment of religion from the state but also state control over religious affairs. They argue that during the period of modernization, Islam has offered a more concrete feeling of belonging than the laicist national identity has. Therefore, since the 1980s, and especially after 1990s, the role and power of Islam has substantially increased. The Turkish business association of MUSIAD is given as an example that demonstrates the growing and accelerating power of Islam in the economic and social spheres. It is worth mentioning that MUSIAD does not define itself as anti-modern or anti-secular, yet it still constitutes an alternative (conservative) model of modernity. As a political party, the AKP prefers not to challenge the nature of secularism, but rather its assertive mode. However, it is argued that while the AKP expands space for Sunni-Muslims in the public sphere and provides them with rights, it does not present the same opportunities to Alevis, non-Muslims, and nonbelievers. Thus, the authors suggest that along with democratic consolidation, there is also a need for the growth of civil society in order to achieve “democratic secular imaginary”.

In the ninth chapter the authors claim that the emergence of a civil society in Turkey did not take place until the 1980s due to the country’s state-centric approach to modernity and its organic vision of society. However, civil society failed in managing to gain popularity in the 1990s because of the state elites’ perception of danger to the Turkish Republic. The chapter argues that the Helsinki Summit in 1999 and the economic crisis of 2011 were turning points for Turkish civil society. Nonetheless, as a result of increasing polarization, civil society in Turkey has realigned itself along the lines of Turkish politics instead of converging around universal values. Furthermore, the AKP has only strengthened Islamic civil society organizations as opposed to all of them.

The authors conclude that the increasing complexity of modernity led to the emergence of the AKP, which has successfully governed the processes of globalization, democratization, Europeanization and modernization. However, this process of transformation has resulted in a hegemonic order, with the AKP at its fore, that has not moved to consolidate democracy. In order to achieve true democratic consolidation, it is argued, that both a new constitution and vibrant civil society are required along with the strong EU anchor.

This book distinguishes itself from the vast amount of texts that are written on Turkey and its recent history thanks to its focus on the question of democracy in relation to transformation. The authors successfully differentiate transformation and democratic consolidation throughout the book in order to indicate that transformation does not always bring about the consolidation of democracy. Moreover, they examine various economic, political and cultural aspects of Turkish politics as they relate to international phenomena and external factors such as globalization, Europeanization, the Arab Uprisings and global turmoil. In this sense, the book is a must-read for those who seek to understand contemporary Turkish politics in a global context.

Another distinguishing feature of the book is the authors' exceptional ability to present historical content, literature review and a sociological framework that employs Mardin's center-periphery thesis. Also, despite each chapter's focus on different aspects of Turkish politics, the chapters are nonetheless well-integrated, making it easier for the reader to follow. That is to say, the structure of both each chapter and the book overall is prepared in such a way that even a reader new to the subject can benefit.

On the other hand, the book did raise some question marks in my mind when contemplating the authors' conceptualization of Europeanization and modernization. Seeing that these concepts are used over and over again throughout the book, it may have been advantageous to provide their concrete definitions. While the authors succeeded in defining transformation in the Turkish context, they did not attempt to comprehensively define the other three core concepts, thus leading to some confusion. More precisely, it is not clear whether the author's see Europeanization as a cause of policy change towards certain European norms or as a consequence of gradual adaptation to European norms. The same problem is present for modernization. Although the authors mention the conservative type of modernization when they refer to MUSIAD as well as the western understanding thereof held by Kemalist elites, they do not specifically explain what they mean by "modernization". As these two concepts are of substantial importance for their argument, along with globalization and democratization, it would have been better to be more precise about the definitions of these concepts.

Considering the fact that the book was written in 2014, and therefore addresses some of the hottest topics such as the Gezi protests, I cannot recommend it enough, especially for those who are interested in an up-to-date reading on the topic or for those who are eager to anticipate the near future of Turkish politics, or more specifically, the democratic trajectory of Turkey.