

Nationalisms and Politics in Turkey

Political Islam, Kemalism and the Kurdish issue

Edited by
Marlies Casier and
Joost Jongerden



Routledge Studies in Middle Eastern Politics

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This book examines some of the most pressing issues facing the Turkish political establishment, in particular the issues of political Islam, and Kurdish and Turkish nationalisms. The authors explore the rationales of the main political actors in Turkey in order to increase our understanding of the ongoing debates over the secularist character of the Turkish Republic and over Turkey's longstanding Kurdish issue.

Original contributions from respected scholars in the field of Turkish and Kurdish studies provide us with many insights into the social and political fabric of Turkey, exploring Turkey's secularist establishment, the ruling AKP government, the Kurdistan Workers Party and the institutions of the European Union. While the focus of concern in this book is with the social agents of contemporary politics in Turkey, the convictions they have and the strategies they employ, historical dimensions are also integrated into the analyses. In its approach, the book makes an important contribution to a widening investigation into the making of politics in the contemporary world.

Incorporating the importance of the growing transnational connections between Turkey and Europe, this book is particularly relevant in the light of the ongoing negotiations over Turkey's membership to the European Union, and will be of interest to scholars interested in Turkish studies, Kurdish studies and Middle Eastern politics.

Marlies Casier is research affiliate of the Middle East and North Africa Research Group at Ghent University, interested in (trans)nationalism, political mobilization, Kurds and Turkey. She has published on the transnational politics of Turkey's Kurds in *Ethnicities* and on the institutionalization of human rights protection in Turkey in the *European Journal of Turkish Studies*.

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Abbreviations

ADYÖD	Association for Higher Education in Ankara (Ankara Demokratik Yüksek Öğretim Derneği)
AKP	Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi)
Ala Rizgarî	Flag of Liberation
ALDE	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
ANAP	Motherland Party (Anavatan Partisi)
ARGK	Kurdistan People's Liberation Army (Arteşa Rizgarîya Gele Kurdistan)
ASALA	Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia
ASKD	Anti Colonial Cultural Association (Anti Sömürgeci Kültür Derneği)
ATÖF	Federation of Turkish Students in Germany (Almanya Türk Öğrenci Federasyonu)
ATTF	Federation of Turkish Socialists in Europe (Avrupa Türk Toplumcular Federasyonu)
AYÖD	Association for Higher Education in Ankara (Ankara Yüksek Öğretim Derneği)
Bahoz	Storm
Bir-Kom	Common Committee (Birlik Komitesi)
Birleşik Kuvvetler	United Forces
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CHP	Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi)
CIA	Central Intelligence Service
CPT	Committee for the Prevention of Torture
Cumhuriyet	Republic (Turkish newspaper)
DABK	East Anatolia Region Committee (Doğu Anadolu Bölge Komitesi)
DDGB	Revolutionary Democratic United Force (Devrimci Demokratik Güç Birliği DDGB)
DDKD	Revolutionary Cultural Associations of the East (Devrimci Doğu Kültür Derneği)

DDKO	Revolutionary Cultural Hearths of the East (Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları)
DEHAP	Democratic People's Party (Demokratik Halk Partisi)
DEP	Democracy Party (Demokrasi Partisi)
Dev Sol	Revolutionary Left (Devrimci Sol)
Dev-Genç	Revolutionary Youth (Devrimci Gençlik)
Devrimci Karargah	Revolutionary Headquarters
Devrimci Savaş	Revolutionary War
Dev-Yol	Revolutionary Road (Devrimci Yol)
DHKD	Revolutionary People's Cultural Association (Devrimci Halk Kültür Derneği)
DHKP/C	Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front, Devrimci Halk Kurtuluş Partisi/Cephesi
DHP	Revolutionary People's Party (Demokratik Halk Partisi)
DTH	Democratic Society Movement (Demokratik Toplum Hareketi)
DTP	Democratic Society Party (Demokratik Toplum Partisi)
EC	European Commission
ECHR	European Court of Human rights
Ekim	October
EMEP	Labor Party (Emek Partisi)
EP	European Parliament
ERNK	Kurdistan National Liberation Front (Enîya Rizgarîya Netewayî Kurdistan)
EU	European Union
EUTCC	European Turkey Civic Commission
Fazilet Partisi	Virtue Party
FKBDC	Unified Resistance Front Against Fascism (Faşizme Karşı Birleşik Direniş Cephesi)
GAP	Southeast Anatolia Project (Güneydoğu Anadolu Projesi)
Greens/EFA	Green/European Free Alliance
GUE/NGL	Gauche Unitaire Européen/Nordic Green Left
HADEP	People's Democracy Party (Halkın Demokrasi Partisi)
HAK-PAR	Right and Freedoms Party (Hak ve Özgürlükler Partisi)
HEP	People's Labor Party (Halkın Emek Partisi)
Hevra	Together
HPG	People's Defense Forces (Hêzên Parastina Gel)
HRK	Kurdistan Liberation Units (Hêzên Rizgarîya Kurdistan)
HRK	Military forces of eastern Kurdistan (Hêzi Rojhelati Kurdistan)
Hürriyet	Freedom (Turkish newspaper)
IDF	Israeli Defense Forces
IRA	Irish Republican Army
Inkilap	reform
KADEK	Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress (Kongreye Gele Kurdistan)
KA-DEP	Participative Democracy Party (Katılımcı Demokrasi Partisi)

KAWA	Kurdish mythical figure and name of a Kurdish Political Party
KCDK	Coordination of Democratic Communities in Kurdistan
KCK	Association of Communities in Kurdistan (Koma Civakên Kurdistan)
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party (Partiya Demokrat Kurdistan)
KDPI	Kurdistan Democratic Party Iran (Partiya Demokrat Kurdistan Iran)
KHRP	Kurdish Human Rights Project
KJB	Community of Assertive Women (Koma Jinen Bilind)
KKK	Association of Associations in Kurdistan (Koma Komalan Kurdistan)
KNK	National Congress of Kurdistan (Kongra Netewiya Kurdistan)
Komala	Association (Kurdish political party in Iran)
Kongra-Gel	People's Congress (Kurdish political organization)
Köy Korucu	Village Guards
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government (name of the regional government in Iraqi Kurdistan)
KSSE	Kurdistan Student's Society in Europe (Komeley Xwendikarani Kurdistan li Ewropa)
KUK	National Liberators of Kurdistan (Kurdistan Ulusal Kurtuluşçular)
Kurtuluş	Liberation
KYKB	Union of Patriotic Women in Kurdistan (Kürdistan Yurtsever Kadınlar Birliği)
MDD	National Democratic Revolution (Milli Demokratik Devrim)
MEP	Member of European Parliament
MGK	National Security Council (Milli Güvenlik Konseyi)
MHP	Nationalist Movement Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi)
Milliyet	National (Turkish newspaper)
MIT	National Intelligence Organization
MLSPB	Marxist-Leninist Armed Propaganda Forces (Marxist-Leninist Silahlı Propaganda Birlikleri)
Mucadele Birlik/	
Emeğin Birliği	Unity in Struggle/Labor Unity
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	non-governmental organization
NUKSE	National Union of Kurdish Students in Europe
ÖDP	Freedom and Solidarity Party (Özgürlük ve Dayanışma Partisi)
OHAL	state of emergency (Olağanüstü Hal)
	Özgürlük Yolu/

Rîya Azadî	Freedom Path (journal of the TKSP and name under which the TKSP was also known)
PAJK	Party of Free Women in Kurdistan (Partiya Azadiya Jin a Kurdistan)
PÇDK	Kurdistan Democratic Solution Party (Partiya Çareseriya Demokratik a Kurdistan)
PDS	Party for Democratic Socialism (Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus)
Pêkanîn	Realization (Kurdish Political Party)
PFLP	People's Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PJAK	Free Life of Kurdistan Party (Partiya Jiyana Azad a Kurdistan)
PKK	Kurdistan Workers Party (Partiya Karkêren Kurdistan)
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
PSE	Socialist Group in the European Parliament
PSK	Kurdistan Socialist Party (Partiya Sosyalîsta Kurdistan)
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (Yekîti Nîstimanî Kurdistan)
PWD	Patriotic Democratic Party (Partiya Welatperez Demokratik)
PYD	Democratic Union Party (Partiya Yekitiya Demokratik)
RAF	Red Army Fraction (Rote Armee Fraktion)
Rizgarî	Liberation
RP	Welfare Party (Refah Partisi)
SDP	Socialist Democracy Party (Sosyalist Demokrasi Partisi)
Serxwêbun	Independence
SHP	Social Democratic People's Party (Sosyaldemokrat Halk Partisi)
Stêrka Sor	Red Star (Kurdish Political Party)
SVP	Socialist Fatherland Party (Sosyalist Vatan Partisi)
TBMM	Grand National Assembly of Turkey (Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi)
TDP	Revolution Party of Turkey (Türkiye Devrim Partisi)
Tekoşer	Fighter (Kurdish Workers and Student' association of Belgium)
Tekoşîn	Struggle (Kurdish Political Party)
TEP	Laborist Party of Turkey (Türkiye Emekçi Partisi)
THKO	People's Liberation Army of Turkey (Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Ordusu)
THKP/C	People's Liberation Party-Front of Turkey (Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Partisi-Cephesi)
THPP/C-Acilciler	People's Liberation Party-Front of Turkey-Urgency (Halk Kurtuluş Partisi-Cephesi-Acilciler)
TİKKO	Workers and Peasants' Liberation Army of Turkey (Türkiye İşçi Köylü Kurtuluş Ordusu)
TİP	Workers Party of Turkey (Türkiye İşçi Partisi)

TKDP	Turkey Kurdistan Democratic Party (Türkiye Kurdistan Demokratik Partî)
TKEP	Communist Labor Party of Turkey (Türkiye Komünist Emek Partisi)
TKP Kırılçım	Communist Party of Turkey-Spark (Türkiye Komünist Partisi- Kırılçım)
TKP/İS	Communist Party of Turkey/Workers Voice (Türkiye Komünist Partisi/İşçinin Sesi)
TKP-ML	Communist Party of Turkey/Marxist-Leninist (Türkiye Komünist Partisi/Marksist-Leninist)
TKSP	Turkey Kurdistan Democratic Party (Türkiye Kurdistan Demokratik Partisi)
TMMOB	Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects (Türk Mühendis ve Mimar Odaları Birliği)
TOBB	Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey
TRT	Turkish Radio and Television (Türkiye Radyo Televizyon)
TRT6	Channel of the TRT broadcasting in Kurdish
TSİP	Socialist Workers' Party of Turkey (Türkiye Sosyalist İsci Partisi)
TÜSIAD	Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen's Association
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	The United Nations Children's Fund
USSR	Union of Socialist Soviet Republics
YDK	People's Democratic Union of Kurdistan (Yekîtiya Demokratîk a Gelê Kurdistan)
YJA-STAR	Free Women Units
YÖK	Higher Education Board (Yüksek Öğretim Kurulu)

Introduction

Marlies Casier and Joost Jongerden

Turkey has been attracting growing interest from scholars, policy-makers and the public in the Western world. Once mainly the playing field of international relations theorists, Turkey and its social and political changes are today the subject of an increasing amount of interesting scholarly work in sociology, anthropology and the political sciences. This book is an engagement with respected scholars in these fields, who provide us with many insights into the social and political fabric of the country. In particular, this volume engages with the ideological contestations in the country, stemming from the presence of political Islam and rising forms of Kurdish and Turkish nationalisms. However, rather than merely assessing the ideological fault lines, most of the contributors focus on the political and social agents of these competing projects. Different chapters therefore engage with Turkey's secularist establishment, the ruling AKP government, the Kurdistan Workers Party, (the PKK) and the Institutions of the European Union, with which Turkey, after being on a waiting list for long, has since 2005 finally started negotiating its future membership. In this respect, there is a growing consensus that Turkey's reforms, which were far-reaching during the early 2000s, have tended to stagnate since accession talks formally commenced, in 2005. Comprehending the difficulties of Turkey in meeting the conditions for membership to the European Union necessitates an understanding of its internal dynamics.

In order to understand the developments inside Turkey, however, requires also that we extend our vision beyond the boundaries of the country. Not only does internal competition and conflict affect its EU negotiations, they in turn impact greatly on the internal political discussions. What is more, approximately 3.5 million people from Turkey are currently living in Western Europe, outside of their homeland or the country of origin of their ancestors. Around one million of them are from Kurdish descent and are considered amongst the most politicized diaspora living in Europe, and their engagement with political contestation has also had a major affect on the political agenda inside Turkey. Through the presence and the organization of Turkey's primary political advocate of Kurdish demands, the PKK, many of the Kurds residing in Europe have extended their boundaries of belonging (Migdal 2004) and have formed an imagined community (Anderson 1991) of Kurds.

Many of the discussions that mark Turkey today are still intimately connected to Turkey's project of state-building that started in the 1920s. This volume does

not intend to recount the story of the Turkish Republic, which has already been thoroughly covered elsewhere (Kasaba 2008; Zürchner 2006; Taspınar 2005). However, in order to present a historical context for this work it is imperative that we address very briefly some of the main features of this state-building project – through which we will also be able to introduce current discussions and the ways in which the contributions to this volume engage with them.

Turkey's founding fathers wanted to break away from the Ottoman state-form, whose political structures had been deemed inappropriate insofar as they had not prevented the secession of many of its former territories (this regardless of the demise of empire and loss of land to foreign powers). The Ottoman state system, which was less concerned with engineering population than with expanding its territory, was replaced by a cultural one, holding that the borders of the political unit (the Republic) and cultural unit (the nation) should coincide – what Foucault refers to as the passage from 'territorial state' to 'state of population' (Foucault 2007). The spatial binding of polity and culture in the 'state of population', a benchmark of nationalism, has modelled politics in Turkey, but also accounts in large measure for the many crises with which the political system has been, and continues to be confronted.

The (January) 1923 Convention signed at Lausanne – which paved the way for the more widely known (July) Treaty establishing the independent Republic of Turkey – provided for a shuffling ('exchange') of populations between Greece and Turkey aimed at a culturally homogenization of the two countries' populations. Out of what had been a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, and multi-religious territory the government and its administration of the new republic set about to building a nation of Turkish citizens. A variety of policies were designed to turn these populations into Turks, starting with the naming of the country, '*Türkiye Devleti*' (the 'State of Turkey'), in the first (preparatory) Constitution of 1921, and repeated mention, in the second (first full) Constitution of 1924, of '*Türkler*' ('Turks') even though this was supposed to be understood as 'a political term, without distinction of, or reference to, race or religion' (Earle 1925). Part of the rationale in establishing a national army and a national educational system was to promote the official language, Turkish, as unifying tool by which was deemed necessary to imbue a sense of loyalty of the citizenry towards the governing elite. Settlement policies were also enacted, planned to Turkify sensitive, mostly border areas (often Arab, sometimes Christian) and disperse non-Turks (mostly Kurds) in order to accelerate assimilation. In the first decades of the newly established republic, the equation of citizenship with Turkishness virtually turned non-Turks into non-entities. In terms of number and inhabited territory the Kurds in the southeast of the country were the most important population thus neutralized (Barkey and Fuller 1998). Kemalist pressure to assimilate the Kurds led, conversely, to an increased awareness amongst the Kurds of their own ethnicity (Taspınar 2005: 65–6).

Furthermore, the Kemalist elite believed that Turkey could only succeed in the stated, revolutionary aim of modernization and become part of the Western, 'civilized', world by secularizing the political system and excluding religion from the public sphere. Under the 1924 constitution, the caliphate was dissolved. Religious

(clerical) legal, medical and educational institutions (Sharia, madrasa) were done away with, to be replaced by secular systems styled after those of Switzerland, Italy, Germany and so forth. Muslim brotherhoods and sects were closed down and the political influence of sheikhs – particularly keen in the more rural areas and in the Kurdish provinces – was formally called to an end. Headwear laws were employed to literally divest religious scholars of their authority, and religion came under state control through its institutionalization into the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

In today's Turkey we are constantly reminded of the need for a thorough revision of the decisions taken during this foundational period. The place of religion in politics and society is questioned, with the growth of Islamic capitalist enterprise (e.g. Asya Holding) under the umbrella of business organizations (like Müstakil Sanayici ve İşadamları Derneği) establishing an Islamic bourgeoisie which provided the socio-economic base for the rise (during the 1990s) and coming to power (during the 2000s) of political Islamic parties (Maigre 2006). Since 2002, the Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP) has run the government, which has led to increased tensions in Turkey's political and social life, given the fearfulness and distrust over their true intentions by the Kemalist secularists in Turkey, as well as a real shift in the traditional power balance of the country.

In this volume, Menderes Çınar offers an account of the growing cleavage between the AKP and its followers on the one hand and the secularist establishment on the other. When the AKP came to power and took the lead in the pre-accession reform process, there was great optimism amongst many observers as to the party's role in the democratization of the country. Çınar argues that the AKP might indeed have had the potential to further democratize Turkey, but has been failing of late to deliver upon its promises. It is the author's argument that the AKP is currently facing an *ancien régime* in Turkey, a sneer to the Kemalist establishment's innate conservatism, and that the AKP is consequently suffering from an anti-political reformism that expresses itself in a failure to raise public awareness of the reasons why reforms serve democracy, political unity and economic prosperity. These and other reasons that account for the current status quo are subjects of analysis. Murat Somer similarly engages with the discussion over the democratization of Turkey. He gives an account of the ways in which both sides in the conflict have envisaged and caricatured the other in a dichotomous opposition, while negating historical engagements of the secular Turkish political system with Islam and Islamism, and vice versa. This has greatly obstructed the emergence of a space for the 'twin tolerations' and mutual trust between Turkey's two sets of political players that would allow for a thorough democratization of the country.

The political demands that have come from the European Union and from a part of Turkey's civil society and its liberals involve a plea for measures that would end the discrimination of minorities and promote an expanded definition of the minority concept, so as to clearly establish the full rights of ethnic and religious minorities which make up Turkey's still rich cultural tapestry, such as Kurdish Sunnis, Zaza Alevites, Zaza, Yezidi, Armenian Orthodox Christians, and so on and including, as fundamental, a reconceptualization of the definition of Turkish

citizenship in the Constitution. Heated, protracted and (thus far) ultimately fruitless debates have taken place, though, when real propositions to replace the old definition were made, of which one of the best examples was the prosecution – private, but under the Constitution (Article 301) – of Baskın Oran and İbrahim Kaboğlu in proposing the concept of ‘*Türkiyelilik*’ (‘Turkishness’), meaning ‘Being from Turkey’, as an umbrella concept under which various identities could find shelter (such private prosecutions are now prevented, but the offending article has not been repealed or revised).

The endorsement of the idea that Turkey is constituted by different ethnic and religious groups is enough to invoke the history of Ottoman disintegration and the Western attempt to carve up Anatolia (formally, with the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres), and create alarm over the future territorial integrity of the country. This is very well illustrated in the chapter by Ferhat Kentel in his psycho-sociological account of how Turkish nationalism has affected the mental maps of its citizens, particularly in a globalizing world in which the old boundaries become increasingly superfluous. Kentel shows that while many of the projected ideas and fears are incorporated in the ways individuals and groups construct their relations to the state and conceive of the relations between self and others, their anxious identities are, nevertheless, reconstructions of the grand narratives of trauma and thus testify to a constant tension between loyalty and resistance. Particular attention is drawn to the circulation of intrigue theories in Turkey and the ways in which the threats coming from without are projected onto the internal Others of the country, Armenians, Christians, Alevis and Kurds.

The chapter by Mesut Yeğen lends more insight into the particular approach of the Turkish Republic in relation to the Kurds as internal others and the Kurdish question more generally. He demonstrates that at first, during the few years prior to the foundation of the Republic, state officials declared they would recognize Kurds as an ethnic group with cultural and political rights – following which, from the mid-1920s to the 1990s, the state continually denied not only the cultural and political rights of the Kurds, but even the very fact of their existence. Their very identity, as well as their rights, was rendered invisible and nullified. It was only at the end of the century that the state finally began to concede the validity of this ethnic dimension. Concomitantly, Yeğen argues, in the last two decades the strategies employed by the state in tackling – or avoiding – this issue have morphed into an amalgam of old and new, blending the assimilation and oppression of the past with a new discrimination and recognition.

The Kurdish question has indeed been central in the political agenda of Turkey, with political actors using both bullet and ballot to deal with it. Several uprisings among the Kurds have been met with military force, and the south-east of Turkey – the Turkish part of the Kurdistan region – has been ruled under a state of emergency or martial law imposed from Ankara until 2002. Even so, from the beginning of the (post-World War 1) multi-party period, Turkish political parties actively searched for alliances with Kurdish tribal leaders and notables as ‘bulk vote generators’ (Barkey and Fuller 1998: 77). Their integration in the political system pacified, one might say, the Kurds as Kurdish political agents. And participation in the