Kitap Tanıtımı

Modern Turkey: People, State and Foreign Policy

in a Globalized World[[1]](#footnote-1)

Ali Balcı[[2]](#footnote-2)

‘The rise of JDP to power in 2002 and its particular emphasis on judicial and constitutional amendments towards democratization and EU membership, put Turkey’s domestic, foreign and economic policies on the spotlight. The JDP’s record-breaking third election victory in June 2011 is likely to further increase Turkish and foreign scholars’ interest in scrutinizing the Turkish case. This is not only due to the skyrocketing economic growth and JDP’s pursuit of a far more active foreign policy (in its office for nine years) than its predecessors, but also its uniqueness among other secular democracies in showing a sensitive attitude to Islamic values. Writing on the Turkish case risks becoming obsolete before it is published.

*Modern Turkey* focuses on the last decade in Turkish history and explores a range of themes such as i.e. politics, economics, religion, foreign policy, placing them in the context of a rapidly ‘globalizing world’. With special reference to the historical backgrounds of these themes, the book looks at how ‘modern Turkey’ has coped with its historical problems “in a globalized world”. Its main research question concerns the impact of globalization processes on the Turkish state, and society (4). Parks conceives of forces of globalization as “the main explanatory factor behind the shifts in political behavior and policies” (p. 204). In this light, he attempts to “identify the key shifts in the operating environment of the Turkish state and society, to explore whether and how those shifts have altered that state and society, and to trace the conquest adaptations made by Turkey” (ibid). Confronted with the challenges in foreign policy, brought by the end of the Cold War, the way in which Turkish-originated forces have contributed to the globalization process is also included in Park’s analysis.

This globalized world, Park contends, is far different from the one in which the Turkish republic was born into. It is, thus, the founding ideology of the republic which “has paradoxically served to block progress towards the liberal internationalism” (58) despite its commitment to ‘Western’ values from the beginning. With the passage of time, what European values represent has profoundly altered and served socio-political forces (describing themselves with Islamic and Kurdish identities) in their struggle against Kemalism as a foundational state ideology. As a corollary, a tension arose “between the EU’s (European Union) requirements of Turkey and the Kemalist mindset” (56). According to Park, the latter has taken a “defensive” stance (59) against the EU and its beneficiaries in Turkey.

For Park, foreign policy is not a policy pursued by “unitary state machinery”; it is instead an “outside-in pressure on the state and society that contribute to both their shape and their behavior” (8). Therefore, Park is most accurate in describing the emergence of the JDP and the key shifts in Turkish politics as results of Europeanization in particular and globalization in general. Globalization gave to the Turks, who “had never fully bought into the vision that had been laid out for them by the republic’s founders”, an opportunity “to find expression for their dissatisfactions” (207). Thus, the JDP benefited from this global conjuncture. Needless to say, for Park, internal dynamics, such as the Islamic bourgeoisie and the Kurdish question (chapter 5 and 6), and external factors have been mutually determining in explaining key shifts in Turkish politics and the emergence of the JDP.

The book gives a special attention to Turkish foreign policy during JDP’s rule. Despite the dominance of the Kemalist paradigm in Turkish foreign and security policy, Park argues that JDP’s foreign policy has been “in stark contrast to the wary, unimaginative and cautious approach that had hitherto shaped Ankara’s engagement, or lack of it, with the outside world” (106-7). Park explains this ‘new’ Turkish foreign policy with reference to a ‘neo-Ottoman’ thesis (119) which he sees as “a kind of ‘normalization’ of Turkish foreign policy” through freeing it from the legacy of a Kemalist foreign policy that had long discouraged Ankara from building close relations with its eastern neighbors. Remarkably, Park contends that, just like other former imperial powers such as the UK, France and Russia, Turkey also pursues her interest in her former colonies (109). That said, neo-Ottomanism “is expressed in benign and constructive rather than atavistic forms” (139).

Park builds on a critique of discourses that condemn Turkey for being ‘lost’ to the ‘West’’ due to the ‘Islamification of its foreign policy’ (116). However, her foreign policy regarding the Balkans, Afghanistan, and the crisis in Lebanon indicates that Ankara continues to share ‘Western’ motivations in world politics (see chapter 8). Perceived as such, Park emphasizes the multidimensional character of JDP’s foreign policy. Although he defines Turkey as a “middle power” (121), Park takes the centrality of Turkey in energy policies as proof for Ankara’s central character in global politics (150).

The book also touches upon thorny issues such as the Armenian genocide, Alawites and Gulen movement. The Gülen movement is presented as an extension of “soft power” in Turkish foreign policy (201-2). However, Park argues that the Armenian genocide and the Alevi question have remained as a source of foreign pressure on Ankara.

Turkey’s changing role in the Middle East and the key shifts in its foreign policy vis-à-vis regional and global players is a timely topic in international relations. In this context, *Modern Turkey* makes an important contribution to the studies on Turkish foreign policy by providing a comprehensive picture of the JDP period. Although the book is one of the first comprehensive volumes on the JDP’s foreign policy, its reliance on only English sources overshadows its value. In addition, readers and students of politics should make allowance for the regional developments during the book’s publication process and take into account some of the outmoded analysis on Turkey’s relations with other countries in the Middle East. Parks’ book is written to appeal to academics and policy makers as well as entrants into the field. As such, it is well suited for use on general courses but also involves theoretical insights for an academically informed audience.

1. Bill Park, Routledge, London, 2012, (ISBN: 978-0-415-44370-8) $47.95 (Paperback) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
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