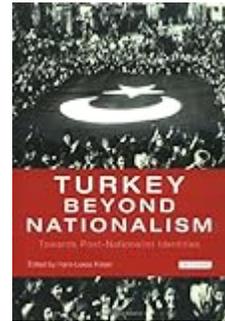


Hans-Lukas Kieser. *Turkey beyond nationalism: Towards post-nationalist identities?*
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H-L. Kieser (Hrsg.): Turkey beyond Nationalism

The study of modern Turkey and the late Ottoman Empire has undergone a profound transformation in the last two decades. Critical and revisionist voices have taken centre-stage in a field where ossified nationalist conventions used to suffocate alternative readings. An increasing number of publications on themes once considered outside the reach of scholarship, such as the racist underpinnings of Republican ideology, Kurdish identity, the Armenian massacres and the plight of communities excluded from the "ethno-religious core" of Turkish Sunni Islam have created a growing body of critical scholarship. Not unlike some of the "New Historians" in Israel, the actors of this critical project are engaged in the radical reconsideration of the transformation from the late Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic and the debilitating effects of ethno-nationalism on both majority and minority communities. "Turkey Beyond Nationalism" is a timely, yet only partially successful attempt to bring together authors of such revisionist persuasion in an edited volume of eighteen chapters and five parts in historical progression.

The first part deals with the emergence of Turk-

ish nationalism and opens with a major contribution to the debate on its ideological and historical roots by S. Hanioglu ("Turkism and the Young Turks, 1889-1908"). Hanioglu exposes a false dichotomy in conventional Turkish historiography: The dichotomy between Ottomanism and Turkism as successive and mutually exclusive projects geared towards saving the ailing empire. He establishes that Turkist ideology – a core ingredient of Turkish nationalism – was developed well before the Balkan wars, even if couched in the more inclusive terms of Ottomanism, while Ottomanist ideas and the implicit notion of coexistence survived even after the Balkan wars. Hanioglu hereby invalidates two deeply entrenched, if opposing narratives: The apologist argument that Turkish nationalism turned against "others" only after Ottoman-Turkish elites were convinced of the impossibility of coexistence with disloyal Christian communities and the essentialist notion that the radical ethno-nationalism of the Turkish Republic was a foregone conclusion.

The second part presents a wide range of papers on the experiences and traumata of the policies of nation-

alism, homogenisation and social engineering, including Fuat Dündar's discussion of the forced migration of some Muslim communities under the rule of the Committee of Union and Progress, a summary of his work published elsewhere. Corinna Grigg Guttstadt and Berna Pekesen introduce two case studies that are often overlooked, yet highly relevant for the analysis of the mechanisms of Turkish nationalism. Guttstadt examines the relations between restrictive citizenship policies in Turkey in the 1930s and the deportation from Europe of Jews holding Turkish passports, thereby calling into question the comforting narrative of Turkey's benign policy of active support of Jews during the Holocaust. Pekesen discusses the exodus of Armenians from the Sanjak of Alexandretta in the 1930s, based on an examination of the gradual takeover by Turkish nationalists of the Sanjak and the ensuing emigration of the large majority of its Armenian community and sizeable numbers of Alawites, Christians and Arabs.

Elise Massicard's paper 'Claiming difference in a unitarist frame: the case of Alevism' gives a comprehensive overview of Alevi movements and their struggles for recognition vis-à-vis an unsympathetic and uneasy state. The overall sound research of the paper is marred, however, by a number of terminological and linguistic faux-pas that hint at sloppy editing: Her distinction between 'Alevism' as political movement for the recognition of Alevi identity and 'Aleviness' as the identity itself is misleading when mentioned only incidentally. In the relevant English literature and in the Turkish usage, Alevism is indeed used as a term designating Alevi philosophy. Further on, the author refers to State Security Courts mistakenly as Milli Güvenlik Mahkemesi. While these errors taken one by one would not discredit the argument as such, their existence is rather undesirable in the context of a specialist publication on Turkey.

Part III on 'The Historiographical Challenge' opens with Fatma Geçmiş's search for 'Parameters of a post-nationalist Turkish historiography through the case of the Anatolian Armenians'. Contextualizing this search in the 'post-modern projects of destruction' developed by Michel de Certeau and Hayden White, she not only establishes the vast discrepancy between the 'real and discourse' (p. 86) in the case of Turkish historiography, but actually suggests a paradigmatic re-orientation to overcome the hegemonies of nationalist Turkish historiography with a new periodization based on 'the intersections of the experiences of both the Turks and the minority groups' (p. 90).

Raymond H. Kevorkian's discussion of the criminal trials against members of the Committee of Union and Progress in 1918 and 1919 involved in the deportations of and massacres against Ottoman Armenians and the related discussions in the Ottoman Parliament is important on two accounts. Firstly, before the later denial, there actually was a brief period of soul searching in Ottoman public debate. Secondly, as Kevorkian shows, it was in the same period and during precisely these debates, that the discursive building blocks of the denialist argument were first voiced. This is indeed an important point of departure, also suggested by Ayhan Aktar in his earlier work on the Ottoman Parliament's debates on the deportations. Aktar, Ayhan, *Son Osmanlı Meclisi ve Ermeni meselesi*. Kasım-Aralık 1918 [The last Ottoman Parliament and the Armenian Question], in: *Toplum ve Bilim*, Winter (2002), pp. 142-165. Kevorkian's paper, despite its accusative narrative and occasional essentialism, is a relevant contribution.

The following parts IV and V deal with 'Turkey in Motion', i.e. the actual current political trends and processes of transformation between 'nationalism' and 'post-nationalism'. One of the contributions in this volume that combine original empirical insight with conceptual sophistication is Kemal Kirişçi's 'National identity, asylum and immigration: the EU as a vehicle of post-national transformation in Turkey'. The author actually engages with the term 'post-nationalism' rather than taking it for granted and mobilises it to examine the current changes in Turkey's immigration and asylum policy in the context of Turkey's own historical experience, changes in the framework of the EU and general globalising trends. Hundreds of thousands of 'new immigrants' and refugees from the former Eastern bloc, Iran and Africa as well as European professionals and pensioners, which do not fit into the established notions of 'traditional immigration policy' giving priority to 'Muslim Turkish speakers' (p. 188) have created challenges to institutions as well as to public conceptions of national identity. Despite deficiencies, developments on the ground seem to move towards a more inclusive and accommodating model for immigration, while policies in the EU regarding asylum and immigration seem to become evermore restricted.

After a panoply of recent books and journal articles deconstructing the discourse of the secular Turkish Republic, the icing on the cake would have been an authoritative edited volume, bringing together cutting-edge scholarship with a perspective that allows for regional and conceptual comparisons. 'Turkey Beyond Nation-

alismâ raises high expectations in this direction as it promises to make âTurkish nationalism the subject of sophisticated scholarly consideration and respectful criticismâ (p. 13). Such expectations, however, are fulfilled only in some of the chapters, while the book succeeds only partially to give a sound, substantiated and, most importantly, critical account of the issues at stake.

A major shortcoming of the volume is the absence of a conceptual debate: terms like nationalism and post-nationalism are taken for granted and used generously, however, they are not discussed critically in their wider context. Other concepts and fields of study like transnationalism, Diaspora studies, minority rights, racism and post-colonialism, whose discussion would help to generalise the Turkish case, are also largely absent. It appears as one of the bookâs greater weaknesses that the introduction, rather than contextualising the Turkish case historically and in its neighbourhood, opts for a Turkey-centred, inductive mode of discussion. The resulting âExceptionalismâ, a notorious undercurrent in some political commentary on Turkey, leads to a rather sterile account of the countryâs particularly fierce nation-building process. Fierce it was, yet as the latest English-language scholarship establishes beyond doubt, it was not different

in essence from other cases of nation-building in South East Europe.

A second drawback is the uneven quality of the volume. The contributions range from fully developed scholarly papers with great substance, original research and relevance for the debate to summaries of interesting essays published elsewhere. At the bottom end, there are papers that lack insight and would not merit publication in a reviewed journal. This unevenness in quality, coupled with inattentive editing in some contributions suggest that the editor had to choose between a thorough yet time-consuming editing process and the immediate publication of available conference proceedings, independent of their quality and level of sophistication. It might have allayed criticism, and tempered expectations, to state in the introduction that rather than an edited volume âTurkey Beyond Nationalismâ should be read as a collection of papers, delivered at the conference with the same title in Basel in October 2004. Despite these deficiencies, however, the volume contains some high-quality contributions, which are essential reading for students and scholars of modern history and politics of modern Turkey.

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