Middle East, as a junction point of various national interests, has always been a hot spot for decades. Following the loosening of Ottoman Empire’s grip in the region, the strong players of the Middle East Game; Britain, France, Russia and in latter position Germany focused their attention on the region to shape their plans. Sick man of Europe; Ottoman Empire was weak and ponderous whereas the Central Powers were strong and reckless. The partition plans were continuously changing throughout the process, the secret offers between sides were made, promises postponed, societies were manipulated etc. The new map of the Modern Middle East was not only shaped by wars and blood but also with keen diplomatic efforts of all sides.

The formation of the Modern Middle East mainly covers the period of “Collapse of Ottoman Empire” and formation of the successor States. “The Makers of the Modern Middle East” focuses “the Collapse of Ottoman Empire,” “Arab Nationalism,” “Zionism,” “new Turkish Republic,” and “formation of Arab States,” “Israel State” respectively. The book The Makers of the Modern Middle East analyses the events each under a separate title in a chronological order. Moreover, what the book specifically does particularly well is emphasizing the inevitable influence of the three leaders on the historical events referenced; the Hashemite Emir Faisal, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk and Chaim Weizmann who played significant roles in the formation of the Modern Middle East.

The authors of the book; Thomas G. Fraser, Andrew Mango and Robert McNamara Fraser and McNamara are the authors of ‘Chaim Wiesmann: The Zionist Dream’, ‘Ataturk’ and ‘Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East 1952-1967’ respectively. Thomas G. Fraser is a Profesor Emeritus of the University of Ulster. He is a member of the Royal Institute of International Affairs. Andrew Mango is an Istanbul born Anglo-Russian author who has worked on the Turkish section on BBC and then as the Head of the South European Service. Robert McNamara is still a lecturer in the International History Department of the University of Ulster at Coleraine. The book is divided into seven parts starting with ‘The Birth of Nationalism’, ending with ‘Conclusion: The Legacy’ according to the content of the issues and their connections. Each chapter is also divided into subsections. This format makes it easy for the reader to follow persons and events without being disrupted.

In Chapter I, growing influences of nationalism in the Ottoman Empire is covered under the title of ‘The Birth of Nationalism’. Chapter starts with the brief history of Turks from Seljuks to Ottoman period. Afterwards, the authors refer to the heterogeneous religious structure of the Ottoman Empire. The authors claim that Ottoman Empire resembled its Habsburg rival. It was discovering the fact that rich variety of cultures and religions in an empire was not an advantage at the period of awakening nationalisms (p.4). It is underlined that the Western observers mostly ignore the Turkish success despite the defeats, which according to the authors is because of the following reasons; ‘courage’ of Turkish conscripts and the experienced and well-trained Ottoman elites who had gained these qualities during the reforms of the 19th century’s Ottoman Empire (p.7). Coming from the general Ottoman society to the specific millets, firstly the Arab Millet is analyzed. Why the Arab population accepted the Turkish Ottoman Dynasty as their rulers is due to two reasons. During the years of Arab conquests, within the Muslim population, the main bond was forged through religion rather than ethnicity or nationality. Moreover, the separate Arabic speaking societies were based on familial, tribal, ethnic or religious groupings, which were dependent on their own...
leaders, which provided them a partial independence (p.8). It is a well-known fact that Arab Nationalism has first raised with the penetration of Western cultural and educational influences with the help of the missionary establishments. However, the spread of Arab Nationalism did not start organically but rather with the provocation of Hashemite ambitions (p.10). It is claimed that the ambitions of the Hashemites were not mainly based on Arab Nationalism but based on “their own aggrandizement” (p.13). In relation, when the Grand Sherif of Macca was nominated to this position, his main aim was to consolidate his own power and autonomy for which he did not avoid having close relations with Britain (p.19). In addition to Arab Nationalism, Zionism movement started to evolve around the late 18th century. With the foundation of the movement “Hibbat Zion (Love of Zion)” in 1882, migration of Jews to Palestine started. The main catalyzer of this movement was the persecution of Jews living in the Tsarist Empire, as the largest Jewish population in the world (p.21).

In Chapter II, de jure and de facto Wartime agreements, partnerships etc. have been examined under the title of “Wartime Promises and Expectations.”

Taking on a wider perspective, authors summarize two key elements of Ottoman Empire, which are used to threaten the Central Powers. The first key element is ‘Suez Canal’ with which Britain draws troops and supplies from India, Australia, New Zealand and Persian Gulf, which provides source of oil for the battleships. In addition, the Central Powers were afraid of the influence of Ottoman Empire on the Islamic World through the power of caliphate, which could have created tensions in their mandate territories (p.39).

On the Palestine issue, the British protectorate on Palestine was to the mutual interest of both Britain and Jews. With such an agreement Britain would have an Egyptian border under control, having the gratitude of Jews all over the world in addition to having the Jews act as a bridge between the East and the West (p.48).

Due to Palestine’s proximity to the Suez Canal, Britain aimed to control it itself, not allowing the other Central Powers to take part in the region.

Weizmann; as the main character of the “Palestine-Homeland of Jews” issue have continued a constant diplomatic struggle with Britain (p.47). On the other hand, with an unexpected war effort, Turks had shown significant resistance to the Entente Powers especially in Gallipoli. This led Field Marshal Liman von Sanders to appoint him as the commander of forces at Souvla Bay Peninsula (p.49). In the book, regarding the Armenian issue it is claimed that the Young Turk leadership (especially Talat Pasha) have seen it a necessity to distance the Armenians from the region in order to secure this portion of the homeland not to resemble the territories lost to other Christian communities (p.51). In Anatolia, the authors underline the fact that more Muslims have died than Armenians in absolute numbers. On the other hand, when death numbers have been proportioned to the total numbers, Muslims lost one fifth of their community whereas Armenians lost their one third. Due to the well-documented sufferings of the Armenians, the Western observers have ignored the resembling sufferings of the Muslim population (p.52). Meanwhile, Hussein ibn Ali was in a close correspondence with McMahon. Hussein was expecting a secure premium for the revolt against Ottoman Empire, which took part in the whole of Arabian Peninsula (p.59). McMahon, with diplomatic maneuvers did not reject his demand but kept him on hold, as Lord Kitchener recommended not alienating the Arabs (p.61). Not informing Hussein, Britain made a secret agreement with France; Sykes-Picot Agreement regarding the division of the Middle East (p.63). On the other hand, for the negotiations between Jews and Britain, the Balfour Declaration paved way to the formation of a Jewish State in Palestine (p.81).

In Chapter III, the struggles of the Entente Powers as well as the Zionist and Arab subjects as well as their dual frictions in the Peace Agreement of Paris have been discussed under the title of “Arabs and
Zionists in Paris.” As the Zionist movement was eagerly looking for ways to fasten the process, a Zionist Commission was formed with the leadership of Weizmann for the purpose of establishing a link between Jews and the British military, creating political connections with the Arabs and building Jewish institutions - one of which would be the dream of Weizmann; a Jewish University. The commission included Jews from the allied countries excluding the US, which did not take part in war against the Turkish side (p.104). Even if he established his power on Arab Nationalism, Feisal did not refuse the movement of the Zionist Commission. Moreover, he gave his –full support, unable to envisage the formation of a Jewish State in Palestine (p.107).

On the other hand, the control of the Arab lands in addition to Mesopotamia was another issue which could not be solved. Britain claimed that Sykes-Picot agreement was no more current due to the dissolve of the Russian Empire. Britain pursued the will of controlling Syria and Palestine under British Mandate whereas France did not agree (p.134). Feisal realizing the promises not being fulfilled by British side, decided to change his side first with Young Turks corresponding with Cemal. He had offered independence to Arabia and autonomy to Syria conditioning Feisal to change his side. However, Sherif Hussein being informed by Lawrence prevented the probable rapprochement (p.109).

Subsequently, there has been a rapprochement between France and Feisal. However, this converging relation did not last long due to Feisal’s mistrust toward the French side (p.135). The ultimate aim of Feisal for the Paris Agreement was to attract American support for the self-determination aim of the Arab nationalists (p.114). Toward the realization of the Zionist state in Paris Conference, Zionist side started to play their cards open. Arabs were encouraged that agitation could have helped them with the British side preventing the formation of a Jewish National Home. Whereas, when the Zionist program was announced, the fact that the formation of a Jewish National Home was a “chose jugee” was emphasized.

In Chapter IV, San Remo and Sevres agreements are analyzed under the title of “San Remo and Sevres: The Flawed Peace.” San Remo and Sevres Conferences have ended with the partition of Ottoman Empire as; France gaining the Mandates of Syria and Lebanon while Britain gaining Iraq and Palestine. Weismann and Zionists gained what they aimed for in accordance with what was promised in Balfour Declaration (p.194). Feisal was taken away from the control of the Arab Lands (p.178). The partition plan was shaped not taking into account the will of the local residents but the ambitions of British and French sides which have underestimated the nationalist power of the former Ottoman; Turkish society under the command of Mustafa Kemal.

In chapter V, the revalidation of the agreements and the conflicting aims in the new Middle East have been issued under the title of “The Middle East Rebels and The Peace Settlement Revisited.” With the Cairo Conference, Middle East has been shaped to today’s present look. Mesopotamia was named as Iraq which was controlled by the new king; Feisal. As a bribe to stop attacking the French, Abdullah has been honored as the leader of Transjordan. The Arabs who were against the formation of a Zionist state were persuaded that it was “a national home” instead of “the national home” being referred in the Balfour Declaration which underlined that Zionists would only accommodate in Palestine not getting the control of the state (p.210-11). For the Mudros Armistice, the negotiations were carried out, with the new Turkish Government, which has replaced the defeated Ottoman Empire.

As the authors claimed, San Remo and Sevres Agreements were the reflections of “imperial ambitions” of the Central Powers.

In Chapter VI, the period between two World Wars has been covered under the title of “From War to War.” The Ottoman Empire period was over. Middle East was reconstructed according to the aims of the Central Powers with the concept of nationalism, which was used as cement for the new successor states.
In the coming decades, Middle East would never be peaceful when compared to the Ottoman era as the region of oil and “hostilities.” The only neutral state would be Turkey carrying out a peaceful policy of neutrality in the region (p.245). Mosul, as one of the main issues of the agreements was finally given to the Iraqi State with the decision of League of Nations (p.267). Moreover, as a consequence of Hitler’s anti-Semitic movement, a significant number of Jews moved to Palestine, which created tension with the Arab society. Looking for a solution, Reginald Coupland-member of Zionist Commission suggested a partition within the land of Palestine. Coupland was laying out his suggestion on the argument that the Jewish population was European whereas Arab population was Asian, which was creating an inconsistency within the society. In relation to this argument, what Zionists would aim to have was not a “National Home” but a “State”. With the conference held for the future of Palestine in 1939, it became obvious that a Zionist State would be formed (p.283-6).

On the other hand, in parallel to the formation of a Zionist State, the fear of the Jews became real with the “Genocidal Nature of Hitler” ending up with the Holocaust. (p.288).

In Chapter VII, post-war period of Middle East have been summarized as a conclusion. After the intense influences of the Second World War, with the utopic idea of President Roosevelt, a supranational formation providing cooperation among victorious powers in order to guarantee peace was formed with the name of United Nations (p.292). United States, to provide guaranteed allies in the region, had taken Turkey into the American orbit with the Marshall Aid, modernization of the Turkish Armed Forces etc. Next step was the inclusion of Turkey into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. This allowed the predefined independent domestic and foreign policy of Turkey to be redefined within the orbit of the West and the US (p.295). On the other hand, about the Palestine issue, there has been a Committee was established; the United Nations Special Committee (UNSCOP). Arabs boycotted this formation whereas Zionists took this step as an opportunity to convince UNSCOP (p.298-9). The British Mandate for Palestine had ended on 14 May 1948 with the official announcement of the establishment of ‘the State of Israel’. With the establishment of the State, the conflicts turned into real attacks firstly with the Palestinian al-Nakba attack, which would then be followed, by serious attacks and wars between Palestine and Israel in the coming years. The problem with the Palestinians was the lack of organization in basis (p.301-2). As the first official resistance organization; PLO and afterwards Hamas have shown significant efforts, which were supported by totally different ideologies (Leftist and Islamist respectively) but the freedom of Palestinians in common.

Consequently, the book analyzes the fortune of the latter Ottoman societies-Arab, Jewish and Turkish populations under the influence of the leading powers; Britain and France. Moreover, the transformation achieved by the three leaders; Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, Feisal and Weizmann is discussed with respect to the positive and negative consequences. The point of view of the authors is quite objective and the perspectives of the events have been analyzed with different dimensions. For instance, on the Armenian issue, the Western scholars have been criticized for considering just one dimension of the picture whereas in Kurdish issue the state approach has been criticized. The only contribution could have been a compact analysis of the overall issues as a conclusion at the end of each chapter, which could have enlightened the scattered issues on the reader’s mind.

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Ada Holly Shissler’s book *Between Two Empires: Ahmet Agaoglu and The New Turkey* is an intellectual biography which started as a dissertation Project at UCLA. Ahmet Agaoglu was an interesting figure in his own milieu. He was involved with the majority of intellectual movements and with many of the political movements that shaped the Russian Caucasus and the Ottoman Empire. But why did she choose him to study? She answers:

“...because it is in so many ways both remarkable and representative. It is the career of a man of talent, conviction, initiative and some means, who lived in very unusual and interesting times. He was involved directly or indirectly in three revolutions (1905 in Russia, 1908 in the Ottoman Empire, 1917 in Russia), a world war and a war of resistance to foreign occupation (the Turkish War of Independence). He was a man who functioned absolutely fluently in at least five languages (Azerbaijani, Ottoman, Russian, Persian and French) and possessed multiple university degrees; who wrote books, published articles, edited newspapers, taught university and high school courses in the fields of foreign language, literature, law and history; who was elected to public Office in three states and who held political appointments as well. Thus he is interesting simply in the diversity of his experiences and in his scope.” (p.1)

In this project, she uses a range of secondary and some primary material to supply the details of Agaoglu’s life and activities. Her object is to analyse Ahmet Agaoglu’s intellectual development through and examination of some of his published works. She uses a careful examination of some representative pieces within his historical context as a way of illustrating some of the dynamics of identity construction for Middle Eastern reformers at the end of the nineteenth century and the start of the twentieth. According to her selection of articles, the main structure of the book is based upon Agaoglu’s journalistic production over a period of many years. First, she examines the early French material in detail, because according to her, it forms a baseline or point of departure as his first published work, and also because it provides insight into the early French influences on his thought. After that, she tries to select pieces that are more oriented towards intellectual questions and less towards the reporting of news. She especially focuses on works that deal with questions of identity and modernity, in particular, pieces that deal with nationality and nationalism, religion, the status of women, inter-ethnic relations (especially with the Armenians) and education. She concentrates largely on his works in French, Ottoman and Azerbaijani.

According to Shissler, during his career, Ahmet Agaoglu was concerned with two central issues: the establishment of a liberal, civil society, populated by ‘whole persons’, and the creation and maintenance on a conscious level of a shared mentality which would lend cohesion to that society of free men. To reach these goals for his own community (mainly the Muslims of the Russian Empire), he emphasized on liberal institutions while at the same time he privileged language and religion as the two most important elements structuring and engendering that common mentality which was, for Agaoglu, the essence of nationality.

Aha Agaoglu was born in the city of Şuşa in the Karabagh region of Russian-controlled Azerbaijan in 1869. He was a scion of an old family of Azerbaijani beys, and he was tormented by the doubts as to his role and proper place. The economic conditions, political structures and even the ethnic composition of his homeland were changing with breathtaking rapidity. Like his earlier generation of intellectuals, for Shissler, Agaoglu felt a pressing need to define his relationship with the West. His father, Mirza Hasan, was a large athletic man, who spoke Persian and Arabic as well as Turkish and occupied himself with the family’s cotton holdings. Agaoglu defines his father with his words:
“…If someone were to ask him ‘Who are you?’ he would reply ‘I am of the community of Blessed Mohammed, I am a devotee of Ali, my father is Mirza Ibrahim and his father is Hasan Ağá of the Kurteli (tribe).’ It never occurred to him that he was a Turk…” (p.43)

In contrast to his father, Agaoglu was filled with a sense of longing even loneliness, with a sense of things lost and of belonging nowhere. The following description of his departure for St. Petersburg and the university there is a representative:

“… I was to lose the wholeness with which history and nature had endowed me. But I was not to acquire a new wholeness. I was to become a half-way patched up thing. This patched-up quality is an endless drama. It is an inner drama, it is a spiritual tragedy. At no time now do I feel complete and whole. And you know, it is a torment of Hell to feel half-patched. I enjoy both European and Eastern music, but at the same time I see and I feel that I do not experience the first as completely and fully as a European, nor the second like an Easterner.” (p.44)

The contrast between the two descriptions could hardly be more stark. The father is a man secure in his world. The son is tormented by in search of something. I have chosen those dramatic paragraphs because, they drew me into the work in the beginning of the book and they clearly show the identity crisis of Ahmet Agaoglu in the early years of his intellectual career.

Russia was also changing and becoming more modern and less dynastic state, accordingly, the role of the Agaoglu’s family were becoming increasingly marginalized from the actual life and administration of the region. So, according to Shissler, the young Muslim elites were forced to look elsewhere, outside their traditional roles and outside of government service, to make a place for themselves. In addition to that, they also found themselves among the competition from other groups in trade and industry, and some legal disabilities and limitations on Muslims in many of the professions and in regard to holding elective office. Therefore, Ağaoğlu concentrated not only on the role of a liberal social order in the achievement of progress, but doing it from a distinctly community-oriented standpoint.

For Shissler, Agaoglu as a Shi’ite, was aware of the problem of sectarian divisions in the Muslim community. And he was also very sensitive to the argument that an ethno-linguistic identity base, could create splits in the religious community. However, throughout his career he devoted himself to show that far from being opposed to one another, religion and nationality reinforced one another. Especially, his sojourn in France helped him in this struggle. He studied with the prominent orientalists such as Darmesteter, Renan and Madame Juliette Adam. They were particularly interested in the philological-historical investigations into how ‘mentalites’ were constructed, and they specifically saw the study of myth and religion as an integral part of this process. This three French figures who befriended him showed him a non-radical liberalism, that put great stock in religious feeling, religion and tradition; and that rejected the older Voltaireian vision as cold, lacking in heat and humanity and overly sceptical, materialistic and individualistic. In addition to the values of merit, rationality and progress, for them, one must have ideals and faith and keep a covenant with the past that is based on conserving a ‘mentalite’, which however, must not intrude in such a way as to prevent freedom of thought.

Agaoglu saw religion as an inevitable component in the formation of the national mentality and in the process of civilization, he was not willing to reject it in the first place. However, for Shissler, he was well aware of the argument that said religion especially Islam, was in superable impediment to free thought. Therefore, he was always concerned to point out that religion was by nature an historical phenomenon that developed and adapted with the environment and this developmental and interpretative process was not wrong. Rather, it was a product of its context. Thus, for Agaoglu, the important thing was
to get people properly educated so that they would understand and practice this flexibility. Finally, he argued that the strength of the whole was the strength of the parts; strong Muslim nations meant a strong Islamic World almost by definition.

Although his thoughts changed on how to combine these elements shifted as he moved through Europe according to Shissler, his certain points remained constant in his thinking. He never lost interest in the Muslim community of the place of his birth; his goal remained the creation of a non-cosmopolitan society which was liberal both in its official institutions and in the outlook of its people. Because for Shissler, Agaoglu believed these were future - the road to progress, well-being and strength.

According to Shissler, the facts of Agaoglu’s life were available from a wide array of published sources. However, he emphasizes that when this work began its life, there was no one that had assembled the information available in those sources. In 1999, however he adds, Fahri Sakal’s Agaoglu Ahmed Bey (Türk Tarih Kurumu Basmevi, 1999) appeared which has helped to fill that gap. Shissler uses Dr. Sakal’s book for the Republican period particularly. That is to say, this work is the first comprehensive book that is dedicated to both Agaoglu’s early life in the Russian Empire and his intellectual turning points throughout his journey between Europe and the Middle East. The work is very detailed and fascinated me in Shissler’s effort to combine Agaoglu’s thoughts with the historical contexts of their evolution. Throughout the work, Shissler tries to select the articles that represent best the ideas of Agaoglu and she tries to explain their background with using both the context and the milieu in which Agaoglu is also a part of. Therefore, it is not only a study of theoretical analysis but also a look to the intellectual environment of the 19th and 20th centuries and this makes the book attractive for general audience.

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The presented book is ten years old. In the field of political science, this usually means “out of date.” But I want to show here that Hakan Yavuz’s piece on political Islam in Turkey is highly valid also for the present. In the past several years, the issue of political Islam, i.e. Islamism, has become mainstream not just in political science or international relations. Religious motivated terrorism, or recent events in the Middle East known as the Arab spring are elusive without taking into account the issue of political Islam. In the case of public discussions surrounding the Arab spring, we can often hear phrases like “following the Turkish example” or “taking lesson from the successful Turkish story.” Authors of these opinions mean more or less to incorporate moderate Islamists into the liberal style democratic process. Journalists and scholars frequently reference the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi - AKP) as a successful example to imitate in post-revolutionary Arab societies. And it is here where Yavuz’s book can be extremely useful for us to problematize this notion.

In this book we are presented with the history of the long-lasting struggle between the Turkish secular state and devout Muslims on Islam’s role in society and politics. As the author says in the beginning: “this book is the story of the ‘other Turkey’” (p.vii). It deals with a Turkey often overlooked in the works of Kemalist and foreign historians. It reconstructs the development of “AKP’s successful model” praised by many observers and subsequently also provides an in-depth explanation as to why these claims are worthy reconsideration.
The main idea of the book is that the process of “authoritarian” westernization and “modernization” led by the Turkish state after 1923 was far from successful in influencing all segments of the population. Traditional society resisted state-led attempts to penetrate it with new ideology and to divorce it from its Muslim past. These traditional segments of population achieved survival of their Islamic identity mainly by two means, which are also concepts Yavuz developed in the book. First is “vernacularization of modernity” which he understands as “efforts of Islamic intellectuals and movements to redefine the discourses of modernity (nationalism, secularism, democracy, human rights, the liberal market, and personal autonomy) in their own Islamic terms” (p.5). Yavuz wants to show that Turkish Islamic intellectuals and politicians did not merely adopt these concepts as their own, but that their understanding of them is even more “western” (because of more democratic) than competing state (i.e. Kemalist) versions. Another key concept is “opportunity spaces,” by which he means the “forum of social interaction that creates new possibilities for augmenting networks of shared meaning and associational life. Such arenas include civic and political forums and electronic and print media and cyberspace, as well as the market” (p.24). This opportunity spaces allow the “vernacularization of modernity” to happen and thus preserve, develop and promote Islamic counterculture.

However, this process of “vernacularization of modernity” in new “opportunity spaces” has not happened smoothly. Yavuz starts to track it in Ottoman times, which provide us with necessary background for later events; the period is also a reference point for contemporary Islamic movements. The Ottoman state was formed differently than states of Christian Europe, without aristocracy and other intermediary institutions; the Sultan ruled his citizens directly. In this situation, religion was used as a control mechanism of the heterogeneity (millet system) and also as a source of authority and a tool for ruling the Muslim population. The Sultan was at the same time Caliph, the legitimate sovereign of all Muslims, which allowed him to gather otherwise ethnically and culturally divergent Muslim populations under one banner.

Erosion of this system in late Ottoman times culminated in Mustafa Kemal’s reform process, starting after the War of liberation and particularly after the abolishment of the Caliphate. Yavuz provides us with a picture of this period different from traditional Turkish historiography or popular works by foreign authors. Rather than unproblematic acceptation of the modernization process, we witness widespread attitudes of rejection, resistance and even rebellion. Rejection and an inward-looking approach to personal spirituality and purification was mainly the case in the Nurcu movement. On the other hand, Nakşibendi orders—another Sufi branch and the other most significant segment of the Turkish Islamic landscape—practiced rejection and rebellion. Some of the reforms, which were rejected by almost the entire population, had to be later reconsidered (ezan, i.e. call to prayer, in Turkish; religious education; total ban of headscarves, etc).

“Secularism, the official discourse of the Republic, failed to establish real connections with much of the population” (p.58), particularly the alienated population who in the 1950s supported the Democratic Party (Demokrat Parti - DP) as a means of expressing their desire to increase freedom in all segments of life, mainly in religious affairs. The same trend was repeated in the 1980s with the Motherland Party (Anavatan Partisi - ANAP), in 1995 with the Welfare Party (Refaş Partisi - RP) and from 2002 onwards with the AKP. This struggle took place in almost all segments of population, even in business. Yavuz describes rivalry between state-centric, secularist and protectionist TÜSİAD (Turkish Industrialists’ and Businessman’s Organization) and Islamic MÜSİAD (Independent Industrialists’ and Businessman’s Organization). He argues that the newly emerged bourgeoisie are characterized by their religious and social conservatism, economic liberalism and orientation towards private initiative (p.94). For the author, this is another archetype of division that affects all segments of the population.

The above mentioned characteristics of the new bourgeoisie are also generally applicable to Turkish Islamic intellectuals. The new class of Islamic thinkers is more active in media, literature and elsewhere...
outside the traditional religious establishment. Therefore there is no longer a need for mosques, as a means of spreading ideas, to become an influential figure in the Islamic movement. These thinkers also argue there is no opposition between Islam and modernity. Rather than simple dichotomy, tradition and modernity together with Islam create multiple approaches with various mixtures of these components.

An important role in this unconventional development was played by Sufi orders, namely Nakşibendi and Nurcu, which were corner stones of Turkish Islam for generations. Their informal networks, which managed to survive state oppression, were according to Yavuz essential for emergence of the type of Islam comfortable with modernity, the liberal market and human rights.

In his book, Hakan Yavuz provides us with important information regarding the evolution of Islam in Turkey and its attitudes towards the state. This book is very useful mainly because it casts light on the developments usually overlooked in conventional historical writings about republican Turkey. It also allows much better understanding of the role of Sufi orders, such an important part of Turkish society, in policy, ideology and in the personal beliefs of Islamic politicians.

Nevertheless, there are some problems that slightly reduce the value of his work, mainly his uncritical approach and relatively biased attitude towards political Islam in Turkey. Expressions like “The secular elite considered any attempt by marginalized societal groups to seek representation within the state center as an example of an ‘Islamic revival’” (p.55) goes throughout the whole book. Every time he refers to the secular segments of population he uses the word “elite” to stress the negative meaning. Usually words like “secular,” “Kemalist” and different adjectives of “state” are used with pejorative connotations. On the other hand, the Muslim groups and Islamic thinkers are referred strictly in positive sense through words such as “oppressed,” “marginalized,” “democratic,” “liberal” and so on and so forth. However, the careful reader should not be surprised, because he provides us with background information in the preface of the book. There he explains his sympathies for Sufi groups, which can be traced back to his childhood. Likewise his antipathy for authoritative Kemalism has roots in the university environment from his studies and early academic career.

Another objection which can be raised is the lack of empirical data supporting his generalizing claims. Throughout the book he explains what different groups thought, what Kemalists or Islamists wanted, and what was the common intention of the traditional Muslim population, but he does not support these claims with any data. We can see this also in the above mentioned citation. To overcome the risk of sinking into pedantic statistical analysis, we could at least be provided with more insight into the reasoning behind these generalized claims.

The last problem, connected with the author’s sympathies for Islamic groups, is the lack of reference to the radical and even violent Islamic groups such as the Turkish Hizbullah. When the author presents the typology of Islamic movements (pp. 28-32), the “revolutionary-violent” type is one of them. However, in later text, we are only shown the Nakşibendi rebellions from 1925 and 1930 as examples of violent practices. Another largely overlooked trend is the Sunni violence against Alevis, which is mentioned in just a few lines without any deeper commentary.

Despite this possible critique, I still think Yavuz’s book can be very useful for anybody interested not only in Turkish politics and society, but also in the ongoing transition in the Middle East. Particularly, it tells us why we should think twice before using Turkey as the model for anything.

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Güney Florida Üniversitesi Tarih Bölümü yardımcı profesörlerinden Hüseyin Yılmaz, “Doğu Sorununun ve Osmanlı İmparatorluğunun” başlıklı yazısında 19. yüzyılda “Yakın” ve “Ortadoğu” kavramlarının nasıl ortaya çıktığını, Osmanlı ve İslam entellektüelleri ve Avrupalı entellektüeller tarafından nasıl algılandığını, si-


Güney Kaliforniya Üniversitesi Tarih bölümü yardımcı profesörlerinden Ramzi Roughi “Mağrib’te (Kuzey Afrika) neden Ortadoğulu lar yoktur?” başlıklı yazısında hem Frankap onun Ortadoğu algısını eleştirmiş hem de Fransızların Kuzey Afrika’yi İslam Medeniyeti’nin bir parçası olarak görmekten çok Fransa’ya ait bir bölge olarak görmeyi tercih etmelerini de sorgulamıştır. Aynı zamanda Kuzey Afrika


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Yazara göre, Avrupalı seyyahların Hristiyanlık için kutsal olan yerleri dinî motifelede anlatması İncil’e atıtuka bulunmasından kaynaklanır; fakat Varisco, İncil’deki kutsal yerlerin betimlemesi ile 1800’lerde Avrupalardı tarafından yapılan dinî betimlemler arasında ne gibi bir farklık olduğu olduğunu bahsetmez. İncil’deki betimlemeyi imancı gerek getirip cabo edebilir. Okuyucunun görüşü, Avrupalardı hristiyanlar için kutsal sayılan yerleri İsa’nın doğumundan yaklaşık 1800 yıl sonra yeniden betimlemesi, bu betimlemenin oryantalist olmadığını ispatlamaya yeterli olacağını iddia eder (s. 129). Varisco, İncil’deki betimlemleri İncil’e dayandırdığını iddia eder ve İncil’den alumno da bu tezini doğrular.


Gagan D. S. Sood, Pakistan’dan Hindistan’a kadar uzanan bölgeyi çok kültürlü ve çok dinli yapısı vurgulayarak ele almıştır. Yazar göre, çok kültürlü bir bölge yapılmak uluslararası arası ticaretde çatışma yerine iş birliği ve dayanışmayı zorunlu kılmıştır. Mesela, Basra liman-sahil bölgesi gibi bir hinterlanda muhtardır. Yerel bölgelerin bağımsızlığından çok birbirleri ile bütünleşmesi sonucunda bölgesel çapta ticareti sosyo-ekonomik ve politik gelişmeler sağlanacağı tezi Sood tarafından savunulmuştur. Sood, bu tezini Osmanlı, İran ve Hint bürokrasisindeki statü ve rütbelerin birbirine çok benzeyen fonksiyonlar için ifade edildikleriyle etkilediği tarihi akışına açığa çıkarmıştır. Ayni zamanda, Sood, bu bölgede varlığı sürdürmek isteyen devletler için kültür ve siyasî bütünleşmenin kaçınılmaz olduğunu, sosyal, siyasî ve ekonomik hayatın düzenlenmesinde kültür ve siyasî bütünleşmeyi sağlamak için gerekli olduğunu belirtmiştir. Osmanlı, İran ve Hindistan’dan sosyal hayatda benzer meslek grupları için aynı ifadelerin kullanılması, bü-
rokraside de aynı rütbe ve derecelerin yer alması kültürel ve siyasî büttünleşmenin zorunluluğuna bir örnek.

Okuyucunun dikkatini çeken bir diğer husus, özellikle Ortadoğu'da Osmanlı döneminde kültürel büttünleşme ve siyasî birlik sağlanmasına rağmen, Osmanlı sonrası döneminde görüleceğini kadar Avrupa devletlerin de müdahale olmasyla etnik ve mezhepsel çatışmaları yayılmıştır. Modern-öncesi dönemde genelkesel dünya görüşü insan ve mekânın birbirine büttünleştirerek anlamlandırırken, modern dönemde aydınlanma düşüncelerinin inşa ettiği rasyonel dünya görüşü sosyal, kültürel ve ekonomik alanları bireysel ve rasyonellik ilkelelerine göre konumlandırır. Rasyonellik ve birey merkezli anlamlandırmanın her alanda çatışma yaratma potansiyeline sahiptir.


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“We showed how united AK Party is to both friends and foes alike in K›z›lcahamam” states Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on a regular Tuesday meeting of his party group. Though resembling a quote smeared by an ordinary show of force in order to survive in competitive party politics, one can both embed or display a conservative tone even in this plain and simple phrase. Since the aim for a political scientist is to bind pieces in order to enjoy both observing and engineering political discourses, even this random sample under our scope shouldn’t be shelved. On the contrary, if we are to dissect the sentence, we may face the principles that conservatism contain like the organic society and the sanctity of community through being “united” as Erdoğan puts it. Also the scepticism of change and changed like the AK Party’s “foes” and their unsuccessful swerve ambitions against the traditional continuity, here symbolized as the organization of the AKP itself. Nevertheless, this is one facade of the phrase where unlimited choices exist. Conservatism is not the only option on a spectrum so wide that different political ideological approaches would ultimately pick another political conception for a fruitful examine. However, since the ordinary perception of both AKP and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan himself leads one to the context of conservatism, not only this simple phrase but all the phrases related to the sole governing political organization in Turkey as of May 2013 could be the subject of an analysis where conservatism is the filter. In addition, “conservative democracy” as a term was officially used by one of the founders of the AKP back in 2003 to define the governmental attitude of the party. Even though “conservatism” in that sense may be intramental as an indicator in analysing not only the AKP of contemporary history, but also the DP, the JP and the MP, the line of popular right of Turkey that may be easily claimed as enjoyed the democratic period of Turkey so far. Yet it simultaneously fails to do so because of the ambiguity and dilogical perception of “conservatism”. As a result, political science lacks a possible valuable contribution and a criterion for the better understanding of right discourse and politics. This blank is the main motivation of Mehmet Akinci in his 2012 dated book Turkish Conservatism: From the Multi-party Period to September 12. Akinici, teaching at the Aksaray...
Akınçi discovers that the antagonism of center and periphery which may be claimed as the most essential driving force of the Republican history of Turkey lacks a political theory scheme. Especially naming the ideology of the periphery is a pain in the back in that sense. After all, conservatism tended to be perceived merely through linguistic means, with the verb “to conserve” misunderstood as “to react”, rather than a political ideology. Hence Akınçi begins with observing how the conservative ideology rooted back in early 19th century where Enlightenment ideals boomed with the spectacular French Revolution which turned out to be way more radical than British or American ones. Edmund Burke as the godfather of the ideology was referred and his stance for the American and British Revolutions and against the French Revolution was underlined in order to satisfy the answer whether conservatives are solely reactionary or not? Burke illustrates the British and American Revolutions as events to preserve the rights of that have already been a part of mankind. On the other hand he points to the inferiority of the “founding rational” of the French Revolution that inevitably tries to change the society head to toe. Finally “these two revolutions were welcomed positively by Burke not because they were predicting change, but preservation of what is existing (p.41).

Akınçi brings up the categorization diversities by referring to authors such as Andrew Heywood, Andrew Vincent, Peter Viereck with academicians from Turkey; B. Berat Özipek and Hasan Hüseyin Akkaş. Though discussing mainly the founding diversities between different types of conservatisms, Akınçi also points to the 20th century divisions such as neo-conservatism, paleo-conservatism or the New Right briefly in order to choose the best fit for the search of Turkish conservatism. He rolls the part up with the defining themes of conservatism shortly intrumentally according to different researchers like Robert Nispet, Tanıl Bora, Andrew Heywood and Russel Kirk. Ultimately he uses an interactive lens between mentioned thinkers for a reasonable list of principles such as the organic society, state, religion as a accessory force, authority, hierarchy and how they operate within the conservative thinking.

Turkish Conservatism then reaches the question of whether Turkish conservatism exist or not. Akınçi here uses an eliminative narrative and pushes conservatism to a field where nationalism and Islamism also trying to take part. Hence a comparison of nationalist discourse and the agenda related to the ideology was offered as a fuel by Akınçi. He emphasises that though religion is a component, especially in Turkish conservatism, it is not easy to claim the Islamism as the “liquid form” and the source of images, values and rituals with swift reflexes to reshape and position itself in Turkish right would inevitably turn into the “gas form” which is conservatism that provides the spiritual means to the right politics, in Tanıl Bora’s unique terminology. In other words, Akınçi asserts that “Bora, ignoring the differences of the right, wants to examine the discourse similarities and gets satisfied with it” (p.98) Akınçi draws a line between Islamism and conservatism where the latter and the nationalist virtues also enjoy being side by side. Yasin Aktay’s quotation here helps the author that “Islamism in fact lacks a space where it can express itself, therefore used conservative politics and sociality instrumentally” (p.102). But Akınçi adds that the opposite positioning of both ideologies against the progressive politics can also make them perceived as the same, which is quite problematic: “In short, the reason why we see two trends as the same, is their opposition to the reform politics by the central elites and this opposition’s nourishment by the same religious belief.” (p.105).
In addition, “passing the culture, getting the technology” motto is a common ground for both ideologies. Nevertheless since conservatism supports communitarian politics rather than individualistic or class based ones, articulation into Turkish nationalism that enjoys a more rational approach as can be seen after WWI in comparison with Islamism, a partnership so comfortable was reached where nationalist ideology and the “nation” itself was acknowledged as “the sum of traditions” (p.126), as Baltacıoğlu states.

Lastly, Akınçi examines the Turkish conservatism itself solely by referring to two different titles related to the conservative ideology rooted in Turkey. First off, Turkish conservatism gets examined with regard to “change, continuity, synthesis”. Author underlines the very concerns of conservatism regarding the Turkish modernism. This part also puts down the discourse of contemporary popular right politics about the Turkish modernism on a plain and simple basis. There are five sub-topics that Akınçi used to define the Turkish conservative thought that couldn’t position itself far from the criticism of Turkish modernism. These topics are: 1) Epistemological criticism of Kemalist modernism, 2) Criticism of modernizing political practice, 3) Cultural continuity and concern about the results of change, 4) Synthesis ideal in Turkish conservatism, 5) Relationship with official ideology. Basically, Akınçi refers to the conservative thinkers’ belief that though “modernism” as a term may sound tasty, it can also be misleading when it comes to the well-being of community that one lives in. Therefore top-down changes after the War of Independence and the “modernizing political practices” of Kemalist elite influenced by Western ideals are hazardous rather than helpful. Reforms regarding the language gets underlined by conservative thinkers significantly with a negative tune, follows the reforms on the official perception of Islam. Hence conservative thinkers tend to accept these changes in political and social life not as progress but rather like a rupture of traditional and historical line that would ultimately undermine the nation in the newly founded republic. Second title Akınçi used to define the characteristics of the Turkish conservatism is its stance on the idea of the “state, democracy and civilization”. Once more, author uses sub-topics and this time he picks; 1)”Eternal State”, 2) Turkish conservative thought and democracy, 3) Limited democracy against communism and revolutionaries, 3) “Conquer in Time of Defeat”. Clearly can be agreed, this part uses the pathos conservatism tend to embrace for the greater sake and sanctity of state. Yet Akınçi draws a rational line between Ali Fuad Bağgil and his social contract-laden liberal tendency in the discovery process of the state by the Turkish conservatism. Bağgil as painting the state with functionality, conflicts with Safa, Turhan or Güngör as latter three emphasize the state as the “total of heritage and customs” so that it existed and should last forever. Then, it is essential to observe the distinguishing characteristics of Turkish nations and organize the tool of state according to it. Akınçi results the part with conservatives’ exclusion towards left movements and claiming that after all falling into the opposite of the “left” is what identifies the conservatives so far (p.314) and also communism as a groundbreaking movement can’t be accepted where one of the vital principles of the conservative ideology is the continuity and the order of the nation:

“This character, as mentioned above, is the belief of a purpose by the society separate from individuals forming it or other factors (Macridis, 1992: 81; Scruton, 1990: 23). The logical result of this thinking is the appearance of the clashes and disagreements, with correct statement, different voices’ as marginal to the nature of the society” (p.318) 

Akınçi’s analysis of Turkish conservatism is an attempt to fully cover the conservatism as a “political ideology” rather than just a reaction. It comes with a proper research with a plain touch of topics for the better understanding of the ideology. It is well organized and swiftly targeting the mottos that even AKP of 2013 uses comfortably even though one could trace them back to Peyami Safa of early 20th century. In addition, Akınçi stayed put where he began the research and had little intervention in his narrative. Ultimately an objective work emerged that uses the method of quotationing rather than discussions of the author
himself which could in the end, suffocate the attempt of contributing the science. Akıncı use İsmail Hakkı Baltacıoğlu, Peyami Safa, Mümtaz Turhan, Osman Turan, Ali Fuad Başgil and Erol Güngör as companions through his work. Though influential, same characters were also heavily involved in the Conservatism volume of the İletişim Publishing. It may be inevitable to refer them but it is always fruitful to introduce variety in order to craft a way more refine form of analysis to prevent the act of addressing the elephant and enjoy the elegance of the subject.

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