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BOOK REVIEWS

The New Turkey and Its Discontents, by Simon A. Waldman and Emre Caliskan. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, pp. 360.

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Turkey's transformation under the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in the last two decades has put the country in a new direction paving the way for the “New Turkey”. Since the AKP came in power in 2002 a prosperous economy, a stable political environment, and a pro-European orientation were considered successes in Erdogan's first years in office; nevertheless, the current state of affairs could threaten that legacy. Erdogan has presided over Turkish politics for almost 20 years either as a Prime Minister or President, having established a self-centered regime that has failed to move towards democratization despite a promising start.

The New Turkey and its Discontents by Simon Waldman and Emre Caliskan outlines the AKP and Erdogan's political journey in consolidating their power. The book offers a well-documented chronological depiction of the AKP policies in both domestic and foreign levels as initiated from 2002 till shortly after the failed 2016 coup d'état. Waldman and Caliskan's main argument is that Turkey has moved to a post-military period with a concentration of power in the hands of the AKP. The book consists of seven chapters alongside the introduction and conclusion. The book

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offers detailed documentation of the demise of the military's power as a detachment from the Kemalist legacy. The authors described the military's undoing as a result of domestic and foreign pressures and plots. The new era that succeeded this transformation started with the AKP's rise to power and its early successes in different areas mainly on the economy, public health, and transportation - and was perceived as a step in the right direction for the country's democratisation. Despite the pro-European stance of Erdogan's first term in power, the gradual promotion of political Islam and the growing central role of religion in Turkish politics has gradually moved Turkey away from European ideals and the EU's normative nature. This newly Islam-nationalism was employed as a cover of the party's authoritarian practices and Erdogan's assertive rhetoric. While highlighting the Islamist tendency of AKP ruling, the authors nonetheless miss a more in-depth theoretical evaluation on how it defines Erdogan's domestic and foreign policies and how the public responds to it.

An essential element of Turkish political culture is presented in chapter three with a rich and chronological overview of the predominance of "One-man rule" since the origins of the Turkish Republic. Historically, political leaders have concentrated power in their hands. Thus, there has not been a clear separation of powers, and authoritarian tendencies are part of the political system while the public at large seems to approve this rather strong patriarchal way of governance.

The book's main contribution is to outline the discontents of "New Turkey": namely, control of media and judiciary, urban politics' corruption, the conflict surrounding the "Kurdish question," and a foreign policy that looks to the East and aspires for a dominant regional position. The authors emphasize how the already weak political institutions of the country, such as the judiciary and media are deprived of their role in checking the AKP and Erdogan's growing power. In particular press censorship, the demise of independent media, and the constant violations of freedom

of speech and press freedom as described in chapter four, constitute one of the most defining factors of Turkey's democratic deficit and inability to expose the so-called “deep state”. The deep state is another essential concept that has been used widely in academic literature to describe Turkish domestic politics. It is generally attributed as “the very idea that elements within the state can act with impunity and engage in illegal activities such as extrajudicial killings are indicative of a lack of transparency and the rule of law.” (p.9). However, the authors do not agree with the term and prescribe Turkey as a “weak state” mainly due to the discontents that define the Turkish political system under the AKP.

Urban development and the involvement of government officials in corruption scandals are scrutinised in Chapter five. The Gezi Park protest depicts the interrelation that binds together the AKP, big corporations but also the residents of more impoverished neighbourhoods. It also helps in understanding the nature of the *gecekondu* (squatter) and how they have established a clientelist political system.

The authors also develop, to a lesser degree, the discontents of Turkish foreign policy. Under the AKP's rule, the country's foreign policy abandoned its Western-looking policies halting the EU accession process due to severe divergence with EU normative dimension and ideals while the relationship with the neighbours of the country has risen to tensed relations. Admittedly there is a limited reference of Turkey's relations with other actors and particularly Russia, the USA, and Iran and how these bilateral relations have impacted Erdogan's course of action. In Chapter seven, former prime minister Davutoglu's foreign policy doctrine and its aspirations of a new Ottoman empire are analysed. The core of the doctrine is a turn to the East with a focus on the Middle East and to secure Turkey's regional hegemony. However, since the book does not account for the latest developments, it cannot explain how

Davutoglu's resignation impacted the consequent design of the country's foreign policy. In this chapter, a theoretical framework could provide a more nuanced in-depth explanation of Turkish foreign policy decisions. An elaboration of the offensive realist approach could explain the assertive role of Turkey at the regional level and its involvement in the war of Syria, the provocations towards Greece and Cyprus for the drilling in the Mediterranean, the war in Libya, etc. Still, the importance and central role of national interests in the design of the Turkish foreign policy is evident, especially after 2011, that could also be analysed under the prism of neoclassical realism.

In conclusion, the authors stress that the country risks becoming a weak and fragile state following Erdogan's polarising rhetoric and its authoritarian turn. The constitutional reform of 2016 and the 2018 transformation from a parliamentary to a presidential system widened the power of the presidency and consolidated more power on Erdogan. Even though Waldman and Caliskan place their hopes on the "vibrant civil society and intelligent, well-educated population", in advancing democracy in Turkey, Erdogan's ruling in the post-coup era indicated a further annihilation of personal and civil freedoms.

The book offers rich insights into AKP's gradual consolidation to power as well as its successes and failures along the way. When discussing the country's domestic and foreign policy decisions, there is a clear emphasis on the "first unit of analysis", namely the individual. In particular, on Erdogan's presence in all aspects of Turkish politics. However, one of the shortcomings of the book is the lack of theoretical underpinnings on the factors that have allowed and advanced Erdogan's authoritarian turn or the goals it seeks to achieve in terms of foreign policy.

Overall, the book is a useful tool for anyone interested in Turkish politics but also in the discipline of international relations offering an understanding of the his-

torical developments of the AKP governance over the last twenty years and Erdogan's orchestrated efforts to remain in power at all costs. A wide variety of readers, from policymakers to academics, and students will find Waldman and Caliskan's book as a useful road map in Turkish politics.

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