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Multiculturalism in Turkey: The Kurds and the State. Durukan Kuzu. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. doi:10.1017/9781108278461.

Multiculturalism in Turkey: The Kurds and the State is a new and ambitious work which aims to contribute to the literature on national minorities through a case study of the Kurds. As one of the largest stateless populations in the world, with a long-standing resistance movement for recognition and rights, the Kurds have not yet found their deserved place in the theoretical literature, and Kurdish Studies remains a fledgling field. This lacuna means that this book will appeal to readers with an interest in political theory, national minorities, Kurdish studies and history, nationalism, and identity politics in Turkey. Durukan Kuzu's iconoclastic approach is bound to create debate and controversy.

This succinct book consists of six main chapters. In Chapter Two, Kuzu outlines the emergence of the concept of multiculturalism in political thought. He analyzes civic individualist egalitarianism/assimilationism versus multiculturalism as two different means states have chosen to deal with national minorities. He refers to recent debates in the literature to distinguish between ethnocentric multiculturalism and moderate multiculturalism. In Chapter Three, Kuzu compares the experiences of national minorities around the globe, developing a typology which includes recognized minorities (Québécois, Flemish), oppressed minorities (non-Muslims in Turkey, Muslim Turks in Greece), and minorities of assimilation and integration (Kurds, Corsicans). In Chapter Four, Kuzu provides a historical overview of the Kurds in Turkey. He suggests that while the non-Muslims were always the state's "Other," the modern Turkish state attempted to integrate Kurds (and other Muslims) on the basis of civic nationalism. He points out that the Kurds in Turkey are heterogenous, being divided by class, ethnicity, language and religion. He contends that because the Kurds assimilated/integrated, remain internally divided, and maintain multiple identities, ethnicized politics is supported only by a minority. In Chapter Five, Kuzu analyzes the Justice and Development Party's approach to the Kurdish issue. He outlines policy changes during the 2000s, such as the creation of a state tv channel broadcasting in Kurdish, the teaching of the Kurdish language in some private schools, the devolution of power to regional municipalities, the changing of laws on crimes of "terrorism," and the initiation of talks with the PKK (the Kurdish Workers' Party). In what might be among the most controversial arguments of the book, Kuzu claims that these reforms failed in so far as they resulted in greater inequalities for Kurds and increased conflict between the Turks and the Kurds.

Chapter Six is centered on a detailed comparison of the Corsican and the Kurdish cases. According to Kuzu, unlike Ireland, the usual go-to case for comparison, Corsica provides a more apposite parallel to the Kurdish case. Historically, Turkey followed the example of France in pursuing a discourse of civic nationalism. In the case of France, while the majority of Corsicans assimilated to French national identity, a separatist movement also emerged. While the rise of multiculturalist policies led France to give Corsica greater autonomy in the recent period, most Corsicans do not support the separatist movement. Studies have suggested that multiculturalist policies may have exacerbated the conflict. On the basis of his own research, including interviews conducted in 2009-2011, the analysis of survey data and secondary sources, Kuzu argues that the Kurdish case bears a striking resemblance to that of Corsica. He goes on to critique multiculturalist policies, suggesting that Turkey needs to develop a moderate approach to provide a balance between civic nationalism and ethnocentric multiculturalism.

The strength of this book consists of its attempt to contribute to the theoretical literature on national minorities through a case study of the Kurds, which increases the visibility of a relatively understudied and undertheorized subject. Its weaknesses derive from its overambitious claims, its overreliance on the Corsican case as a fit for the Kurdish one, and, most importantly, from the question of whether its argument squares with the experience of the Kurds—both historically and in the present. While the discourse of the modern Turkish state was based on civic nationalism, in practice all Muslims were forced to perform Turkishness. This meant that assimilation/integration was inevitably ethnicized—and racialized—particularly in the case of the Kurds. It is this complex and violent experience which produced a continuous and intergenerational spirit of resistance, leading finally to the Kurdish movement. Given that the Kurds were forced to assimilate, developed multiple and heterogeneous identities and remain internally divided, what remains remarkable is the emergence of such a popular movement—one of the most long-lived resistance movements in the world. Furthermore, this movement managed to capture the imagination of young women and men raised in a patriarchal, conservative and highly religious society on the basis of a socialist, feminist and environmentalist discourse. Given the hegemony and surveillance of the state, it is difficult to measure Kurds' support for the Kurdish movement on the basis of survey or interview questions. Complex issues such as regional administration or language policy are hard to address in what are often simplified and leading questions in surveys or interviews. Regardless of volatile voting practices, continuing debates about the meaning of the concept of regional autonomy, and the issue of how to deal with the loss of the Kurdish language, Abdullah Öcalan remains a key symbolic figure for many Kurds because the movement he created forced public recognition of the Kurdish language and ethnicity—of the Kurds as a people—for the first time in the history of modern Turkey. Dismissing the Kurdish movement as a terrorist group, Kuzu treats it as a static entity, disregarding its radical transformation over time. He also reduces its politics to ethnic politics, even though the discourse of the Kurdish movement is based on internationalist socialism, and the movement moved over time in the direction of embracing democracy and human rights for all peoples and citizens of Turkey. Durukan's Kuzu's claim that multiculturalist reforms in Turkey failed is also problematic given that the so-called "Kurdish opening" was too little too late, and ended before it really began. We really do not have any concrete evidence that true democratic reforms in Turkey not only for the Kurds but for all citizens would not bring about a lasting peace.

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