

## BOOK REVIEW

# İlker AYTÜRK and Berk ESEN (eds.), Post-Post-Kemalizm: Türkiye Çalışmalarında Yeni Arayışlar (İletişim Yayınları, 2022)

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# Post-Post-Kemalizm: Türkiye Çalışmalarında Yeni Arayışlar

İlker AYTÜRK and Berk ESEN (eds.)

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*Post-Post-Kemalizm: Türkiye Çalışmalarında Yeni Arayışlar (Post-Post-Kemalizm: Search for Alternatives in Turkish Studies)*, edited by İlker Aytürk and Berk Esen, aims to present a multidimensional approach to a long-standing intellectual debate in the field of Turkish studies. As laid out by the editors in the preface, the book is based on the argument that the post-Kemalist paradigm is insufficient for making sense of Türkiye today, which prompts the search for an alternative paradigm (p. 14). The book, which consists of two sections, first details the failure of the post-Kemalist paradigm as seen through different disciplines, including political science, women's studies, and foreign policy. The second part then provides a rethinking of the paradigm by presenting a critique of post-Kemalizm from different thematic perspectives, including liberalism, culturalism, secularism, tutelage,<sup>1</sup> Islamic studies, and political parties. The work aims to create an alternative perspective to contemporary Turkish studies and provides benefit to researchers who are interested in and are carrying out studies in this field.

The book begins with the chapter titled "Post-Post-Kemalizm: Waiting for a New Paradigm" by İlker Aytürk, which gives information about the academic, intellectual, and political background of post-Kemalizm and argues that it incorrectly diagnoses the ongoing tutelage problem of Türkiye (p. 25), placing the entire responsibility of the problems that Türkiye currently has on the early Republican period and the Kemalist ideology (p. 39-40). In addition, Aytürk shows the necessity of an alternative perspective to emerge that opposes post-Kemalist paradigm, as its transformation from an oppositional mindset to a dominant one with the coming to power of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) (p. 29). As post-Kemalizm saw the Kemalist, military, and secular establishment as the main source of the tutelage and democratization problem in Türkiye, the AKP's critique

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1 Authors use the term "tutelage" as a comprehensive concept that refers multiple dimensions of tutelage in Türkiye, that includes military, political, and bureaucratic aspects.

of tutelage led to an intersection of academic and intellectual debate of post-Kemalism as it applies to political practice (p. 356-357). In this chapter, Aytürk introduces the reader to post-post-Kemalism and explains why Turkish studies needs a new paradigm that investigates the rise and fall of post-Kemalism by analyzing multiple factors, criticizing its mistakes in secularism and foreign policy, and arguing that what we see in Türkiye today as a problem is not merely the result of Kemalism, but also other factors such as the military, right-wing parties, and the political elite (p. 47-48).

The first section of the book makes a disciplinary assessment of post-Kemalism's decline and the necessity of the post-post-Kemalist paradigm. Written by Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, the first chapter examines how the reflections of Kemalist and post-Kemalist ideas has shaped the discipline of political science in Türkiye. Kalaycıoğlu elaborates on the main concepts and issues such as secularism, democracy, and the nation-state and their roles in transforming political science. In his conclusion, he argues that the major failure of post-Kemalism is to link all political developments to a single political ideology, Kemalism, but there is a need to look for other social and political factors. Thus, post-post-Kemalist political science studies must adopt a multidimensional perspective in searching for other factors that explain Türkiye's problems (p. 89-93).

The second chapter by Berrin Koyuncu-Lorasdağı examines the post-Kemalist literature that criticizes the identity construction of women by Kemalism in the processes of modernization and secularization in Türkiye. It describes the failure of the post-Kemalist approach to women's identity, as it is erected around pluralism and democracy but focused on Islamic and cultural identity (p. 136). In this respect, she argues that, instead of analyzing women's liberation in Türkiye over religious or ethnic identity, there is a need for an alternative reading that considers the factors of violence, representation, and poverty (p. 142). The analysis of Koyuncu-Lorasdağı takes a critical perspective on both Kemalist and post-Kemalist approaches to women's identity and addresses a highly neglected knowledge gap in Turkish studies.

The following chapter by İlhan Uzgel focuses on the post-Kemalist foreign policy and its critique of modernization, secularism, and nationalism in the early Republican period. Uzgel discusses how the post-Kemalist critique emerged in the field of foreign policy toward Kemalist foreign policy making and makes an in-depth analysis of why post-Kemalist foreign policy making has failed by investigating various cases including but not limited to the Cyprus problem, EU relations, and the Middle East. Through a unique approach, Uzgel embeds the challenges that post-Kemalism faced into an international perspective, thus arguing that the paradigm failed not only in domestic matters but also in foreign affairs because it adopted a more radical, authoritarian, and sectarian foreign policy orientation than the Kemalists it has criticized.

In the last chapter of the first section, Aytürk critically engages with Mete Tunçay's book, *Establishment of the One-Party Government in the Republic of Türkiye, 1923-1931*, that elaborates the one-party government period in Türkiye and builds up an analysis of the post-Kemalist critique of state-building. The chapter provides a comprehensive critique of the post-Kemalist understanding of the issues facing Türkiye, arguing that the greatest failure of

the paradigm is the blame that it puts on Kemalist values and the early Republican period for every single problem that Türkiye faced since the 1920s (p. 235).

In the second section, the authors discuss the post-Kemalist paradigm from six different themes and analyze its limitations. In the first chapter, Sencer Ayata elaborates on the political stance of the liberals in Turkish politics during the Republican era, the political processes that made them become part of the post-Kemalist paradigm, and how they ended up being excluded in the AKP period as the party turned into a populist authoritarian government (p. 275). Then Tanıl Bora investigates the impact of Kemalist culturalism on post-Kemalist thinking, supporting his main arguments through a content analysis of the *Yücel* and *Varlık* journals. Bora concludes that while criticizing Kemalist culturalism, post-Kemalism was unable to see that the main actors of the post-Kemalism, nationalist, and conservative sides were also driven by a culturalist approach (p. 311).

Chapters written by Zana Çıtak and Berk Esen complement each other. Çıtak does an in-depth assessment of secularism in the post-Kemalist literature and argues that while secularism was at the center of post-Kemalist critique, after moving from the opposition and becoming a mainstream paradigm with the AKP government, the practice was not a post-secular society as assumed but rather a society with Sunni domination in the religious realm (p. 345). Çıtak concludes that secularism is a necessity for the existence of modern democratic societies and secularism is a must-think matter for post-post-Kemalism to overcome the post-Kemalist paradigm (p. 347-348). In Esen's chapter, the main discussion builds around the post-Kemalist critique of the tutelage of the Kemalist institutions, such as the military, state bureaucracy, and the dominant political ideology. Esen argues that the critique of tutelage makes it possible for post-Kemalists and the AKP to intersect, which he describes as "the main thesis of the AKP" (p. 355), and argues that the problem of tutelage is traceable in every late industrializing and developing society; thus it is not *sui generis* for Türkiye (p.406-407).

The book ends with two crucial chapters, one by Yüksel Taşkın that critically engages with the impact of post-Kemalism in Islam studies, and one by Şebnem Yardımcı Geyikçi and Berk Esen that analyzes the post-Kemalist paradigm from the perspective of political party studies. Taşkın briefly analyzes the ideas of Şerif Mardin and Nilüfer Göle as prominent post-Kemalist thinkers, which enables the reader to understand two main things: the literary contribution of these two thinkers to Islam studies and the link between post-Kemalism and Islam studies. He concludes the chapter by pointing out that the greatest weakness of the post-Kemalist paradigm is that it searched for the sources of authoritarianism only in Kemalism and did not examine the roots of this problem from the Ottoman era (p. 440). The closing chapter by Yardımcı Geyikçi and Esen touches on a significant but understudied field in Turkish studies, party politics, and reveals how the post-Kemalist paradigm and political parties affected each other. The authors highlight the neglect of the empirical studies on party politics in Türkiye, which they see as the main cause of the superficial party analysis of the post-Kemalist paradigm and encourage the post-post-Kemalist paradigm to fill this gap (p. 474-476).

*Post-Post-Kemalizm: Alternative Approaches in Turkish Studies* addresses one of the most prominent academic debates in Turkish studies and attempts to provide an alternative paradigm after the fall of post-Kemalism that can help scholars understand and analyze the

current social and political situation in Turkish studies. While the editors designed the book in the form of paradigmatic disciplinary and thematic analysis, they lack the reasoning for the inclusion of these disciplines and themes and the exclusion of others. Although they mention in the Preface that they also had the desire to have chapters for nationalism, literature, and Kurdish studies (p. 21), this note does not provide any insight into why these themes, and other crucial themes such as political economy, are missing from the analysis of the paradigm. Nevertheless, Aytürk and Esen have taken a critical first step toward a new path in Turkish studies to replace the outdated paradigm of post-Kemalism, which no longer explains contemporary Türkiye, and have attempted to build an alternative paradigm that answers for the failures of post-Kemalism.