



Yayın Adı Time Out istanbul English
Referans No 20872433
Renk Renkli

Yayın Tarihi 01.02.2013
Etki Olumlu
STxCM 154,00

Küpür Sayfa 1
Tiraj 20000
Sayfa 66



Muslim Nationalism and the New Turks Jenny White

BOOK OF THE MONTH



Princeton University Press

Few tropes about Turkey are more tired than the 'secularists v Muslims' refrain. Affirmed over and over in global media by stock phrases and images – the covered woman with a shockingly bare-headed female friend, 'caught between West and East' – the approach reduces the country to two clashing schools of politics and thought.

While it may make Turkey more digestible to foreign audiences, this view sells short the fascinating, untidy patchwork of affiliations and ideologies that comprise the Turkish population today. It omits subtler notions of nationhood that have shaped the law, language and culture of Turkey, and ignores the many similarities between Muslim and non-Muslim modes of nationalism.

These are the points that Jenny White seeks to illuminate in 'Muslim Nationalism and the New Turks'. To do so, she draws on extensive interviews with Turks from all sections of society, a vast archive of news and research publications, and her personal experiences in Turkey over the course of more than three decades. Her findings are engagingly presented, never veering toward advocacy, and her claims are supported by a wealth of factual detail and hefty quotes taken from her interviews.

Since the 1990s, a new nationalism has emerged in Turkey alongside the ascendance of a 'self-consciously Muslim' political and

economic class, White argues. It defines 'nation and the national subject based on a post-Ottoman, rather than Republican, model' and uses cultural commonalities rather than markers of race or ethnicity as criteria for national belonging. Under the Kemalist traditions that guided the Republic after its founding, the state took a very active role in religion, deciding where and how it could be expressed. What most Turks really want, White concludes, is the freedom to shape their own Muslim identity and support a 'credible Muslim alternative vision of the nation and what it means to be Turkish – a Muslim nationalism that is challenging the Kemalist tradition.'

The ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), despite its Islamist roots, professes to endorse a more hands-off form of secular government than its Kemalist forebears. That stance earned Prime Minister Erdoğan harsh words from the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt after a September 2011 visit, during which he told Egyptians not to fear secularism and visited Alexandria's Coptic Patriarch. In recent years, of course, the AKP has injected religion into public policy to the increasing discomfort of its own supporters, as in the 4+4+4 education reforms, for

example, or the abortion controversy. One of the book's few weaknesses is that its interviews were mostly conducted in 2008, meaning it merely glances over the dogmatic turn in AKP policy over the past three years.

Yet plenty of White's findings will challenge the preconceptions that most observers, even the exceptionally educated, bring to Turkey. She cites a 2009 study showing that one fourth of self-identified leftist secular nationalists supported AKP, while a substantial portion of youth who identify as Muslim first and Turkish second supported the Republican People's Party (CHP). No less surprising are some of her interviewees' opinions, ranging from chador-wearing AKP supporters who claim that Turkey is 'a country raised not to express what we're thinking' and boast Alevi and

Kurdish friends to an official in the right-wing Motherland Party (AP) who dismisses the violent nationalist Grey Wolves youth group as 'soft' for resorting to racist definitions of Turkishness.

Many of White's most interesting points, however, address the similarities between the many nationalist movements in Turkey. Whether Muslim-leaning or secular, the movements White identifies are linked by several common features: fear of attack by enemies without or minorities within, pressure to conform to an artificially homogenous national identity, suppression of women through a patriarchal state and social structure, socially engineering these attitudes in the population through an authoritarian education system and, perhaps most prominently, plenty of internal contradiction.

White's writing is packed with interesting facts (did you know that Turkey nearly went to war with the United States in 2003 after American soldiers captured and hooded 11 Turkish soldiers? Or that, until 2004, rapists in Turkey could not be prosecuted if they married their victim?). But the real strength of her work is its ability to illuminate surprising swaths of Turkey's population without over-simplifying or passing judgement on her subjects. Whether you've lived in Turkey for decades or are just beginning to acquaint yourself with this country, 'Muslim Nationalism' is sure to teach you a thing or two. Julia Hart

Feelings Run Faster Yankı Yazgan



Boyut Publishing

If you've ever thought that Turkey needed some thorough psychoanalysis, 'Feelings Run Faster' may prove a very cathartic read. Author Yazgan, a working psychiatrist and professor in Istanbul, applies a mix of clinical analysis and personal musing to a range of topics: how Istanbul's perpetual *telaş* (rush) relates to the savouring of artichokes, the neuroscience of political conservatism and the Turkish herd mentality that tolerates and even encourages cutting corners to get ahead.

'Feelings Run Faster' can either be read cover-to-cover or browsed. Yazgan's whimsical sketches skitter through the pages, breaking up brief chunks of text. Divided into five categories – Turkish Coffee, Happiness, Others, Love, Time and Places – Yazgan's conclusions are particularly convincing when he relates a personal memory or anecdote to illustrate a broader observation about life, such as his initial disgust but eventual gratitude towards receiving an encyclopaedia for his circumcision.

Yazgan's English, as he recognises in the afterword, is far from perfect, and the text contains a fair number of errors and confusing passages, which sometimes detract from the flow of his writing. But the overall brisk text boasts plenty to keep readers engaged, especially brief homages to under-translated Turkish authors such as Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar and Öğüz Atay, frequent invocations of *atasözler* (Turkish proverbs) and interesting findings quoted from psychiatric or social science studies. JH

