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BOOK REVIEWS

Authoritarianism and Resistance in Turkey: Conversations on Democratic and Social Challenges, by Esra Ozyurek, Gaye Ozpinar and Emrah Altindis (Eds.). Cham: Springer, 2019, pp. 290.

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Authoritarianism and Resistance in Turkey is a timely new collection of interviews from different sections of Turkish society. Unlike many other works that largely focus on the methods used by the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) to consolidate authoritarian rule since 2002, this book traces the decline of Turkish democracy back to the military coup in 1980. In addition, many different interviews stress the older roots of authoritarianism in the country, even back to the early decades of the Turkish Republic.

The volume first reconstructs the roots of authoritarianism in the country's political and economic history. For instance, Baskin Oran's chapter on Kemalism is fascinating as it links the contemporary weakness of the Republican People's Party (CHP), the main opposition party, to that period. Similarly, Sun-gur Savran's examination of the Gezi Park protests of 2013 does a brilliant job in relating the current trends of resistance to historical antecedents that stretch back

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to the Late Ottoman Empire. The historical background in this section complements the second section, which largely explores the rise of neoliberalism in Turkey and its intersection with authoritarianism. This part of the book examines how both the military and the AKP promoted neoliberal economics since the 1980 coup and demonstrates how economic policies have been used to stifle dissent.

Part III instead digs deep into the development of political Islam in Turkey, looking at the AKP and the Gülen movement. The interview with Yuksel Taskin demonstrates that the AKP reminds both previous Islamist and non-Islamist center-right formations in their predatory attitudes towards democracy in an extremely majoritarian fashion. It also discusses AKP's undemocratic internal structures and how these are reflective of its national governance either. Ahmet Sik's interviews describe the attempts by the Gülen movement to integrate with state institutions to influence policy rather than through electoral means. These interviews are complemented by an overview of Turkish Islamic movements by the interview of an academic Hayri Kirbasoglu. He describes the corruption of the Islamist movement through its relationship with political power, which he sees as a move from attempting to influence policy to seek to gain hegemonic power.

Part IV delves into the history of Turkish social movements, and highlights their resistance to the AKP's socially conservative and neoliberal policies after traditional and formal avenues of opposition were robbed of their power. Once again the variety of contributions is impressive: from the Gezi protests to new 'spontaneous' forms of resistance, to feminist, environmental and LGBTI+ movements. Common to these interviews is the growing sense of solidarity

across the various movements in the face of the new regime, and increasing awareness of the intersectionality of their claims.

Part V dealing with Turkey's minorities is the most compelling and cohesive in the volume, demonstrating how minority ethnic and religious groups have resisted some form of authoritarianism throughout modern Turkish history, even in periods considered relatively democratic for the majority of the population. This section explores how minority groups have preserved their cultural autonomy against the state, and particularly their psychological resistance against the imposition of Turkishness. For example, the chapter on the Kurdish community – the country's largest minority group – stands out. The interview with academic Nazan Ustundag interrogates the methods and ideology of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), the backbone of the Kurdish liberation movement, and illustrates its dialogue and alliances with leftist groups, other ethnic minorities, and ecologist organisations. Equally interesting is the chapter on the Armenian minority, including their experience of Genocide. The interview with Lerna Ekmekcioglu underlines the unique situation in which Armenians find themselves in living within the society that committed genocide against them while forcing their 'Turkicization', as for the names. ed to adopt parts of that society's identity (e.g. Turkicised surnames). Lastly, a thorough understanding of Alevism is provided in the interview with academic Besim Can Zirh, wherein he describes a main act of resistance against official denial.

Human rights and their deterioration since 2016 are the common themes of Part VI which explores how authoritarianism has been consolidated through the legal system, and how its subservient and chaotic nature has prevented it from being a bulwark against authoritarian tendencies. Likewise, the stunted

growth of press freedom hindered resistance against the regime. Furthermore, an interview with editor Tanil Bora discusses right-wing vigilante violence and lynching in Turkey, and how successive governments have used it to underpin authoritarian governance and deter resistance. While the section contains several interesting interviews, there seems to be a lot missing here: for example, none of the chapters address the crackdown on social media and the internet in the past decade. A discussion on the restrictions in the sphere of political rights is also curiously absent.

Lastly, Part VII demonstrates why democracy has failed to be successful in Turkey and why authoritarianism has returned repeatedly. A particularly fascinating chapter by Cem Kaptanoglu delves into the psychological impact of the history of the Republic of Turkey, showing how the strong corporatist and fascist elements of early Kemalism have had a lasting impact and prevented the growth of durable democracy in Turkey.

The book is commendable for giving way to the voices of progressive thinkers and activists in Turkey during the consolidation of authoritarianism while exploring how their experiences reflect the changes in Turkey since 1980. Furthermore, the interviews meritoriously link economic analyses to the study of authoritarianism and offer the readers the possibility to approach the issue of resistance to authoritarianism from various perspectives.

However, it is unclear how well the volume works on its thesis on Turkish authoritarianism. In the introduction, the editors lay out their aims - firstly to comment on authoritarianism in the Turkish context and secondly also to provide a voice to progressive intellectuals in Turkey (p.7). I would argue that the second objective is full-filled, but the readers should be aware that this is a fairly loose

collection of interviews (albeit very interesting ones) that lacks a concluding section that could have tied the various insights from each of them together.

Indeed, this volume is impressive in many ways, especially for the calibre of interviewees, many of whom are currently incarcerated for their views. The high quality of most of these interviews is also to be commended. While I am not sure that all of the interviews or sections talk to each other - with the volume possibly addressing too many different aspects at once -, they undoubtedly remain a very interesting read.

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