

Democracy in Turkey: The Impact of EU Political Conditionality

By Ali Resul Usul

Routledge: London and New York, 2011, 235 pages, ISBN 9780415566988.

In the ever-increasing stream of academic studies of Turkey's foreign policy, no aspect is better covered than Turkey's relations with the European Union. In fact, this reviewer counted no less than twelve books on this subject published in the last five years, excluding this one! Furthermore, there are more books on Turkey-EU relations than all the other books on Turkish foreign policy all together. To justify another addition to an already long inventory, the author must believe he has something new to say, or at least is covering aspects not addressed by others. While Dr Usul's book offers a useful summary of the literature on the role of external actors on democratisation in general, and the emerging policies of the EU in creating democratic conditionality for candidate states, his coverage of the Turkish experience adds little to the existing body of literature, and is out of date.

His first two chapters concentrate on general principles and experiences, rather than the Turkish case in particular. Starting from the point that the literature on regime change has traditionally been domestically based, but that the international aspects of the process are now commonly considered, he develops the argument by outlining different definitions of democracy, and the roles of political culture and international factors in democratisation. The second chapter switches the focus to the development by the European Union of political conditionality as a central part of the process of admitting new states. The

argument rests on the familiar proposal that conditionality is only effective if the candidate state can trust the EU's commitment to eventual accession: without this, external pressure will be too feeble to achieve effective results. For newcomers to the subject, these first two chapters will serve as a useful summary, with numerous benchmarks for further reading.

Having set the scene, Dr. Usul divides the time line of Turkey's accession into two periods: before and after the historic December 1999 Helsinki meeting of the European Council, whereby Turkey became an official candidate for eventual EU membership, opening the way for negotiations once the Copenhagen criteria of democratic acceptability was met. For most readers of *Insight Turkey*, this is an all too well-known narrative, as a great deal of more up to date material currently exists. The conclusion was that prior to 1999, the conditionality mechanism did not automatically offer accession at the end of the process, but after this date, the achievement of this outcome became the norm.

However, one major criticism of this book is that it is not an easy read. In the narrative chapters, brief references are made to complicated examples, with no explanation in the main text. As an example, on page 84 we are told that "[A]fter Turkey applied for membership, its first major problem with the European parliament was the Kutlu-Sargin issue." To find out what this was, one has to skip forward in the book to a note on page 182 (having

located the right note). The process has to be constantly repeated, as this is one of 51 such notes for a single chapter, filling five pages of small print, causing annoyance, distraction, and wasting the reader's time. Why the information could not have been included in the main body of the text is a mystery.

The other and more important critique, and although there is no reference to this in the book, it would appear to be a virtually unrevised reprint of the writer's PhD thesis, submitted over four years ago,* published in 2011, but with no attempt to take into account the important changes that have occurred in the meantime. The fact that the narrative breaks off at the beginning of 2007, and for instance, the summaries of the Commission's annual reports on Turkey's progress towards accession do not go further than November 2006 make it next to impossible to avoid this conclusion. Of eleven other books published on this subject since his thesis was presented, only one features in the bibliography. This matters, since much has happened over the

past five years. In broad strokes, Turkey's EU accession process has been stuck in the doldrums, with a consequent severe weakening of the conditionality mechanism, while democratisation has continued, with important constitutional amendments passed in 2010, a new constitution now under active consideration, and a sharp reduction in the political power of the armed forces. There is no mention of any of these important trends in the book, or any consideration of the likelihood that Turkish democratisation has acquired its own momentum, seriously weakening the central argument advanced in its pages. Publishers should not accept unrevised doctoral dissertations without being much more discriminating.

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* Ali Resul Usul, *The limits of political conditionality in Turkey: an analysis of the EU's impact on democratic consolidation in Turkey over a twenty-year period (1987-2007)* (University of Essex, Ph.D, 2008).

Harem Histories: Envisioning Places and Living Spaces

Edited by Marilyn Booth

Durham: Duke University Press, 2011, 416 pages, 9780822348696, \$24.95.

Controversies over the realities of life in the harem have long been in need of a treatment that challenges the stereotypically narrow perception of the concept and provides the opportunity to see the harem's multi-layered structure from a critical perspective. This collection of readings on the harem as a cultural and social institution provides such an approach. As

stated by the editor, the emphasis of the book is "on the concept/institution/image of the harem as shaped and represented within the societies of the Middle East and North Africa, while . . . [contributing writers] also attend to its representational and political uses by visitors to and observers of these societies."

In keeping with this claim, this book