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BOOK REVIEWS

Multiculturalism in Turkey: The Kurds and the State, by Durukan Kuzu, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom, 2018, 204 pages, $99.99 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-108-41782-2

Durukan Kuzu's *Multiculturalism in Turkey: The Kurds and the State* provides trenchant criticism of what its author critically conceptualizes as "ethnocentric multiculturalism," even if it unfortunately overlooks the role that "Islamic multiculturalism" played in motivating and legitimizing Turkey's reforms for its Kurdish minority. In explaining his reason for writing this book, Kuzu argues that "there is a strong tendency on the part of 'liberals' in Turkey to overlook the global debate on multiculturalism, its normative flaws, inegalitarian outcomes, and essentialist tendencies" (7), and as a result, "new inequalities that are emerging from the current multicultural discourse in Turkey" (10). He argues that in addition to the "so-called liberals in Turkey" (107), the "multicultural paradigm [is] supported by the EU [European Union] and the Council of Europe" (131).

Kuzu is most convincing and commendable in his criticism of "ethnocentric multiculturalism." Ethnocentric multiculturalism disregards the heterogeneity of the Kurdish minority while limiting individual Kurds' freedom of exit (118), and further stigmatizes (119) and reifies Kurdish identity in an essentialist manner (120). Also laudable is his comparative approach, which permeates the discussion throughout the book, although the book is a single case study of Turkey otherwise. In Chapter 3, Kuzu proposes a tripartite typology of ethnic minorities, namely, "recognized minorities," "oppressed minorities," and "minorities of assimilation and integration." He argues that the question of Corsican identity in France is similar to that of Kurdish identity in Turkey, both of them being minorities of assimilation and integration. Because unlike the Quebecois in Canada or the Flemish in Belgium, both of which are discussed at length, "there are other situations in which the majority of people in a national minority group have chosen not to affiliate with ethno-politics" and both "Corsicans and Kurds made these kinds of choices consistently in the first decade of this century" (51). Thus, his argument appears more about feasibility rather than normative desirability in this typology: Ethnocentric multiculturalism is a viable option for the Flemish in Belgium and Quebecois in Canada, but not for the Corsicans in France or Kurds in Turkey. Kuzu argues that ethnocentric multiculturalism is more viable in situations where the minorities are "oppressed" and excluded, as has been the case with Uyghurs in China, Muslim Turks in Greece, and non-Muslims in Turkey (56). Chapter 4 explains in detail why the Kurds in Turkey fall under the category of minorities of assimilation and integration.

Chapter 5 is the empirical core of the book, where its main contribution is most lucidly elaborated. In a nutshell, Kuzu emphasizes that Kurds are a very heterogeneous group, and this heterogeneity is fraught with numerous intra-group tensions of political significance, which he argues ethnocentric multiculturalism and its advocates, such as the EU and the purported "liberals" of Turkey, consistently overlooked in their attempt to construct a monolithic and essentialist Kurdishness with innately autonomist if not separatist aspirations: "For example, tension remains between Zaza and Kurmanci, Alevi and Sunni, conciliatory and radical, western and eastern, religious and Marxist Kurds" (98). There is indeed much to be praised in this critique. Especially noteworthy is the bitter irony of Kurdish ethnonationalists' efforts to downplay the Zaza identity, a very sizeable ethnolinguistic subgroup of Kurds if not an altogether different ethnolinguistic group (e.g. 130-1). Making matters worse, "almost all scholars of liberalism in Turkey . . . think of Kurdish and Turkish identities in this way [as mutually exclusive categories]" (107), which then leads them to come up with ethnocentric multiculturalist recommendations overlooking the hybridity and

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heterogeneity of hyphenated Kurdish-Turkish identities. The author conducted 338 interviews in Kurdish-majority cities of Diyarbakir, Mardin, Tunceli, Bitlis, Van, and Hakkari (109), which constitute very impressive fieldwork. He took care to have a diverse sample of Kurdish provinces in their religious, ideological, and other relevant characteristics, which is a strength of this book, distinguishing it from many Diyarbakır-centric narratives of Kurdishness. All interviews are understandably anonymous, and yet it is disappointing not to have any lengthy direct quotations or testimonies from his interviewees. Such a wealth of interview material is only summarized by the author at a high level of abstraction.

There are also shortcomings of the book, related to the dependent variable ("failure" of the Kurdish reforms), the independent variable ("multiculturalism" in Turkey), and engagement with the literature on both of these. What is the measurement for the "failure" (e.g. "disappointingly failed," 8) of Turkey's Kurdish reforms? The only measurement provided seems to be the rise of PKK insurgency and terrorism after the introduction of significant reforms, such as Kurdish-only public television (in 2009) and the teaching of Kurdish language in public schools as an elective course (starting in 2011). However, Kuzu recognizes that the PKK was rapidly losing its popular support, since larger numbers of Kurds were voting for the AK Party government as a result of the Kurdish reforms; and the escalation of the PKK insurgency and terrorism is explicable as a symptom of the reforms' success, not their failure. Moreover, this electoral trend resumed after the failure of PKK's last major offensive in 2015–2016, but the book does not discuss any developments beyond 2015, including the failed coup attempt of July 2016, a critical turning point in Turkish political history by any measure.

Kuzu also misidentifies the cause of Turkey's reforms as "the pressure of the European Union" (e.g. 100-1), which then justifies his focus on ethnocentric multiculturalism as the main recommendation of the EU. However, this explanation does not resonate with the chronology of Turkey's reforms and the EU accession process. Turkey's reforms for Kurds peaked between 2009 and 2013, including the inauguration of Kurdish-only public television (in 2009) and the teaching of Kurdish language in public schools (starting in 2011), at a time when Turkey's EU membership prospects all but disappeared, and not a single chapter in Turkey's negotiations for EU membership has been successfully closed since 2006. Rather than EU accession, the causal centrality of "Islamic multiculturalism" in motivating and legitimating Turkey's reforms for the Kurds and other minorities became more obvious since the early 2010s, as I emphasized in numerous articles since then, including in my book on *Regimes of Ethnicity and Nationhood in Germany, Russia, and Turkey* (Cambridge University Press, 2012). For example, Erdoğan's speech in Diyarbakır in 2005 is mentioned in passing (102), but Kuzu overlooks the overwhelmingly religious content of Erdoğan's periodic speeches in Diyarbakır, usually during election campaigns, which are always saturated with numerous references to early Islamic warriors and religious notables. This is all the more surprising as Kuzu acknowledges that "a survey completed in 2010 . . . shows that the most important source of identity that binds people, and especially the Kurds, to Turkey is now religion [e.g., Islam]" and moreover, "almost half of all Kurds tend to identify with Islam before their ethnicity" (121). This finding is actually supportive of Kuzu's main argument insofar as it contradicts ethnocentric multiculturalism, according to which "Kurdishness is understood to come before religion, sex, profession, ideology, family position, or any role around which they might define themselves" (122).

Overall, *Multiculturalism in Turkey* is a necessary and useful corrective against the "ethnocentric multiculturalist" tendency to see Turkey's Kurds as a monolithic group and PKK-affiliated Kurdish socialist nationalist parties as their authentic representatives, especially since both of these assumptions are prominent in the Western media and even in the scholarship on this subject.

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