

and Ergene examine the plaintiff's chances of success and continue with a detailed elaboration of "who won" in the court of Kastamonu. Based on their preliminary analysis, the authors argue that holding a prominent title and being knowledgeable about the legal procedures of Ottoman courts were the key factors in winning trials (p. 303).

Although the chapters of this work are built upon and support each other well, it must be admitted that some parts of the book are repetitive. Since the work contains many tables and analysis of empirical data, the authors have chosen to frequently summarize the arguments and remarks from preceding chapters in order to keep the reader on track. While it is of course quite reasonable to engage in such repetitions considering the abundance of data tackled in the book, these reminders still carry the potential of distracting the reader. Moreover, the inclusion of a glossary of the legal terms involved would have been beneficial for those unfamiliar with Ottoman legal terminology.

All in all, Coşgel and Ergene's quantitative analysis of the court records of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Kastamonu, as well as their application of legal and economic approaches, fill a significant gap in Ottoman legal history. In addition to providing theoretical insights drawn from the literatures of law and economics and introducing analytical categories and quantitative techniques, the authors have also achieved their goal of demonstrating the verifiable patterns of empirical data hinged on court records. They boldly evaluate the possibilities of the value and wealth of the information that the court records provide, as well as pointing out these records' limitations. More importantly, this collaborative and multidisciplinary work analyzing the court "as a local venue in which social differences and hierarchies were revealed" (p. 319) persuasively opens up new perspectives on the research of Ottoman court records for various localities in the Ottoman Empire.

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A. Kadir Yıldırım. *Muslim Democratic Parties in the Middle East: Economy and Politics of Islamist Moderation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016, x + 279 pages.

Recent developments in the Middle East—such as the military takeover in Egypt, the civil war in Syria, and the rise of ISIS in Iraq and Syria—have

resulted in a (post-)authoritarian turn in spite of the initial expectations of democratization that had accompanied the start of the so-called “Arab Spring.” During the initial phase of that period, scholars, journalists, and political actors had applauded what they perceived as the rise of democracy in the region. As part of this initial wave, the Justice and Development Party’s (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) long tenure in Turkey came to be considered an example of a sound democratic government in a Muslim majority country, and it was expected that Middle Eastern states would follow or replicate the so-called “Turkish model.” However, hopes and realities do not always coincide: Islamist movements in the region, including in Turkey, have not moved toward more democracy, but instead made an authoritarian turn.

A. Kadir Yıldırım’s *Muslim Democratic Parties in the Middle East: Economy and Politics of Islamist Moderation* would have been very timely and spot on had it been published during the initial phase of the Arab Spring, when the hopes of integrating democracy and Islamism were still running high. The book examines the phenomenon of Muslim Democracy, which is accepted by some scholars as a path for integrating democracy into the region. Yıldırım’s schema separates Muslim Democratic Parties (MDPs) from Political Islamists and attempts to explain the reasons behind the rise of MDPs in the Middle East. He argues that, over the last few decades, socioeconomic developments led to the emergence of such parties, just as in the case of Christian Democracy in Europe (p. 2). After explaining the difference between Muslim Democrats and Islamist movements, Yıldırım goes on to argue that the sociological transformations that resulted in the rise of MDPs are related to liberalization attempts (p. 32). As case studies of this, he examines Turkey, Egypt, and Morocco, with Turkey representing the successful case, Egypt a failed example, and Morocco an experience between those of Turkey and Egypt.

As this brief summary should make clear, anyone familiar with the Middle Eastern context is likely to find the book tragically out of date in 2018, or even in 2016 when the book was published. This is particularly the case for Yıldırım’s claim that Turkey represents a successful case of Islamic moderation and democratization. While it may have been understandable in the early 2010s to expect more democratization and moderation in these contexts, after 2013 especially it became clear that the Islamic movements in question would not in fact help to stabilize democracy in the region, thus rendering any distinction between Political Islam and MDPs tenuous at best. Apart from its attempt to explain the institutionalization of political Islamist parties in the Middle East, Yıldırım’s book can give us no satisfying explanations of Middle Eastern politics and society for the period after the early 2010s.

This obvious criticism regarding recent developments in the region notwithstanding, the book does offer a potential contribution to our

understanding of the formation of political parties in the Middle East. Yıldırım differentiates Muslim democrats and political Islamists in regard to their political aims and methods. Firstly, in his view, Muslim democrats pledge themselves to a democratic regime, and their aim once they have taken control of governmental processes is not the Islamization of the state. Instead, the only aim of MDPs in connection with their religious ideology is the representation of the Muslim identity. Secondly, the basic economic doctrine of Muslim democrats is “the liberal market economy with the regulatory role of the state” (p. 5). This doctrine is related to the Muslim democrats’ ties with Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). And lastly, high levels of social spending are an important tool for MDPs in attempting to resolve possible conflicts between SMEs and low-income voters, both of whom are constituencies and targets of MDPs (pp. 4–5). According to Yıldırım, the AKP in Turkey, the Center Party (*Hizb al-Wasat*) in Egypt, and the Justice and Development Party (*Hizb al-Adala wa’l-Tanmia*) in Morocco can all be considered MDPs. Against such “moderate” parties, more radical parties based on Islamic movements also formed, particularly in the periphery. Specifically, Yıldırım suggests the Felicity Party (*Saadet Partisi*) in Turkey, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and the Association of Justice and Charity (*Jamaat al-Adl wa’l-Ihsana*) in Morocco as the Islamist counterparts of MDPs. Throughout the book, the rise of Islamist moderation or Muslim democracy is explained via a comparison of these different groups.

There are two main pillars in the book’s theoretical model. First, the author uses social cleavages to elaborate upon how economic factors change the demands of the Muslim masses. There has been social conflict between the center, which holds political and economic power, and the periphery, which is excluded from political decision-making processes. The book emphasizes how any explanation of party formation in the Middle East requires a clear understanding of the conflict between these two groups. The periphery represents the Muslim identity, and for Yıldırım, Islamist parties have been supported for decades by the masses in the periphery as a means of acquiring power from the center, which can serve as an explanation of why Islamists in the periphery have typically appeared more radical (pp. 21–22).

This conceptualization of the center and the periphery as homogenous entities, however, is problematic, since it might obscure more than it might explain. Yıldırım uses Şerif Mardin’s center-periphery paradigm to explain recent social structures, but Mardin’s own analysis was aimed at understanding the social and political environment of the late Ottoman Empire and the early years of the Republic of Turkey. Social structures have changed since then, and even though the center-periphery paradigm may give us some insight into contemporary Turkish society, it is questionable that accepting the center and

the periphery as homogenous entities can prove capable of explaining recent developments in Turkey as well as other states in the Middle East. Rather than taking it as his starting point, the author should have instead explored and critically discussed the applicability of this paradigm.

The second theoretical pillar of the book is how, according to Yıldırım, liberalization efforts have a tremendous effect on the transformation of the periphery. In this connection, the author offers two types of liberalization: competitive liberalization and crony liberalization (p. 29). In the former, SMEs in the periphery have the potential to achieve their goals and become as powerful as the established economic and political groups in the center, whereas in crony liberalization the center maintains its power. From this point, Yıldırım argues that, in cases of competitive liberalization, the supporters of Islamist movements grow moderate and commit themselves to democratic institutions for reasons of stability, with their preferences in this regard leading to the rise of MDPs. Turkey is given as an example of such competitive liberalization (p.73). On the other hand, in crony liberalization the periphery is “stuck” where it has always been and its economic gains remain stagnant (p. 128). This is represented by Egypt, where according to Yıldırım moderation in Islamist movements cannot be achieved successfully. In the in-between case—namely, semi-competitive liberalization—some moderation can be observed, but not full moderation; Morocco is presented as an example of such semi-competitive liberalization (p. 183).

Yıldırım thus sees a close correlation between liberalization and the rise of democratic values and offers the Turkish case as an example. He measures competitive liberalization through integration into the global economy on an international level and liberal regulations on a national level. Yet, once again, with respect to this claim, the Turkish example does not fit the theoretical explanations provided. While Yıldırım’s model could perhaps explain the rise of the AKP through the early 2010s, since then Turkey has been faced with significant authoritarian tendencies though the global characteristics of its economy have not decreased. Since commitment to democratic institutions is described as the most important difference marking MDPs off from Islamist parties, how can we categorize the AKP within this picture? Even if Yıldırım sees the AKP’s authoritarian tendencies as related to “personalistic authoritarian leadership” (p. 126), as well as to general problems afflicting democratic institutions in Turkey, such an explanation is obviously not sufficient. Moreover, in Turkey the AKP has managed to increase its electoral support even as it has grown more authoritarian. Since the book explains the rise of the AKP as a successful example of MDPs, which are the outcome of certain historical and sociological conditions, then there must have been a shift in the preferences of the masses after the AKP’s authoritarian turn—something which cannot be

observed at the moment. As a result, the interaction between this party and its constituents should have received a fuller analysis in the book.

To conclude, A. Kadir Yıldırım's *Muslim Democratic Parties in the Middle East: Economy and Politics of Islamist Moderation* offers a theoretically informed explanation of the rise of the phenomenon of Muslim Democracy in the Middle East. However, even if it might explain the "rise" and initial phases of this phenomenon, it has almost nothing to say about why or how this trend has been so quickly reversed. As such, more recent developments in the Middle East as a whole and in the selected countries in particular beg the question of whether MDPs have in fact "risen" in these countries at all, as well as the question of whether the distinction the author sets up between Muslim Democracy and Political Islam is a sustainable one in analytical terms. In short, the dramatic changes recently experienced in the selected countries, especially in Turkey, shakes the book's theoretical foundations to their core. Even if one cannot deny the existence and distinctiveness of Muslim Democracy, it might be more apt to delve into the hegemonic tendencies of this movement—as done, for example, in Cihan Tuğal's recent works¹—and approach Muslim Democracy with a more critical lens.

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1 See Cihan Tuğal, *The Fall of the Turkish Model: How the Arab Uprisings Brought down Islamic Liberalism* (London and New York: Verso, 2016) and Cedric de Leon, Manali Desai, and Cihan Tuğal, eds., *Building Blocs: How Parties Organize Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015).