BOOK REVIEWS

Şener Aktürk. *Regimes of Ethnicity and Nationhood in Germany, Russia and Turkey*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, xxii + 304 pages.

Şener Aktürk's *Regimes of Ethnicity and Nationhood in Germany, Russia and Turkey* discusses the changing modes of government pertaining to various ethnic groups living in Germany, Russia, and Turkey. Aktürk demonstrates that state policies regulating the relationship between ethnicity and nationality in these three countries have been simultaneously experiencing salient transformations which are related to certain internal political variables that have emerged since the late 1990s. He develops a causal model explaining the reasons behind the constitutional changes and political reforms in connection to each country's subordinate ethnic groups. Using newspaper sources and interviews that he conducted with political actors, Aktürk reconstructs the historical trajectory of the ethno-political transformations taking place in Germany, Turkey, and Russia.

Aktürk states that, from 1913 to 1999, the German state provided citizenship rights only to ethnic Germans. However, changing this policy in 1999, the German state legalized a new citizenship law by providing thousands of Turks and other ethnic groups with German citizenship-membership rights. Aktürk defines the political regime pertaining to ethnicity that existed between 1913 and 1999 in Germany as a "monoethnic regime" in which the German state sought "to restrict membership in the nation to one ethnic category through discriminatory immigration and naturalization policies" (p. 5). In monoethnic regimes such as Japan and Germany, "ethnic diversity is minimized through the construction of a monoethnic citizenry" (p. 6). With regard to Turkey, he states that, until the late 1980s, the Turkish state considered all Muslims living in Turkey to be Turks, and it was forbidden to say that Kurds existed in Turkey. He identifies the state politics in Turkey concerning various ethnic groups between 1923 and 2004 as an "antiethnic regime" in which "a state accepts people from ethnically diverse backgrounds as citizens (membership), but discourages or even prohibits the legal, institutional, and public expression of ethnic diversity (expression)" (p. 6).

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Nevertheless, Aktürk says that, due to the implementation of a number of transformative reforms by the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP), the antiethnic regime in Turkey has changed in the late 2000s. Among these reforms, Aktürk states that "the beginning of broadcasting in five minority languages from state television is the most significant reform symptomatic of an ethnic regime change in Turkey" (p. 185). Concerning Russia, Aktürk says that, from 1932 to 1997, all Soviet citizens' passports included an indication of the ethnicity of the passport holder. He calls this policy a "multiethnic regime" in which "a state accepts people from ethnically diverse backgrounds as its citizens (membership), and allows, encourages, or even participates in the legal and institutional expression of ethnic diversity (expression)" (p. 6). In 1997, ethnicity was removed from the Russian internal passport. He argues that, after their respective alterations, Turkey and Russia became hybrid regimes between multiethnic and antiethnic regimes, while Germany also became a hybrid regime between monoethnic and antiethnic regimes (p. 11).

The main goal of the book is to explain how and why these states' approaches to diverse ethnic groups within each country—that is, their regimes of ethnicity—have changed over time. Aktürk identifies regimes of ethnicity as "state policies regulating the relationship between ethnicity and nationality" (pp. 4-5), and considers different empirical outcomes occurring in different domains controlled by the states to be sufficient for a regime change. For instance, in the case of Germany, while the transformation of the state's citizenship definition denotes such a change, what represents a regime change in Turkey are certain cultural reforms not incorporated into the country's existing constitution, while in Russia this is indicated by the removal of ethnicity information from passports. Moreover, Aktürk explains the reasons behind these transformations by means of a single causal model. This model asserts that transformations of ethnic regimes depend on "the presence, or absence, of three independent variables: if 'counterelites' representing constituencies with ethnically specific grievances come to power, equipped with a 'new discourse' on ethnicity and nationality, and garner a 'hegemonic majority', they can change state policies on ethnicity" (p. 5).

Aktürk identifies "political hegemony" as "disproportionate political power over the opposition" (p. 23) and "counterelite" as "the political elite that is linked with and representative of constituents with ethnically specific grievances against the continuation of the ethnicity regime" (p. 23). In parallel with these definitions, he states that "I trace political hegemony by examining the margin of victory in elections and parliamentary

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balance between the government and the opposition in Germany and Turkey, and president's power over his opponents in the Soviet and Russian cases" (p. 24). He names the counterelites and the new discourses of these countries as follows: the SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany) and Green government in Germany (1998–2005), supported by the FDP (Free Democratic Party) and the PDS (Party of Democratic Socialism) and equipped with the discourse of "assimilationism" and "Germany is a country of immigration;" the Yeltsin presidency in Russia, equipped with the discourse of "Rossiian (territorial) nationalism" (1992–2000); and the AKP government in Turkey (2002–present), which promotes the discourse of "Islamic multiculturalism" (p. 40).

Aktürk's definition of regimes of ethnicity and his understanding of "political hegemony" and "counterelite" assume that an ethnic regime is controlled and regulated only by state power and can be transformed only by parliamentary means. Therefore, on the one hand, his causal model might explain the transformation of ethnic regimes in certain countries where parliament is the only institution that can impact state policies; on the other hand, however, this same causal model remains inadequate to account for the impacts on ethnic regimes of national liberation struggles, armed conflicts, or ethnic civil wars, all of which happen outside the pale of parliament. For instance, in the case of Germany, while interrelating "counterelites" and the "new discourse"—which are the two main variables of his causal model—Aktürk shows certain significant legal channels and mechanisms used by immigrants, the SPD, and the Greens. He states that labor unions and foreigners, who redefined themselves as immigrants, have played a significant role in the making of a new discourse about ethnicity in Germany (p. 89). This is because "foreign workers were organically connected with the SPD through the German Labor Union (DGB), and hence had channels through which to express their interests and demand inclusion in the SPD" (p. 53), and also because "the Greens were pioneers in including foreigners in its ranks, first at the local and later at the federal level, not only as members but also as officials" (p. 87).

In the case of Turkey, Aktürk mentions that the number of AKP MPs of Kurdish origin is higher than the equivalent number in the pro-Kurdish party (p. 180), but, when discussing the AKP's reforms, he fails to look at the impact the Kurdish movement has had on Turkey's transformation. This is because Aktürk does not consider the Kurdish national movement in Turkey as a counterelite capable of influencing the regime of ethnicity in Turkey. He describes the PKK strictly as a terrorist organization (p. 24, 38, 166) and views the legal pro-Kurdish political

parties as the political wings of this terrorist organization (p. 119, 167). For him, only the members and the founders of the AKP constitute the counterelite of Turkey (p. 40), and as a result, his discussion exclusively emphasizes the AKP's articulation of discourses of Islamic multiculturalism (pp. 177-178). He states that "the impact of the PKK on prospects of reform has been regressive" (p. 38) because "the use of terrorism by the PKK stigmatized any multiculturalist reform as a concession to terrorism, making change even more difficult" (p. 38). This approach fails to fully assess the consequences of the Kurdish ethno-political conflict that has been going on for the past 30 years in Turkey, and it completely ignores the idea of a plural-democratic Turkey, for which the legal Kurdish political parties have been campaigning since the 1990s, as well as ignoring the impact of the peace dialogues and negotiations conducted between Turkey and the PKK, which started secretly in 2008 and are currently ongoing. The account Aktürk presents shows the reforms as being solely the product of the AKP's new approach, informed by its discourse of Islamic multiculturalism. In fact, one can put forward an argument that reforms were introduced by the AKP to lessen the pressure built up by the Kurdish movement's practices and discourses, some of which are entirely new for the political regime in Turkey.[1]

Overall, while the significance of *Regimes of Ethnicity and Nationhood in Germany, Russia and Turkey* lies in its informative manifestation of the three different regimes, in terms of the transformation of these regimes, it develops an explanatory causal model which remains parliament-centric to the extent that Aktürk fails to acknowledge various formative societal and political mechanisms, as well as processes and actors that impact the emergence of a regime change within countries where an armed conflict or a peace process take place.

Güllistan Yarkın
State University of New York at Binghamton

1 To name some of the more important among these practices: the establishment of the first Kurdish television channel, MED TV, in 1995, and the use of Kurdish as the local service language in more than thirty municipalities governed by Kurdish political parties since 1999.

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