

Atatürk: An Intellectual Biography

By M. Şükrü Hanioglu

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This work by M. Şükrü Hanioglu somewhat represents a departure from previous work on the subject in that it seeks to distance Atatürk from the great-man theories that have plagued his legacy. In doing so, Hanioglu evaluates the development of Atatürk's political views in terms of both the international and domestic contexts of the late Ottoman Empire.

Hanioglu essentially views Atatürk as a product of the Tanzimat period, when the rulers of the empire took inspiration from the West and sought to "enter as equals into the post-Napoleonic club of European states" (p. 11). It was into this environment of change that Atatürk was born in Salonika, which very early on had adopted things such as rail travel (the first trams in the Balkans), electricity, gas, banks, telephones and the printing press while the rest of the empire quite often lagged behind. As a result, Hanioglu states that "Atatürk should not be viewed as a solitary genius impervious to his upbringing, early socialization, education and intellectual environment" (p. 6), he further claims that Atatürk's preference for "new institutions" has its origins with this period.

The bleakness of the situation for the empire's Muslim subjects in terms of educational advancement is well presented by Hanioglu. Despite reforms, in many areas modern curricula as well as the use of blackboards and maps were rejected. Indeed, one of the modern schools in Salonika was forced to close its doors on numerous occasions as a result of mob activ-

ity and Atatürk himself briefly attended a Greek school attached to a local church.

However, Atatürk's first real immersion into the products of the reform period was to come when he attended military preparatory school at Manastır (Bitola). These schools, according to Hanioglu, combined a "hybrid of classical Ottoman education and modern French schooling" (p. 22). Later on, Atatürk went to study at Harbiye in İstanbul, the war academy which by then had been re-organized by the Germans, headed by Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz, on similar lines to the Kriegsakademie in Berlin (p. 33). Atatürk was immersed in a world of foreign language, of modern education as well as to the revolutionary ferment which existed amongst the officer class which manifested itself as Turkish nationalism. Hanioglu claims that Atatürk's later policies were very much shaped by the ideas he encountered as a "Young Turk activist" (p. 48).

There is little doubt that the nationalism which formed the basis of the Republic of Turkey has its origins in this period as the officer class quite clearly saw the power of nationalism, particularly in the Balkans. The officer class had established themselves as the saviors of the nation and were becoming more and more open to the idea of Turkish nationalism, which in non-Turanist form was that the empire must withdraw to its Anatolian and Rumelian heartlands. Hanioglu explains this by saying "clearly, a nationalist ideology would have much greater chance of success were the population ethnically ho-

mogenous” (p. 39). Indeed, in 1907, even before the Balkan wars, Atatürk is said to have made suggestion that the “empire voluntarily dissolve itself and exchange populations” (p. 37).

The officers looked West, as the Sultans had also done, and they sought to imitate what they saw. This was a somewhat paradoxical view given that the empire itself had or later on would be fighting against many of those same Western powers. As Hanioglu points out, “on the one hand the west symbolised intellectual and scientific ascendancy, and provided the blueprint for the ideal society of the future; yet on the other hand, it was a predatory monster that fed on Ottoman wealth and territory” (p. 57).

The chance for the fruition of the politics of this officer class came with the independence war and the subsequent Treaty of Lausanne. The reforms of the subsequent fifteen years, from the foundation of the republic until Atatürk’s death, argues Hanioglu, were influenced by an array of eclectic ideologies, and most importantly many of those reforms already had historical precedents, whether from the reforms conducted by the Ottoman court or previous proposals from within the Turkicist movement.

Expressing this point, the author claims that Atatürk “eschewed dogma and ploughed ahead”, and as a result, may be referred to as “perhaps the truest adherent of vulgarmaterialismus, shunning all philosophies in an unrelenting drive to build a society governed by science” (p. 61). In this regard, the Kemalist regime drew inspiration from the earlier Turkicist views of religion. Turkicists had been as early as 1903 arguing “that pre-Islamic Turkic religions were more liberal than Islam” (p.

61). However, Atatürk did not confront religion openly in such a manner. Instead, “he [Atatürk] paid lip service to religion while putting it under strict state control and seeking to refine it in narrowly scientific and nationalist terms” (p. 63); for example, the regime introduced the recitation of the adhan in Turkish and had the Quran translated, while simultaneously Islam was referred to as an “Arab religion” (p. 63). This was despite that during the national liberation war, just a few years previous, the Ankara government “surpassed any other administration since the inception of the Tanzimat in 1839 in the enforcement of Islamic morals” (p. 103).

The author dedicates some space to the work of the Turkish Historical Society (THS) and the Turkish Linguistic Society in terms of their roles as institutional extensions of the Kemalist ideology. Established with the aim of promoting politically correct theories of language and ethnic makeup, in the case of the THS, this was to produce a “Turkish Historical Synthesis” which sought to usurp all previous Anatolian civilizations, claiming that the cumulative product of these civilizations was the modern Turkish nation. This was reinforced by the activity of foreign scholars, who were invited to Ankara for various conferences and courted by the government to confirm the work of the THS, and some of whom, such as Eugene Pittard, expressed their sympathy. Nevertheless, this work and the naming of some institutions after pre-Turkish civilizations—EtiBank, Sümerbank, etc—was “not enough to create an emotional connection” with the pre-Turkic civilizations (p. 195).

Rather amusingly, during the first congress of the historical society, Prof. Şevket Aziz Kansu (who himself published works

on the subject of the Turkish race in the 1930s), brought a blonde child from a nearby village for the foreign delegates to take a look at (p. 170). And in other cases, they busied themselves with activity such as digging up the great architect Sinan's grave to measure his head with the intent of proving his Turkishness (p. 171). However, the work of the linguistic society was slightly more refined. It sought to purge foreign loanwords, mostly of Persian or Arabic origin, from the Turkish language. However this was also not without difficulty, and "by the time of the second language congress of 1934, linguistic chaos reigned, official declarations had become incomprehensible and even the educated public could not follow many newspaper articles" (p. 175).

The book itself relies largely on primary sources, particularly Ottoman, and the marginalia that Atatürk made on own his own books. Ample use is made of the recollections and memoirs of Atatürk's contemporaries, in addition to the use of material in its original language where applicable, mostly French and German. On the downside this book doesn't give

sufficient space to the ideological debates which took place within the Kemalist movement itself in the 1930s, particularly those of the left and right centered around the *Kadro* and *Ülkü* publications. While the author states that the Folk Houses were the regime's "main agent of indoctrination" (p. 190), it is a rather dubious point given that the Folk Houses were highly influenced by those seen to be on the right of the Kemalist movement and their ideas were in no way representative of the movement as a whole. Furthermore, the book's conclusion is rather thin. Hanioglu mentions, among other things, that today all university undergraduate students must take a course on the reforms of Atatürk and refers to the abandonment of the Hittite sun as the emblem of Ankara in the 1990s. However, he doesn't place these statements in any sort of context. The author may be justified in doing so, to avoid being pulled into present day political debates, but this could potentially leave those readers who are unfamiliar with the subject matter slightly confused.

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Hoca: Türk Dış Politikasında Davutoğlu Etkisi (Teacher: The Davutoğlu Effect in Turkish Foreign Policy)

By Gürkan Zengin

İstanbul: İnkılap Kitabevi: 2010, 488 pages, ISBN 9751030573.

In recent years, not only have the changes in Turkish foreign policy been discussed but also the key factors and actors behind the change. This book deals with both the professional and academic life of the foreign minister of Turkey,

Ahmet Davutoğlu, and provides information on him and on developments in Turkish foreign policy. The author, Gürkan Zengin, is a journalist with an interest in foreign relations. His book includes a number of important stories of Davutoğlu