

Editor's Note / V

Commentaries

Turkey's Constitutional Amendments: Between the status quo and Limited Democratic Reforms / 1
Serap Yazıcı

The Turkish-Armenian Debacle / 11
Semih İdiz

Prospects for Normalization between Armenia and Turkey: A View from Yerevan / 21
Sergey Minasyan

Russia and Turkish-Armenian Normalization: Competing Interests in the South Caucasus / 31
Igor Torbakov

Turkish-Armenian Protocols: An Azerbaijani Perspective / 41
Elhan Mehtiyev

Articles

A Key to "Democratic Opening": Rethinking Citizenship, Ethnicity and Turkish Nation-State / 49
Levent Köker

The "Democratic Opening" in Turkey: A Historical/Comparative Perspective / 71
Kıvanç Ulusoy

The CHP and the "Democratic Opening": Reactions to AK Party's Electoral Hegemony / 91
Fuat Keyman

The Militarization of Secular Opposition in Turkey / 109
Menderes Çınar

Turkey's Radical Right and the Kurdish Issue: The MHP's Reaction to the "Democratic Opening" / 125
Ödül Celep

The AKP and the “Alevi Opening”: Understanding the Dynamics of the Rapprochement / 143
Talha Köse

The Alevi Opening: Concept, Strategy and Process / 165
Necdet Subaşı

Kurdish Political Movement and the “Democratic Opening” / 179
Ruşen Çakır

Reimagining Minorities in Turkey: Before and After the AKP / 193
Kerem Karaosmanoğlu

“Democratic Opening”, the Legal Status of Non-Muslim Religious Communities
and the Venice Commission / 213
Ergun Özbudun

Prospects for Democratization in Iran: Policy Implications / 223
Dariush Zahedi

Book Reviews

Harmonizing Foreign Policy: Turkey, the European Union and the Middle East
By Mesut Özcan / 241
Meltem Müftüler-Baç

Winning Turkey: How America, Europe, and Turkey Can Revive a Fading Partnership?
By Ömer Taşpınar and Philip H. Gordon / 242
Kılıç Buğra Kanat

The Armenian Rebellion at Van
By Justin McCarthy, Esat Arslan, Cemalettin Taskiran and Ömer Turan / 244
Abdulhamit Kırmızı

Blood, Beliefs and Ballots: The Management of Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey, 2007-2009
By Robert Olson / 247
Güneş Murat Tezcür

Turkish Politics in a Changing World: Global Dynamics and Domestic Transformations
By E. Fuat Keyman and Ziya Öniş / 249
Jülide Karakoç

Muslim Modernities: Expressions of the Civil Imagination
By Aryn B. Sajoo / 251
Robert W. Hefner

The Politics of Chaos in the Middle East
By Olivier Roy / 253
Zeynep Şahin

Artillery of Heaven: American Missionaries and the Failed Conversion of the Middle East

By Ussama Makdisi / 257

Thomas S. Kidd

U.S. Foreign Policy and Islamist Politics

By Ahmad S. Moussalli / 259

Gema Martín Muñoz

American Ascendance and British Retreat in the Persian Gulf Region

By W. Taylor Fain / 261

Ramazan Hakkı Öztan

Under Crescent & Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages

By Mark R. Cohen / 263

Mahmut Aydın

Geçmişiniz İtinayla Temizlenir (Your History is Carefully Cleaned: Historian as an Autopsy Expert)

By Cemil Koçak / 266

Ali Balcı

Islam in Nederland en België

By W.A.R. Shadid and P. S. van Koningsveld / 268

Michael S. Merry

The Ties that Bind: Accommodating Diversity in Canada and the European Union

By Erik Fossum, Johanne Poirier and Paul Magonette / 271

Şener Aktürk

The Magna Carta Manifesto

By Peter Linebaugh / 274

Jeffrey Edward Green

Editor's Note

İHSAN DAĞI

Turkey's political transformation is continuing with new waves of democratization. The latest move is an initiative proposed by the AK Party's parliamentary group to amend the constitution. With proposals to amend 27 articles, the reform package, currently being considered in the Turkish parliament, is one of the most comprehensive amendments to the current constitution.

Amending some articles of the constitution may be a fresh beginning for a new round of democratic reforms, which is needed to speed up the EU accession process on the one hand, and to consolidate democratization on the other.

In Turkey, political reforms have had a constitutional dimension since 1995. The reason for this is that the current constitution, introduced in 1982 under a military regime, is the basis of undemocratic institutions with mechanisms and principles that have an authoritarian spirit designed to protect the state vis-à-vis the citizens. The bureaucracy and judiciary are appointed as vanguard institutions over elected representatives of the people, and Kemalism is protected as the official ideology of the state. It is a constitution that hijacks sovereignty from the people and entrusts it to the bureaucracy and the judiciary. Therefore, any attempt at further democratizing Turkish politics or expanding the scope of individual liberties has to confront the issue of constitutional reform.

However limited the amendment package may be, it will be good for the democratization of Turkey. The latest constitutional move by the AK Party is expected to reactivate the democratic opening initiative launched by the government in the summer of 2009 that aims to address the identity-based claims of the Kurds, Alevis, non-Muslims and the Roma people.

It is crucial to understand not only the content of the opening but also the reasons for the resistance against it, for the initiative is in a stalemate right now. At the core of the opening lies the Kurdish question. For decades, the Turkish state denied the existence of the Kurds, the Kurdish language and Kurdish identity. Finally, in 2005, Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan - during his historic trip to Diyarbakır - described it as the "Kurdish Question." Now, we are talking about a "Kurdish solution". This is a huge step forward given the slow-changing nature of "state policies" in Turkey and the enormous resistance put up by the radical nationalist elements on both sides.

The government's initiative, while falling short of a detailed and comprehensive plan to address the Kurdish question does start with an acknowledgement that greater democratization and respect for ethnic diversity are key to resolving

this issue. It also proceeds on the assumption that a sort of truce and commitment to lay down arms is essential to start and sustain the “solution process”.

At this historical juncture, the government’s initiative represents an overwhelming consensus on the urgency to solve the Kurdish question, providing all parties with a unique window of opportunity. The unresolved Kurdish question is a burden for Turkey and for its citizens, Kurds and Turks alike. One of the casualties of the unresolved Kurdish question is democracy since the Kurdish insurgency has been constantly used as an excuse to postpone fully establishing liberal democracy.

However, while the democratic initiative raised hopes for a settlement, the outcome so far falls short of expectations. Resistance by the opposition, uncooperative policies of the Kurdish political movement and a hesitant attitude of the government have hindered bolder and expedient measures to solve this issue. The key problem is how to address the cultural and political demands of the Kurds, disarm the PKK and make these demands acceptable to ethnic Turks.

Part of Turkey’s openings concerns a foreign policy dimension as well, that of the Turkish-Armenian normalization process. The protocols signed in October 2009 were a step forward in this direction. It was a foreign policy move that supported and strengthened Turkey’s quest at home to come to terms with its own ethnic and religious diversities. Yet, the normalization process appears to be stuck due to the unresolved Nagorno-Karabakh issue and the genocide recognition diplomacy led by the Armenian Diaspora.

The Turkish government finds it difficult to follow through on the Protocols while the Armenians are not showing any flexibility on the Karabakh issue, and continuing to press for genocide recognition worldwide. The latter has also the potential to block the process of democratization in Turkey by fanning nationalist fears. Under the current circumstances, anyone who wants to close the debate on what happened to Armenians in 1915 should start by describing the event as genocide. If Turks are somehow expected to be part of this debate, a more constructive approach from the Armenian side is needed. This requires avoiding language that closes the debate when in fact a lively discussion has already been going on in Turkey. The democratization of Turkish politics is allowing for the emergence of pluralistic ideas on the past including the Armenian question.

This process will certainly continue. But the critical point is that if the debate is reduced to terminology and qualifying the 1915 events as genocide, it may stall the whole process. Unlocking the hearts and minds of Turks at large necessitates abandoning the attitude of categorical accusation over the 1915 events. We can get out of the imprisonment of past atrocities not by labeling but by disclosing them.

These and other aspects of Turkey’s ‘new democratic initiative’ are analyzed in depth by distinguished commentators and academics in this issue of *Insight Turkey*.