
Formation of the Turkish Nation-State, 1920-1938

By Yeşim Bayar

New York, N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, 200 pages, \$95.00, ISBN: 9781137384522.

Reviewed by Adam McConnel

YEŞİM BAYAR'S *Formation of the Turkish Nation-State, 1920-1938*, an adaptation of the author's doctoral dissertation, is a strong introduction to several topics that dominated official Turkish thought in the 1920s and 1930s. Even though the book's title suggests a comprehensive analysis, Bayar focuses on three primary issues: language, education, and citizenship. All three are discussed in relation to the manner in which the early Turkish Republic's elites employed them in order to mold their new society. The author's essential aim is to situate the Turkish experience in the literature on nationalism and nation-state formation.

Bayar begins the study by arguing that Turkey's national project has been largely ignored in the literature on nation-state formation (p. 6) and then, in the second chapter, presents a broad overview of 19th century Ottoman history that pauses at appropriate points to focus on issues leading to the book's main discussions. Chapter three, concerning language policy, asserts that in the Turkish case language "becomes a question of politics and ideology" (p. 38). The chapter's exposition continues on to provide many examples from parliamentary debates, newspapers, speeches, and memoirs of prominent Turkish political figures from the 1920s and 1930s, as well as from the secondary literature. The author closes the chapter by reiterating the connection between language and politics, and em-



phasizes that in the Turkish case, "... linguistic assimilation became inextricably linked with the rules of belonging to the nation" (p. 72).

The study's two other main chapters follow a similar pattern. Chapter four, which considers education policy, argues that Turkish state

elites utilized education in order to assimilate minorities and to control society in general. The fifth chapter focuses on citizenship and explains that the Turkish elites created a hierarchy of assimilationist and exclusionist categories for the issues of citizenship and immigration. The author concludes the study by arguing that, in the Turkish case, cultural and ethnic elements of Turkish nationalism were manipulated by the Turkish elites for their own political ends, and that those elites' overriding concern was internal threats posing potential challenges to their sovereignty.

This text's most important contribution is the research carried out on primary resources of the 1920s and 1930s. Those include parliamentary proceedings, newspapers, and speeches or comments from Turkish officials of that era, and the author uses that material effectively to fortify the book's arguments. Furthermore, much of that information is presented in English for the first time. An additional positive aspect of Bayar's book is the biographical list at the end of the text; for readers who are new to the subject this list will prove extremely useful.

One necessary criticism concerns the extent of the research reflected in the book's content. Most of the relevant and major texts on the issues Bayar covers are included, but a more extensive bibliography would be expected in a book for which the author has stated the aim of providing "a deeper understanding of a specific case" as well as offering "a basis for rich comparative analysis" (p. 4). Concerning the issue of minorities in the early Turkish Republican era, for instance, Dilek Güven, author of *6-7 Eylül Olayları*, wrote and taught a course, titled "Minority Questions in Contemporary Turkey," at Sabancı University in Spring 2007. For that course, Güven used at least two major texts that Bayar does not refer to. Those are Alexis Alexandri's *The Greek Minority of Istanbul and Greek-Turkish Relations 1918-1974*, and Martin van Bruinessen's *Agha, Shaikh, and State*. Essentially all of the texts utilized for Güven's course are relevant to Bayar's study. It is fair to say that Bayar does include most of them amongst her citations but the omissions are noteworthy.

Bayar also does not reference several well-known books relevant to the topic, even if they would be more important for directing her readers to the wider literature on citizenship, education, human rights, minorities, and the state during the early Turkish Republican era. Günay Göksu Özdoğan's "*Turan*"dan "*Bozkurt*": *Tek Parti Döneminde Türkçülük (1931-1946)*, for example, was not mentioned, nor was Levent Köker's *Modernleşme, Kemalizm ve Demokrasi*. More surprising was the omission of Hasan Bülent Kahraman's writing on the socio-political construction of the Turkish state elites. Although Bayar cites a selection of Şerif Mardin's and Şükrü Hanioglu's texts, Kahraman is the most prominent direct intellectual descendant of both, and his works would create more explanatory depth for Bayar's analysis.

Kahraman's work is especially important for the section in Bayar's second chapter devoted to analyzing who the early Turkish Republic's state elites were. The reference section of Kahraman's *Türk Siyasetinin Yapısal Analizi-I: Kavramlar, Kuramlar, Kurumlar* would also have provided Bayar further resources to examine.

Subsequently, the lack of extensive secondary literature research causes some of Bayar's arguments to lack full development and explanatory power. Several of the author's explanations are thin in terms of historical background and, at some points the reader is left with unanswered questions concerning the contemporary social and political context. The most striking example occurs in Chapter five when the author scrutinizes parliamentary debates concerning the manner in which minority Muslim groups should be perceived by the Turkish state. During the parliamentary proceedings of late 1922, a motion was presented to limit parliamentary membership to those who had been resident in the contemporary Turkish territory for the previous five years. Bayar offers a quote from the discussions surrounding that motion to support her overall argument; the quote is attributed to Erzurum MP Necati Bey, a member of the parliamentary opposition, Second Group (p. 121). This initiative was most likely submitted with political motives, and was intended to preclude Mustafa Kemal from parliamentary candidacy in a potential election. This implies that the author's example may not have the meaning that the author suggests it does, or at least needs to be explained more fully for the reader to understand the context (see: Ahmet Demirel, *Birinci Meclis'te Muhalefet: İkinci Grup*, pp. 516-521).

Several books addressing the same issues as Bayar's study have also been published in the past two years. Examples include Metin Çınar's *Anadoluculuk ve Tek Parti CHP'de*

Sağ Kanat, Elizabeth Özdalga's *Kimlik Denklemleri: Türkiye'nin Sosyo-Kültürel Anlam Haritası Üzerine*, which is a collection of Özdalga's articles translated into Turkish, and the Routledge collection *State-Nationalisms in the Ottoman Empire, Greece, and Turkey: Orthodox and Muslims, 1830-1945* edited by Benjamin Fortna, et al. Those texts and others were published too late to be added to Bayar's study, but they are welcome recent additions to the debates concerning Turkish minorities, Turkish nationalism, and the Turkish state.

Overall, because of the brevity of Bayar's text and the limited references that Bayar supplies for the reader, *Formation of the Turkish Nation-State, 1920-1938* will be useful as an introduction to the issues of language, education, and citizenship in the early Turkish Republic, especially for readers who do not have command of Turkish. For more in-depth information and direction in the wider literature on those topics, however, the reader can only make a start with the discussion and references provided by the author

Ally: **My Journey across the American-Israeli Divide**

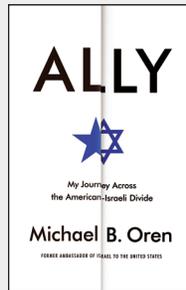
By Michael B. Oren

New York: Random House, 2015, 432 pages, \$11.99, ISBN: 9780812996418.

Reviewed by Murat Ülgül

GIVEN THAT we are approaching the end of his administration, President Obama's American foreign policy has increasingly and critically been written about in a number of books. One of the most recent examples was written by Michael B. Oren, an Israeli historian, now-politician, but most importantly, the Israeli ambassador to the United States during 2009-13. In *Ally: My Journey across the American-Israeli Divide*, Oren chronicles his years as an ambassador in Washington and narrates the problems between the United States and Israel in this period while briefly talking about his academic and personal life as well as his political career at the beginning and end of the book respectively.

Ally can be evaluated in two ways. First, as its name puts it, this is a book about the prob-



lematic American-Israeli relations during the Obama administration. As a first-hand witness, Oren successfully explains the contentious topics between the two countries during these years. On several issues, including the Iranian nuclear program, peace process, settlement construction, Arab Spring, arms sales to Arab states, relations with regional leaders such as Erdoğan, Mubarak, Abbas, etc. we see significant differences between the Obama administration and Israeli right-wing Netanyahu government.

Oren's central argument is that on these contentious issues, the Obama administration damaged the core principles of American-Israeli relations. He summarizes these principles as three "no's": no daylight (no disagreement both on security and diplomacy poli-