Osservatorio TURCHIA CeSPI

Approfondimento n. 19/2022

The old and the new: Nationalism, islam and democracy in Turkey

Umut Özkırımlı
Senior Research Fellow at IBEI -Professor at Universitat Ramon Llull - Senior Research Associate at CIDOB

Introduction: A Model for the Middle East?

It wasn't always like this. Despite initial skepticism regarding the results of November 3, 2002 general elections which saw the decimation of the incumbent coalition and veteran politicians such as Bülent Ecevit, Mesut Yılmaz, Tansu Çiller and Devlet Bahçeli by the newcomer Justice and Development Party (AKP) and its leader, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkey was soon hailed as a model for the rest of the Islamic world, an inspiring example of how Islam can be combined with secular democracy and market capitalism.[1] "Turkey is changing in surprising and encouraging ways, setting a constructive example for the entire Muslim Middle East", *The New York Times* wrote as early as January 2004.[2] This was shared by George W. Bush, the 43th President of the US, during an official visit to Turkey:

"This land has always been important for his geography — here at the meeting place of Europe, Asia and the Middle East (…) Turkey is a strong, secular democracy, a majority Muslim society, and a close ally of free nations. Your country (…) stands as a model to others, and as Europe's bridge to the wider world. Your success is vital to a future of progress and peace in Europe and in the broader Middle East".[3]

But the optimism inherent in considering Erdoğan's Turkey as a model to emulate in a post-Arab Spring context proved to be short-lived, as demonstrated by a series of political crises including corruption scandals, country-wide protest movements, a failed military coup, the escalation of the conflict with Kurdish separatists, the societal polarization exacerbated by uncontrolled immigration, and last but certainly not the least, brutal repression of all forms of dissent — all inextricably linked to Erdoğan's rapid authoritarian turn.

It is of course true that the "model discourse", or the idea that particular national experiences could serve as a blueprint for prescribing reforms in another country or region, is itself problematic from both a historical and sociological point of view. Each country is unique, with its own historical development path and ensuing political, social, cultural and economic realities. The pertinence of the Turkish experience is further complicated by the specific legacy of the Ottoman Empire which is not particularly welcome in much of the Middle East and North Africa. Sociologically speaking, the term "model" is often deployed as a normative ideal and a vehicle for the wholesale validation of the experience of that particular society. Governments find in it a source of political capital, a welcome distraction from political dissent, while public complacency, when appropriately cultivated, could degenerate into a sense of national superiority *vis-à-vis* the societies at the receiving end of this interaction. The "model" is thus transformed into a reified political reality, an instrument of domestic legitimation and international hegemony. In this sense, it would not be inaccurate to say this was indeed what prompted Erdoğan's various rebranding efforts, first coming up with the term the "New Turkey" (more for internal consumption) and, more recently, the formal request to replace Turkey with Türkiye at the United Nations.[4]

On the other hand, the failure of the so-called Turkish model cannot be explained by unrealistic expectations or conceptual squabbles. The rapid deterioration of Turkey from "competitive authoritarianism" into full-blown authoritarianism is also a manifestation of a broader, global trend of what political scientists call "democratic backsliding".[5] As documented by Freedom House, 2021 marks the 15th consecutive year of decline in global freedom. "The countries experiencing deterioration outnumbered those with improvements by the largest margin recorded since the negative

---

[1] Ali Çarkoğlu, "Turkey's November 2002 Elections: A New Beginning?", *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 6, No. 4, December 2002.

[2] "A Turkish Success Story", *The New York Times*, 28 January 2004, available at https://www.nytimes.com/2004/01/28/opinion/a-turkish-success-story.html

[3] George W. Bush, "President's Remarks at Galatasaray University", White House Archives, 29 June 2004, available at https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2004/06/text/20040629-1.html.

[4] "Turkey wants to be called Türkiye in rebranding move", BBC News, 2 June 2022, available at https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-61671913.

[5] Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, "The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism", *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 13, No. 2, April 2002.

trend began in 2006", the report notes.[6] With a global freedom score of 32 out 100, Turkey is categorized as "not free", below countries such as Algeria, Jordan, Kuwait, Pakistan, Morocco, Bangladesh, to name but a few.

A similar observation is made by the Economist Intelligence Unit's (EUI) *Global Democracy Index*. "The average global score in the 2021 Democracy Index fell from 5.37 in 2020 to 5.28", the report writes, "representing a bigger year-on-year decline than the previous year and setting another dismal record for the worst global score since the index was first produced in 2006".[7] The report calls Turkey a "hybrid democracy", which is characterized by the following characteristics: elections have irregularities that prevent them from being free and fair; corruption is widespread; the rule of law and civil society is weak; and media and the judiciary are not independent.[8] The EUI's *Democracy Index* also notes that authoritarian regimes, 59 out of 167 countries covered by the Index, constitute the largest proportion of regime types in 2020, encompassing a whopping 37.1% of the world population. Varieties of Democracy Institute's 2022 report — the largest global dataset on democracy — titled *Autocratization Changing Nature?*, confirms these findings, informing us that "the level of democracy enjoyed by the average global citizen in 2021 is down to 1989 levels". "Electoral autocracy remains the most common regime type", writes the report, "and harbours 44% of the world's population, or 3.4 billion people".[9] Turkey is listed as one of the two autocratizers in the MENA region alongside Yemen as well as one of the six autocratizers in the world, with Brazil, Hungary, India, Poland, and Serbia.

But how did Turkey get here? Irrespective of the merits and limitations of the model discourse, what accounts for the meteoric fall from grace of what was once considered, even if briefly, a success story? To what extent is the well-documented deterioration of democracy in Turkey related to the global rise of authoritarianism? And how do domestic factors, notably nationalism and religion, factor in?

From Empire to the Nation-State

Modern Turkey emerged out of an imperial order that was based on a quasi-corporatist and collectivist system where the main line of demarcation was religious affiliation. The salience of religion was buttressed by the social and political organization of the empire into legally recognized, culturally autonomous religious communities, the *millet* system. Although the Muslims were not formally organized as a *millet*, in practice they acted as such, especially after the office of chief mufti was created in the fifteenth century. This partially decentralized system granted some measure of internal autonomy to Ottoman communities, which were organized on the basis of more or less self-administered localities where family and personal status law was derived from communal traditions and custom. But this relative autonomy did not amount to some form of multiculturalism *avant la lettre*, as some commentators have later argued.[10] On the contrary the system guaranteed social and cultural segregation, regulating interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims and ensuring that intermixing was restricted.

The Ottoman Empire peaked in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, encompassing Anatolia, the Balkans, the Levant and Northern Africa. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, it began to decline militarily and economically. Encroachments by European powers engaged in a drive for imperialist expansion were complemented by the influence of enlightenment ideals that also started

[6] Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2021*, available at https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2021/democracy-under-siege/countries-and-regions.

[7] Economist's Intelligence Unit, *Global Democracy Index 2020*, 2 February 2021, available at https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2021/02/02/global-democracy-has-a-very-bad-year

[8] ibid.

[9] Varieties of Democracy, *Democracy Report 2022: Autocratization Changing Nature?*, available at https://v-dem.net/media/publications/dr_2022.pdf.

[10] Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

to permeate the intellectual elite who increasingly questioned the traditional religious values that upheld the imperial order. The Ottoman Empire joined World War I on the side of the Central Powers and collapsed in the subsequent defeat at the hand of the allies, which also led to the occupation of İstanbul and İzmir. The humiliation and the exigencies of this defeat triggered a profound psychological trauma for the Ottoman elites, and prompted the formation of a strong nationalist movement with a vision of a modern nation-state in the shape of republican Turkey. In 1922, after a successful military campaign against the victorious Western military forces that has later become the cornerstone of the foundational myth of contemporary Turkey, a newly founded parliament officially ended 623 years of Ottoman rule, and the following year "The Republic of Turkey" was created with Ankara as its capital and the charismatic war hero Mustafa Kemal (later bestowed with the surname Atatürk, or the "father of Turks") as president.[11]

Ruptures and Continuities

The founding elite was determined to distance the new state from its predecessor as it deemed a clean break with the Ottoman past necessary for its nation-building project. Post-imperial identity embraced Western modernity across the whole spectrum of daily life, from the mundane (the adoption of a new dress code, the introduction of the international Gregorian calendar, the metric measuring system and the Latin alphabet, the abolition of titles, and the passing of a bill introducing family names) to the official (the replacement of the God-given sharia law by a civil code which abrogated most of the practices undermining the freedom and dignity of women, such as polygamy, the introduction of a new penal code modelled on the Italian penal code, the closure of religious convents), and it was premised on a number of foundational myths: of an embattled nation threatened by both internal and external enemies, of the need to prioritize the nation at the expense of individual and group rights and, ultimately, of democracy. Despite its claim to be all-encompassing, hence "civic", republican nationalism had a strong "ethnic" colour from the outset as it placed particular emphasis on culture, and privileged the dominant Turkish element. The spread of literacy, combined with the translation of the Quran into Turkish, and the disbanding of sects and Sufi orders were seen by republican elites as a means of "restoring" the direct connection between the faithful and the holy text. This was meant to have a dual effect; it would subsume Islam to the state and the nation-building narratives that the latter propagated and, at the same time, gradually push Islam to the private realm.

In practice, however, the situation was much more complex. Their self-avowed commitment to modernism and secularism notwithstanding, the republican leadership was aware of the strength of Islam, hence developed an instrumentalist and accommodationist attitude towards it, at least initially. This paradox of rejecting religion in principle, yet embracing its potential it in practice was to have a lasting legacy on social and political life. On the one hand, Islam, seen as a link with a past from which republican elites were trying to dissociate themselves, had to be symbolically downgraded. On the other hand, its appeal as a mobilizing force, a factor of social cohesion and a cultural resource for the new national narrative, not to mention its function as a boundary excluding what were deemed to be "non-Turkifiable" minorities, was hard to deny. The solution to this conundrum was to place religion under the purview of the state. Although in theory Islam was defined as a strictly private affair, in practice it was transformed into yet another state apparatus dedicated to the colonization of everyday life by the newly formed state and the inculcation of a *statist paternalistic* logic, as will be explored in more detail later. Contrary to the commonplace view that the establishment of the Republic banished Islam to the margins of Turkish social and cultural life, republican nationalism and its definition of Turkishness drew heavily on Sunni Islam, and the systematic process of "Turkification" the new elites embarked on involved measures that discriminated against non-Muslim minorities and subsequently heterodox Muslim minorities such as the Alevis. It can thus be argued

---

[11] Umut Özkırımlı and Spyros A. Sofos, *Tormented by History: Nationalism in Greece and Turkey*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

that Islam, despite — or perhaps because of — its subsumption to the state, became a dominant ethnic and national idiom, a privileged and highly important signifier of Turkishness.

Nationalism and Islam

The transition of Turkey into multiparty politics in the 1950s marked the beginning of a new era which saw the transformation of Islam into a language of protest and discontent, in particular by the rural population of Anatolia who had to bear the brunt of the top-down, authoritarian nature of republican reforms. Sects and religious orders, already partly tolerated by the political elites, re-emerged, influencing the agenda of opposition parties such as the center-right Democrat Party (DP) which, for example, promised the restoration of the Arabic call to prayers in response to popular demands. Despite the continued claims of the political elites that republican nationalism, in particular its secularist pillar, continued to constitute the guiding principle of the Turkish political system, the rehabilitation of religion by the Democrat Party became a prevalent feature of conservative politics which relied on Islam as a force for political mobilization.

State paternalism, which was reflected in the state's attitude towards Islam, was inspired by what we can describe as a mistrust of the very people whose sovereignty the Republic was supposed to represent. The imperative of building and consolidating a strong modern nation-state as well as the memories of the failure of earlier attempts at democratization meant that modernization was going to be selective and driven from above. This entailed a state acting not as an arbitrary institution or as an expression of various class interests, but as an active agent that would shape and reshape it to "elevate" it to the level of contemporary, i.e., Western, civilization. This envisaged a strenuous process of social engineering, to enlighten the people so to speak and "save" them from the clutches of tradition, and the establishment of formally democratic, but in essence authoritarian, political institutions that would safeguard the unity and modernization of Turkey even after the formal end of the one-party system. This explains why the republican vision was premised on a deliberate and strategic conflation of the terms "nation" and the "people", which allowed the elites to mitigate the expression of the people's will by recourse to the other dimension of popular sovereignty, that of the nation. Thus, in instances where democracy was considered to be testing the boundaries of accepted political behaviour, the national interest acquired priority over that of popular will, and was used to justify the frequent interventions in the democratic process.

The reintegration of Islam into definitions of Turkishness during the 1950s and 60s informed the so-called Turkish model until the end of the twentieth century, albeit kept in check by a formally secular state and the military that assumed the role of guardian of the Kemalist heritage. During this time, Turkey was described as what several commentators called a "tutelary democracy". [12] Tutelary democracy in its Turkish variant was, as alluded to earlier, premised on the distinction between the nation and the people, and thus relied on the principle of the sovereignty of a transcendental subject, the nation. Individual and collective rights were always supposed to take second place to the national interest — a pervasive motif that also marks the political discourse of the current Islamist government. The collective anguish encapsulated in the early republican slogan "The Turk has no friend but the Turk" has led to an excessive emphasis on unity and togetherness which manifested itself in persistent attempts to create a homogeneous society, a society without any cleavages. In this visualization of modern Turkey, the nation was equated with an undivided people with a single sense of purpose. This entailed the "othering" of those who were believed to constitute a threat to national unity, i.e. those who insisted on stressing their difference from the national body, be they non-Muslims, Kurds, Alevis or other minorities.

---

[12] Adam Przeworski defines tutelary democracy as "a regime which has competitive, formally democratic institutions, but in which the power apparatus, typically reduced by this time to the armed forces, retains the capacity to intervene to correct undesirable states of affairs". See for example Adam Przeworski, "Democracy as a Contingent Outcome of Conflicts", in Jon Elster and Run Slagstad (eds), *Constitutionalism and Democracy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

This binary divide between nation and people survived the demise of tutelary democracy and became one of the defining features of Erdoğan's rule, as demonstrated by the contemporary juxtaposition of national interest and a narrowly defined majoritarianism. In fact, as the career of the AKP indicates, the earlier, more instrumental, synthesis of Islam and Turkishness has not been radically overhauled, even at the time when it appeared that the Islamist project managed to take over the republican-secularist state apparatus. Appeals to the nation and national pride, a strong emphasis on national independence and anti-imperialism, the embrace of aspects of modernity represented by ambitious infrastructure projects — in fact, the wholesale, unquestioned adoption of the neoliberal agenda — reaffirm the republican principles of the national and modern character of Turkey. Even the tropes of the strong leader/father of the nation have been maintained and reproduced with Erdoğan emulating the paternalistic style of Atatürk. True, Islam has emerged out of the margins, became more assertive and visible, yet still remained mainly a tool of mobilization and legitimation, still controlled and shaped by the state which considers it part and parcel of its particular "national vision".

The "New Turkey"

Turkey's tutelary democratic system has indeed come to an end, but the particularities of political transition, notably the intense antagonism between the Kemalist-secular advocates of tutelary democracy and the alternative constellation of forces that found expression in, or even tactically supported, the AKP, have accentuated the authoritarian and populist characteristics of the latter. In this highly polarized context, the most robust contender for the succession of the *ancien régime* was a political system premised on a procedural conceptualization of democracy that treated competitive elections as the sole source of legitimacy and the expression of the national will. The war of maneuvers between the AKP and the military/state bureaucracy and, more recently, other contenders for power, notably a former ally, the influential Gülen community led by the Pennsylvania-based cleric Fethullah Gülen, was conducted in such a way that the AKP developed into a counter-institution displaying a lot of the characteristics of the opponents whose power it sought to eliminate – not only its national vision. The choices made reinforced centralizing tendencies within the party and facilitated the creation of a personality cult around its leader, Erdoğan. The party progressively established its own control over key institutions of the state apparatus and resisted calls for internal democratization. Somewhat ironically then, despite the downfall of the Kemalist state, its post-Kemalist successor, Erdoğan's "New Turkey", turned out to be a less secular replica of the old regime.

Contrary to conventional wisdom, I would argue that this was by no means a foregone conclusion. There were times, in particular in the first, *pragmatic*, phase of AKP rule, which lasted roughly until 2010, when hopes for the emergence of a truly democratic order were stronger. Emboldened by a series of electoral victories, a self-confident AKP even launched an initiative to resolve the country's longstanding Kurdish problem, the so-called "democratic opening" process, which lasted in fits and starts until the beginning of 2015. It is true that the reforms the state undertook were more cosmetic than concrete; the process itself top-down, opaque and subject to the whims of two strongmen, Erdoğan and Abdullah Öcalan, the incarcerated leader of the Kurdish separatist PKK (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan*, or The Kurdish Workers Party). Still, the ceasefire between Turkish armed forces and the PKK lasted more than two years, and many believed that the process was irreversible, irrespective of the intentions of the actors involved.

These hopes were dashed in 2013, when a peaceful sit-in held by a handful of environmental activists on 28 May 2013 to counter government plans to raze one of İstanbul's last remaining green spots, the Gezi Park in the symbolic Taksim Square, escalated into a country-wide protest movement, only to be brutally suppressed by the state and its security apparatus. The fear that has been the hallmark of the second, *ideological*, phase of AKP rule has been exacerbated by the bitter feud between the government and the Gülen Movement, the deteriorating situation in Syria and the declaration of autonomy in Rojava (Northern Syria) by the PKK's sister organization The Democratic Union Party (PYD) and a series of terrorist attacks in various Turkish cities allegedly perpetrated, yet never claimed, by the Islamic State.

The simmering tensions boiled over when, to the surprise of many observers, a small clique within the Turkish army attempted to topple the government on July 15, 2016, leaving 241 dead and an even stronger "strongman" behind. A state of emergency which gave extra powers to the government and the president was declared, purportedly to root out "the threat against democracy, the rule of law and the people's rights and freedoms".[13] This was followed by the largest purge of republican history, an immense wave of arrests and detentions which extended far beyond those individuals, groups and organizations allegedly linked to the Gülen movement, the "mastermind" behind the putsch according to the official narrative.

These developments could be read as the culmination of an extended process marked by an ambivalent attitude towards democratization, which is itself a reflection of longstanding divisions in Turkish society which has been characterized by a plurality of lifeworlds, antagonistic value systems and an intense political polarization. They could also be seen as a manifestation of wider, parallel tendencies in the world, the rise of authoritarian populism or what political theorist Sheldon Wolin refers to as "managed democracy", a term that can be usefully applied to Russia, India, China and, at the heart of Europe, Poland and Hungary.[14] This entails a gesture towards the established legitimacy of democracy while on the other hand seeking to entrust leadership and power to a strong leader. Elections then become something more akin to periodical coronations, and democracy ceases to be more than but a formal shell within which authoritarians can flourish in the name of national interest and unity.

Statist Communalism

It is commonplace to talk about Erdoğan's "New Turkey" in terms of "the return of religion" or the failure of top-down secularization in a predominantly Muslim society. But this does not capture the fundamental continuity between Kemalist and post-Kemalist Turkey. Erdoğan's unabashedly Islamist regime has more affinities with the modern-secular nation-state Mustafa Kemal and his associates were trying to build in the aftermath of the War of Independence than its proponents are prepared to admit. It is authoritarian, state paternalist, based on a notion of strong leadership and the personality cult that goes with it, xenophobic and – at least at the rhetorical level – anti-Westernist. On the other hand, unlike its Kemalist forebear, the new authoritarian nationalism portrays Turkey as a regional power house, and the potential leader of the (Sunni) Muslim world — championing a particular interpretation of Islam, one that attempts to reconcile it with modernization and the inner workings of a capitalist market society. This was indeed the attractiveness of the so-called Turkish model: an ideal "Islamic democracy" that allows for both a version of Islam and an updated Kemalism, stripped of its rigid understanding of secularism.

Why did this model collapse so easily and, one should add, so spectacularly? The answer to this question partly lies in one of the most enduring aspects of Turkish political culture, and the link between the old and the new, what I would call *statist communalism*. Turkey has always been (and still is) an archipelago of communities held together by fiat and when necessary, by force, be it by powerful leaders such as Mustafa Kemal, İsmet İnönü, and their wannabees like Adnan Menderes of the Democrat Party and Erdoğan, or by the self-appointed guardians of the republic, the army. Yet this contrived unity did not produce a society of shared values and practices, let alone a nation with a sense of a common past and destiny. Communitarianism *alla turca* was a far cry from the communitarianism of political philosophers like Alasdair McIntyre, Michael Sandel, and Charles

---

[13] "Turkey Declares 3-Month State of Emergency*", The New York Times*, 20 July 2016. Available at https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/21/world/europe/turkey-erdogan-gulen.html

[14] The Turkish political system has been variously called "competitive authoritarianism", "majoritarian authoritarianism", "electoral authoritarianism". Here, I prefer to use the much broader term "managed democracy" – "the smiley face of inverted totalitarianism" – which Wolin defines as "a political form in which governments are legitimated by elections that they have learned to control" as it encompasses both Western and non-Western regimes, hence it is more comprehensive and less Eurocentric. Sheldon Wolin, *Democracy Incorporated: Managed Democracy and the Specter of Inverted Totalitarianism*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017.

Taylor. Unlike philosophical communitarianism, which presupposed, in the words of Amitai Etzioni, a "pluralism (of communities) within unity (the society)", an overarching framework of shared understandings and institutions.[15] Statist communalism is predicated upon a strong, paternalist state, one that values communities, above all family, tribe and clan (*aşiret*), over individuals and civil society. This paternalist state is not egalitarian; it does not tend to increase social welfare, or protect individuals or groups against encroachments on their rights and entitlements. On the contrary, it is perceived as and acts like a "father", presiding over a hierarchical structure that promotes a form of communalism akin to the *millet* system of the Ottoman Empire. Various communities are all connected to and dependent upon the state to further their interests. In this model, rights — whether individual or collective — accrue from the state and can be withdrawn at will despite the existence of a written constitution which itself codifies a rigid framework based on the idea of a unitary and homogenous nation.

The transition to full autocracy was so rapid and easy in Turkey, because it has no unified society held together by shared values; because each community is ready to form an alliance with the state to further its own interests, turning a blind eye to the predicament of other communities; because overcoming autocracy requires resistance, and resistance requires unity, but the various communities that happen to share the geographical space we call Turkey, old and new, despise one another as much as, if not more than, they despise autocrats; because for every community, including that of the oppressed, the only route to salvation is to nurture a leader from among its own ranks and to replace the autocrat with its own leader, thereby taking control of the state mechanism.[16]

The Future?

We should of course be wary of the pessimism bred by the crisis rhetoric; it may indeed be that there is more democratic resilience in Turkey than is apparent at just this moment in history. Today's crisis may turn into tomorrow's opportunity. And even if the crisis proves to be of more permanent nature, reflecting on it will shed light on the global tension between, on the one hand, the nation-state as a secular democratic project organized around a community with clearly demarcated boundaries, and, on the other, more universalistic projects which rely on theocratic authoritarianism at home and expansionism abroad (as the Turkish army's recent interventions in Syria, Iraq, Libya and even Azerbaijan show).[17]

It is clear that a country as heterogenous and vibrant as Turkey cannot be held together by an autocrat who relies on a slim majority, no matter how fragmented the opposition is.[18] This leaves us with two options. Either the country will be thrown into chaos and disorder, a scenario which cannot be tolerated by the international community given Turkey's pivotal role in the region and in various strategic alliances — in particular in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Or the opposition will finally decide to bury the hatchet, even if temporarily, and start acting together.

Needless to say, this does not require taking up arms or engaging in violence which would be tantamount to mimicking the regime. In fact, as Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan show in their award-winning book *Why Civil Resistance Works*, based on an analysis of 323 cases of violent and nonviolent resistance campaigns between 1900 and 2006, nonviolent resistance campaigns are almost twice as likely to achieve full or partial success as their violent counterparts.[19] This is particularly true

---

[15] Amitai Etzioni, *The Spirit of Community: The Reinvention of American Society*, London: Fontana Press, 1995.

[16] Jenny White, "Spindle Autocracy in the New Turkey", *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, Vol. XXIV, No. 1, Fall/Winter 2017.

[17] For a detailed discussion of the Kurdish question which forms a backdrop to Turkey's recent interventionism, see Umut Özkırımlı, "Multiculturalism, Recognition and the 'Kurdish Question' in Turkey: The Outline of a Normative Framework", *Democratization*, Vol. 21, No. 6, 2014 and Umut Özkırımlı, "Vigilance and Apprehension: Multiculturalism, Democracy and the 'Kurdish Question' in Turkey", *Middle East Critique,* Vol. 22, no. 1, 2013.

[18] Jenny White, *Muslim Nationalism and the New Turks* (updated edition), Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014.

[19] Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works? The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*, Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2012.

in the case of antiregime resistance campaigns. Nonviolent resistance campaigns are almost twice as likely to achieve full or partial success as their violent counterparts.

The answer to the Leninist question, "what is to be done", then, is not hard to come by. What is harder is to overcome statist communalism, to leave behind the bitter feuds and quarrels that stand in the way of an organized civil resistance.[20] This may require us, as one of the protagonists in Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's unique *The Little Prince* puts it, to endure the presence of a few caterpillars until we become acquainted with the butterflies. Not a particularly heavy price, I would hazard, if this is indeed the only way out.

---

[20] See also Emre Caliskan and Simon A. Waldman, *The New Turkey and its Discontents*, London: Hurst and Co., 2016.