

Book Review

Ali Balci, *Militarist State Discourse in Turkey 1960–1983* (Türkiye’de Militarist Devlet Söylemi 1960–1983). Ankara: Kadim, 2011, 168 pp., \$7.20, ISBN 9789759000240

The years between 1960 and 1983 have an exceptional prominence for scholars who work on modern Turkish politics and history. Especially when considering Turkey’s current efforts for democratic consolidation, the period between 1960 and 1983 sheds light on what was missing during this era in which two military coup d’états took place and the military leadership issued a memorandum that sought to overthrow the constitutional system. Thus, one could plausibly argue that the historical roots of the military tutelage could be tracked back to this period. Ali Balci employs a Foucauldian perspective to research the roots of militarist tutelage in the Turkish state’s militarist discourse during the years between 1960 and 1983. The author analyses the web of power relations in all levels of society to uncover the roots of militarization. He concludes that the militarist rhetoric in Turkey is not only stemming from the Turkish army’s endeavour to put Turkish civilian politics under a yoke, but there is also a process of militarization of public life, civilian politics, universities, and all aspects of daily life as well.

The attractive feature of this book for students of Turkish politics is that the author offers to explain the militarization of Turkish politics since 1960, not through a one-sided explanation referring to the Turkish military’s interference in the civilian political realm. The author’s remarkable contribution to existing literature on civil–military relations in Turkey is that he builds his in-depth analysis of the militarization on Turkey by explaining that the military coup d’états (1960, 1971, and 1980) are not the reason for the militarization of Turkish politics, rather they are consequences of the increasing militarization of Turkey on both the domestic and global scenes. The author emphasizes that during the Cold War, Turkey’s alliance with the US, permitting US military bases on Turkish soil, embroiled the Turkish political scene with a concurrent militarization process with the US (pp. 24–28). Moreover, the author claims that the present militarization was partially accelerated by Turkey’s Western alliance and adoption of its Cold-War agenda. The polarization of international politics between the communist bloc and the West also reflected itself in Turkish public opinion and politics and led to violent clashes between left and right-wing armed groups. Furthermore, the author discusses that especially after the 1960 military coup d’état, financial capital in Turkey was militarized through the Armed Forces Pension Fund (OYAK), which is virtually a tax immune organization that creates a vast fund and makes financial investments for the benefit of the army members (pp. 65–72). Although, the author widely covers the process of how OYAK became a top-tier financial organization in Turkey, he has underemphasized why and how existing financial corporations in Turkey was transformed by closer affiliations with the military elite in Turkey between 1960 and 1983.

In contemporary Turkish politics, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government, under the leadership of the Muslim conservative Prime Minister Recep Erdogan, has waged a wide political campaign in political, public, and legal areas to remove the influence of military tutelage over political life. Moreover, Erdogan has adopted rhetoric that

states that the Muslim conservatives are the most suppressed and disadvantaged group in Turkish politics due precisely to military tutelage. However, the author of this book offers a new perspective for the readership. The author uses archives from newspapers, parliamentary sessions, and legal documents between 1960 and 1983 to reveal that AKP's political predecessors, such as the National Outlook Movement and conservative Muslim figures – for example, renowned Turkish poet and author Necip Fazıl Kısakurek – made public declarations to affirm the necessity of the military coup d'états (pp. 90, 115) for the future of the Turkish state. It is a prominent contribution of the book, as the author argues that a large spectrum of the Turkish intelligentsia, from left wing to right wing, as well as conservative religious groups, affirmed the necessity of the military coup d'état, and in so doing they have contributed to a constant reproduction of militarist discourse via internalizing the military's influence.

The author limits his research period from 1960 to 1983. The year of 1960 is a milestone for Turkish politics since it is the year that the first military coup d'état occurred in Turkey. Moreover, after 1983 the military tutelage in Turkish politics entered into a trend of decline due to parliamentary elections and this trend has continued until the present. Since 1983, the militarization of Turkish politics has experienced various dynamics, such as armed conflict against the Kurdish insurgency, the rise of political Islam, and the end of the Cold War. However, if one would like to grasp the contemporary pattern of the militarist discourse both in the public and political life of Turkey, Ali Balcı's *Militarist State Discourse in Turkey 1960–1983* is an essential starting point to understand the historically seeded roots of militarism in the country.

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