

Turkey in a Globalizing World: A Case of Pivotal State/Alternative Modernity

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In recent years, there has been an upsurge of interest in Turkey and its modern history — a history that has demonstrated that a secular, democratic, constitutional democracy is possible in a social setting where the population is dominantly Muslim. This interest has occurred in the context of what has come to be known as "the post-9/11 world," in which the rapid spread of inhuman and deadly terrorist attacks throughout the world and their link to Islam have become a central concern of international relations. Since 11 September 2001, world affairs have been framed increasingly by a "clash of civilizations" discourse. The codification of Islam as the negation of secular modernity and liberal democracy is fundamental to this discourse and has led to the suggestion that success in the ongoing global fight against terrorism depends to a large extent on the possibility of articulating Islam with modernity and democracy. In political and academic discourse, this suggestion has been formulated in a variety of ways, ranging from the idea of "exporting democracy through war and occupation, leading to necessary regime change in failed states" to calls for "global democratic governance" capable of establishing an effective foundation for the coexistence of different cultures and civilizations in a manner that involves tolerance, respect, and responsibility as the guiding principles of social interactions in international, regional, and intra-national relations.

In the post-9/11 world, Turkey and its historical experience of modernity has constituted a significant case for the possibility of the coexistence of Islam and democracy. As a social formation with a large Muslim population, Turkey has succeeded in establishing itself as a modern nation with a strong secular state structure, transforming its political system into a multi-party parliamentary democracy and creating a free-market economy. Moreover, as a social formation located at the intersection of the East and the West, Turkey's identity has always been marked by its will to "reach the contemporary level of civilization," understood as Westernization and Europeanization. In other words, even though Islam has remained a significant symbolic reference in the formation of cultural identity in Turkey, its modern history has been characterized by Westernization as a site of secular modernity, economic progress, and democracy. Moreover, despite the existence of a number of regime breakdowns and democratic-deficit problems in its multi-party system, Turkey has nevertheless persisted in its commitment to parliamentary democracy and its norms. It is this commitment that accounts for the ability of political Islam not only to find a place for itself in the multi-party parliamentary democracy in Turkey, but also to enlarge that place so as to become the governing party of a strongly secular state, as in the case of the recent majority government of the Justice and Development Party (AKP).

Of course, the Turkish experience of modernity and democracy has not been without serious problems and recursive political, economic, and cultural crises. In fact, the history of modern Turkey can be described as one of "success and failure" — successful in establishing the necessary institutional structures of modernity, such as a nation-state, modern positive law, parliamentary democracy, a market economy, and citizenship, but at the same time a failure in making modernity

multicultural, consolidating democracy, creating a stable and sustainable economy, and enshrining rights and freedoms in the exercise of citizenship. Yet, it is precisely because of its constant and persistent commitment to secular modernity and democracy, as well as to Westernization and Europeanization that Turkey has become one of the crucial actors in the post-9/11 world. The deepening of Turkey-European Union (EU) relations and the European Council's historical decision at its December 2004 summit to begin full accession negotiations with Turkey, cannot be explained without taking into account the increasing importance of Turkey in today's highly insecure world. Similarly, Turkey's ability to experience the coexistence of Islam with modernity and democracy in a generally peaceful manner has also been central to Turkish-American relations in recent years. In its unilateral act to restructure the Middle East region through war and occupation, the Bush Administration has approached Turkey and its experience of modernity as a "model" for the region. The recent interest in Turkey, especially in terms of the possibility of Turkey's full accession to the EU can also be observed in most Islamic countries. In fact, a quick glance at the growing study and debate about Turkey in global academic and public discourse reveals that Turkey is perceived as an important, even pivotal, actor in international relations, regionally and globally. In these discourses, a number of identity-based perceptions have been used to characterize this role:

1. As a modern nation-state formation with democratic governance and a secular constitutional structure, Turkey is a "model country" for the possibility of stability and peace in Iraq in particular, and in the Middle East and Islamic world in general. In fact, with its more than a century long legacy of modernizing reform and constitutional democracy experience, Turkey is the most successful example in the world today of a secular democracy within a Muslim society.
2. Turkey's modern history constitutes both an "alternative to the clash of civilizations thesis" (as in the case of the Inter-Civilization Dialogue Project, led by the United Nations, Spain, and Turkey) and a "significant historical experience" from which the Islamic world, and in particular countries such as Malaysia, Morocco, and Indonesia, can learn in its attempts to democratize itself. Particularly instructive may be the AKP and its ability to establish an electoral victory through its claim to be a "conservative-democratic centre right party."
3. With its ability to sustain, and even deepen, its secular democracy in a peaceful manner, along with its "dual identity as both a Middle Eastern and European country," Turkey's recent governance by the AKP has made Turkey a "pivotal state/regional power" in the process of fighting against global terrorism without making Islam the focal point of opposition.
4. In the deepening of Turkey-EU relations and the beginning of full accession negotiations, there is an increasing perception, especially among economic and foreign policy actors, that Turkey is a "unique case in the process of European integration" with the ability to help Europe to become a multicultural and cosmopolitan model for a deep regional integration, a space for the creation of a post-territorial community on the basis of post-national and democratic citizenship, and also a global actor with a capacity to contribute to the emergence of democratic global governance. The possibility of Europe gaining these qualities depends to some extent on its decision about the accession of Turkey in the European Union as a full member.
5. With its dynamic economy, recursive growth rates, and young population, Turkey has become one of the important, but not pivotal (such as India or Brazil), emergent market economies of today's economic globalization. Moreover, although Turkey does not produce oil or natural gas, it has recently begun to act as an important energy hub for the transmission of natural gas between the Middle East, the Post-Soviet Republics, and Europe.

How to Study Turkey?

All of these identity-based perceptions of Turkey have to do with global dynamics and the domestic transformations that Turkey has been undergoing. Most serious and scholarly contributions to the study of Turkey have tended to focus on domestic pressures and actors as the fundamental driving forces in Turkish politics. There is a great deal to learn from these studies, yet there is a need to rethink Turkey at a time when global and regional influences assume increasing importance, making it progressively more difficult to separate domestic politics from international politics and internal from external actors. At a time when "outside" becomes "inside," there is a need to analyze the Turkish experience both theoretically and historically by paying attention to the interplay of global dynamics and domestic transformations. This way of approaching Turkey also enables us to go beyond binary oppositions drawn between inside and outside, domestic and international, national and global, and modernity and tradition, to provide an understanding of Turkey that explicitly takes into account the interactions of global, regional, national, and local forces and processes.

In this sense, a better understanding of Turkey requires locating it in a globalizing world and examining its changes and contradictions. My research on globalization has been an attempt, on the one hand, to understand and analyze both its impacts on social relations in Turkey, and its articulation by different political, economic, and civil society actors in their own visions, strategies, and identity-formations. On the other hand, it aims to see how Turkey has been perceived in academic and public discourse, specifically in Europe and America. In my research on the impacts of globalization on Turkey, I have employed not only Arjun Appadurai's (2000) multi-dimensional understanding of how globalization works in "flows" and in different "zones," but also his "methodological warning" concerning the way researchers approach and articulate globalization in their research agendas. Researchers, he warns, should neither ignore the existing cultural differences and peculiarities of the country they are researching in describing the importance and validity of global dynamics and systemic/structural factors (the use of the universal without ignoring the particular) nor privilege parochialism, uniqueness, or authenticity in stressing the importance of difference and peculiarity (the use of the particular without ignoring the universal). In other words, a relational, contrapuntal, multi-dimensional, and complex understanding and analysis of globalization and its varying impacts should go hand in hand with the recognition of cultural differences and peculiarities without falling into the traps of Eurocentric universalism or cultural essentialism, both of which constitute parochialism in different forms. I have paid particular attention to Appadurai's (2000) suggestion with respect to (a) modernity, identity, and difference in reference to the process of "Islamic resurgence" and "the Kurdish Question"; (b) civil society and citizenship; (c) the relationship between culture and economy and the development of multiple modernities; and (d) Turkey-EU relations.

Specifically, I have focused on the following questions which have been taken into account, not only by me, but by a number of researchers in Turkey as the most pressing research questions about globalization:

1. If Turkey is, in fact, able to achieve the coexistence and compatibility of Islam with secular modernity, parliamentary democracy, and liberal market values, where does this ability originate, and what are the dangers embedded in this coexistence?
2. To what extent does Turkey's ability to achieve the coexistence of Islam and modernity make Turkey a case of "alternative modernity"? What contribution does the Turkish case make to the development of the concept of "multiple modernities," or "global modernities"?
3. How strong or how vulnerable is Turkey's national economy vis-à-vis economic globalization,

and its main actors? What impacts do the processes of globalization produce on the capacity and autonomy of the developmental state?

4. In the post-9/11 world, in which insecurity and violence have become a central focus of globalization, there is an interest in Turkey. What dangers does this interest involve, especially within the context of the Greater Middle East Project?
5. What is the impact of globalization, and more particularly regionalization as the most visible form of today's globalization on Turkey, on the country as a unitary-sovereign state? Turkey-EU relations within the context of Turkey's European integration process and Turkey-US relations within the context of the question of Iraq, regional stability, and PKK terrorism constitute the main focus of study and debate.
6. Another set of questions pertain to the increasing importance of identity politics since the 1980s, the Kurdish question, the resurgence of Islam, and the role of globalization in all three. Of course, each question involves claims to recognition, a critique of the state-centric and top-down operation of Turkish modernity, and its claim to secular and homogeneous national identity. Moreover, each claim has a complex and multidimensional nature, involving political, economic, and cultural actors and their discourses of identity, modernity, and globalization.

It seems to me that all of these questions are ones confronting many scholars coming from and working in different countries. In terms of understanding and analyzing the impacts of globalization, questions of state sovereignty, identity, and democracy on the one hand, and questions of sustainable economic development on the other, require systematic and ongoing collaboration. Even though, as most of my research indicates, globalization is understood as a mainly economic activity taking place and operating beyond the borders of the country, recently, there has been a move in academic and public discourse to equate globalization with US imperialism. In fact, there is a possibility that today we are witnessing in our globalizing world what is now being called a "return to the state." The return of the state has to do not only with the process of political or geopolitical globalization, as in the case of the neo-conservative US foreign policy and its war and occupation-based global operations in the name of the global war on terrorism, but with the economic and energy-based processes of globalization as seen in the cases of China, India, and Russia.

As a historical reality and social fact, globalization produces complex and multi-dimensional impacts. It is extremely important to analyze critically globalization and its impacts on national social formations. Moreover, this critical analysis of globalization should aim both to understand how it emerges and generates impacts, but also and more importantly to alter them in a way to create a more human, just, and democratic global order. This effort demands a systematic and comparative study of globalization, and herein lies the significance of the case of Turkey.

Works Cited

Appadurai, Arjun. 2000. Grassroots globalization and the research imagination. *Public Culture* 12 (1): 1-19.