

The Politics of Permanent Crisis: Class, Ideology and State in Turkey, edited by Nesecan Balkan and Sungur Savran. Huntington, New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2002. \$79.00. Pp. ix, 257.

Turkey's rising strategic significance in world politics in recent decades has generated interest in its political and social structures. The situation, however, was notably different in the 1960s and 70s, when Turkey was just a compliant U. S. outpost in the cold war without an autonomous presence. Turkey was then largely used to embellish the ideological narrative of modernization theorists, keen on finding illustrative cases to confirm the superiority of capitalism and the West. Turkey provided a great opportunity for this deceptive mythmaking, as "a Moslem country on the path toward Western-type modernization." During the late 1970s and early 80s, inquiries into Turkey other than those of the modernization ideologues failed to generate a substantial literature that could tie contemporary conditions to the country's past. In brief, what exists on Turkey in English today is mostly written from an uncritical social science perspective; and is more about the country's past than its present. Against this background the Balkan–Savran volume brings together original thinkers from Turkey, who move beyond mainstream social science and take a critical attitude toward Turkish politics. Most of the authors are prominent names from the radical social science tradition in Turkey.

The Politics of Permanent Crisis includes chapters on the immediate, urgent issues surrounding the contemporary Turkish state, classes, and their respective ideologies. Turkish realities are embedded in the worldwide capitalist order, rather than being studied in isolation. The authors thus give metropolitan readers an opportunity to understand why and how Turkey has come to occupy a key, albeit fragile, strategic position in the imperialist world system.

As Balkan and Savran put it imaginatively in their editorial introduction: Having been thrown by history to the front stage in Eurasia, one of the most delicate regions of the world at present, and also having been accorded a significant mission by its allies, in particular the U. S., and torn, on the other hand, by such profound tensions in economics, society and the polity, Turkey seems to be a powder keg sitting in the midst of the fateful triangle formed by the Balkans, the Middle East and the Caucasus. (xxiv.)

There is no doubt that human civilization is at a crossroad, and this collection leads one to think of Turkey as *a crossroad at a crossroad*. This is perhaps the book's main message, which is obviously a difficult one to get across. The difficulty arises over the method of inquiry. The chapters, while on the whole adhering to a historical methodology, take as their main reference structural continuities in the Turkish social formation. The methodological background is thus a carefully constructed combination of historical and structural elements. The most important of the latter reveals itself in the form of the capitalist state. The Turkish state evolved as an oppressive organization that, for the most part, had to deal with a condition of "permanent crisis" *via* coercive means. Therefore, the first task is to uncover the political and social factors responsible for the construction and institutionalization of the oppressive capitalist state, and then work out the contingencies and structural conditions involved in the impasse. This orientation necessitates considering social classes and struggles among them, with particular reference to the formation of their ideologies. The book helps capture the present day as a new moment in Turkish capitalist history. Most of the important issues of Turkish politics such as "Political Islam," "the Kurdish Question," "fascist movements," "socialist–communist movements" and "democracy" are all systematically analyzed with reference to classes and their relationship to the Turkish state and the imperialist world system. "The Cyprus question"

and “integration with the EU,” the two enduring international problems of the Turkish state, are examined in a similar fashion.

Chapter 4 addresses one of the major current challenges to the Turkish state: the Kurdish movement and its repercussions on Turkey’s relations with the capitalist powers, especially the European Union. Zulkuf Aydin focuses on the Kurdish political mobilization that began in 1984 after the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) initiated armed struggle in southeastern

BOOK REVIEWS 271

Turkey. Aydin argues that the Kurdish question is not only a socioeconomic problem with a class dimension, but also an ethnic one. “Ignoring the ethnic dimension and concentrating on militaristic policies will not eliminate the Kurdish problem” (97). In fact, the militaristic approach to containing the Kurdish popular movement failed to gain legitimacy beyond the borders of Turkey. Several international human rights organizations have accused Turkish governments of systematic human rights violations in regard to the Kurds. These charges, while complicating relations with the EU, made it clear that “the international community wants Turkey to move beyond nationalistic ideology by democratizing itself and by establishing the principle of citizenship, providing real equality to all” (100). Having said this, however, Aydin seems to believe that the EU and the USA have recently come to view the Kurdish problem as an instance of “terrorism” and “underdevelopment” in line with the official ideology of the Turkish state. As he puts it, “it seems that the USA and the EU base their relations with Turkey on ‘*realpolitik*’ rather than democracy and human rights issues.” This provides strong support for the argument made by Mehmet Turkay (Chapter 9) regarding the capitalistic foundation of the EU, which limits the real democratic capacity of this regional bloc. Turkay sees the EU as a capitalist bloc, facing competition from other regional blocs that have emerged in the post-Cold War era. The EU seems to be interested in Turkey primarily because of its geopolitical/military importance. “The EU is trying to convince Turkey, a country that has the second biggest army in NATO, next only to the US, to agree to the unconditional use of NATO facilities by the new European military force” (225).

Readers of *The Politics of Permanent Crisis* may disagree with some of the arguments presented in the collection. Yet I would like to postpone constructive criticisms for future debates. At this time I can only state that no one who is seriously interested in Turkish politics can overlook this book’s timely and significant contribution to our knowledge of contemporary Turkey and its place in the capitalist world system.

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