

theoretically informed explanation. This is not a problem as such, but one is left wondering why Toal introduces the above-mentioned concepts in the first place.

Third, Toal's analysis fails to engage with the extant stock of constructivist-inspired analyses of Russian foreign policy in the field of international relations. In recent years, scholars such as Andrei Tsygankov, Iver Neumann, Ted Hopf, Anne Clunan, and Tuomas Forsberg have provided an array of insightful studies that examine how Russia's national identity discourses and hunt for status have shaped its foreign policy behavior. In fact, several constructivist-inspired studies explicitly address Russia's interventions in Georgia and Ukraine. Given the overlap between critical geopolitics and constructivism, it would have been interesting to see how the conclusions reached by Toal differ from or relate to the findings of those existing works.

These weaknesses notwithstanding, *Near Abroad: Putin, the West, and the Contest over Ukraine and the Caucasus* is undoubtedly worth reading. Toal's analysis of the interplay between intrastate conflicts and great power politics, the detailed empirical accounts of the wars in Ukraine and Georgia, and the new survey data from eastern Ukraine and Crimea make the book a necessary resource for anyone interested in the international politics of the post-Soviet space. For a theoretically informed explanation of these dynamics and patterns, however, we have to wait for Toal's next book.

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The Political Economy of the Kurds of Turkey: From the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic, by Veli Yadirgi, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2017, \$79.99 (hardcover), ISBN 9781107181236, \$27.99 (paperback), ISBN 9781316632499

Dealing with the predominantly Kurdish areas in Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia of Turkey (ESA), Veli Yadirgi's book does a decent job in understanding the complex interplay of economic and political causes behind the social, economic, and political transformation of the region. Tackling the time-honored tradition of essentially viewing Kurds as primitive and backward, Yadirgi demonstrates the adverse outcomes of the Ottoman and Turkish states' policies of dislocation, dispossession, and annihilation. Analyzing the transformation of ESA over a long time span, the book allows the reader to see the transformation of ESA with a multifaceted perspective, offering insights on the impacts of profound macro-scale changes such as the emergence of nationalism, the birth of modern-nation states, and the integration of the Ottoman and the Turkish states into the capitalist world system.

After a brief overview of the Kurdish question, the book analyzes the two paradigms that are widely embraced by scholars. Inspired by the modernization theory, the first paradigm explains the underdevelopment in ESA with reference to the absence of "commercialization of agriculture," which is usually accepted to be the departure point for the formation of a market-oriented economy (41). Narratives based on this explanation go on to argue that such dynamics were absent from the ESA because of the long-lasting dominance of the Kurdish elite, who possessed "unbreakable authority" and thus were resilient to change. The alternative paradigm, however, claims otherwise. As the Ottoman central state's authority in ESA relied on the

indigenous Kurdish ruling stratum, it was the Ottomans who preserved and proliferated the traditional hierarchical social structure, which led to the underdevelopment of ESA. The endurance of tribal structures was thus an outcome, not a cause, of the Ottoman and later Turkish state policies in ESA. Influenced by dependency theory that gained prominence in the 1960s, the advocates of this approach proclaimed the predominantly Kurdish regions to be colonies of the Turkish state. Whereas the Ottoman and the Turkish state exploited the natural sources of ESA, it provided little in return – if at all.

For Yadirgi, both explanations fall short. The former totally dismisses the close link – and in some cases, cooperation—between the Ottoman state and the Kurdish elite, and the latter explanation reads the history of ESA on the basis of “the state vs. Kurds” dichotomy. Yadirgi alternatively proposes to “systematically account for the historical antecedents of eastern Turkey’s economic development” (46). In line with his approach, in chapter two, Yadirgi examines the gradual erosion of Kurdish autonomy in ESA during the 16th and 17th centuries, analyzing how “the Kurdish administrative bodies evolved from self-governing entities or *hükümet*s to centrally governed classical Ottoman *sancaks* or semiautonomous administrative organizations, *yurtluk* and *ocaklık*” (71). That said, even though there was a certain degree of decline in the so-called “unbroken autonomy” of the Kurdish elite, ESA provinces at times outperformed many others in the empire; its tax-farm revenues constituting one of the biggest sources of income for the Ottomans when the Ottoman economy in general was underperforming.

In chapter three, Yadirgi turns the conventional narratives upside down as he establishes a causal relationship between the abolition of the Kurdish polities and the economic decline of ESA. Insofar as the Kurdish polities lost power as a result of full-fledged centralization policies of the Ottoman state, ESA witnessed a decline in agricultural productivity and commerce from 1830s onward, mostly due to the detrimental effects of the confiscation of lands by the Ottoman state (112). Approximately four decades later, the Ottomans’ attempts to absorb the Kurdish elite into the army and the political structure resulted in the revival of the Kurdish elite who concentrated vast amount of lands at the expense of Armenians (119). What coincided with this process was the proliferation of trade and commerce, especially in the post-1890s period, thanks to the ESA’s interregional and intraregional trade ties. For Yadirgi, this proliferation demonstrates the existence of vibrant commercial ties, contrary to the widely-accepted portrayal of ESA as “isolated.” However necessary and significant Yadirgi’s argument is in order to challenge the isolated image of Ottoman Kurdistan, it nevertheless has two limitations. First, his evidence, mostly consular reports and statistical data, limits his analysis to Erzurum and Diyarbakir for the most part, but extrapolating from his sources to his much broader conclusions about the ESA may be misleading. Second, although he successfully shows that the centralization efforts had devastating consequences on ESA’s agriculture, the proliferation of trade and commerce after 1890 implies that the centralization did not necessarily mean economic deterioration of the ESA in the long run.

In chapters four and five, Yadirgi does a splendid job of showing how the transformation of the Ottoman and Turkish political structure, along with important shifts in economic policies, changed the political and economic dynamics of ESA. Yadirgi argues that Turkish nationalism constituted the major deteriorating factor for ESA’s development during the last decade of the Ottoman Empire and the early periods of the Republican rule. High-handed policies of the Ottoman state, with the Armenian Genocide in 1915 being the starkest example, drastically wounded the economic development of ESA as “the new occupiers failed to put these appropriated properties to efficient use” as a result of “squander and dissipation” (161). However, Yadirgi shows, even though coercive policies existed during the Republican period, the devastating impact of Turkish nationalism on ESA was not merely limited to extra-economic means. The conscious policy of the Turkish state to make minimum economic investment led to regional income disparities as well as unbalanced sectoral distribution, which shows the prioritization of

industrialized Western economic centers over Kurdish provinces (208). In the 1990s, a decade after the transition to neoliberal policies, the Turkish state made attempts to recognize “the Kurdish reality,” even though the politicians now tended to identify it with “a separatist terror” as a result of the armed insurrection led by the PKK. From the 1990s to the present, Yadirgi demonstrates, there were significant variations in Turkish state policy, with sudden swings from violent policies to democratization efforts and vice versa. During this period, Yadirgi shows that the neoliberal economic policies of the Turkish state only deepened the economic problems of the ESA.

All in all, Yadirgi successfully demonstrates the historical background of the ESA’s economic development as well as the transformation of the Kurdish question over time. A discussion on how local Kurdish notables and peasants have influenced Ottoman state policies would have made the research even more compelling. The book is very state-centric in many aspects that it becomes almost impossible to hear local voices, as if local actors were either external to the state policies or mere victims of it. This shortcoming most likely derives from the fact that Yadirgi did not utilize primary sources from the Ottoman archives, even though he employed a wide range of primary and secondary sources, including but not limited to records of the British Archives, publications of the State Planning Organization, and interviews. Utilization of Ottoman archival sources would not only make the exploration of local voices easier, but also complicate the state-centric narratives that are still dominant in Kurdish and Ottoman historiography. With these limitations in mind, however, Yadirgi’s book is an invaluable contribution to the field both in terms of its methodology and the well-researched, empirical data it offers the reader.

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