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Turkey and the West: Fault Lines in a Troubled Alliance

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of naval warship design. But in doing so he demonstrates the futility of this construction. Bent on applying the lessons of Jutland to ensure victory in the next great naval battle, nations built the ultimate dreadnoughts, only to see them relegated to convoy protection and anti-aircraft duty, untested in the fleet actions for which they were designed. While America, Britain, France, and Italy continued to operate battleships after the Second World War, the design and construction costs of battleships proved exorbitant in relation to their utility in the era of the aircraft carrier.

JAMES P. MCGRATH



Turkey and the West: Fault Lines in a Troubled Alliance, by Kemal Kirişci. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2018. 309 pages. \$34.

Turkey's oscillation between the West and East is nothing new, nor is there a lack of literature on the topic. But what Kemal Kirişci accomplishes in his most recent work is an insightful analysis of Turkey's history and its foreign policy by-products through the lens of the current security quandary. Most valuably, the book demonstrates the interaction among the various currents within Turkey and how they are creating an increasingly anti-Western foreign policy. Given the author's goal of elucidating Turkey's history up to the present day and reducing the confusion about what is behind its government's decision-making, his book offers the most authoritative work available.

Not long ago the United States was touting Turkey as a model for countries seeking to join the international liberal order, in particular for those trying to

reconcile Islam and democracy. Early in his tenure Recep Erdoğan gave a speech at Harvard in which he quoted Thomas Jefferson, praised democracy, and extolled the virtues of Turkey's eventual European Union (EU) accession. As recent as 2011, Erdoğan delivered a speech in Cairo that emphasized democracy and secularism as qualities intrinsic to Turkey. Yes, things can change in a hurry in the Middle East, but why and how did the esteem in which Turkey was held around the world recede so quickly?

The author provides an engaging picture of all the factors at play, many of which are rooted in domestic politics. He traces Turkey's history since World War II, focusing particularly on the period since the Gezi Park protests in 2013. Turkey has banned consumption of alcohol in public spaces, altered the content of educational materials in schools to align them more with Islam, curtailed personal freedoms, and detained journalists. Nowadays Erdoğan makes public comments demeaning the founder of the modern Turkish republic, Kemal Atatürk. Erdoğan is deploying an increasingly majoritarian form of democracy that excludes the 48.6 percent of the country that did not vote for his increased power in the April 2017 referendum. The situation in Turkey portends a mutually reinforcing nexus in which growing authoritarianism within the country's borders moves in parallel with a foreign policy increasingly at odds with that of the West.

In analyzing the international factors at play in Turkey's shift, Kirişci gives due attention to the war in Syria and the migration crisis. But in addition to these better-known fault lines, what the author does exceptionally well is to explain how Europe and the United States are not without blame for fostering skepticism

of Western sincerity among the Turkish population. The 2003 invasion of Iraq—in the face of Turkey’s objections and its perceptive and rather dire predictions—inflated an already-strong sense of distrust toward the United States. The EU’s halfhearted attempts at accomplishing Turkish accession predictably have come to a standstill, which removes the pull of Europe and the pressure for democratic reform. Perceived insensitivity on the Kurdish question, and even overt sympathy among some for increased Kurdish autonomy, represents another source of contention. The author also brings context to some overlooked fault lines, such as the EU’s acceptance of Cyprus as a member even though that country refused to support the UN-backed reunification plan, on the support of which the Turkish government had expended significant political capital. Other examples include the 2014 failure of Turkey to be reelected as a nonpermanent member of the UN Security Council and Western governments’ delayed and lukewarm condemnations of the 2016 coup attempt.

This book is immensely helpful in understanding Turkey’s foreign policy and the myriad of factors that influence it. A major theme of the book is why Turkey continually shows signs of shifting its orientation away from Europe and the United States toward China, Iran, and Russia. The author provides a

strong argument that if this shift were to culminate in a complete reorientation—especially at a time when the Middle East is more of a flash point than usual and the aggressiveness of Russia is trending upward exponentially—the consequences to the international liberal order would be grave.

No magic solutions are provided, and the book’s candid assessment is that the relationship will get worse before it gets better. The book’s central argument is that the United States and the EU should maintain robust engagement with Turkey. Kirişci also offers a flexible framework for analysis and several recommendations for narrowing the fault lines. Turkey remains anchored in the political, military, and market economy-based institutional structures of the West—at least for the time being. Moreover, in the long run, who is Erdoğan or his eventual successors going to trust more, the EU and the United States or China and Russia? The history of Turkey reveals indicators of orientations in both directions, but more so a Western bent. The question is whether that history of Western integration can survive the rising Islamism in the country and Erdoğan’s seemingly perpetual authoritarian rule. Reading this book might not enable one to predict correctly Turkey’s final direction, but one’s guess at least would be much better informed.

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