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Along with the Kurdish issue, Islamic activism has become the most hotly debated subject of Turkish politics. In the early 1980s, academic studies examined Islam's reinsertion into the heretofore secularist Turkish political process as a function of increased participatory democracy and rural-to-urban migration.^[1] Work in the 1990s branched out to investigate Turkish Islam as a lived phenomenon in political culture, print media, ritual, and gender dynamics, yielding some of the greatest empirical dividends to date.^[2] With the advent of the Islamist Refah Partisi government in Ankara in 1996, and its subsequent deposition by the military in 1997 (the 28 February 'soft' coup), focus has turned to the bases of Islam's cultural and political appeal in Turkey, as well as to the personalities, factions, and mobilizational methods characterizing what is in fact a quite diverse societal phenomenon.

M. Hakan Yavuz's *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey* fits in this most recent category of work. He seeks to tell "the story of the 'other Turkey'" (vii), focusing in particular on how economic and political changes following the ascent to power of Turgut Ozal's pro-market economy regime in 1983 opened up "new opportunity spaces—social and economic networks and vehicles for activism and the dissemination of meaning, identity, and cultural codes" (vix). These opportunity spaces of print and electronic media, associations, study circles, and political parties have produced "the Turkish example of Islamically-oriented political and social movements committed to playing within a legal framework of democratic and pluralistic parameters," thus providing a "potential model" (4) for other Muslim countries.

Yavuz provides a welcome compendium of basic information about the most dynamic and headline-catching personalities, movements and events associated with politically-relevant Islam in Turkey since the 1970s. He highlights the ability of homes, town neighborhoods, and Sufi mystical orders such as the Naksibendi to preserve the relevance, on the provincial Anatolian level, of the Islamic religio-cultural idiom during the first three decades of modern Turkish statehood, when the regime pursued explicitly secularizing policies. From the Naksibendi milieu, in particular, sprang what Yavuz defines as the key elements of contemporary Islamism in Turkey. The Naksibendi spiritual leader Said Nursi (1876-1960) catalyzed a reinvigorated contemplation of Islam's place in a modernizing, secularizing society. Later, a new generation of Islamic intellectuals in the 1950s-1970s reaffirmed the centrality of Islam as the "fundamental constitutive essence" of an Anatolian Turkishness responding to the authentic feelings of the Turkish masses, who yearned to reconnect with an "Anatolian Turkish-Islamic synthesis" (116).

Such thinkers' successors in the 1980s and 1990s altered the critical focus by questioning the Turkish republican regime's modernization efforts since the 1930s on the latter's own terms. Benefiting from modern education systems and experiences abroad, today's Islamist intellectuals have focused on the military-bureaucratic elite's unyielding attitude toward religion, and question the state's grasp of and commitment to democracy, social justice and secularism as understood in Europe—since the 1850s, Turkish modernization's civilizational destination. In an era of failing economic policies and growing decadence among the civilian political elite, such questioning has conceptually under-girded political

formations explicitly defining themselves as Islamic. These movements' leaders in the Refah Partisi (1991-97) and now the Justice and Development Party draw upon their inner Anatolian backgrounds and market-oriented upper middle class economic status to push Turkey towards a more open polity able to make good on its European Union aspirations. Along the way, newly privatized media, educational, and associational opportunity spaces have become integral to Turkish Islamism.

In this perspective, Turkish Islamism comprises a broad and indeed factionalized arena, whose intellectual leaders, charismatic figures and political players are among the most innovative and continually evolving in the contemporary Islamic world. Because of a slow, often reluctant process of political liberalization, "Turkey has succeeded in incorporating Islamists into the political system, and this in turn has softened and restructured Islamic demands and voices," (237) such that radical, violent expressions are entirely marginalized. Indeed, through his discussion of the movement led by Fethullah Gulen, Yavuz demonstrates that one of the most dynamic expressions of Turkish Islamism is only indirectly political, and supports capitalist development, Turkish culture and even the Turkish state itself, from within an Islamic rubric. Yavuz concludes: "What has been going on in modern Turkey is the reconstruction of the Islamic tradition in terms of modern idioms to create a new Turkey that can become an exemplar of political, economic, and cultural success for Muslims around the world" (238).

For the uninitiated, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey* provides a comprehensiveness and timeliness often lacking in scholarly work. However, those readers familiar with Yavuz and others' previous work in the field will encounter more of the same in less empirical detail and analytical sharpness. He adds little that is new to the discussion of Said Nursi,^[3] while his discussion of the Fethullah Gulen phenomenon would have benefited from dialogue with scholars who take a somewhat more critical line.^[4] Likewise, sections of the book addressing Turkish political dynamics from 1996-1998 do not meaningfully extend Yavuz's previous articles.^[5]

Much more problematic, Yavuz encrusts the useful engine compartment of his book (from p. 109, in the fourth chapter of a nine-chapter work) in a politically motivated narrative at times venturing into polemic. Combining the salient points of both the leftist and Islamist critique of modern Turkey, the author asserts that a military-bureaucratic junta diverted Turkey from the Ottoman path of culturally authentic modernization into a cul-de-sac of rigorous anti-Islam and a crude ethnic nationalism focusing on worship of the state and its leader, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. Turkish nationalism and the reforms of the 1920s-40s "alienated large segments of society," and as "the state's hostility to religion became clear,... Islam thus became a political tool in the hands of marginalized segments, which made up the bulk of Turkish society" (54).

Yavuz continues: Though the democratic era of the 1950s opened up a greater sphere to authentic Turkish Islamic expression, the repressively secularist military felt too threatened, and "derailed Turkey's gradual evolution into a full-fledged liberal democracy" (62). Still, the undeniably Islamic nature of Turks continued to emerge through new generations of intellectuals and the vitality of Naksibendi-related organizations. And after the sagacious alterations to the economic political system effected by the Islam-friendly Naksibendi/free marketeer Turgut Ozal, "increased democratization" (79) has opened up new opportunity spaces for activist Islam. In sum, "since 1980, Turkish Muslims have begun to feel that the worst period of Kemalist oppression has passed and that their state could and should represent their Ottoman-Islamic culture and identity" (79).

While this reviewer does not deny Turks or others the opportunity to hold such opinions, one would hope that opinion would not determine scholarship. Rather, if the product is to be presented as scholarly, rigorous and methodical academic inquiry should displace opinion. Yet in place of arguments based on empirically provable data and critical dialogue with recent scholarship, the author tends to make blanket assertions that elude validation or refutation.

This is particularly the case with respect to "Kemalism," the ideology imputed to Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. Though not a coherent system or code, but rather a body of at times unrelated or contradictory ideas understood through examination of decades worth of pragmatic action, public pronouncements and latter-

day reinterpretation, Yavuz makes several references to "Kemalism," a "Kemalist system," a "Kemalist project," or a "Kemalist vision of an ideal society"—none of which he rigorously defines in all its different capacities according to its different constituencies. Still, Yavuz presents Kemalism only as authoritarian, desirous of "a docile, homogeneous and secular nation state" (46), and setting the military above all as the guarantor of state, regime, and ideological correctness—this, in spite of the fact that other scholars have demonstrated Atatürk's concerns that the military remain outside of politics.^[6] Indeed, pointedly absent from Yavuz's coverage of the Kemalist era and post-1980 military neo-Kemalism is any reference to the central scholarly literature concerning state-directed ideological change in Turkey.^[7]

Likewise, we are told, "after 1930, the state elite considered participatory political activity as a dangerous and potentially regime-threatening phenomenon, whereas society as a whole... sought an apolitical and cultural venue for challenging radical Kemalist secularism" (54). The attempt to characterize the "Kemalist vision," or what "Turkish Muslims" think, or what "society as a whole" wants at any given time would seem to require a methodology more nuanced than mere assertion. At the least it would require some discussion of the perils of making such (sometimes necessary) generalizations, but such contemplation is also lacking.

This 'affirmation through unvalidated assertion' approach emerges most clearly in his description of Turkish Islam. We are told, "Turkish Islam, rooted in Sufism, particularly Naksibendi Sufi orders, and punctuated by frontier conditions of Turkey, is pluralistic and liberal" (274). Not only does Yavuz not engage in the painstaking theological, historical, and anthropological work necessary to prove such claims, but Ottoman-Turkish Islam's historical record since the ninth century is as likely to refute such claims as it is to validate them. Elsewhere the author writes: "Islamic cosmology conveyed a clear vision of the phenomenal world for the true believer, and this enabled him to sustain the imaginary and emotional life of the archetypal Muslim, the Prophet Muhammad" (55). Again, who is the "true believer" and what is that (monolithic) "clear vision" to which Yavuz might refer without elucidation? These statements are simply too broad and abstract to evaluate meaningfully. Finally, by claiming that "the increasing role of Islam in Turkey does not represent a 'return to religion' but another level of self-understanding: the repersonalization of relations with a 'new' articulation of community and identity" (101), the author uses attractive terms not to elucidate a phenomenon as much as to advocate a position.

These rampant circumlocutions are not clarified by the equally unverifiable claim that the main 1970s-80s institutional representative of political Islam sought "the revitalization of the Ottoman-Islamic liberal reformist tradition that had been dominant in Turkish society until the radical Kemalist-positivist revolution of the 1920s" (212). Of course, this discursive approach also passes over the inconvenient but verifiable facts that today's political Islamists in Turkey reject the 1820s-60s Ottoman liberal westernizers as much as they idealize the authoritarian pan-Islamist modernizers of the 1870s-1909 years, and that precursors for the Kemalist reforms can be found in measures and proposals in the 1890s-1910s. Likewise, Yavuz's overarching narrative framework dissuades one from pondering a vitally important question: to the extent that Turkish Islamism is "committed to playing within a legal framework of democratic and pluralistic parameters," might this be at least partially due to a decades-long experience of state-enforced secularization of the political sphere? So, rather than a pluralistic Islam having emerged solely from opposition to the Kemalist state, might it not be in key ways a product of that very state and the Kemalist socialization imbibed by latter-day Islamists?

Yavuz's book is still an important contribution to the growing literature reassessing the Turkish modernizing project in political, cultural, and economic terms. In this respect, it joins works by other Turks that might be read both as academic contributions and as primary sources representing the angst and self-questioning of that sector of the urbanized, highly educated, often expatriate Turkish intelligentsia coming into their own after the 1960s.^[8] In sum, then, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey* exhibits a sometimes polemical, sometimes philosophical vision by a Turkish academician resident in the United States of how Turkey should relate to Islam and what Islam should be, presented in the form of a work of scholarship. While it does present a wealth of useful information and provocative perspectives, those looking for a more intimate, though still more compassionate and critical, examination of Islamic activism in today's Turkey will need to read other books along with Yavuz.^[9]

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9. In particular, see Jenny White, *Islamist Mobilization in Turkey: A Study in Vernacular Politics* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003). Though Yavuz makes reference to events subsequent to this book's publication, he does not cite it.