

Kitap İncelemesi: “The Emergence of Modern Turkey”

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Kitap İncelemesi

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TELHİS (ÖZ)

Bu kitap, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun çöküşünden 20. yüzyıl ortalarına kadar Türkiye'nin modern bir ulus-devlete dönüşümünü yapısı, içeriği, akademik içgörüler ve olası eksiklikler açısından sistematik olarak incelemektedir. İlk bölüm, “Ortaya Çıkış Aşamaları”, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun çöküşü, Batı etkisi, reformlar, milliyetçi hareketler ve Kemalist Devrim dahil olmak üzere kritik gelişmelerin kronolojik bir genel görünümünü sunar. İkinci bölüm, “Değişim Perspektifleri”, dört spesifik konuya daha derinlemesine bakar: Türk kimliği ve milliyetçiliği, hükümet politikası, dini reformlar ve ekonomik ve sosyal gelişim. Lewis, Türk milliyetçiliğinin evrimini, devletin yönetimdeki rolünü, laikliğin din ve kültür üzerindeki etkisini ve devletçi ekonomik politikaların uygulanmasını inceler. İnceleme, Lewis'in titiz araştırmalarını ve akademik yaklaşımını övmekle birlikte, eserin dönüşümün belirli yönlerine sınırlı odaklanması ve bazı bölümlerde Avrupa merkezli bakış açısına sahip olması gibi potansiyel eksikliklerini de kabul eder.



Book Review: “The Emergence of Modern Turkey”

Book Review

ABSTRACT

The book systematically investigates Turkey’s transformation into a modern nation-state from the decline of the Ottoman Empire to the mid-20th century through its structure, content, academic insights, and potential drawbacks. The first chapter, “The Stages of Emergence,” provides a chronological overview of critical developments, including the decline of the Ottoman Empire, Western influence, reforms, nationalist movements, and the Kemalist Revolution. The second chapter, “Aspects of Changes,” delves deeper into four specific topics: Turkish identity and nationalism, government policy, religious reforms, and economic and social development. Lewis explores the evolution of Turkish nationalism, the role of the state in governance, the impact of secularism on religion and culture, and the implementation of statist economic policies. While praising Lewis’s meticulous research and scholarly approach, the review also acknowledges the potential drawbacks of the work, such as the limited focus on certain aspects of the transformation and the Eurocentric perspective in some sections.

KEYWORDS

Bernard Lewis, Modern Turkey, Ottomans, Western Challenges, Reforms.

Bernard Lewis's "The Emergence of Modern Turkey" is a seminal work in Turkish studies. It offers profound insights into Turkey's complex history and transformation into a modern nation-state. Initially published in 1961 by Oxford University Press, London, the second edition of this influential book continues to captivate readers and scholars alike with its meticulous research, astute analysis, and comprehensive examination of Turkey's evolution, stimulating intellectual curiosity and engagement.

At the outset, the book comprehensively explores Turkish civilization from various perspectives. Then, the author has structured the book into two main chapters: "The Stages of Emergence" and "Aspects of Changes." The first chapter chronologically addresses the phases and processes of reform, while the second chapter examines political, social, and economic changes. The concluding part attempts to draw overarching conclusions regarding the nature of the Turkish Revolution and its achievements. A separate acknowledgment section expresses gratitude to all those who contributed to the preparation of this book in various capacities.

The first chapter, "The Stages of Emergence," consists of eight distinct sections. The first section deals with the decline of the Ottoman Empire through various lenses, highlighting the inadequacy of existing studies, particularly Lewis's critique of the insufficient understanding of the empire's decline. Moreover, it examines the historical trajectory of the Ottoman Empire's economic and military challenges between the 16th and 17th centuries, which necessitated changes within its state apparatus.

The second section of the first chapter considers the Western influence, especially preceding the French Revolution, which began to impact the Ottomans, leading to the adoption of European technological and scientific advancements. These 'Western Challenges' included the Industrial Revolution, which highlighted the empire's technological backwardness, and the Enlightenment, which introduced new ideas of liberty, equality, and nationalism. Despite these efforts towards Westernization through reforms, conflicts with Russia and Austria hindered progress. In the third section, the French Revolution introduced new ideas of liberty, equality, and nationalism,

which permeated the Ottoman Empire, although its direct impact was limited. However, liberty took root in Islamic lands and continued to evolve.

Under Mahmud-II's leadership, reforms aimed at centralization, including military, educational, and administrative changes, were implemented in the fourth stage. Despite these efforts, the reforms achieved only limited success, highlighting the challenges faced by the Ottoman Empire in modernization. The fifth section discusses how the Tanzimat period saw further law, finance, and education reforms under leaders like Mustafa Reşit Pasha. Despite some regression during Abdulmejid's reign, reforms persisted under subsequent leaders, albeit with varying degrees of success.

In the sixth section, the seeds of revolution began to sprout in the late 18th century with the emergence of new interpretations of freedom. Increased interactions with the West in the mid-19th century further highlighted the empire's backwardness, prompting critical reflections by writers like Sadik Rifat Pasha. The role of the press emerged as a significant factor in driving progress, with newspapers like the *Zarida-i Hawadis* pioneering Turkish journalism. However, strict government controls imposed in 1865 reflected the challenges of navigating political censorship.

Despite resistance from traditional quarters, the reforms by Mahmud-II and his successors created an elite group among the educated class and administrators. This transformation accelerated with the translation and adaptation of European works into Turkish. Therefore, in the second half of the 19th century, the absolute dominance of the sultan and administrators increased. Liberal and constitutional ideas had long been known in Turkish society. The government criticized these thoughts with a revolutionary program in the 1860s. From a specific group established in 1865, the spread of liberal and constitutional ideas accelerated.

The Committee of Union and Progress Movement, mostly comprised of military personnel, initiated a revolution and implemented some changes in favor of women. This movement was supported by nationalist elements seeking Turkish sovereignty and centralized authority. Later on, the Committee of Union and Progress group was accused of creating a period of fear and oppression and aiming to disintegrate the empire in domestic and foreign

policies. Although the period between 1908 and 1918 seemingly did not present a favourable picture, some significant issues were addressed. However, many unresolved and deteriorated matters continued.

Nevertheless, the Committee of Union and Progress attempted to pave the way for a new Turkey. The Committee members took some beneficial initiatives, such as establishing provincial and municipal organizations, but failed to transform the empire into a constitutional government. Nonetheless, they made significant educational strides and implemented reforms, such as providing women with education opportunities.

The eighth section of this chapter describes the Kemalist Republic. Mustafa Kemal fought to rectify Turkey's situation after the Treaty of Sevres, a treaty that aimed to dismember the Ottoman Empire and distribute its territories among the Allied Powers, and emerged victorious. He laid the foundations of the New Turkey. The Kemalist revolutions, despite opposition, materialized, with one of the most crucial ones occurring in law. Reforms were undertaken, including the abolition of the absolute Sultanate reigning until 1924, the elimination of Sharia courts, and the adoption of new laws. Despite being recognized as a strong leader, Atatürk conducted the country's administration through his military and political experiences and successfully conducted the revolutions. This revolution brought new hope and life to the Turkish nation, firmly propelling them towards independence and freedom.

The last section examines the developments and situations after Atatürk's death. His close associates, like İsmet İnönü, were elected to succeed him. However, society no longer accepted the roots of authoritarian rule, and the regime's oppressive tendencies waned. The single-party era ended, and Turkey progressed towards a democratic governance model through various changes. This process began with Turkey's accession to the United Nations and culminated in the defeat of Atatürk's party in the 1950 elections.

The last chapter, "Aspects of Changes," includes five distinct issues. The first issue mainly concerns the Turkic communities and nation (millet). Turkish nationalism was adopted by the state towards the end of the Ottoman period and strengthened during the Kemalist Republic era. The Turkish movement and cultural nationalism popularized the idea of the Turkish nation, and

Kemalism enabled Turkey to be defined as “Turkey.” Mustafa Kemal, while exposing sympathy to other Turkic communities, fought to protect the interests of the Republic of Turkey.

The following issue is relevant to Turkey’s state and government policy. Alongside the revolutions of the 19th century, Turkey sought to acquire a European state structure. The Republican administration was established by professional soldiers and had an authoritarian structure, but it was never a military dictatorship. The term “Mülkiye” was used in the 19th century to denote the separation of civil services from the military and religious authorities. However, the structure of civilian administrative services changed significantly during the Republican era. Turkish governance held a degree of authority over the people, emphasizing the importance of serving people.

Thirdly, the religious reforms of 1924 targeted the institutional structure of religion rather than dervishes, and opposition to secularism generally came from dervishes. Turkish nationalism formed a foundation based on Turkey’s historical and cultural richness. The Turkish people’s wisdom aimed to strike a balance between Islam and modernism, and the Turkish revolution progressed towards achieving this balance.

Statism in Turkey opened a new era of economic and social development in the 1920s. Statism meant the state leading and regulating economic activities in Turkey. Kemalism brought the revolution to towns and cities, but the problems of the peasants remained unresolved. The Turkish Revolution completed the transition from the Ottoman Empire to a national Turkish state and from feudalism to a modern capitalist economy.

Lewis wanted to conclude his book by saying that the Turkish Revolution, spanning nearly two centuries, began with the adoption of European thoughts and ideas due to successive defeats and pressures. It involved various reforms and movements, establishing a national Turkish state, a constitutional republic, and a modern capitalist economy. While external influences played a significant role, internal dynamics were driven by nationalism and Westernization. The transformation was not simply a response to foreign stimuli but also involved internal struggles and changes in the ruling elite. Unlike other revolutions, Turkish history was shaped by Islamic and Middle

Eastern heritage, with Western influences gradually integrated. The Anatolian shift symbolized a transition from Ottoman rule to Turkish identity. Ultimately, the revolution aimed at Westernization replaced Islamic concepts with European ones. Despite challenges, significant progress has been made toward democracy and freedom, propelled by civic courage and social changes.

Lewis has compiled this comprehensive work, covering a wide range of historical, economic, and social events from the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699 to 1950. The author imbues the work authentically based on Western and Turkish sources. True to Lewis' style, the book is infused with imagination and written in a clear and accessible manner, as is characteristic of his other works. Moreover, the book presents an objective overview of the critical results and reactions to historical events rather than getting bogged down in details. It is evident that the author's extensive research, conducted over many years of education and training, has resulted in a scholarly and thorough examination of the subject matter. Each idea presented is supported by detailed footnotes, allowing readers to explore further and verify the information. However, it is instead a reliable and enduring resource that will satisfy intellectuals and academics seeking insight into Ottoman and Turkish history. It is highly recommended as a trustworthy guide for Western intellectuals and anyone interested in understanding this period of history.

As mentioned earlier, the book is widely praised for its comprehensive analysis and scholarly approach. However, some potential drawbacks could be considered. The book may exhibit a Eurocentric bias, focusing more on Western influences and perspectives rather than wholly embracing the complexities of Turkish history and culture. Moreover, as a non-Turkish author, Lewis's perspective may lack the nuanced understanding that a native Turkish historian could provide. This could result in oversimplification or misinterpreting certain historical events or cultural aspects.

Besides, some scholars have critiqued his interpretation of certain historical events or periods, suggested alternative perspectives, or challenged his conclusions based on newer research or differing interpretations. Firstly, "in large and important areas of the public life of Turkey, the Westernizing revolution is accomplished and irreversible" (p. 486). Feroze criticized the

author's comment. This is the common perspective among Western observers. Through a comment to Lewis, Feroze said that this policy may affect largely Westernized Turkish cities rather than the general population. While the Turkish state is theoretically secular and religion is meant to be independent, in reality, there has been no actual separation between religion and the state. How can this situation be explained? In Elie's view, Mustafa Kemal stands out vividly in the book, depicted with his strengths and weaknesses, but the other characters briefly appear and then fade away, which is a critique of the author's approach.

At the bottom line, the book is a seminal work offering profound insights into Turkey's complex history and transformation into a modern nation-state. The book meticulously examines the stages of Turkey's emergence and delves into various aspects of its transformation, ranging from identity and governance to religion, culture, and the economy. Lewis's comprehensive analysis, backed by meticulous research and scholarly rigour, deeply explains the forces driving Turkey's evolution over nearly two centuries.

While the book is widely praised for its scholarly approach and thorough examination of historical events, there are potential drawbacks. Additionally, some scholars have critiqued specific interpretations or imbalances in the book's coverage. However, despite these limitations, the book remains a cornerstone in Turkish studies and a must-read for anyone interested in the history and evolution of modern Turkey.

YAZAR(LAR)IN BEYANI

- 1. Katkı Oranı Beyanı:** 100%
- 2. Fon, Destek ve Teşekkür Beyanı:** No.
- 3. Çatışma Beyanı:** No.