The Political Economy of the Kurds of Turkey

In recent years, the persecution of the Kurds in the Middle East under ISIS in Iraq and Syria has drawn increasing attention from the international media. In this book, Veli Yadirgi analyses the socioeconomic and political structures and transformations of the Kurdish people from the Ottoman era through to the modern Turkish Republic, arguing that there is a symbiotic relationship between the Kurdish question and the de-development of the predominantly Kurdish domains, making an ideal read for historians of the region and those studying the sociopolitical and economic evolution of the Kurds. First outlining theoretical perspectives on Kurdish identity, socioeconomic development and the Kurdish question, Yadirgi then explores the social, economic and political origins of Ottoman Kurdistan following its annexation by the Ottomans in 1514. Finally, he deals with the collapse of the empire, and the subsequent foundation and evolution of the Kurdish question in the new Turkish Republic.

Veli Yadirgi is a Research Associate and a Teaching Fellow in the Department of Development Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London. He has previously worked as a political correspondent and an editor in a variety of European media companies, and is a member of the London Middle East Institute, the Centre for Ottoman Studies, and Neoliberalism, Globalisation and States (all at SOAS).
The Political Economy of the Kurds of Turkey

From the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic

Veli Yadirgi

School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London
To My Parents
Contents

List of Figures and Tables... ix
List of Maps... xii
Preface... xiii
Acknowledgements... xiv
List of Abbreviations... xv

Introduction

1 The Kurds, the Kurdish Question in Turkey and Economic Development in ESA: An Exploration of the Central Theoretical Debates and Outline of the Methodological Resources 17
1.1 Defining the Kurds 17
1.2 Differing Theories on the Kurdish Question in Turkey 30
1.3 Alternative Perspectives on Economic Development in ESA 39
1.4 Research Design, Methods and Sources 60

2 The Formation of Ottoman Kurdistan: Social, Economic and Political Developments in Ottoman Kurdistan before the Nineteenth Century (1514–1800) 64
2.1 Overview 64
2.2 Political Relations and Structures in Ottoman Kurdistan between the Sixteenth and Eighteenth Centuries 68
2.3 The Demography and Economy of Ottoman Kurdistan between the Sixteenth and Eighteenth Centuries 76

3 The Transformation of Ottoman Kurdistan: Underdevelopment in Ottoman Kurdistan in the Age of Centralisation, Westernisation and Crisis (1800–1914) 93
3.1 Overview 93
3.2 Social Structures 103
3.3 Agriculture 110
3.4 Transportation 123
3.5 Commerce 134
3.6 Population Income Levels 150
viii Contents

4 The Deformation of Ottoman Kurdistan and Bordering Regions: De-development in ESA from the First World War until the 1980 Coup (1914–1980) 151
  4.1 Overview 151
  4.3 From the Mudros Armistice of 1918 to the Lausanne Treaty of 1923 161
  4.4 Society, Economics and Politics in the Republican People’s Party Era (1923–1950) 165
  4.5 ‘Transition to a Turbulent Democracy and ‘Incorporation’ of ESA (1950–1980) 191

5 Turkey’s Kurdish Question in the Era of Neoliberalism: From the 1980 Coup to the AKP’s Kurdish Overture (1980–2010s) 214
  5.1 Overview 214
  5.2 Authoritarian Neoliberal Restructuring of Turkey and the Emergence of the Armed Conflict between the PKK and the Turkish State 218
  5.3 Gradual Democratisation Efforts and the Timid Politics of Recognition 221
  5.4 A New Phase in the Kurdish Questions Post-1999: The End of the First Period of Conflict 225
  5.5 The Second Period of Conflict and the AKP’s Kurdish Overture 228
  5.6 The Economic Balance Sheet of ESA in the Era of Neoliberalism 233

Conclusion 259

Appendix I List of Interviews 279
Appendix II Ottoman Diyarbakır Trade Statistics 281
Bibliography 284
Index 307
Figures and Tables

Figures
5.1 Comparison of regional disparities in OECD countries (Gini Index for GDP per capita), 1995–2005 page 235
5.2 Compound annual average growth rate of GDP (%), 1970–2011 236
5.3 Turkey’s GDP per capita (constant 2005 US$), 1970–2011 237
5.4 Turkey’s current account balance as % of GDP, 1980–2011 237

Tables
1.1 Eyalets, sancaks and kazas in Ottoman Kurdistan, ca. 1890 27
1.2 Kurdish population estimates, 2000 30
2.1 Administrative division of the eyalet of Diyarbekir, 1527–1792 73
2.2 The has’ of the beylerbeyis, late sixteenth or early seventeenth century 75
2.3 Distribution of the population of Turkey, 1520–1535 79
2.4 Avarizhanes in four Ottoman zones, 1640–1786 80
2.5 Total revenue of the Ottoman Empire, 1527–1728 82
2.6 Balance of provincial revenues, 1527–1528 82
2.7 Provincial tax-farm revenues of Anatolia and the coastal and northern portions of Syria, early seventeenth century 85
2.8 Principal revenues for the provinces of Diyarbekir and Erzurum, early seventeenth century 86
2.9 English and French imports from the Levant, 1620–1789 90
2.10 Mukataa revenues, 1706–1707 90
2.11 Principal mukataas, 1698/99–1748 91
2.12 Revenues of the Diyarbekir Voyvodalı˘gı, 1797–1798 92
List of Figures and Tables

3.1 Ottoman population, 1844–1914 103
3.2 Population of selected Ottoman towns, 1830–1912 104
3.3 Population estimates of selected Ottoman towns, 1890 105
3.4 The ethnic and religious composition of Diyarbekir, Erzurum and Harput, 1868 106
3.5 The ethno-religious composition of various provinces of Ottoman Kurdistan, Ottoman census of 1881/82–1893 107
3.6 Occupations and trades of the inhabitants of Diyarbekir, Erzurum and Harput, ca. 1869 108
3.7 Landownership and distribution in the Asiatic provinces of the Ottoman Empire, ca. 1869 115
3.8 Distribution of farm sizes ca. 1900 in the core regions of the Ottoman Empire 117
3.9 Population and agricultural output measured by tax revenues of Anatolia, 1910 121
3.10 Population and agricultural production measured by tax revenues of the different regions of Anatolia, 1910/11 and 1913/14 122
3.11 Goods transported on various Ottoman railways, 1891–1910 126
3.12 Passengers transported on various Ottoman railways, 1891–1910 126
3.13 Shipping tonnage entering main Ottoman ports, 1830–1913 128
3.14 Customs revenues collected by the Diyarbekir Voyvodahçı, 1797–1834 129
3.15 Ottoman foreign trade, 1830–1913 138
3.16 Revenues of the Diyarbekir Voyvodahçı, 1797–1834 140
3.17 Annual amount of the produce of Diyarbekir Province, 1857 143
3.18 Trade between the province of Erzurum and England, 1863–1871 146
3.19 Imports and exports of Erzurum, 1871–1884 147
3.20 Imports and exports of Diyarbekir, 1863–1884 148
3.21 Imports and exports of Diyarbekir, 1891–1913 148
3.22 Imports and exports of Erzurum, 1891–1913 149
4.1 Indicators of development, 1913–1928 174
4.2 Industrial plants established under the First Five-Year Plan 178
4.3 Indicators of development, 1933–1938 180
4.4 Changes in the Human Development Index, 1913–1950 188
4.5 Indicators of regional differences in living standards, 1923–1950 190
### List of Figures and Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure/Table</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>The regional distribution of industrial enterprises, 1927–1955</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>Landless peasant families in ESA, 1950–1968</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>Sectoral distribution of the public investment in ESA, 1963–1983</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>Sectoral breakdown of GDP in ESA and the Marmara region, 1978</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>The GDP share and rankings of the ESA provinces, 1965 and 1979</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>Literacy and educational attainment data for ESA for individuals aged six and older, 1985</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Turkey’s human development index, 2000</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Income inequality league from low to high inequality in OECD countries, late 2000s</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Socioeconomic development index in Turkey, 1996 and 2003</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Average per capita income, 2006</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Green card holders in Turkey, 2008</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>Bank deposits and credits, 2005</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>The regional breakdowns of subsidised investments in Turkey, 1995–2004</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>The regional comparisons of public investments per capita, 2002–2007</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>Sectoral distribution of public investment in ESA, 2002–2007</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Maps

1. Map of the Ottoman Middle East, ca.1914 page xix
2. Map of Turkey xx
3. Mine and metal manufactures and trade in Anatolia, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries 87
4. Trade in Anatolian sheep, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries 88
5. Location and revenues of Ottoman dye houses or boyahanes, late sixteenth century 89
6. The jurisdictional boundaries of the province of Diyarbekir, 1700–1847 131
7. Transportation routes in Ottoman Kurdistan 132
8. Oil infrastructure of Turkey, 2013 239
9. Gas infrastructure of Turkey, 2013 240
10. Categorisation of provinces in Turkey, socioeconomic development index of SPO, 2003 244
Preface

This book examines the linkages between economic development in the predominantly Kurdish provinces in Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia (ESA) and Turkey’s Kurdish question. In so doing, it adopts a historical, structural and political-economic approach, which entails that socioeconomic and political developments, structures and transformations in ESA are analysed in juxtaposition with those of other domains within the context of the larger geographical area and political entity of which these territories have constituted a part: the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic.

This study is comprised of three main parts. The first part discusses the key theoretical foundations of the research: theories on Kurdish identity; theoretical perspectives on the Kurdish question in Turkey; and theoretical approaches to socioeconomic development in ESA. The second part explores the social, economic and political alterations, formations and events in Ottoman Kurdistan after 1514 when the bulk of the Kurdish territories largely located in ESA came under the administration of the Ottoman Empire. The final part deals with issues pertaining to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the subsequent foundation and evolution of the Turkish Republic and Turkey’s Kurdish question.

The central argument of this book is that there is a symbiotic relationship between the Kurdish question in Turkey and the peculiar form of underdevelopment witnessed in ESA, which is accurately captured by the notion of de-development. De-development is an economic process generated by a hegemonic power to ensure that there will be no economic base to support an independent indigenous existence (Roy, 1995). Underlying de-development in ESA as well as Turkey’s Kurdish question is the Turkish elite’s paramount political-national objective of maintaining Turkey’s national unity and territorial integrity.
Acknowledgements

It took nearly six years to complete this book. Indubitably, it was an extensive, incredible journey – by far the greatest task, as well as the most exciting and educative process I have hitherto experienced. I was fortunate enough to begin this voyage surrounded by many altruistic and encouraging people, and to meet many more along the way. I am unable to acknowledge everyone, but must mention those who have played the most central roles.

I would never have been able to write this thesis without the constant support of my family, especially my mother, Maviş, my father, Hüseyin, my brother, Güney and my partner, Devrim, who has been a true helpmeet. I felt their unwavering and inexhaustible support throughout this journey.

I am also especially grateful to my supervisor, Prof. Gilbert Achcar, whose guidance and experience has played a defining role in the completion of this study. Additionally, I would like to thank Prof. Şevket Pamuk for his very helpful and instructive suggestions in the early stages of this journey. I cannot pass without expressing gratitude to my PhD examiners, Prof. Hamit Bozarslan and Prof. Özlem Onaran, for their enlightening, constructive and supportive comments during and after my viva. I should be most ungracious if I were to omit expressing my appreciation of Maria Marsh, Commissioning Editor, for her instrumental guidance, time and labour.

I also wish to thank individually (in alphabetical order) Chloe Barget, Çiğdem Esin, Cengiz Gunes, Roman (Pach) Pawar, Haldun Sonkaynar, and Kahraman Yadirgi, as they all contributed, in different ways, to the development and completion of this project. I finally would like to acknowledge all the selfless, edifying and exemplary people (unfortunately too many to mention here one by one) whom I met during my fieldwork. Thank you for your time, labour, knowledge, hospitality and assistance.
Abbreviations

A&P: Great Britain: Parliamentary Papers, Account Papers
AKP: Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi)
AMMU: General Directorate for Tribes and Immigrants (Aşair ve Muhacirin Müdürlüğü-i Umümiyesi)
ANAP: The Motherland Party (Anavatan Partisi)
AP: Justice Party (Adalet Partisi)
BDP: Peace and Democracy Party (Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi)
ÇATOM: Multi-purpose Community Centres (Çok Amaçlı Toplum Merkezi)
CHP: Republican People’s Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi)
CKMP: Republican Peasants’ Nation Party (Cumhuriyetçi Köylü Millet Partisi)
CUP: Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress
DDKO: Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearths (Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları)
DEHAP: Democratic People’s Party (Demokratik Halk Partisi)
DEP: Democracy Party (Demokrasi Partisi)
Dev-Genç: Federation of the Revolutionary Youth of Turkey
DISK: Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions of Turkey (Türkiye Devrimçi İşçi Sendikalar Konfederasyonu)
DP: Democrat Party (Demokrat Parti)
DSI: Directorate of State Hydraulic Works (Devlet Su İşleri)
DTP: Democratic Society Party (Demokratik Toplum Partisi)
EC: European Council
ERP: Economic Recovery Plan
List of Abbreviations

ESA: Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia
EU: European Union
FO: Great Britain, Foreign Office
FYP: Five-Year Plan
GAP: Project of Southeastern Anatolia (Güneydoğu Anadolu Project)
GAP-GIDEM: GAP-Entrepreneur Support and Guidance Centres (GAP-Girişimci Destekleme Merkezi)
GAP-RDA: Project of Southeastern Anatolia-Regional Development Administration
GDP: Gross Domestic Product
GNAT: Grand National Assembly of Turkey
GNI: Gross National Income
GNP: Gross National Product
HCPP: Great Britain, House of Commons Parliamentary Papers
HDI: Human Development Index
HDP: People’s Democratic Party (Halkların Demokrasi Partisi)
HEP: People’s Labour Party (Halkın Emek Partisi)
IAMM: Directorate for the Settlement of Tribes and Immigrants (İskân-ı Aşâr Muhacirîn Müdürlüğü)
IDPs: Internally Displaced Peoples
IEA: International Energy Agency
İHD: Human Rights Association (İnsan Hakları Derneği)
İLO: International Labour Organisation
IFM: International Monetary Fund
ISI: Import Substitution Industrialisation
ISIL: Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
Kawa: Kurdish mythical figure and name of a Kurdish political party
KDP: Kurdistan Democratic Party (Partiya Demokrat a Kurdistanê)
KHRP: Kurdish Human Rights Project
KRG: Kurdistan Regional Government (İraq)
MBK: National Unity Committee (Milli Birlik Komitesi)
MGK: National Security Council (Milli Güvenlik Kurulu)
MHP: Nationalist Action Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi)
NAPP: National Programme for Adopting the Acquis Communautaire
NF: National Front Coalition Governments
NGOs: Non-governmental Organisations
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OHAL</td>
<td>State of Emergency (Olağanüstü Hal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDRs</td>
<td>Priority Development Regions (Kakımada Öncelikli Yöreler)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PKK</td>
<td>Kurdistan Workers’ Party (Partiya Karkarên Kurdistan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSK</td>
<td>Kurdistan Socialist Party (Partiya Sosyalista Kurdistan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PYD</td>
<td>Democratic Union Party (Partiya Yekitiya Demokrat)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEEs</td>
<td>State Economic Enterprises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHP</td>
<td>Social Democratic Populist Party (Sosyaldemokrat Halkçı Partisi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPO</td>
<td>State Planning Organisation (Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBB</td>
<td>Association of Banks of Turkey (Türkiye Bankalar Birliği)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TCBIUM</td>
<td>The Maiden Turkish Statistical Institute (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Başvekalet İstatistik Umum Müdürlüğü)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TESEV</td>
<td>Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIP</td>
<td>Workers’ Party of Turkey (Türkiye İsci Partisi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TKAE</td>
<td>Research Institute on Turkish Culture (Türk Kültürü Araştırmalar Enstitüsü)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TKP</td>
<td>Turkish Communist Party (Türkiye Komünist Partisi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TMMOB</td>
<td>Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects (Türkiye Mühendis ve Mimar Odalar Birliği)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOBB</td>
<td>Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchange of Turkey (Türkiye Odalar ve Borsalar Birliği)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TPAO</td>
<td>Turkish Petroleum Corporation (Türkiye Petrolleri Anonim Ortaklığı)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TR</td>
<td>Turkish Lira</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRL</td>
<td>Old Turkish Lira</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRT</td>
<td>Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (Türkiye Radyo Televizyon Kurulu)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRY</td>
<td>New Turkish Lira</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TMO</td>
<td>Office for Soil Products (Toprak Mahsulleri Ofisi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TÜIK</td>
<td>Turkish Statistical Institute (Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
xviii List of Abbreviations

TÜSIAD: Turkish Industrialist and Businessmen’s Association
(Türk Sanayicileri ve İşadamları Derneği)
UNDP: United Nations Development Programme
US: United States
USARM: Union of Southeastern Anatolia Region Municipalities
(Güneydoğu Anadolu Bölgesi Belediyeleri Birliği)
VAT: Value-Added Tax
WB: World Bank
YTP: New Turkey Party (Yeni Türkiye Partisi)