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The democratization of Turkey has been the country's main news story for many years, and the fate of the Kurds is one of the key themes in that story. The Kurds constitute one of the biggest stateless nations in the Middle East, and those Kurds who live in Turkey have long been forced to assimilate into the Turkish majority.

Since the Republic of Turkey was founded in 1923, the Kurds – who today make up almost 18 per cent of the country's population (about 14 million, out of 77.8 million people)¹ – have been expected to live under the authority of a state which uses only the Turkish language in its dealings with its citizens. A number of Kurdish rebellions during the 1920s and 1930s were repressed by the armed forces; the use of the Kurdish language in public offices and education was banned; and, since then, no movement based on ethnicity has been tolerated. All ethnic differences in the country have been ignored by the 'state that constitutionally consists only of "citizens of Turkey"'.² According to Article 66, paragraph 1 of the 1924 Constitution, 'Everyone bound to the Turkish state through the bond of citizenship is a Turk'.³ The term 'Turk' was comprehensively explained in that document which stated that 'The nation of Turkey with respect of citizenship is called Turk, irrespective of religion or ethnicity'.⁴ In Turkey, nationality has been reduced to citizenship and, according to the Turkish Citizenship Law No. 5901, citizenship can be determined by either *jus soli* (right of land) or *jus sanguinis* (right of the blood). The right of land declares that children born in Turkey's territories do not acquire the nationality of either parent at birth but acquire Turkish nationality from birth; meanwhile the right of blood confers citizenship on children whose parents must be a Turkish citizen at the time of birth.⁵

The 1923 Lausanne Treaty, a peace treaty officially concluding World War I in the Middle East, signed between Turkey, heir to the defunct Ottoman Empire, and the Allied Powers (Britain, France, Italy and Japan), is still accepted as the one and only legal document that treats the issue of minorities in Turkey.⁶ The concept of minority was not very well

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known to the Ottomans until the nineteenth century. Although *ekalliyet*, the Ottoman word for minority, was translated from the Western languages and used during the last fifty years of the Empire, it was not a popular word, and non-Muslims were mostly referred to as *Gayrimuslim* in the Ottoman documents.⁷ The minority regime as we know it in Turkey today was introduced for the first time with the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. Although the concept of minority (*azınlık* in modern Turkish) was new at the time, the fact that it has only been applied to the non-Muslims in modern Turkey has its roots in the old Ottoman *millet* system. The Ottomans used the *millet* system to give minority religious communities within their empire limited power and autonomy to act as legal entities with specific communal – ‘segmental’ – rights and privileges. As such, the Kurds and other Muslim subjects were not considered as entitled to the privileges that other religious minorities had in regulating their own affairs. The same tradition has continued in modern Turkey following the collapse of the empire, and the Lausanne Treaty instituted the minority status in modern Turkey by simply excluding Muslim groups like the Kurds, Caucasians, Laz, and Romani people, who spoke languages other than Turkish.⁸ The adoption of the Lausanne Treaty created a situation where the Turkish constitutional scheme dealt with the question of minorities without fully addressing it.⁹

For some years, international law with a focus on the egalitarian¹⁰ interpretation of individual rights and assimilationism¹¹ also excluded minority/group rights from its framework which the Turkish State often referred to as a source of legitimacy in justifying the way it treated its Kurdish national minority.¹² The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious, and Linguistic Minorities (1992), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1969), and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1955) did not attribute any normative value to cultural identities but instead valued the equal rights of free individuals to live out their cultural identities without being exposed to discrimination. As Claude argued in 1955, ‘The doctrine of human rights has been put forward as a substitute for the concept of minority rights, with the strong implication that minorities whose members enjoy individual equality of treatment cannot legitimately demand facilities for the maintenance of their ethnic particularism’.¹³ A long series of conventions and declarations identified the individual as the only legitimate agent of liberal rights, and, in this framework, minority rights were simply subordinated to human rights that granted minority members the freedom of association.¹⁴

At the international level, the tide has since turned somewhat against this approach, however, because the drivers for individual human rights and the equal citizenship regime mentioned above have proved over time to be insufficient to settle ethnic conflicts and rectify the injustices of assimilation or exclusion.

In Turkey, for example, in the 1980s and 1990s, the separatist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) was involved in an armed conflict with Turkish government forces that led to the deaths of more than 35,000 people on both sides.¹⁵ The 10 per cent electoral threshold in Turkey made it very difficult for the Kurdish minority nationalists to be represented in the Turkish parliament. Most Kurdish political parties have also been closed down with charges of working with and being a political branch of the PKK, which is listed as a terrorist organization by the Turkish State, the European Union and the USA. The Kurdish question has long been seen by the Turkish state as primarily a security problem rather than a matter of equality and civil liberties, and therefore those injustices that emerged as a result of neglecting cultural differences in public were not addressed until very recently.

In reaction to similarly negative developments regarding the minorities across the globe, multiculturalism has started to earn credibility in international law as early as the 1990s. Advocates of this approach argue that members of a national ethnic minority should have differentiated group rights that would emanate from membership of their cultural communities. In a general sense, these rights are understood as being needed to rectify the unjust practices that led to the neglect, exclusion, discrimination, or forced assimilation of minorities in the past.¹⁶ This approach, which proactively attempts to promote ethnic minority cultures, has long been accepted as a valuable strategy for redressing some of the imbalances generated by individual human rights and its universalized emphasis on toleration and neutrality. Multiculturalists respond to the 'neutral' approach to diversity by suggesting that it is simply utopian. They argue that the practical necessity for a state to use at least one official language means that no political community can remain culturally neutral. Multiculturalists further suggest that when the representation of culture at the state level is inevitable, it is important to represent not just the cultural identities of dominant groups but also those of minorities if a fairer society is to be achieved. Multiculturalists argue that a liberal state needs to legalize and make official the public use of the languages used by its national minorities alongside the language used by its majority group. According to the precepts of multiculturalism, groups should have differentiated rights and ought to become arbiters on issues related to their own communities. This view suggests that those national minorities which historically inhabited a given territory and were

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accustomed to use their own language before their subordination to the state should now be entitled to self-government rights, just like the majority which has had the right to decide which language is to be officially used in relation to the state.¹⁷ These self-government rights – which might include regional autonomy, multi-national federalism, or the right to use their own languages in public life – can be used to increase the cultural freedom of minorities and to redress situations where their will was previously ignored and oppressed in the nation-building process carried out by the dominant community which forms the ethnic core of the state.¹⁸

In accordance with the 1990 Copenhagen criteria and the 1992 European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the protection of linguistic minorities in candidate and member countries became more important, and members of the European Union (EU) were advised to allow the use of minority languages in public education and services. According to Article Fourteen of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, states should ‘endeavour to ensure adequate opportunities for being taught in the minority language or for receiving instruction in this language’.¹⁹ Moreover, the EU found it necessary to extend these rights to include self-government, which would generate regional administrative units for minority communities by accepting the terms and policy advice of other international organizations such as the Council of Europe, the conventions and reports of which are referred to as decisive in the European Commission’s progress reports on candidate countries.²⁰ Especially its European Charter of Local Self-Government takes a central place in the EU’s negotiations with candidate countries.

The charter commits the Parties to applying basic rules guaranteeing the political, administrative and financial independence of local authorities. It provides that the principle of local self-government shall be recognised in domestic legislation and, where practicable, in the constitution . . . Local authorities, acting within the limits of the law, are to be able to regulate and manage public affairs under their own responsibility in the interests of the local population.²¹

The EU’s minority norms have been created with reference to best practice in relation to the cases of the Catalans in Spain, the Flemish in Belgium, the German-speaking minority in South Tyrol in Italy, and the Alanders in Finland. Their cases were used as examples to show that the problems of national minorities could be solved if minorities were granted differentiated group rights that in some situations could be extended to include self-government rights. These success stories encouraged international and supranational organizations to export the

policies used in these scenarios to solve national minority problems in other contexts and countries.

Turkey as a candidate country for accession to the EU was put under pressure to fulfil the conditions the EU has set for the protection of minorities. In this realm the current government, which has ruled Turkey for the past fourteen years, has been working towards a radical change in the way that Kurds are accommodated and has initiated a gradual program of political recognition and multiculturalism. The government led by the Justice and Development Party (AKP), which has been in power for fourteen years, has carried out a gradual program aimed at radically changing the ways in which the Kurdish population is accommodated in Turkey. Changes to improve political recognition and multiculturalism for the Kurds have included the Constitutional Amendment Law no. 4471 of 2002 and Law no. 4903 of 2003, which guaranteed a legal basis for the use of ethnic groups' languages or dialects in education and the media. The state television channel TRT6 was dedicated to broadcasting in Kurdish only,²² and, as a result of these legal changes, the language has now become more evident and publicly used than ever before.²³

Reasons for Writing

In June 2015, the pro-Kurdish minority political party, the People's Democratic Party (HDP), crossed the electoral threshold in Turkey for the first time in the history of Turkish Republic, and its representatives are now in the parliament. The politics of recognition, and Kurdish demands in particular, are increasingly gaining momentum in Turkey, and so there is an urgent need to analyze these trends and communicate about them in ways informed by a liberal perspective that has long been lacking in the country. The violent conflict between the Kurds and the state, which was persisting in an increasingly violent fashion as of January 2016, begs the question as to why a transition towards the politics of recognition in Turkey has failed to bring about a just peace. The multiculturalist idea of differentiation between Turks and Kurds created great turmoil among people who thought it would lead to further inequalities in Turkey. For example, the Lazs, Arabs, Georgians and Circassians in Turkey, whose groups are not as sizeable as the Kurds and would find it difficult to make claims for autonomy, felt it unfair that the Kurds might be given differentiated cultural and political rights over and above those allotted to smaller groups.²⁴ The gradual shift from policies of oppression to those which recognized Kurdish identity in Turkey was ironically accompanied by increasing levels of hostility between

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different ethnic groups. The offices of the pro-Kurdish BDP party (*Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi*) were heavily attacked by civilians in 2011,²⁵ and a mob looted and set fire to Kurdish premises in the city of Kutahya in May 2016.²⁶ What once was an armed conflict between the PKK and the Turkish army has almost evolved into a civil war. This violent conflict has escalated to the extent that more than sixty civilians were killed by two bomb attacks in Ankara in February and March 2016, and the Kurdish militia took responsibility for both attacks.²⁷

Most scholars are still trying to puzzle out ‘why the insurgent PKK which was militarily defeated, which renounced the goal of secession, and whose leader was under the custody of the Turkish state, remobilized its armed forces in a time when opportunities for the peaceful solution of the Kurdish question were unprecedented in Turkey’.²⁸ Despite apparently positive changes, the poverty problem which is correlated with historical policies of assimilation and discrimination remains to trouble the majority of the Kurds even though their cultural identity has been explicitly recognized in the public sphere. Perhaps most importantly, the Kurds themselves do not have any sense that they are becoming better off just because their ethnic identity is gradually becoming more valued. On the contrary, recent research indicates that, since reforms began, Kurds have been increasingly marginalized.²⁹ Meanwhile, the further ethnicization of Turkish politics has swept away any hopes for substantive democracy in the country. These developments in Turkey challenge the conventional wisdom which presumes that a positive relationship exists between tolerance and group rights on the one hand and the fundamental principles of liberalism, such as freedom, peace, and equality, on the other.

To understand why reforms have not worked as expected, it is important to analyze the government’s plans for ‘multiculturalism’ and their compatibility or incompatibility with liberalism and democracy in the context of the social realities of contemporary Turkey.

Ethno-cultural diversity is a reality in Turkey, and its management is as important as it has ever been, but questions persist about how the desirable goal of multiculturalism can be achieved and in what form it can be realized. Can multiculturalism, the politics of recognition, and ethno-cultural group rights be mobilized in ways that ensure freedom, dignity, equality, and peace for all of the citizens of the modern Turkish state? Such questions are not peculiar to modern Turkey. Claims for autonomy, the tension between individual rights and group rights, and the right of self-government for national minorities have always been controversial in the fields of international law, political theory, nationalism, and conflict studies.³⁰

In each of these fields, scholars have raised issues that states need to deal with if they are to accommodate minority claims within a political system in which equality, peace and freedom can be achieved for all. In particular, liberal theories demonstrate the importance of the ways in which national minorities are approached and of the roles that states play in dealing with citizens who come from different backgrounds. They have been extensively discussed from both theoretical and legal perspectives in relation to national minorities elsewhere for decades. Indeed, there is much that can be learned from considering the Kurds of Turkey in relation to the wider history of the treatment of national minorities, and from an examination of different understandings of how diversity should be accommodated.

My main motivation in writing this book was therefore to inform the Kurdish question in Turkey by contributing to a theoretical debate about multiculturalism that has not, so far, been taken up within Kurdish and Turkish studies. The politics of identity and recognition for the Kurds in Turkey has gained momentum since 2002, but the trajectory of this politics has never been fully recognized, studied, or assessed. Critics such as Ozkirimli³¹ and Gunter³², who rightly emphasize the persistence of the state's authoritarian character, have not, to date, questioned the possibility that their own normative suggestions might not be theoretically consistent or sociologically grounded. Minority nationalists as well as liberals, and scholars such as Ozkirimli and Gunter in Turkey, have presumed the virtues of ethno-cultural autonomy and have focused their ire on external factors such as the party politics that have hampered its realization in the country. As a consequence, there is a strong tendency on the part of 'liberals' in Turkey to overlook the global debate on multiculturalism, its normative flaws, inequalitarian outcomes, and essentialist tendencies. Also unexplored are its negative impacts on conflict and, most importantly, how they apply to contemporary developments in relation to the Kurdish question in Turkey. This book, based on my fieldwork and other contemporary social surveys, shows that there are seriously conflicting views within the Kurdish community about the forms that the politics of recognition could take. This book explores these conflicts of interest amongst the Kurds using a bottom-up approach and shows that recognition of an authentic Kurdish identity is especially difficult because of these intractable conflicts within their group. This is the first academic text of its kind to explain how the quest for an authentic Kurdish political identity, as well as attempts to generate it, actually have the potential to limit the autonomy of individual Kurds and exacerbate existing disparities between Turks and Kurds in Turkey.

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Careful observation of various cases has shown that the success and consistency of multiculturalism with respect to the accommodation of national minorities has significantly varied from one case to another. While theories of multiculturalism have been successful in helping to resolve issues for minorities in Canada and Belgium, they have failed in other countries. For example, during the process of incorporating the multiculturalist paradigm into the European Union legal framework, the compatibility of multiculturalist policies with these new contexts sometimes emerged as doubtful.³³ In some instances it was unsuccessful in promoting equality or pacifying ethnic conflicts, and in other cases it could not even be put into practice despite government efforts. The Roma people in Hungary who were given self-government rights to administer education in their own language still suffer from inequalities which have not been rectified by the introduction of multicultural discourse.³⁴ In France, the idea of legalizing Corsu as the language of public education in Corsica could not be achieved, despite the French government's intention to introduce this measure through a referendum in 2003.³⁵ A total of 114,970 voters cast their ballots on July 6, 2003, in a referendum that would have allowed the island of Corsica to exercise a degree of autonomy. The referendum asked voters whether they would accept a new territorial assembly and an executive body that would manage more of the island's affairs. Based on the results released by the French Ministry of the Interior, a marginal majority voted against autonomy.³⁶ Similarly, in Turkey, Kurdish identity started to be officially recognized in the 2000s, and Kurds were gradually granted simple cultural rights such as state broadcasting and private language education in Kurdish.³⁷ Nevertheless, the Turkish government's adoption of weak multiculturalist initiatives in the period of accession to the EU did not evolve into the kind of strong policy envisaged by the EU, which required the provision of state-funded education for the Kurds in their own language.³⁸ The gradual implementation of the multiculturalist discourse in Turkey has so far, as briefly introduced above, disappointingly failed.

This puzzle is worth exploring, not least because theorists of multiculturalism speak with such certainty about the success that will follow its realization.³⁹ Their view involves taking the positivity of multiculturalism for granted and disregarding the ways in which multiculturalism – as an idea employed in different forms by political institutions and other actors – causes instability and even perpetuates inequality in some cases. The consistency of the political theories in question and their overarching presumptions about political behaviour need to be tested against

evidence informed by political sociology and its understanding of national minorities.

This book makes the case that it is imperative to undertake a closer examination of different cases of multiculturalism in practice, not only to expose its good and problematic aspects, but also to remedy the insufficient theorization and analysis of its assumptions, which are being used to underpin projects involving national minorities across the globe. I aim to reassess what might be termed an idealistic popular theory of multiculturalism in order to identify its actual capacity to deal in real situations with the continuing problems of heterogeneity and national minorities.

This book, which takes a comparative approach, represents the first contribution towards bringing the Turkish/Kurdish case into the global debate about multiculturalism and its flaws. Theoretical discussions around the topic are extremely important in informing new developments in Turkey and in explaining why peace, freedom, and equality might not yet be on the horizon. This book suggests that these universalized concepts will need to be modified to be effective in the Turkish situation. Equally important, however, is this book's focus on an empirical analysis of the Kurds. It seeks to contribute to the theoretical literature on universal minority rights by locating the Kurdish question in relation to the treatment of other national minorities such as the Québécois in Canada, Republican Catholics in Northern Ireland, Corsicans in France, and Muslim Turks in Greece. This book invites the reader to question in what forms multiculturalism can actually work for different national minorities. The central questions this book addresses to an equal extent can be summarized as follows:

- How did the transition to the discourse of multiculturalism in Turkey between 2002 and 2015 impact on the conflict between the Kurds and the Turks, equalities and freedoms?
- What is the impact of multiculturalism discourse on national minorities, especially the Kurds? Does it encourage ethnic nationalism, polarization and conflict while challenging the state hegemony?
- Can we categorize national minorities and identify the extent to which different types of multiculturalist policies can produce the desired outcomes of peace, equality and freedom for each category?
- Where do the Kurds in Turkey stand in comparison to other minorities, how do their peculiarities complicate the implementation of multiculturalist discourse in Turkey and what are the more suitable approaches to the Kurds in Turkey from a liberal perspective other than the current discourse explained in this book?

What Themes, Concepts, and Ideas Does This Book Develop? What Unique Features or Focus Does It Have?

This book's most important contribution is to Turkish and Kurdish studies. There are many such studies which criticize the unequal treatment of minorities in Turkey and highlight the need to improve equality between Kurds and Turks. However, while the focus remains on this possible transformation, new inequalities that are emerging from the current multicultural discourse in Turkey remain unanalyzed. There has, to date, been no study about how and to what extent the contemporary discourse of multiculturalism affects the ethnic conflict between Kurds and Turks. Recognition of minority identities and the viability of accommodating diversity in a liberal democratic system have been at the center of arguments about the conflict in Turkey, but the effects produced by this idealistic approach have not been subjected to scrutiny. This book elaborates on the global debate on multiculturalism, its normative flaws, and its essentialist tendencies, and it examines how they apply to the Kurdish question in Turkey.

It is clear that state policies of forced assimilation have radicalized a remarkable number of the Kurds in Turkey, but the slow transition from assimilationism to multiculturalism has not subdued ethnic conflict either. Increasing numbers of terrorist incidents and ethnic violence in the country since 2004 suggest that the country's 'politics of recognition and multiculturalism' may in fact be heightening the conflict that they are designed to settle. This book explains to what extent and how the contemporary discourse of multiculturalism affects the ethnic conflict and inequalities that exist between the Kurds and the Turks. It furnishes an understanding of what multiculturalism means for national minorities in general, and it also establishes how multiculturalism impacts in particular on the Kurdish question and its possible solutions.

This book will be useful to scholars in a variety of disciplines who want to study whether state nationalism and multiculturalism are compatible on theoretical and practical levels. It explains the importance of being sensitive to different types of nationalism and assesses their implications for various interpretations of multiculturalism. Conventional academic wisdom suggests that multiculturalism is a civic project which challenges the ethnic domination of the majority in a nation-state, yet, as this book shows, multiculturalism for national minorities is in fact an ethnocentric project. When multiculturalism challenges the nominally constructivist notion of nationality, it assumes, to all practical and theoretical intents and purposes, that nationality is an ethnic category. Chapter 3 elaborates on this argument and explains it in detail. By examining the problematics