E. Fuat Keyman (ed.), Türkiye’nin Yeniden İnşası: Modernleşme, Demokratikleşme, Kimlik

(Remaking Turkey: Modernisation, Democratisation, Identity)

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Türkiye’nin Yeniden İnşası is the revisited translation of Remaking Turkey: Globalisation, Alternative Modernities and Democracy edited by E. Fuat Keyman and published in 2007 by Lexington Books. The book analyses the transformation of Turkey in its dichotomy through collected essays by different scholars who have met around the ‘Karaköy soul’, expression used by Keyman in order to describe common concerns of these people who came together regularly in a restaurant at Karaköy, Istanbul. In the introduction, Keyman describes Karaköy soul as a way of critical thinking that should be developed against the polarisation in Turkey. That is why the publication of this book in Turkish is a precious contribution to the current debate in Turkey on polarisation within the political sphere and more importantly in the society. The book provides a theoretical as well as a critical analysis of the transformation of Turkey’s political system, social structure and democracy. F. Keyman summarises what the contributors to this book mean by ‘remaking’ – or re-construction, re-building if the word in Turkish inşa is retranslated – in one word: ‘democratisation’.

Türkiye’nin Yeniden İnşasi aims to analyse fundamental dimensions of Turkey’s reconstruction on a democratic basis, within an historical, sociological and theoretical perspective. The central axis of the book is social transformation. This central axis is treated through four historical periods in Turkey: the history of modernisation started with the foundation of the republic in 1923, the history of democratisation started in 1950 with the transition to a multiparty system, the history of globalisation since 1980 and finally the history of Europeanisation thanks to Turkey’s EU full membership process. Keyman considers these four periods simultaneously and underlines that the complex structure of Turkish society can be analysed by taking into account several effects of these four transforming periods together. These historical periods are also at the origin of main cleavages in the political sphere and society: centre-periphery, left-right, and global-local.

The book is divided into three parts. The general introduction in which main themes and arguments of the book are pointed out by Fuat Keyman is followed by three parts: modernisation, democratisation and identity, and foreign policy.
In the first part, Engin F. Işın, Andrew Davidson and Aslı Çırakman present three different aspects of Turkish modernisation since the late Ottoman period until the Europeanisation process. This part reflects clearly central elements and the problematics of the main historical periods mentioned in Keyman’s introduction and fits perfectly with the backbone of the book. The second part, entitled ‘Democratisation and identity’, is composed of nine essays. Each of them highlights one of the fundamental issues of Turkey’s democratisation process, by focusing on claims and demands of different groups such as minorities, for instance Kurds and non Muslim minorities in U. Özkirimli’s, F. Keyman’s, and A. Aktaş’s articles, or women as A. Kadıoğlu discusses gender issues through a theoretical approach on citizenship. This part also contains an essay by M. Borovalı and Ö. Turan on the headscarf ban by pointing out two approaches about the ban. The third part of Türkiye’nin Yeniden İnşası is on Turkey’s foreign policy. It is composed of three essays, the first treating Middle East and Turkey after 9/11, the second on European integration and the last one on the Cyprus issue. Actually this last part of the book is the weakest one and is not completely relevant to the core themes of the book and to the previous parts. Although the quality of the essays are undeniable, the connection to the idea of transformation in Turkey through modernisation, democratisation and cleavages which compose the main focus of the book it is not clearly underlined in this part. Bülent Aras’ article and the article co-authored by S. Aydın Düzgit and F. Keyman give some explanations and insights about Turkey’s position in the Middle East after 9/11 and its policy towards the EU. They provide a link to the internal transformation of Turkey after AKP but the last article on Cyprus is disconnected from the general topic and does not provide the reader with a relevant conclusion at the end of the book. The third part does not contribute as much to the fascinating theme of transformation in Turkey as the two previous parts do.

Although this book seems to be a contribution to studies on Turkey, it provides a theoretical debate on globalisation and effects of globalisation on social transformation and democracy. By analysing examples from the Turkish context, Türkiye’nin Yeniden İnşası presents lots of conceptual tools and analytical explanations that could be useful in comparative studies, especially on similar democratisation contexts to those of Turkey. In this respect this book is more than a study on Turkey and it contributes to the literature on democratisation processes in the developing world, on globalisation and multiple modernities.

Secularism for instance, which is one of the core themes of the post 9/11 context and of the debate on international migration and integration, is treated saliently in this book. By analysing the concept of secularism through the dichotomous structure of Turkish society between laïcité of the state and secularism, Dawison and Borovalı-Turan’s articles discuss state-citizen relations and contradictory elements of secularism within them. Essays on different social aspects of Turkey’s transformation in the second part provide a general debate on social and political claims, transformation of state-society relations under the effects of globalisation and the place for multiple identities within this transformation. Özkirimli’s and Keyman’s articles on ethnic identity analyse for instance the tight relation between the development of ethnic identity and democratisation. Türkiye’nin Yeniden İnşası brings back the problematic of the political sphere’s ability to adapt itself to social transformation. Analysing the Turkish case in a general theoretical perspective it underlines the gap between social transformation and political representation.
This book is also a great contribution to studies on Turkey by explaining several reasons for the cleavages in this country and provides an analytical framework to the debate on polarisation. As Keyman underlines in his introduction, Turkish society is a complex one and the political sphere is no longer able to present a political solution to this complexity. Only AKP which is also one of the consequences of this complexity remains a powerful actor despite its position which is far from embracing different parts of the society and providing democratic institutions – the only remedy to Turkey’s chronic problems. Actually this book not only presents a conceptual analysis in order to give a sense to Turkey’s transformation, it provides also some intellectual solutions to Turkey’s problems. In this respect, as is underlined several times in the book, Türkiye’nin Yeniden İnşası brings an opening to the democratisation process in Turkey by highlighting the necessary conditions for a good and just governance in Turkey.