

# Turkey in World Politics

**Barry Rubin and Kemal Kirnsci (Editors)**  
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# Cyprus: A Troubled Island

**Andrew Borowiec**  
**Praeger, (Westport, 2000) 194 pp.**  
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These two volumes provide a selection of insights and commentary on the political dynamics and problems of two inter-related states – Cyprus and Turkey. They utilise different historical and analytical techniques and together provide an overview of the political dynamics of the troubled Eastern Mediterranean

Andrew Borowiec's *Cyprus: A Troubled Island* is essentially a journalist's memoir of his observations and insights during the development of the Cyprus conflict, during the course of his involvement with the region. It provides a pleasant and informative read, though no effort has been made to provide any kind of supporting evidence for the author's assertions, nor point to any source material. There are few recent publications in the extremely sparse bibliography. As an introductory volume to the Cyprus conflict, generally supporting of a minimalist approach to ending it, this volume is of interest though it must be read in the context of a broader bibliography. It provides a readable overview of the progression of Cypriot politics, from independence to deadlock in the 'national problem', and argues for an approach that depends upon the creation of a 'Cypriot consciousness' (p. 175) rather than a continuation of the legalistic process of negotiations on constitutional issues, recognition and sovereignty. Though it is easy to agree, his idealistic conclusion rather smacks of social engineering (representing the popular Washington consensus on how to end conflict in the 1990s) and fails to comprehend the magnitude of even creating bicomunal projects when the political situation is so fraught. The creation of a Cypriot consciousness would be an obvious nation building solution, but it was tried in 1960 and since then has underlain the international communities assumptions on likely outcomes of the Cyprus problem (though not that of the Turkish side). The latest attempt to address this problem has been the 'postmodern' union with the EU, which might have more luck in creating a

common consciousness that does not threaten the multiple differences that both sides claim are important in their identities.

*Turkey in World Politics* examines Turkey's emergence as a regional power. In Chapter 1 Barry Rubin looks at its new international significance, arguing somewhat problematically that Turkey has transformed its foreign policy more thoroughly than any non-communist country in the post Cold War era (p. 1). In Chapter 2 Sule Kut examines the themes of Turkish Foreign Policy in the 1990s, arguing that there has been no real change other than Turkey's pragmatic approach continues towards its neighbours, allies, and its European objectives. Chapter 3, by Gencer Ozcan examines the role of the military in the creation of foreign policy, arguing that the role of the military increased in this period mainly because of the increased threats from Kurdish separatism and Islamic fundamentalism. In the following chapter, William Hale and Gamze Avci look at Turkish EU aspirations arguing that though there are obstacles (including the Cyprus question in particular) and that it would be a lengthy process, Turkish EU accession looked plausible. Chapter 5, by Ilhan Uzgel examines Turkey's role in the Balkans arguing that it made an active and important contribution which has also enhanced its own security (p. 66). Chapter 6, by Amikan Nachmani, looks at Turkish – Greek relations, arguing that the benefits of a reduction in tension would be enormous (p. 89). In the following chapter Kemal Kirisci looks at Turkish policy towards the Middle East. He argues that after the end of the Cold War, and particularly after the EU's negative decision on Turkish accession in 1997, Turkey increasingly looked at other regional issues. Its relationship with Israel has been of particular significance and this is taken up further in Chapter 8 by Efraim Inbar who examines the Turkish- Israel alliance. He argues that this is now a long term relationship which has become a key part of Middle Eastern politics, and is based upon a common perception of threat from Syria, Iran, and Iraq, as well as a fear of Islamic Fundamentalism, and the spread of weapons of mass destruction (p. 125). Kirisci looks at US Turkish relations in the following chapter, arguing that the US perceives Turkey as a key actor in the region, though there has also been criticism of its human rights record. In the following chapter, Duygu Bazoglu Sezer examines Turkish relations with Russia, which he argues has been subject to difficult regional and domestic pressures in both countries. Gareth Winrow examines Turkish relations with central Asian states in Chapter 11 arguing that Turkish Foreign Policy in this respect is extremely difficult, given the balancing act between Western, Russian, and Turkish interests, as well as those of actors in this complex region. In the following chapter, Mine Eder examines the impact of globalisation on the Turkish economy, and the question of what went wrong with the liberalisation process that Turkey has undergone. This is a fascinating question, relevant to many of the world's developing economies. In Chapter 13, Brent Sasley looks at Turkey's energy politics, and in particular the difficulties surrounding the Baku-Ceyhan project. In Chapter 14, Ali Carkoglu and

Mine Eder look at Water conflict in the region, and argue that peace in the Middle East might allow for a more equitable distribution of the water resources Turkey currently controls. Finally, Barry Rubin sums up with an examination of what he describes as Turkey's new foreign policy.

This study provides a very traditional area studies approach to its presentation of Turkish foreign policy, failing to provide any analytical insights other than from a solid, objective presentation of both history and trends. This is somewhat problematic, given that analytical frameworks are crucial to understanding such data, and that so many similar studies have already been published. Furthermore, many of the chapters seem very cursory in their treatment of their areas.

Both of these volumes touch upon the issue of Cyprus or Turkey as a key respective problem only in passing. For Boroweic, Turkey is hidden in the background, though obviously it has been important in influencing the local events he describes. However, it is very problematic to produce a discussion of the Cyprus problem while ignoring the role of the regional hegemony to a large degree. For Rubin and Kirisci, Cyprus is similarly a secondary issue in an array of themes and dynamics of global significance, mainly because the discourse employed in the book relates to a supposed 'grand strategy' of international diplomacy. This sums up aptly the differences of relative perception that both sides carry about each other. It is remarkable given the impact of Turkey and Cyprus upon each other that there is so little on this in both volumes, and indeed, that there is so little that is new. These studies also carry some qualities that remind us what is problematic with scholarship on both Cyprus and Turkey, in that while investigating interesting and much needed aspects of regional political dynamics, they also tend to present partisan positions, sometimes they dispense with the need for proper referencing to support arguments and controversial assertions, and sometimes merely repeat arguments or information that has been made better elsewhere already. This is not to detract from the fact that these volumes, are in their own way, worthy volumes, but to point out that in such highly charged, politicised, contested and disputed political environments as in Cyprus and Turkey, there are simple traps awaiting those who do not take due caution in their approach to research in these environments.

This is an opportune moment to examine these problems with respect to these volumes, and also more generally. The state of academic analysis of both the Cyprus problem and more generally of Greco – Turkish dynamics is generally troubling. Only a few attempts have been made to move beyond superficial, unstructured, partisan, and self-replicating strategic analyses. While intellectual debates have moved on for other regions, utilising interdisciplinary approaches, rigorously informed by an understanding of epistemology, ontology, and research

methodology, scholarship on the politics of the Eastern Mediterranean is often hampered and marred by petty minded and narrow analytical approaches, courting public and official attention in a self-aggrandising manner, and skirting the key issues of this region such as recognition debates, responsibility, inclusion and exclusion, identity formation, consensus building, gender, the environment, legitimacy rather than legality, to mention but a few. There are many outstanding scholars who have and are doing pioneering work in these areas of course, yet they often go unrecognised, even vilified, and obscured.

There is much here to be learned about the conduct and impact of scholarship in zones of ongoing conflict and there is much to be learned about how to recognise and avoid inferior scholarship. Some pointers to this are as follows. Firstly, there clearly are serious pressures on all those who research and write about on-going conflict, particularly from officials and those who work closely with them. There is also social pressure however, exerted on researchers – particularly those who are not aware of ontological and methodological debates, which is all too easy to succumb to. There are also political pressures and career pressures – the desire for 'junkets' or for popular recognition, for a public profile and a media presence. As a general rule of thumb, very few academics have and can have a media presence. If they do, it is generally reluctantly because they feel they cannot express themselves sufficiently in such an environment. This is not a hard and fast rule, but the credentials of academic, commentator, analyst, and so forth are earned not by media exposure but by research. Yet there seems to be an unwillingness for audiences of so-called academic analysis to question sources, methods and motives of those who claim to understand their situation better. It also seems that for some, developing a research career on such 'national' problems is a short-cut to exposure and success. To combat these problems, one must ask the following questions. What is the relationship of the researcher with the material researched? What are their motives? How have they conducted their research? Does their scholarship reflect original thought or a well known 'line'? Does their scholarship reflect a wide understanding of the broader conflict environment, of the state of, and debates about, international relations, the international system, political philosophy, and historiography and a broad cross section of relevant dynamics? Why are these qualities so often ignored assessing work on the politics of the East Mediterranean?

Clearly there are reasons for this. The protective nature of local societies and the extreme stakes involved, the need for consensus to preserve security, and the apparent incapacity to move beyond intellectual frameworks from the era of immediate decolonisation are but a few. All research is political, and all expressions of that research, whether in a form of a monograph or a media interview, are also political. This can be clearly seen in these volumes, which do contribute to the debates on the politics of the region but also must be read with a critical eye. Herein

lies a fundamental problem. All research reflects our own self-referential subjectivities, as do all those experts vying for space and time in the region. Some simple steps, such as those I outline above, should be able to help decide what is humbug and what is scholarship on the region. I would like not to have to read another unoriginal contribution on a region that is so hard for outsiders to understand and so problematic for insiders (those who could really enlighten us) to explain.

**Oliver P Richmond**