

Yilmaz, Ihsan. (2021).

## **Creating the Desired Citizen: Ideology, State and Islam in Turkey.**

Cambridge University Press.

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This book provides an insightful analysis of the nation-building projects pursued by Turkey's two dominant political ideologies over the last century: Kemalism and Erdoğanism. Through a comparison of how each regime conceptualized and sought to construct its ideal citizen, Yilmaz sheds new light on long-taken-for-granted, fundamental aspects of Turkish politics. While acknowledging overlapping concerns regarding threats to national unity, Yilmaz demonstrates how Kemalism and Erdoğanism pursued citizenship projects based on distinct ideological motivations, with varying implications for Turks of diverse ethnic, religious, and political persuasions.

Yilmaz frames his analysis around three citizenship archetypes, which he terms "Homo LASTus" for Kemalism and "Homo Erdoğanistus" and "Homo Diyanetus 2.0" for the changing face of Erdoğanism. These Weberian ideal types represent the "desired citizens" each regime aimed to cultivate through social engineering tools like education, popular culture, and the Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*). By delineating idealized citizenship categories, Yilmaz provides a novel framework for comprehending the shared, as well as divergent, social visions animating Turkey's competing modernizing ideologies. His tripartite construct proves an insightful lens for mapping how each interpreted Turkish identity and nationalism, demarcated insiders from outsiders, and mobilized citizens through promises of belonging.

After briefly introducing Kemalism's emergence from the late Ottoman era, Yilmaz methodically outlines the major theoretical and policy elements of early Republican nation-building. He traces the consolidation of the Republican People's Party's (CHP) one-party rule and establishment of Kemalism as Turkey's civil religion, positioning it as the authoritarian value system against which Erdoğanism would emerge as an alternative. Yilmaz skillfully elucidates Kemalism's utopian vision while acknowledging debates, achieving nuance without sacrificing clarity. He discusses how Kemalism constructed a myth of ethnic Turkishness through inventing continuity with ancient Turkic peoples and discounting Ottoman society's multiethnic nature. Yilmaz also analyzes how Kemalism promulgated an official history replacing the Ottoman past with an imagined legacy of pre-Islamic Turkish glory. Furthermore, he delves into how the Kemalists propagated an ethnocentric version of Turkish nationalism through rewriting history textbooks, implementing single-party rule, and using force against opponents. By vividly tracing these nation-building techniques, Yilmaz provides crucial context for understanding the competing desires for belonging represented by Erdoğanism that emerged in response.

Subsequently, Yilmaz examines the construction of each citizenship category—Homo LASTus, Homo Diyanetus 1.0, and the state’s “undesired citizens”—through separate sections, highlighting their assimilationist and security imperatives. This granular treatment effectively dissects the regime’s social design at the level of lived experience and state-society relations. It brings into focus how the pursuit of national homogeneity impacted citizens differentially based on attributes like ethnicity, faith, and ideology. Yilmaz’s focus on implementation, not just doctrine, offers critical insights into the infrastructures of nation-building as an ongoing process of population management, not just ideological policy.

Having established the blueprint of Kemalist citizenship projects, Yilmaz introduces Erdoğanism through discussion of Turkish Islamism’s roots and revival after the 1997 “postmodern coup.” Importantly, he frames Erdoğanism’s emergence as contingent on the trauma experienced by Turkish Muslims under sustained Kemalist repression. This contextualization locates Erdoğanism within the dialectic between victimized Islamists seeking restorative justice and an ever-threatened Kemalist establishment reacting defensively, a dynamic that would persistently shape Turkish politics. Yilmaz then analyzes the ideological contours of Erdoğanism according to the book’s conceptual framework, elucidating points of continuity and departure from Kemalism.

The heart of the book compares the citizenship projects pursued by each regime—Homo Erdoğanistus under the AKP and the reshaped Homo Diyanetus 2.0 in more recent years. Like his treatment of Kemalism, Yilmaz’s dissection of the AKP’s desired citizen archetype and its recalibration of Diyanet Islam via popular culture, education policy, and Friday sermons is meticulous and illuminating. It conveys the gradual ideological reformatting underway, with its end goal of cultivating the “pious generation” as Erdoğanism’s counter to Kemalism’s Westernized citizens. Throughout the book, Yilmaz’s close readings of changing state discourses on Islam, citizenship, and identity reveal the intense social engineering underway with transformative goals.

Yilmaz analyzes how Turkey’s state apparati craft identities under Erdoğanism. Examining shifts in medium reveals films and TV framing histories and events to align views with Erdoğanist perspectives. Textbook alterations introduce more Islamist and nationalist themes while cutting ideas like pluralism. Diyanet sermon analysis shows topic evolution from piety to embracing rhetoric glorifying martyrdom against imagined enemies. Through cross-medium investigations under state control, Yilmaz demonstrates their gradual remodeling of citizens’ worldviews, with examples like textbook and sermon changes illustrating this process in action.

After detailing how each regime constructs and marginalizes “undesired citizens,” Yilmaz concludes by emphasizing the substantial continuity in designating threatening out-groups despite changing ideologies. His three citizenship constructs provide a novel optic revealing both change and underlying similarities in how Turkish regimes have envisioned and stratified society. Perhaps the book’s most penetrating insight is its demonstration of how each regime’s nation-building projects have entailed not only the elevation of “desired citizens” but also the “othering” of sizeable segments of the population.

Yilmaz also discusses resistance and pushback against the idealized citizenship types promoted by Kemalism and Erdoğanism in Turkey. For example, in chapter 4 on Kemalism's undesired citizens, Yilmaz notes that religious and ethnic minorities resisted or rejected the assimilationist project of Kemalism by preserving aspects of their distinct identities and ways of life. This included continued use of minority languages, religious practices, and cultural traditions. Then, in chapter 5 on Kemalism's tolerated citizens, Yilmaz discusses how more religious sections of Turkish society resisted full assimilation by pushing back against strict secularization policies. They maintained unofficial Islamic practices and organized collectively through Sufi brotherhoods and organizations like the Diyanet. Finally, in chapter 11 on Erdoğanism's undesired citizens, Yilmaz explores how secularists, liberals, Kurds, and other groups have resisted and protested Erdoğan's nation-building project, including through open dissent, activism, and the Gezi Park protests of 2013. Throughout the book, Yilmaz notes tension between state ideology and identity projects versus grassroots identities maintained by religious and ethnic groups. This implies continuous negotiation and resistance by nonnormative citizens seeking alternative paths. Thus, while the state promoted idealized citizenship types, Yilmaz does acknowledge the agency of religious, ethnic and ideological minorities in Turkey who resisted full assimilation and pushed back against the hegemonic projects through maintaining alternative identities and forms of collective organization. Their resistance challenged dominant visions of Turkish citizenship.

Yilmaz's meticulous analysis sheds new light on formative aspects of Turkish politics long taken for granted or superficially treated. Most importantly, through its granular tracing of citizenship projects unfolding over a century, the book brings into focus the state's sustained social engineering and its ramifying impacts on a diversity of citizens' lived experiences. Yilmaz contextualizes these projects within the historical formation and evolution of Turkey's ruling ideologies shaped by persistently reproduced national anxieties. His conceptual framework and close empirical readings deliver profound insights with important implications for scholars across fields. The book significantly enhances understanding of citizenship and identity politics in Turkey while also providing broader perspectives on nationalism, secularism, and Islam–state relations. It has the potential to stimulate scholarly discussion and act as an essential reference for researchers on these topics for years to come.

In conclusion, Yilmaz offers an elegant comparative framework and meticulous empirical analysis of Turkey's citizenship projects under Kemalism and Erdoğanism. By tracing these nation-building endeavors through evolving citizenship categories over a century, he illuminates both change and underlying similarities in how Turkish regimes have envisaged and treated citizens. His nuanced conceptualization and granular case studies set a new standard for understanding how regimes construct ideal citizens through desired, tolerated, and undesired categories. Specifically, his concepts of Homo LASTus and Homo Diyanetus as Kemalism and Erdoğanism's desired and tolerated citizens provide novel insight into these regimes' social engineering projects. Yilmaz also offers erudite examination of how non-Muslims, Islamists, leftists, Kurds, and Alevites were marginalized as undesired citizens. While his framework is state-centric, it

lays the groundwork for incorporating societal perspectives into analyses of nation-building processes. Future research could build on Yilmaz's comparative approach to interrogate citizenship projects in other nation-states. Scholars could also extend his findings by exploring how notions of ideal citizenship evolve over time within individual regimes.