

Review of Social Studies

Gender and Migration

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*Editorial Office address: LCSS, 4th floor, Cornhill House, 59-60 Cornhill, London, EC3V 3PD, UK
Tel.: 0044 (0) 20 7936 3118*

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Correspondence concerning editorial content and potential submissions should be addressed to the editor: latif.tas@rossjournal.co.uk

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NUMBER 1

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*REVIEW
OF
SOCIAL STUDIES*

Gender and Migration

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Institutional Change in Turkey: The Impact of European Union Reforms on Human Rights and Policing. By Leila Piran. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, 183pp., £60

Leila Piran's book is of particular importance to the understanding of Turkey's policing reforms, framed within the country's internal dynamics since the 1980s. In academia and policy circles, reforms in the police are usually believed to emerge either in the already stable democracies or immediately after a conflict settlement in which an independent third institution is also engaged. According to Piran, the timing and scope of Turkish national police reforms do not match with this definition. Turkish national police reforms have occurred following the 1980 military coup at the height of insurgency activities in Turkey. Furthermore, the European Union's (EU) impact on these reforms remains a relatively new phenomenon, deriving from Turkey's admission as a full candidate for EU membership during the 1999 Helsinki Summit.

From a historical perspective, Piran underlines that it was during the *Tanzimat* era that the Ottoman Empire first decided to turn its face to the Occident. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the dislocation of the *Janissaries* allowed the emergence of new police units in Istanbul in line with European standards. After the foundation of the Turkish republic in 1923, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk further implemented the Western model as the only choice for Turkey to emulate in terms modernisation in most domains, including policing. Long after Atatürk's death, Turkey was ruled by an elite who showed their allegiance to Kemalist ideology and had a desire for governance according to European norms. However, these efforts did not prevent three successive military coups from happening in 1960, 1971 and 1980. During the 1960s, the Turkish military elites, or the 'guardians' of the state posited to have intervened in politics to regulate Turkish democracy. In the ensuing years, the left-right polarisation, having reached a peak and created a climate of tension, was once again curbed by a military intervention a decade after the first. Finally in 1980, under the pretext to counter the rising Kurdish insurgency as well as the threat of communism, the military generals made yet another *coup d'état*, during which the army was mainly concentrated in areas where it was deemed necessary to combat the Kurds and communists, whereas the police was assigned to take hold of the rest.

Piran's central thesis is that the Turkish police was able to emerge as a 'professional civil force' in the early aftermath of the 1980 coup. Indeed, the Turkish prime minister of the time, Turgut Özal launched a series of new police reforms, which allowed the Turkish police force to boost its

budget, receive special instruction on human rights at home, and participate in numerous training sessions abroad. However, these revamping efforts in the organisation of Turkish police did not prevent human rights abuses by the latter, particularly throughout the 1990s. Another important development was that the Turkish police moved from the control of the military to become dependent on the Ministry of Interior under Ozal's administration. According to Piran, these reforms were neither due to pressure from the EU nor solely by means of Turkey's NATO membership. In fact, Turkey would have been obliged to alter the organisation of its national police force based on domestic factors to keep its strong state tradition alive.

In 1999 Turkey was granted full candidate status to accede to the EU. This was also meant to be a reconsideration of Turkey's policing methods, in order to democratise the country and improve human rights. Accordingly, the period of pre-trial detention was reduced from fifteen to four days and persons subject to interrogation were allowed legal assistance and representation. Despite these measures, among others, there was still an increase in violence (though intermittently) in the Southeast of Turkey particularly from 2000 onwards. This proved that the Kurdish insurgency in Turkey was far from being over unlike Piran suggests, as well as the rule of law, which was far from being perfect. Based on her findings, Piran notes that the Turkish police force operates under a heavily centralised system, which is dismissive of regional differences and nuances inside the country. Besides, the judiciary is not fully independent *vis à vis* the state, resulting in a drift toward authoritarianism. Furthermore, the thorny issue of corruption arises as police officers are pushed to work long hours without much financial incentive from the government. Thus, the image of the Turkish police is ruined within Turkish society, affecting the content, speed and trajectory of police reforms whether domestic or EU-imposed. These conclusions are based on a two-stage piece of doctoral fieldwork research that Piran conducted during 2007 and 2008 in Turkey with 60 Turkish police officers, numerous deputies, lawyers, and human rights activists, in addition to journalists with relevant expertise on the subject.

On the other hand, Piran addresses the degree of normativity as well as simulation within the EU criteria. In this regard, Turkey is a good example as Turkish candidacy illustrates how these criteria might be unpredictable depending on the specific country context and beyond. From a comparative perspective, Piran uses the cases of EU accession for Bulgaria and Romania to further demonstrate the subjectivity inherent to the EU criteria. Whereas Bulgaria and Romania lag behind Turkey in most domains, they nevertheless obtained full EU membership by 2007. It can be

argued that geography and religious proximity, and to a further extent, cultural aspects shared with Europe have played a central role in both countries' EU accession. In addition, Bulgaria and Romania did not have a Kurdish or a Cypriot issue to resolve either, which reminds the reader, once again, of the importance of domestic factors when implementing reforms.

Ultimately Piran's study attests that the police reforms in Turkey have materialised as a result of Turkey's own internal evolution since the 1980s. Nevertheless, the impact of reform programmes imposed by the EU shall not be totally dismissed. Piran's own fieldwork notes include how her interlocutors think of the EU proposals as leading in many ways for convergence with European norms.

By considering the endemic circumstances Turkey has undergone since at least three decades earlier, it is clear that Piran provides an original contribution to the understanding of Turkey's policing reforms.

Elsa Tulin Sen, Institute of Middle Eastern Studies, School of Social Science & Public Policy, King's College London

Information for Authors

RoSS is a peer-reviewed journal. New, original and unsolicited articles are welcomed. Articles should be submitted to the Editor in Chief, Dr. Latif Tas, via email at latif.tas@rossjournal.co.uk in a Word document. Authors may expect that a decision about publication may take between two to three months. Authors of accepted articles will be asked to transfer copyright to the *Review of Social Studies (RoSS)*.

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Guidelines for preparing and submitting your article to the *Review of Social Studies (RoSS)* are provided below. Please ensure you refer to these instructions if you are preparing a manuscript to submit to the RoSS.

Article Preparation

- Articles are only accepted in English. Articles should be 7,000 – 9,000 words including footnotes and references. On a separate sheet, please provide the author's name, address, a brief biographical note, a 150-200 word abstract, acknowledgements, and a word count (including footnotes and references).
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- The Harvard referencing system should be used for bibliographical references in the text and footnotes. Notes should be kept to a minimum. A bibliographical reference list should be included at the end of the article, starting on a new page.
- Submissions must be double-spaced throughout, including footnotes and the list of references. Margins should be of at least one inch on all sides and the text should be no smaller than 12 point font (Times New Roman).
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- Pages in the manuscript should be numbered.
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- Using the Harvard referencing system, references should be presented as:

Book:

Menski, Werner (2006) *Comparative Law in a Global Context: The Legal Systems of Asia and Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Book chapters:

Menski, Werner (2006) Cherry-picking Customs: On What Happens when Custom is Not Taught. In Manfred Hinz (ed.) *The Shade of New Leaves*. Berlin: Lit Verlag, 395-411.

Journal articles:

Grillo, Ralph D. (2007) Betwixt and Between: Trajectories and Projects of Transmigration. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 33(2), 199-217.

Journal articles from an electronic source:

Menski, Werner (2010) Fuzzy law and the boundaries of secularism. *Potchefstroom Electronic Law Journal* [Online, 3 December 2010], 13(3), 30-54. Available at: http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1752910 [accessed: 24 October 2014].

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- One hard copies of the issue containing the article will be supplied free of charge to the corresponding authors. Authors will also receive a PDF offprint of their article.

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Reviews should involve both a non-evaluative overview of the content and a critical assessment. Please note that the publication of reviews submitted to RoSS is at the Book Review editor's discretion.

The name/s of author/s of the book should be quoted at the top of the first page followed by the full title and subtitle of the book, the publisher, year of publication, number of pages and price (paperback/hardback) as follows:

Tas, Latif, *Legal Pluralism in Action: Dispute Resolution and the Kurdish Peace Committee*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2014, 222 pp., £70).

The reviewer's name and institution should be placed at the end of the review on the right hand side of the page.

- Reviews for edited and non-edited volumes should be between 1,000 and 1,200 words.
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- Footnotes should not be used in reviews. Instead, please include a citation in the text itself, followed by a full reference at the end of the review in the Harvard style.
- All quotations from the book reviewed should be followed by the page number from which they have been taken; for example, (p. 34).
- The full name of a person, organisation, or programme should be used when mentioned for the first time, and titles and explanatory phrases should be provided when appropriate.
- Dates should be given in the form '1 July 2014'.

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