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Turkey: A Modern History



Synopsis

This revised edition builds upon and updates the twin themes of Turkey's continuing incorporation into the capitalist world and the modernization of state and society. It begins with the forging of closer links with Europe after the French Revolution, and the changing face of the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century. In his account of the period since 1950, Zürcher focuses on the growth of mass politics; the three military coups; the issue of Turkey's human rights record; integration into the global economy; the alliance with the West and relations with the European Community; and much more.

Book Information

Paperback: 424 pages

Publisher: I.B.Tauris; 3rd edition (September 4, 2004)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1860649580

ISBN-13: 978-1860649585

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 1 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.0 out of 5 stars 17 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #471,017 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #201 in Books > History > Middle East > Turkey #440 in Books > Textbooks > Humanities > History > Middle East #2385 in Books > Textbooks > Humanities > History > Europe

Customer Reviews

"Zürcher's book will make an excellent textbook for students approaching the study of Turkey for the first time, in addition to serving as a valuable aid to scholars looking for a comprehensive, well-written fusion of differing interpretations of Turkish history...This book is destined to remain a standard text in its field."--Lawrence Tel, *International Affairs*"...a valuable addition to scholarly literature."--Andrew Mango, *TLS*

The modern history of Turkey has been marked by momentous political transformations and the rapid evolution of all aspects of cultural, social and economic life. The first comprehensive history to appear in twenty years, Erik J. Zürcher's book takes as its twin themes Turkey's continuing incorporation into the capitalist world and the modernization of the state and society in the face of this challenge. Beginning by exploring the closer links with Europe forged in the period following the

French Revolution, the book looks at the changing face of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century. Zürcher charts its progressive decline in the face of emerging nationalisms and European imperialism, and the fruitless attempts by the ruling elite to reverse the process through modernizing reforms. Arguing that Turkey's history between 1908 and 1950 should be seen as one continuous period, dominated as it was by the efforts of a coalition of Young Turk bureaucrats and officers to construct a sense of Turkish national identity and to introduce a programme of radical modernization and secularization, Zürcher goes on to offer a substantial and strongly revisionist interpretation of the influence of Turkey's 'founding father', Kemal Atatürk. In its account of the period since 1950, the book focuses on the growth of mass politics; the three military coups; rapid industrialization and migration; the thorny issue of Turkey's human rights record; integration into the international global economy; the alliance with the West (including membership of NATO and efforts to join the EC) and Turkey's ambivalent relations with the Middle East; the increasingly explosive Kurdish question, and the role of Islam in an avowedly secular state. Offering a new and original reading of Turkish history and drawing on all the most recent studies, this is an important book that will be of great interest to students as well as to readers with a general interest in Turkey. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This was a subject that interested me, but it turns out that the history of Turkey after the fall of the Ottoman Empire is rather boring. This book devolves into a dry discussion of politics without much discussion of culture or leading personalities. The towering figure of Atatürk is given surprisingly cursory treatment. The more recent history of Turkey, from 1990 to the present, was a bit more interesting, as it impinges on current events, but overall this book was hardly an example of outstanding historical writing.

I certainly learned some about the complications of Turkish policies and government, but this book is quite detailed about political parties and what they stood for etc. It is overly focused on the economy and keeps bringing up these issues almost to a fault. If you want an interesting book on Turkish History in the Modern World, I would encourage you to keep looking!

Interesting read

This book was dry, and the way it was organized often left me confused. I picked it out to do some background reading on Turkey before traveling there ... It was not good for that.

Erik Zürcher has done a service to all who may have an interest in recent history of Turkey, filling a much-needed gap. This is the second revised edition of the original 1993 publication. It expands even more on the recent and more modern history in great detail. It is a nice compliment to Bernard Lewis' "Emergence of Modern Turkey". Zürcher has done a lot more than just reposting known history from other traditional sources. There is much new insight and analysis. Most of it is balanced, but he still has failed to refrain from "recommending" a "multi-national" state "solution" to the Kurdish "problem". As if there is any possibility of it, or as if, after all he has researched and explained about modern Turkey, he would not know, better than anyone else that the unitary nature of the state is what has enabled it to exist in the first place. Given all their ethnic mixes, how often does one encounter a successful model of such a "state" in Europe or Eastern Europe or Middle East? Why such an enlightened solution is rarely pushed ahead in other similar situations, is a mystery. Germany still has to this day, purely ethnic based citizenship laws for example. Besides, why is a democracy that guarantees all individual freedoms to all citizens and makes no distinction among them is still found lacking? Though he occasionally acknowledges the long history of parliamentary and constitutional rule in Turkey, the judicious and brutally honest study of all the blemishes and imperfections of Turkish democracy throughout decades, creates or more like helps propagate the idea that Turks are in general still not comfortable with the concept of democracy, or that they still do not "get" it. It would have put things in better perspective if Zürcher for example had briefly mentioned what was going on in Europe through 20s, 30s and 40s and even 50s while Turkish democracy one way or another managed to stay on track. While history of various political parties and their roles has been very well covered, not all topics of importance have received the same attention. Turkey's EU vocation is treated somewhat superficially for example.

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This is an interesting book that starts in the declining Ottoman empire of the nineteenth century and follows developments of that time forward to quite recent events in Turkey of today, concentrating on political and economic issues. The author clearly knows his stuff and the information is thoughtfully presented. Because this book covers a lot of ground, it usually doesn't go into a lot of depth on any given set of events. My main criticism is that the author tends to compress his version of events in such a way that important points are often obscured or presented extremely briefly. This

makes the book sometimes hard to follow. Nonetheless this is a good overview for anyone interested in Turkey. I came away with a renewed admiration for Ataturk and what he managed to accomplish. I would recommend it to anyone interested in this topic.

I knew absolutely nothing about Turkey when I picked up this book, which I bought in preparation for a trip to Turkey next month. I found that the author, unlike some academics, writes limpid, readable prose. He does dwell in considerable detail on the political jousting that takes place inside the government; it seems that there have always been competing factions within the power structure in Turkey, and they appear at times to have changed position from week to week. I therefore found myself skimming through parts of this book. I wish he'd focused a bit more on cultural history, as this was the bit I found most interesting. Still, all in all, a good read for what is essentially a textbook. I've started "Turkey Unveiled" by Hugh and Nicole Pope, two journalists who are clearly aiming for a more popular treatment of the subject matter, and I can tell that my having read Professor Zurcher's book will make their book much more interesting.

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