

Erken, Ali. *America and the Making of Modern Turkey: Science, Culture and Political Alliances*. London, New York: I.B. Tauris. 2018. 226 pages. \$ 115. ISBN: 9781788311700.

Reviewed by **Güldeniz Kibris**
Leiden University
guldenizkibris@gmail.com

Ali Erken's book, *America and the Making of Modern Turkey: Science, Culture and Political Alliances*, explores Turkish-American relations between 1923 and the 1960s through the activities of the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations in the sphere of education in Turkey. The author makes a historical review of American philanthropy dating back to the 19th-century missionaries in the Ottoman Empire through the Cold War period, during which the US aimed to create its own spheres of influence to balance Soviet expansion by enhancing liberal values. The main argument of the book is that the American policy complemented the vision of the Turkish Republican elite in terms of Westernization. Therefore, not only the US wanted to be in Turkey, but also the Turkish elites enthusiastically supported the foundations' involvement, especially in the case of education, to develop the necessary human capital that Turkey lacked in many areas. Erken's monograph constitutes an original work thanks to the author's extensive research on the sources that had not been widely used before in the archives of the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations and those of Robert College at Columbia University.

The four chapters reveal the cooperation between the two countries and the US' investments in Turkey in different academic fields with grants, fellowships and direct monetary support. In each chapter, Erken mentions the foundations' involvement in various disciplines. These are, respectively, public health and medicine, engineering, management, and social sciences and humanities. The author refers to the establishment of Robert College School of Engineering, the Middle East Technical University (METU), and Erzurum Atatürk University. He also provides archival information about the US visits and other experiences of Robert College graduates in addition to reports prepared by its staff. Therefore, Erken provides a broader picture with impressive details about various educational institutions in Turkey. In doing that, he also refers to some significant academics, such as Mehmet Kaplan, Ömer Lütfi Barkan, Halil İnalçik, and Kemal Karpat, who got funded by those foundations. Thus, as the book's main strength, many educational building blocks and networks are revealed.

Despite its strengths in terms of the richness of materials it uses and the amount of information it conveys, the book does not adequately build a theoretical and conceptual framework. Although Erken refers to the Republican goals of modernization and westernization, he does not explain what they are about and how they could be understood concerning the historical-political contexts. In this regard, the theoretical framework could also be enriched with the concept of 'creative minority,' mainly explored in the final chapter. Erken refers to a report prepared by John Marshall,

the first Human Division officer to visit Turkey. Borrowing from Arnold Toynbee, Marshall underlines the significance of a secular and urban 'creative minority' in transforming the rural and conservative 'great majority.' Here, Erken argues that the US involvement also included the sponsorship of educated elites, so the 'creative minority' in Turkey, who adopted secular and liberal values, thus bringing the country closer to the so-called Western world (p. 31, 125). A discussion of the role of elites in modernizing developing countries could also be beneficial in making the subject much more comprehensible.

Some points could have made the book much more encompassing. First of all, although it is not the main focus of the book, Erken might provide a brief comparison of Turkey's experiences with other countries where America wanted to be influential through education. This could enable the readers to locate Turkey in a transnational area. Secondly, Erken argues that with the involvement of American foundations, the American educational model replaced the German model (p. 45). Here questions such as 'what were the basics of the old and new models?' and 'what were the activities of French and German academics in Turkey before the extensive involvement of the US?' remain unanswered. Thirdly, it is brilliant that Erken mentions the American missionaries in the 19th-century Ottoman Empire and marks a continuity with Republican Turkey. However, his emphasis gets blurred between the lines, especially for readers unfamiliar with the topic. He could have explained the historical background in a much more concise way. As the fourth point, besides stating which schools had been established in line with the westernizing goals of the Ottomans, Erken might have also engaged in discussions about public health, social Darwinism, positivism, the Protestant ethic, and business culture to make the text richer. This method would pave the way towards shedding light on what has been transformed in each academic field. Fifthly, Erken presents the names of many academics who received grants and fellowships from US institutions. However, he discusses none of the characters or their projects. Therefore, as readers, we cannot grasp what to do with all these significant pieces of information. All in all, the author might have utilized his archival materials much more efficiently in order to complete his framework about educational alliances.

Lastly, there is one shortcoming of the book that can be corrected in future editions. Some paragraphs are rather long and lack references (Chapter 2). There is also a misspelled last name, which significantly changes the meaning of the word in Turkish (p. 110, Atasöv must be Ataöv).

Nevertheless, I wholeheartedly recommend this book to anyone interested in new approaches to Turkey's diplomatic history. It is a valuable contribution providing many insights and also potentially inspiring future studies about Turkish-American relations.