

This article was downloaded by: [Koc University]

On: 11 December 2014, At: 11:08

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954
Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH,
UK



Turkish Studies

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ftur20>

Theory-consuming or Theory-producing?: Studying Turkey as a Theory-developing Critical Case

Murat Somer^a

^a Department of Political Sciences and International Relations, Koç University, Istanbul, Turkey

Published online: 09 Dec 2014.

To cite this article: Murat Somer (2014): Theory-consuming or Theory-producing?: Studying Turkey as a Theory-developing Critical Case, Turkish Studies, DOI: [10.1080/14683849.2014.986317](https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2014.986317)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2014.986317>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly

forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

Theory-consuming or Theory-producing?: Studying Turkey as a Theory-developing Critical Case

MURAT SOMER

Department of Political Sciences and International Relations, Koç University, Istanbul, Turkey

ABSTRACT *Case studies of Turkey are typically read and cited as narratives of the Turkish case itself, suppliers of case-specific data, or at best, applications of more general theories. They are not perceived as theory-testing, producing, or even informing exercises. While this tendency partly results from the institutional, geographical-cultural, and methodological biases of extant social sciences, scholars may also be to blame for neglecting theory-development or for producing descriptive narratives. How can Turkish Studies scholars successfully contribute to general theory-development in their respective disciplines? The main value of Turkey for producing theory may lie in its rare combination of many qualities and in its temporal and regional variations. Thus, this article argues that, besides small-N and large-N comparative studies, the most promising way Turkish Studies can engage in theory-building may be by examining Turkey as a theory-developing critical case, i.e. as a crucial or, pathway or within-unit comparative case. For this, scholars would carefully design their studies as theory-infirming, theory-confirming, or theory-producing crucial case studies, utilize temporal and cross-sectional comparisons, and pay special attention to causal mechanisms, sequences, and processes. By using evidence from publications that draw on the Turkish case, the article shows that, since the 1990s, scholars have produced more research published in highly ranked journals of comparative politics, international relations and area studies. They also generate more single case studies with general theoretical ambitions and more visibility but so far with unclear actual theoretical impact. The article discusses some qualities of Turkey which make it a promising critical case for theory-development and how studying it this way can also help to achieve a better understanding of Turkey itself.*

Introduction

How can Turkish Studies become and begin to be seen as a theory-producer, in addition to being a theory-consumer and a source of in-depth knowledge on Turkey? More than a decade ago, Quataert and Sayari observed that “with very few exceptions, scholars in Turkish Studies have been either content with applying the existing theories and conceptual frameworks to their studies or they have

Correspondence Address: Murat Somer, Department of Political Sciences and International Relations, Koç University, Rumelifeneri Yolu, Sariyer, 34450 Istanbul, Turkey. Email: musomer@ku.edu.tr

altogether ignored theoretical issues in their particular disciplines.”¹ In a separate essay, Sayari noted that “political science research on Turkey has had little impact on the mainstream conceptual and theoretical developments in the field.”² After 11 years and historical transformations of Turkish society, politics, and academia—and, arguably, greater interest in Turkey in the world—do studies of Turkey still exhibit the same tendencies? How and to what extent can studies of a country or region contribute to the theoretical and conceptual developments in their respective fields, keeping in mind that these theories and concepts in turn inform and shape how comparativists compare, specialists interpret, and practitioners evaluate these countries and regions? This is a challenging task for any scholar researching a particular country or region, including those focusing on Turkey; and whether or not these scholars successfully help to produce theory depends both on the way they structure, conduct, and present their studies and on some methodological biases and misperceptions that influence how their audiences perceive their work.

For example, a recent, thought-provoking review of Middle East Studies observed that more and more “recent scholarship on Middle East politics is characterized by attempts to combine in-depth knowledge of the region . . . with systematic use of universal theoretical tools from the political science literature.”³ At the same time, the author noted with some surprise that Middle-East specialists tend to use “widely applicable theoretical frameworks to explain cases,” while “non-Middle East specialists” tend to use case-specific data from the region to “engage in theory construction and refinement.”⁴ Curiously, however, many of the scholars whom the article cited as Middle-East specialists might consider themselves comparativists or generalists who happen to harbor in-depth knowledge of or pursue specific questions about particular cases. They may not necessarily view themselves as area specialists. Furthermore, many of them may see themselves as engaged in the task of developing as well as consuming theory.

Scholars whom the article identified as theory-producers seemed to be people who conducted either large-N quantitative or small-N comparative studies, while most of those identified as theory-consumers appeared to have undertaken single case studies. Hence, the article’s observation might reflect a methodological bias: when scholars focus on a single case (e.g. country), people tend to read them as either producing case-specific knowledge, or, at best, consuming theories produced by others. When scholars make use of more than one case, people tend to interpret them as testing or constructing theory, automatically assuming that theories generated this way are always more valid and more reliable. In fact, many methodologists would maintain the opposite. Multiple cases (or observations) may be more reliable for *testing* theories, especially probabilistic theories; however, appropriately structured and conducted case studies can help to test theories as well, especially those of a less probabilistic and more deterministic nature. And, most importantly for the purposes of this article, such case studies often have a comparative advantage for developing theories.

It is true that many contributions to Turkish Studies generate case-specific descriptive narratives. Still others seem to offer causal explanations that they assume to be Turkey specific, or generate causal narratives that merely apply general theories to

explain various aspects of the Turkish case in a non-falsifiable fashion. In either case, studies make selective use of existing general theories. And, they often fail to sufficiently acknowledge and engage alternative descriptions or explanations based on empirical and interpretive evidence. However, it is also true that even though many other studies try to test or develop theory by drawing on the Turkish case, they also tend to be perceived as users, and not necessarily generators of theory.

How can Turkish Studies become and be seen as a source of theory-construction? Scholars pursuing this goal should make a conscious effort to design case studies in such ways that they will inform and produce theory. One way to do this is through large-N studies where Turkey becomes an observation among many others. Turkish Studies contributes to this type of research by producing in-depth knowledge that helps researchers in formulating the hypotheses they will test and in determining the appropriate “sign” for the Turkish case (e.g. democracy versus partial democracy, industrialized versus semi-industrialized, Muslim versus Muslim–secular).⁵ Another way is to undertake small-N comparative studies where Turkey is a major case. One critical challenge to this method is the difficulty of finding appropriate comparative cases. Turkey is Middle-Eastern and Western, a strong and a weak state, Muslim and secular, democratic with a long history of democratization and authoritarian with a long history of oppressing dissent, all at the same time. What is the consequence of this in terms of theory-development? Rather than analyzing and interpreting the Turkish case in a way that informs new theoretical development, many scholars who engage in small-N studies are forced to interpret the Turkish case in ways that fit within a most-similar case comparative framework in relation to the other cases. Hence, theories or hypotheses originating from other, better known cases end up shaping how scholars analytically reconstruct and interpret the Turkish case, instead of analyzing the Turkish case in its own right and as a source of new theories and hypotheses. Theories that are produced based on other cases alter the way we perceive Turkey, rather than the other way around. To be clear at the outset, the claim here is not that Turkey is unique and thus incomparable to others. Nor is the argument that Turkey is the only country featuring an unusual collage of seemingly contradictory characteristics, which cross-cut multiple cultural, geographical, and conceptual categorizations. It is merely argued here that Turkey is one of the more difficult cases that can be productively paired up with others for small-N comparative research.⁶ Hence, the questions research can answer by doing so may be limited.

Given the difficulties of finding cases that can fruitfully be compared with Turkey, another way is to produce single case studies of Turkey in ways purposefully designed to help to build theory. The critical value of Turkey for theory-construction may not lie in its comparability to others. Rather, it may be found in the unusual combination of its many qualities that make it a “theory-infirming or theory-confirming crucial case,” a pathway case illustrating the specific causal mechanisms leading to specific outcomes, and a within-unit comparative case drawing on temporal and regional variations.⁷ Henceforth, the article will use the term *theory-developing critical case studies* as a shortcut to refer to these three types of case studies. The Turkish case examined as such can help both to test and to develop theories by utilizing

within-case comparisons, tracing causal processes, and developing new concepts and typologies. With an emphasis on political sciences and related disciplines, the article will present below evidence indicating that more and more studies may be choosing this path. It will be shown that more single case studies of Turkey are published in highly ranked journals that emphasize theory-development, but citations of these publications do not imply yet that these publications necessarily contribute to general theory-building.

If scholars explicitly and successfully examine Turkey as a theory-developing critical case, this would make Turkish Studies more interesting and valuable for both generalists and specialists in other areas. Hence, this may help to overcome the problem that “most of what Turkish studies specialists do . . . is not seen as very relevant or interesting by the non-Turkish studies specialists in that same discipline.”⁸ Over time, it may also help to overcome the perceptual bias mentioned above, which creates the expectation that studies focusing on the Turkish case alone must necessarily be consumers of theory, not developers.

But the most important beneficiary of this enterprise might well be a better understanding of Turkey itself.⁹ More often than not, studies make observations and claims that are shown to be incomplete, misrepresentative, or disconfirmed by actual developments. Frequently, well-cited contributions—both single case studies and technically speaking well-designed comparative studies—produce explanations, develop new concepts and terminology, and create policy implications that are negated or contradicted by later studies produced by the very same scholars. It is, of course, common, acceptable, and to some extent desirable that scholars turn out to be “wrong” in the sense that they update their expectations, interpretations, and explanations in light of new empirical findings, theories, and social–political developments. This is how academic knowledge is supposed to accumulate. The problem is that often, scholars do not design their studies in ways that other studies can confirm, disconfirm, or simply challenge them based on minimum shared standards and new empirical or interpretive findings. Studies are not structured in such ways that these challenges can become building blocks for new theories and a better comprehension of Turkey.

The rest of the essay will first discuss the value of crucial, pathway and within-case comparative case studies in the context of methodological debates especially in the area of comparative politics, and then try to illustrate via some examples how case studies of Turkey can be designed so that they can contribute to theory-testing and -building. Then, the article will review evidence from publications using Turkey as one of their cases in order to examine whether or not scholars of Turkey are producing more case studies with more theoretical emphasis and impact.

Theory-relevant Case Studies

Throughout the 1990s, political scientists were divided by partially overlapping methodological wedges between the proponents and practitioners of area studies and social sciences, ideographic and nomothetic research, meta-theories and mid-range theories, theoretical purists and synthesizers, and qualitative and quantitative studies.¹⁰

Associating case studies with area studies, qualitative methods, and ideographic research, many assumed that they have little theoretical relevance beyond simple hypothesis-generation.¹¹ This was an untenable view for many reasons. To begin with, well-conducted area studies and interpretive research also contribute to theory-building by inducing conceptual refinement and “grounding theory in the richness of social life,” and at the minimum, because all “theory must be complemented by contextual knowledge.”¹² Furthermore, the impressionistic association between case studies and atheoretical area studies is largely a false association. Not all case studies are qualitative and not all qualitative research is ideographic.¹³ Moreover, a significant portion of theoretical knowledge in political science actually comes from well-conducted case studies by prominent scholars.¹⁴ This, Gerring observed, presented a paradox:

Although much of what we know about the empirical world is drawn from case studies and (they) constitute a large proportion of work generated (by political science), the case study method is held in low regard or is simply ignored.¹⁵

An influential symposium in early 1990s on the role of theory in comparative politics concluded, for example, that most comparative politics research consists of comparative and single case studies treating theories as tools to resolve “real world puzzles” and at the same time pursuing “causal analyses, hoping to discern relationships that hold across a variety of comparable cases.”¹⁶ “Problem-driven” (or question-oriented) prominent political scientists have long argued that good research always needs to find a balance between quantitative and qualitative methods, conceptual development and theory-testing, in-depth knowledge of particular cases and generalized theories, and explaining, interpreting, and “doing” history.¹⁷

During the 2000s, case-oriented scholars fought back. Scholars of interpretive case studies embraced the claim that case studies are inherently atheoretical. On philosophical grounds, they opposed the social–scientific pursuit of explaining and predicting the social world based on generalizable causal knowledge.¹⁸ Others, however, embraced case studies from very different philosophical and methodological standpoints. They acknowledged that small-N and large-N comparative studies may have a relative advantage in hypothesis- or theory-testing because they have more reliability and leverage in terms of number of cases or observations. But, far from rejecting generalizable theoretical knowledge in their own work, they showed that case studies can also serve theory-testing. And, these scholars asserted that case studies actually have a built-in comparative advantage in theory-construction, perhaps exactly because they focus on “rare events” or “black swans.”¹⁹

These scholars maintained that while it is possible to analyze cases by disaggregating them into variables, it is frequently true that one should not reduce cases to a set of variables. Hence, “case-oriented research,” which examines cases in terms of causal mechanisms and processes has distinct advantages over “variable-oriented research.”²⁰ These contributions recognized that many case studies “in the past did not contribute much to theory development (because they) lacked a clearly defined and common focus.”²¹ Hence, they developed elaborate research designs, techniques,

and procedures, which case-oriented research could use to fruitfully engage in theory-development. In other words, what Eckstein called atheoretical “configurative-ideographic” case studies from only a subset of case-oriented research. Whether or not scholars design case studies with a view to build theory is largely a matter of choice even though this choice may often be restricted by the nature of the research question and by the availability of relevant theories and cases.²²

The way theoretically oriented scholars define case studies reflects their desire to understand the world beyond a particular case: “an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units.”²³ It would be useful to briefly recapitulate here some well-known ways of doing so based on single case studies.²⁴

One way is to engage in cross-sectional and cross-temporal, within-case (also called within-unit) comparisons. In this sense, “the case study does not preclude high-N; it simply precludes across-unit N.” Importantly, within-unit comparisons may also utilize “counterfactual reasoning,” where “the actual before and after cases” can be compared with “before and after cases as reconstructed through counterfactual reasoning,” which can draw on formal modeling or theoretical expectations.²⁵ Hence, if properly designed, the ability to make within-unit comparisons is a major comparative advantage of case studies over small-N and large-N across-unit comparative studies. This is because within-unit comparative case studies make it possible to hold constant many contextual conditions (such as geography and culture) that inevitably vary across units in small-N and large-N studies.

Another way to contribute to theory-building is with critical case studies. With some reservation, Eckstein maintained that the major theoretical utility of single case studies came from “crucial case studies,” where they could help to test theories as “black swans”:

The essential abstract characteristic of a crucial case can be deduced from its function as a test of theory. It is a case that must closely fit a theory if one is to have confidence in the theory’s validity, or, conversely, must not fit in a crucial case it must be extremely difficult, or clearly petulant, to dismiss any finding contrary to theory as simply “deviant” (due to chance, or the operation of unconsidered factors, or whatever “deviance” might refer to other than the fact deviation from theory per se), and equally difficult to hold that any finding confirming theory can might just as well express quite different regularities . . . the “least-likely” case (as in Michels) seems especially tailored to conformation, the “most-likely” case (as in Whyte and Malinowski) to invalidation.²⁶

Eckstein’s emphasis is on theory-testing and his crucial case studies would work best to test theories with a deterministic logic.²⁷ However, few social science theories have this property. Nevertheless, carefully designed crucial case studies can at least alert scientists to making additions or modifications to their theories. In recent decades, case-oriented political scientists have developed and carefully laid out tools and procedures that enable case studies to engage in theory-construction.²⁸

In particular, case-oriented researchers have highlighted that one cannot generate a causal explanation without verifying the causal mechanisms that show *how* a causal variable (causal effect) leads to a particular outcome.²⁹ Hence, a third way case studies can help to build theory is with pathway case studies. Case studies have an advantage over cross-case analyses in identifying causal mechanisms. Without establishing which causal mechanisms, and which combinations and sequences of them—i.e. which causal processes and pathways—plausibly connect a causal variable X to a causal outcome Y, the relationship between the two may be spurious or purely correlational. There is yet another reason why it is critical to identify which causal mechanisms are responsible for producing a particular outcome. Different causal mechanisms that are triggered by the same causal variable and lead to the same causal outcome can give rise to very different normative and prescriptive policy implications.

Turkey as a Critical Case of Partial Democratization

Two examples may help to illustrate these points with respect to Turkey and to some questions with which this author is more familiar in his own research. Partial democracies, which display democratic characteristics such as competitive elections together with authoritarian ones such as poor human rights records, weak rule of law, and oppressive state practices, pose particular challenges to democratization studies.³⁰ Even though extant theories would expect that these regimes should either progress toward full democracy or revert to autocracy, partial democracy often proves to be a rather persistent quality of these regimes. Against this background, the case of Turkish democratization can contribute to a better theoretical understanding of partial democracies by examining Turkey as a “most-likely crucial case,” making within-unit cross-temporal comparisons and identifying causal mechanisms. Turkey enjoys many auspicious conditions for democratization such as EU candidacy, relatively long history of democratic transition and relatively high level of economic development. According to available theories, these qualities should enable the country to develop full democracy. But Turkey has failed to do so and remains a partial democracy. If scholars can explain the reasons for this failure, this would help to better understand how partial democracy can become a durable characteristic of a political regime.

Such an analysis may suggest that the reasons go back to the initial conditions during the establishment of modern Turkey in the 1920s. The same structural conditions and elite choices that shaped this period and might have helped Turkey to become a relatively successful nation-state and democracy in a predominantly Muslim social–cultural context, might also have generated path-dependent institutional and social–cultural patterns that continue to undermine the establishment of full democracy. After the War of Independence (1919–22), an authoritarian group of secular and Turkish nationalist elites managed to sideline competing Islamic and Kurdish elites under specific historical conditions and formed a relatively stable unitary state and relatively robust secular and modern state institutions.³¹ These initial conditions and choices facilitated the transition to electoral democracy several

decades later. But they also generated a deep-seated secular–religious elite division and dilemmas of national identity, which seem to haunt the Republic to this day. The Kurdish issue may help to illustrate this point.

Democratization theories typically focus on vertical authoritarian controls, which dominant social classes or authoritarian state agencies such as the military impose on society from above and preclude democratization. They then predict that the elimination of such controls should jumpstart democratization. The Turkish case can show, however, that the very “advantages” enabling a country to achieve partial democracy can generate both vertical and horizontal social–political controls. The latter prevail among citizens themselves and equally impede further democratization. All modern states make efforts to construct a strong national identity in order to firmly establish themselves “in society,” which give rise to social–cultural resistance especially in traditional and multicultural societies.³² During its establishment period, the Turkish state succeeded in constructing and inculcating among its citizens a relatively robust national identity in a traditional and multiethnic social–cultural setting. A relatively “strong state” upheld this national identity.³³ The particular way in which the state managed to do so gave rise to the comprehensive negation of a major ethnic-national identity in society, Kurdishness. It is striking that not only Kurds’ legal and political demands, but their very existence was officially denied and “successfully” erased from the mainstream public discourse for more than six decades, even long after Turkey transitioned to multiparty electoral democracy in 1950.

According to extant democratization theories, the removal of vertical-authoritarian restrictions should have led to successful democratic change. But Turkey has been slow and hesitant in accommodating Kurdish demands even after the end of the Cold War, EU candidacy since 1999, and the practical elimination of military tutelage over civilian politics in recent years. The particular causal mechanisms through which the silence on Kurds within the mainstream public discourse gave way to partial recognition can help to explain why.³⁴ Within-unit temporal comparisons reveal that there was more or less complete silence on the Kurdish category within the mainstream discourse until the 1990s. But the taboo term “Kurd” then swiftly entered the mainstream discourse and became a frequently used category in the early 1990s. Two causal mechanisms facilitated this outcome: the weakening of vertical controls over society and the mainstream society’s lack of knowledge about Kurds. As a byproduct of the relatively successful national identity-building, mainstream Turks simply saw all Turkish citizens as one nation and had little awareness of Kurds. Hence, they did not harbor any strong positive or negative opinions about Kurds. This ignorance weakened their opposition to the discursive recognition of Kurds. However, this same factor also implied that people harbored strong and internalized beliefs about the existence of one single nation in Turkey, which is embodied in the motto “one nation, one state, and one flag.” These beliefs make it hard for mainstream political as well as social actors to recognize separate rights and institutions for Kurds.

Thus, the discursive changes during the 1990s gave rise to a bifurcated outcome among the public. For some people, silence and ignorance on Kurds was replaced by positive attitudes open to Kurdish rights. Among other segments of society,

negative and discriminatory attitudes toward Kurds were reinforced. In other words, the weakening of vertical controls produced democratizing and inclusive as well as exclusive and discriminatory, horizontal pressures vis-à-vis Kurds.³⁵ The outcome was ambiguous democratization. The theoretical implication infirming the expectations of many democratization theories is that greater political competitiveness may reinforce radicalization, in the case of Turkey among both Turks and Kurds.³⁶

Turkey as a crucial case can also help to better theorize the causal relationships between economic liberalization, political Islamism, and democratization. Which particular causal mechanisms connect Turkey's post-1980 economic liberalization/globalization to the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP)? The ascendance of the AKP led many scholars to hastily maintain that Turkey's relatively successful economic liberalization/globalization produced a Muslim democracy.³⁷ Indeed, the party's emergence was preceded and accompanied by the rise of new Islamic-conservative business classes, which benefited from economic liberalization.³⁸ But through which causal mechanisms did the new classes contribute to political transformation? Various plausible and verifiable causal processes can be responsible for this link. Did the new business classes develop more liberal economic interests and values? Did they also develop more democratic political values? If the first mechanism prevailed but the second did not, this would generate more cautious and less optimistic predictions about democratization under the AKP.

Is Turkish Studies Gaining More Theoretical Relevance?

In 2003, Quataert and Sayari observed that

The growth of research and scholarship during the past twenty years has not been accompanied by an equally significant rise in theoretical contributions to the literature in social sciences and humanities ... we cannot afford to remain narrow specialists: more of us need to become members of our disciplines first and Turkish studies specialists second.³⁹

What has changed since then? One way to try to answer this question would be by tracing publications on Turkey in top academic journals. Here, I present the findings with respect to journals in political science (PS), international relations (IR), and area studies (AS) in Web of Science (henceforth ISI) and google scholar search.⁴⁰

As an approximation, it is possible to hypothesize that the more high-ranking PS and IR journals have publications and citations of studies on Turkey, the more likely it is that these studies have general theoretical relevance and attract the interest of non-Turkey specialists. This is not to say that research in area studies do not contribute to theory-construction. As argued, well-conducted research in area studies provides in-depth knowledge about specific cases for the benefit of more general and comparative research. Many area specialists also make direct efforts to build theory. However, articles accepted for publication by high-ranking PS and IR journals are more likely to have a general theoretical dimension and influence theory-

development. Such journals often state explicitly that their evaluation criteria include whether or not submissions have general, theoretical relevance. For example, *International Organization*, which is the second highest-ranking journal in IR states that:

IO features articles that contribute in some way to the improvement of general knowledge or empirical theory defined broadly. Although we may publish a manuscript designed to propose a solution to a current world problem, we prefer to publish those that also apply theoretical ideas and findings or address general questions debated in scholarly publications.⁴¹

Similarly, *World Politics*, the top journal in IR and arguably also in PS, announces that the journal “does not publish strictly historical material, articles on current affairs, policy pieces, or narratives of a journalistic nature.”⁴² *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, the fifth highest ranking in PS, welcomes contributions to “theories on the causes of and solutions to the full range of human conflict.”⁴³

In contrast, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, which is the fifth highest ranked in AS and the highest-ranked AS journal specializing in a region that includes Turkey, does not mention theory. It welcomes “original research on politics, society and culture in the Middle East.”⁴⁴

Figure 1 and Table 1 track the total annual numbers of articles that were published in top-40 journals in PS, IR, and AS that had either “Turkey” or a related term⁴⁵ in their title or abstract, which indicates that Turkey was at least one of their major cases.⁴⁶ Comparing the period of 1990–2001 to the period of 2002–14, the total number of publications increased by 239 percent. Contributions in IR are responsible for most of the increase, closely followed by AS. The majority of the publications on Turkey are made in AS journals, even though their share diminished from 65 percent in the first period to 58 percent in the second.

How are these publications distributed among journals with different levels of ranking? Table 1 demonstrates that there were major upswings in all levels, even though most of the expansion was concentrated in lower ranking journals. The

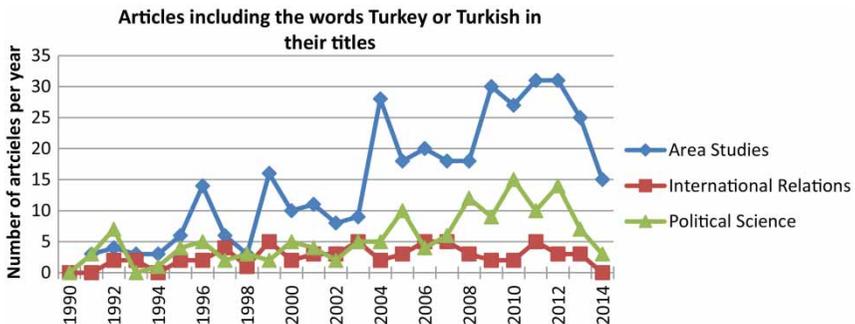


Figure 1. Annual Number of Articles Using the Turkish Case.

Table 1. Turkish Studies Publications in top-40 PS, IR, and AS Journals

	No. of articles 1990–2001	No. of articles 2002–14	No. of articles 1990–2014	Percentage rise
<i>All fields</i>				
Top-ten journals	32	82	114	156
11–20 journals	36	87	123	142
21–30 journals	12	137	149	1041
31–40 journals	78	230	308	195
All 40 journals	158	536	694	239
<i>PS</i>				
Top-ten journals	2	5	7	150
11–20 journals	21	43	64	105
21–30 journals	9	35	44	400
31–40 journals	7	22	29	214
All 40 journals	39	105	144	169
<i>IR</i>				
Top-ten journals	18	50	68	178
11–20 journals	10	39	49	290
21–30 journals	2	46	48	2200
31–40 journals	11	18	29	64
All 40 journals	41	153	194	273
<i>AS</i>				
Top-ten journals	12	27	39	125
11–20 journals	5	5	10	0
21–30 journals	1	56	57	5500
31–40 journals	60	190	250	217
All 40 journals	78	278	356	256

most impressive hikes were registered in third tier (ranked 21–30) journals. By themselves, these findings suggest that in recent years, Turkish Studies scholars made considerable progress in contributing to international journals, including theory-oriented journals.

Actual theoretical impact would occur, however, only insofar as other studies cite and make use of these studies. Tables 2–3 and Figure 2 show that in this respect, the average impact of Turkish Studies seems to have declined in recent years, except for some categories such as citations in second-tier PS journals. In the interest of space, Table 3 only shows the findings for top-10 PS and IR journals.

Are Single Case Studies Becoming More Theoretically Relevant?

The following explanation from the website of Comparative Political Studies, which was to the knowledge of this author added in recent years, suggests that single case

Table 2. Citations per Article across Periods

	1990–2001	2002–14	1990–2014
(per article) Citations of top-1–40 ISI journal articles, in top 1–40 ISI journals	1.55	1.07	1.16
(per article) Citations of top-1–40 ISI journal articles in all sources	31.37	18.04	21.64

Sources: Citations in scholar.google.com as of June 30, 2014.

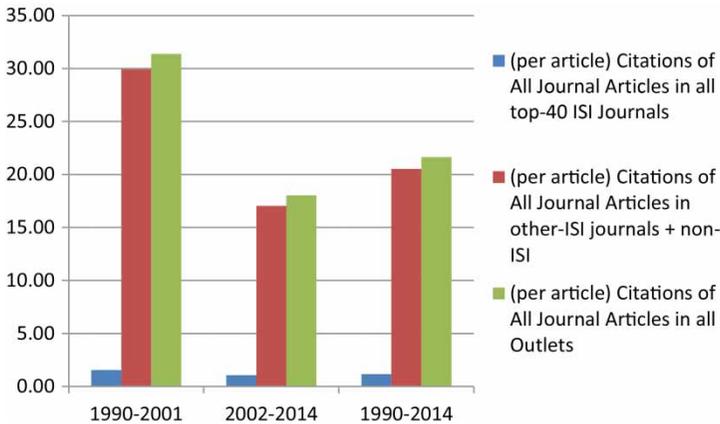


Figure 2. Citations per Article across Periods.

studies examined from a theory-relevant perspective are increasingly accepted by top PS journals (emphases mine):

Comparative Political Studies (CPS) . . . offers scholarly work on comparative politics at both the cross-national and **intra-national** levels. Dedicated to relevant, **in-depth analyses**, *CPS* provides the timeliest methodology, **theory**, and research in the field of **comparative politics**. Journal articles discuss innovative work on **comparative methodology, theory**, and research from around the world with important implications for the formation of domestic and foreign policies.⁴⁷

Indeed, Turkish Studies scholars conduct more single case studies. **Table 4** presents the rising number of single case studies in top-40 ISI journals in the three fields. The share of single case studies increased from 56 percent to 72 percent in PS, from 53 percent to 70 percent in IR, and from 64 percent to 77 percent in AS journals.

Table 3. Per Article Citations by Type of Journal and Ranking

	(per article) Citations of articles in top-ten journals 1990–2001	(per article) Citations of articles in top-ten journals 2002–14	(per article) Citations of articles in top-ten journals 1990–2014
<i>PS</i>			
In top-ten journals	2.0	1.7	1.8
In 11–20 journals	0.0	3.3	2.0
In 21–30 journals	0.5	0.0	0.2
In 31–40 journals	1.0	0.3	0.4
In all 40 ISI journals	3.0	5.3	4.4
In other ISI journals	12.0	15.3	14.0
In non-ISI publications	44.0	49.7	47.4
<i>IR</i>			
In top-ten journals	2.0	0.7	1.3
In 11–20 journals	0.5	0.7	0.6
In 21–30 journals	0.6	0.0	0.3
In 31–40 journals	0.7	0.3	0.5
In All 40 ISI journals	3.5	1.7	2.4
In other ISI journals	7.5	5.1	6.1
In non-ISI publications	48.0	36.1	41.1

Table 4. The Rising Frequency of Single Case Studies

	Turkey in a single case study	Turkey in a comparative case study	Turkey in a large-N study	Turkey in a single case study		Turkey in a comparative case study		Total
				1990– 2001	2002–14 (%increase)	1990– 2001	2002–14 (%increase)	
PS	79	37	1	15	64 (327)	12	25 (108)	117
IR	133	68	1	22	111 (405)	20	48 (140)	202
AS	248	59	1	61	187 (207)	22	37 (68)	308
Total	460	164	3	98	362 (270)	54	110 (104)	627

Many of these single case studies aim to have an impact on theory-building and explain that they treat Turkey as an example of a broader category of countries. For example, one study examining the relationship between social assistance and Turkey's Kurdish conflict formulates its main question in terms of a general question that applies to emerging economies at large: "can we argue that pressures generated from grassroots politics are responsible for the rapid expansion and ethnically/racially

uneven distribution of social assistance programs in emerging economies?” Furthermore, the article is focused on identifying a causal mechanism that explains how conflict leads to social assistance, through within-unit (regional) comparisons:

The Turkish government seems to give social assistance not simply where the people become poor, but where the poor become politicized. This provides support for Fox, Piven and Cloward’s thesis that relief for the poor is driven by social unrest, rather than social need.⁴⁸

Another article explores the answer to a puzzle that at first seems to be Turkey specific:

Why did the insurgent PKK... which was militarily defeated, which renounced the goal of secession, and whose leader was under the custody of the Turkish state, remobilize its armed forces in a time when opportunities for the peaceful solution of the Kurdish conflict were unprecedented in Turkey?

However, the study highlights that its answers are intended to inform a more general question, the relationship between democratization and management of ethnic conflict. It argues that, in Turkey and in general, “democratization will not facilitate the end of violent conflict,” if a certain causal mechanism is activated: “as long as it introduces competition that challenges the political hegemony of the insurgent organization over its ethnic constituency.” The article makes use of both quantitative and qualitative methods to reach its conclusions: “ethnographic fieldwork, statistical analyses of quantitative data (i.e. spatial clustering and ecological inference), and systematic reading of original documents.”⁴⁹

To what extent do these efforts succeed in having actual impact on other studies published in journals with a theoretical orientation? [Table 5](#) demonstrates that the average impact of these contributions in terms of citations has decreased during

Table 5. Citations of Single Case Studies

All fields, all journals	(per article) Citations of single case studies published 1990–2001	(per article) Citations of single case studies published 2002–12	(per article) Citations of single case studies published 1990–2014
In top-ten journals	0.20	0.12	0.14
In 11–20 journals	0.18	0.12	0.14
In 21–30 journals	0.12	0.14	0.14
In 31–40 journals	0.52	0.22	0.29
In all 40 journals	1.03	0.61	0.70
In other ISI journals	3.58	1.77	2.15

the last decade or so (except for a modest rise in top 21–30 journals), along with the average impact of other articles on Turkey during the same period. In particular, the average attention these studies are receiving from other studies in high-ranked journals continues to be minimal.

Conclusions

This essay argued that theory-developing critical case studies may present the most promising way Turkish Studies can utilize to simultaneously become more theoretically relevant and achieve a better understanding of Turkish society and politics. During the last decade or so, scholars of Turkey increased their visibility in terms of international publications and increasingly undertook single case studies with theoretical ambitions. However, this trend does not yet appear to have translated into higher actual theoretical impact, at least on average. In order to increase their theoretical contributions, scholars may purposefully design their studies as crucial, pathway and within-unit comparative cases and in ways that enable others to both challenge and benefit from them on empirical and theoretical grounds.

Acknowledgments

The author thanks Stockholm University Institute for Turkish Studies (SUITS) for a visiting position in 2013–14, research opportunities, and support; the participants of the Joint SUITS-ITS Symposium on Turkish Studies from an Interdisciplinary Perspective, Stockholm University, May 14, 2014, Paul Kubicek and Paul T. Levin for comments; students in my graduate comparative politics course at Koç University for inspiration, and Gitta Glüpker for superb research assistance.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes

1. Quataert and Sayari, "Introduction," x.
2. Sayari, "The Study of Turkish Domestic Politics," 43.
3. Haklai, "Authoritarianism and Islamic Movements," 28.
4. *Ibid.*, 30.
5. See Karaman and Pamuk, "Different Paths to the Modern State" for a recent major contribution by Turkey scholars.
6. With a most-different case design, this property can to some extent become an advantage. See, for example, Altınordu "The Politicization of Religion" and Zarakol, "Revisiting Second Image Reversed."
7. Eckstein, "Case Study and Theory"; George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development*; Gerring, "Is There a (Viable) Crucial-Case Method"
8. Quataert and Sayari, "Introduction," x.
9. And, depending on the nature of the study, of its near abroad.

10. Kohli et al., "The Role of Theory in Comparative Politics," 1; King, Keohane, and Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry*; Laitin, "The Perestroika Challenge to Social Science," 163; Lichbach, *Is Rational Choice Theory*; Fybjerg "Five Misunderstandings," 219; Brady and Collier, *Rethinking Social Inquiry*.
11. King, Keohane and Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry*.
12. Bates, "Area Studies and the Discipline," 31; Snow, Morrill, and Anderson, "Elaborating Analytical Ethnography," 181.
13. Caporaso, "Is There A Quantitative-Qualitative Divide," 67; Mahoney, "Qualitative Methodology," 122.
14. Munck and Snyder, *Passion, Craft, and Method*.
15. Gerring, "What is a Case Study," 341.
16. Kohli et al., "The Role of Theory in Comparative Politics," 46–47.
17. Ibid.
18. Fybjerg "Five Misunderstandings."
19. Gerring, "What is a Case Study," 90; Gerring, "Is There a (Viable) Crucial-Case Method?"
20. Brady and Collier, *Rethinking Social Inquiry*; George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development*.
21. George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development*, 70.
22. Eckstein, "Case Study and Theory," 96; George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development*.
23. Gerring, "What is a Case Study," 342.
24. Most-similar and most-different case designs are two well-known methods that are normally associated with small-N research designs but can also be utilized in single case studies as a basis of within-case comparisons.
25. Gerring, "What is a Case Study," 344; Tetlock and Belkin, "Counterfactual Thought Experiments in World Politics," 3.
26. Eckstein, "Case Study and Theory," 118–9; Gerring, "Is There a (Viable) Crucial-Case Method?"
27. Gerring, "Is There a (Viable) Crucial-Case Method?" 246–7.
28. George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development*. Also see Burawoy, "The Extended Case Method"; Snow, Morrill, and Anderson, "Elaborating Analytic Ethnography," 181 and Mahoney, "Qualitative Methodology," 122.
29. Gerring, "Case Study," 102–3.
30. Epstein et al., "Democratic Transitions," 551.
31. Findley, *Turkey, Islam, Nationalism*; Hale and Ozbudun, *Islamism, Democracy and Liberalism*.
32. Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States*.
33. Among others, Hale and Ozbudun, *Islamism, Democracy and Liberalism*. For the relation between democracy and stateness and national identity, see among others Stepan, Linz, and Yadav, *Crafting State-Nations*.
34. Somer, "Resurgence and Remaking of Identity," 591.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid; Tezcur, "When Democratization Radicalizes," 775.
37. Among others Nasr, "The Rise of 'Muslim Democracy,'" 13.
38. Gumuscu, "Class, Status, and Party," 835.
39. Quataert and Sayari, "Introduction," x.
40. This categorization is used in order to comply with the classification in ISI, even though international relations would normally be considered a subfield of political science along with comparative politics and Turkish politics. For the list of top-40 ISI journals used, see Journal-Ranking.com. <http://www.journal-ranking.com/ranking/listCommonRanking.html> (accessed on June 30, 2014).
41. http://journals.cambridge.org/images/fileUpload/documents/INO_ifc.pdf.
42. <http://www.princeton.edu/piirs/worldpolitics-journal/>.
43. <http://jcr.sagepub.com/>.
44. <http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayJournal?jid=MES>.

45. Thus, for example, an article including “Kurd” but not “Turkey” in its title or abstract but analyzes the Turkish case could potentially be included in the data. But not any such article was found.
46. 2014 figures only include those publications that were documented in ISI as of June 2014.
47. <http://cps.sagepub.com/>.
48. Yoruk, “Welfare Provision as Political Commitment,” 517.
49. Tezcur, “When Democratization Radicalizes,” 775.

Notes on contributor

Murat Somer is an associate professor of Political Science and International Relations at Koç University specializing in comparative politics, political economy, and Turkish politics and focusing on addressing questions related to democratization, ethnic conflict, and religious and secular politics. His research has been published in book volumes and academic journals, including *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *Comparative Political Studies*, and *The Middle East Journal*.

Bibliography

- Altinordu, Ates. “The Politicization of Religion: Political Catholicism and Political Islam in Comparative Perspective.” *Politics & Society* 38, no. 4 (2010): 517–551.
- Bates, Robert H. “Area Studies and the Discipline: A Useful Controversy?” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 30, no. 2 (1997): 166–169. doi:10.2307/420485
- Brady, Henry E., and David Collier. *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004.
- Burawoy, Michael. “The Extended Case Method.” *Sociological Theory* 16, no. 1 (1998): 4–22.
- Caporaso, James A. “Is There a Quantitative-Qualitative Divide in Comparative Politics? The Case of Process Tracing.” In *The Sage Handbook of Comparative Politics*, edited by Landman Todd and Neil Robinson, 67–82. Los Angeles: Sage, 2009.
- Eckstein, Harry. “Case Study and Theory in Political Science.” In *Handbook of Political Science*, Vol. 7, edited by F. I. Greenstein and N. W. Polsby, 79–137. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1975.
- Epstein, David L., Robert Bates, Jack Goldstone, Ida Kristensen, and Sharyn O’Halloran. “Democratic Transitions.” *American Journal of Political Science* 50, no. 3 (2006): 551–569.
- Fearon, James, and Alexander Wendt. “Rationalism v. Constructivism: A Skeptical View.” In *Handbook of International Relations*, edited by Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, and Beth A. Simmons, 52–73. London: Sage Publications, 2002.
- Findley, Carter V. *Turkey, Islam, Nationalism, and Modernity: A History, 1789–2007*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010.
- Fyvbjerg, Bent. “Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research.” *Qualitative Inquiry* 12, no. 2 (2006): 219–245. doi:10.1177/1077800405284363
- George, Alexander L., and Andrew Bennett. *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005.
- Gerring, John. “What is a Case Study and What is it Good For?” *American Political Science Review* 98, no. 2 (2004): 341–354. doi:10.1017/S0003055404001182
- Gerring, John. “Case Study: What It is and What It Does.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, edited by Carlos Boix and Susan C. Stokes, 90–122. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Gerring, John. “Is There a (Viable) Crucial-Case Method?.” *Comparative Political Studies* 40, no. 3 (2007): 231–253.
- Gumuscu, Sebnem. “Class, Status, and Party: The Changing Face of Political Islam in Turkey and Egypt.” *Comparative Political Studies* 43, no. 7 (2010): 835–861.
- Haklai, Oded. “Authoritarianism and Islamic Movements in the Middle East: Research and Theory-Building in the Twenty-First Century.” *International Studies Review* 11, no. 1 (2009): 27–45. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2486.2008.01823.x

- Hale, William, and Ergun Ozbudun. *Islamism, Democracy and Liberalism in Turkey: The Case of the AKP*. London: Routledge, 2010.
- Karaman, Kivanc K., and Sevket Pamuk. "Different Paths to the Modern State in Europe: The Interaction Between Warfare, Economic Structure, and Political Regime." *American Political Science Review* 107, no. 3 (2013): 603–626. doi:10.1017/S0003055413000312
- King, Gary, O. Keohane Robert, and Sidney Verba. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994.
- Kohli, A., P. Evans, P. J. Katzenstein, A. Przeworski, S. H. Rudolph, J. C. Scott, and T. Skocpol. "The Role of Theory in Comparative Politics: A Symposium." *World Politics* 48, no. 1 (1995): 1–49. doi:10.1353/wp.1995.0002
- Laitin, David D. "The Perestroika Challenge to Social Science." *Politics and Society* 31, no. 1 (2003): 163–184. doi:10.1177/0032329202250167
- Lichbach, Mark I. *Is Rational Choice Theory All of Social Science?* Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2003.
- Mahoney, James. "Qualitative Methodology and Comparative Politics." *Comparative Political Studies* 40, no. 2 (2007): 122–144. doi:10.1177/0010414006296345
- Migdal, Joel. *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society relations and State Capabilities in the Third World*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988.
- Munck, Gerardo L., and Richard Snyder. *Passion, Craft, and Method in Comparative Politics*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007.
- Nasr, Vali. "The Rise of 'Muslim Democracy'." *Journal of Democracy* 16, no. 2 (2005): 13–27.
- Quataert, Donald, and Sabri Sayari. "Introduction." In *Turkish Studies in the United States*, edited by Donald Quataert and Sabri Sayari. Bloomington: Indiana University Ottoman and Modern Turkish Studies Publications, 2003.
- Sayari, Sabri. "The Study of Turkish Domestic Politics: Continuities and Changes in Research Agendas." In *Turkish Studies in the United States*, edited by Donald Quataert and Sabri Sayari. Bloomington: Indiana University Ottoman and Modern Turkish Studies Publications, 2003.
- Snow, David A., Calving Morrill, and Leon Anderson. "Elaborating Analytic Ethnography: Linking Fieldwork and Theory." *Ethnography* 4, no. 2 (2003): 181–200. doi:10.1177/14661381030042002
- Somer, Murat. "Resurgence and Remaking of Identity: Civil Beliefs, Domestic and External Dynamics, and the Turkish Mainstream Discourse on Kurds." *Comparative Political Studies* 38, no. 6 (2005): 591–622.
- Stepan, Alfred, Juan J. Linz, and Yogendra Yadav. *Crafting State-Nations: India and Other Multinational Democracies*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011.
- Tetlock, Philip E., and Aaron Belkin. "Counterfactual Thought Experiments in World Politics: Logical, Methodological, and Psychological Perspectives." In *Counterfactual Thought Experiments in World Politics*, edited by Philip E. Tetlock and Aaron Belkin, 3–38. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996.
- Tezcur, Gunes Murat. "When Democratization Radicalizes: The Kurdish Nationalist Movement in Turkey." *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 6 (2010): 775–789. doi:10.1177/0022343310364576
- Yoruk, Erdem. "Welfare Provision as Political Commitment: The Politics of Social Assistance and the Kurdish Conflict in Turkey." *Politics & Society* 40, no. 4 (2012): 517–547. doi:10.1177/0032329212461130
- Zarakol, Ayşe. "Revisiting Second Image Reversed: Lessons from Turkey and Thailand." *International Studies Quarterly* 57 (2013): 150–162.