

Şevket Pamuk, *Uneven Centuries: Economic Development of Turkey since 1820*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018. pp. v+352. 1 map. 17 tabs. 48 figs. ISBN Hbk. 9780691166377 Hbk.£27).

This book examines the long-term economic development record of Turkey in the last two centuries from a global comparative perspective. It is the culmination of the author's work in the last forty years on the economic history of the Ottoman Empire and Turkey. In many respects, it is a one-of-a-kind study. First, the book places the Turkish experience into a global context both in terms of its economic performance and institutional change. One of its key emphasis is that Turkey is a representative developing country given it is neither at the top nor one of the worst in terms of its economic performance in the last two centuries. In other words, the book does not aim to explain the exceptional performance of the Turkish economy but its mediocrity. Second, the book brings together painstakingly constructed long-term economic statistics of Turkey from 1820 to 2015. These long-term statistics help outline the changes in GDP per capita, HDI, international trade, and other macroeconomic indicators of Turkey and will be useful source for other researchers. Third, the book explains the long-term historical reasons which affect the economic growth and development by making use of the most recent literature on *institutions*. It puts particular emphasis on the distribution of political power, cleavages and competition between different elites as well as informal institutions. The book is structured chronologically, dividing the last two centuries into four subperiods which closely follow changes in the global economy, shifts in domestic political institutions, and turning points in the Turkish economy. Recurring themes in each period focus on sources and patterns of economic growth, human development, income distribution, the role of the state in economic development, and the interaction between formal and informal institutions.

The book starts with a discussion on the Ottoman legacy before 1820 highlighting that the Ottoman institutions remained intact until the beginning of the nineteenth century leading to an institutional divergence with Western Europe. In the nineteenth century, the Ottoman government started a top-down reform programme which did not penetrate into society. As a result, the new formal institutions created economic and social cleavages and could not replace the existing informal institutions. The Ottoman economy integrated with the global economy through the rise in international trade, external borrowing and foreign direct investment directed at railways. Economic growth was achieved thanks to the commercialisation of agriculture, but the industrialisation remained limited. 1914-50 was a period of transition from empire to nation-state. One legacy of World War I was the rise of economic nationalism and government interventionism. In terms of institutional change, the new republic adopted a series of radical secularising and modernising reforms; however, similar to the previous top-down reforms, they did not penetrate into the rural areas. As a result, along with economic disparities, the embrace of Islam and the spread of informal networks emerged as another axis of opposition in the countryside. The period 1950-80 was the transition to a more competitive multi-party system. In the first decade of this period, the state-led industrialisation attempts of the earlier era were abandoned and extensive agriculture was favoured. From the 1960s onwards import substitution industrialisation became the basic economic strategy. By the late 1970s, due to the oil crises, political instability, and populist economic policies, Turkey was facing a crisis. Despite rapid economic growth thanks to high levels of protectionism and favourable global conditions;

informal institutions, such as localism and patronage networks, persisted as they mitigated the negative distributional effects of the industrialisation. The post-1980 era is examined in three sub-periods: i. until 1987, when the new economic policies aimed to replace the interventionist model; ii. 1987-2001, with political and economic instability leading to competitive politics and short-lived coalition governments; and iii. 2001-15, marked by the economic programme of 2001 and the rise to power of the Justice and Development Party. This final period itself is divided into two subperiods as the post-2008 regime is characterised by rising of an authoritarian regime, political polarisation, and deterioration of institutions. During this period, the government remained central to deciding winners in the economy by giving a privileged position to certain business groups based on their political affiliation.

One of the main arguments of the book is the persistence of informal institutions in the last two centuries as a factor limiting economic growth. This persistence is explained partly due to cleavages between different groups (i.e. Muslim vs non-Muslim, Kurd vs Turk, secular vs conservative) which made coalitions among different elites difficult and undermined the state capacity. Considering that recent political developments deepen these cleavages without offering a formal institutional framework to resolve conflicts between different elites, the book does not end with an optimistic note with regards to the trajectory of economic and political development in Turkey. Overall, this is not a book which will only be of interest to those studying on economic history of Turkey, as it offers valuable insights on the economic growth experience of developing countries in the last two centuries with an in-depth analysis of a representative case. It is likely to remain at the frontier of the literature in the decades to come and it sets the direction of the future research in the field.