

BOOK REVIEWS

Spirova, Maria (2007). *Political Parties in Post-Communist Societies. Formation, Persistence, and Change* Houndmills: Palgrave MacMillan, 214 p. + index.

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A significant bulk of literature is dedicated to political parties in states that move from (almost) one-party to multi-party system. Studies focused on the nature of party organizations, institutional and behavioral legacies of previous regimes or emphasized the role of party elites in establishing transition tracks. In this context, Maria Spirova's book continues the tradition of analyzing political parties as endogenous institutions and sees their formation and persistence in the system as ways of achieving political goals defined by rational actors. Based on existing theories of party development, this book investigates how features of political parties (i.e. ideology and development) and how exogenous factors (i.e. public financing and transnational parties) influence the electoral strategies. In doing so, it accounts for the linkages between parties on the political scene and advances a theoretical model of party

formation that is tested for six parties in Bulgaria and Hungary.¹

This research fulfills both structural and quality requirements that makes it a model to follow. Divided into six chapters, the study begins by summarizing the broader theoretical framework within which it falls and by providing a theoretical model of party evolution. The latter is seen as a repeated process in which politicians define goals, translate them into electoral targets, and choose accordingly electoral strategies. The latter choice is taken on the basis of multiple factors: the electoral threshold, electoral volatility, ideological crowdedness, ethnic heterogeneity, party financing, and party organizational development. All these are included in nine specific hypotheses to be found in the second chapter, the direction of each relationship between the choice of an electoral strategy and each factor being carefully argued. Based on interviews, party documents and statistical data, the following two chapters provide detailed comparisons and analysis of relationships for each selected party.

The fifth chapter shifts the level of the analysis to system level and besides Bulgaria and Hungary the statistical analysis includes 10 other post-

¹ The parties chosen for Bulgaria are: Bulgarian Socialist Party, Bulgarian Euro Left and the Movement for Rights and Freedoms. The ones in Hungary are: Alliance of Free Democrats, Federation of Young Democrats, and Socialist Workers' Party.

Communist party systems, chosen on their similarities in democratization. When testing the impact of expected volatility, stability of support, electoral threshold, financing regulations, and electoral system on party behavior, the author finds support for all but the electoral volatility hypothesis. The key findings, displayed in the last chapter, show that at party level the ideological position of parties and the crowdedness of the ideological spectrum, the explicit and implicit threshold of the electoral system, party financing, the expected electoral volatility, and Europarties' opinion influence the choice of an electoral strategy. At the same time, this choice appears not to be influenced by party organization. At systemic level, this study does not provide significant evidence regarding the expectation that electoral volatility is linked to the number of parties in the system, the latter being predicted by ethnic heterogeneity.

Spirova's book brings significant contributions to the literature on post-Communist political parties through its analytical and methodological approaches. In identifying the reasons and incentives for parties to compete in elections, the study raises a few relevant points. Unlike most previous studies in post-Communist world, the author argues that the system level changes are the effects of interactions among individual parties (a good reason to consider the latter as unit of analysis). Furthermore, the study discusses two often neglected factors in party development literature – party financing

and external influences. The former is operationalized, in contrast to the previously used dichotomies, as four different types ranging from least permissive to most permissive in terms of its role in the existence of independent political parties (p. 174). The evidence supports the hypothesized relationship according to which party financing type, rather than its simple presence, has to be taken into account in understanding party competition. Regarding external influences, Spirova emphasizes the role played by Europarties that provided both accession and direct and personnel assistance to national parties, thus influencing latter's electoral behavior. A more specific analytical contribution rests in considering the Bulgarian parties as central object of study. If many of the Central and Eastern European states benefit of English language literature, this study is the first to take a compared in-depth look at three important parties in the Bulgarian party system.

Methodologically, the study is complex, innovative and empirically rich in useful data for further research. They consist of the combination of 16 interviews with party leaders in 2002-2003, primary archival sources (programs, statutes, and conference and congress materials), and secondary sources in the form of statistical data. All are employed in a two-phased research design, with consecutive specific methods used for each level, which deals with both individual and party system levels in the attempt to

provide a better picture of electoral strategies. Most of the explanatory variables for electoral strategies are visible at individual party level and are qualitatively analyzed in a *small N* design. By selecting cases that differ both on independent and dependent variables, the author seeks to identify specifics of the relationships she advances in the theoretical framework. The second level of analysis, party system, is relevant as the ideological spectrum, party funding and organizational strength can be evaluated only in relationship with other players in elections.

One specific methodological issue could have been addressed more explicit by the author in order to make the case selection more comprehensive. When expanding the discussion to more post-Communist party systems, selected on the relative similarity in experience with democracy, Spirova includes Ukraine. This case is particularly different with respect to the political system as political parties did not have equal treatment during Kuchma's regime, their life and activities being closer to what we register in the other 11 cases only after 2000 (and especially after 2003). Consequently, the life of the party system is shorter and might make the cases less comparable.

The relevant theoretical elaborations, empirical tests, and analytical underpinnings and findings make Spirova's book a major contribution to the literature on party behavior in newly emerged democracies. The close

analysis of Bulgarian and Hungarian parties provides valuable insights and evidence to distinguish between factors that influence parties and party systems. In this respect, the volume is useful for both academics and practitioners as it represents a valid source of information regarding party behavior, and rational strategies.

Harald Wydra (2007). *Communism and the Emergence of Democracy*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 314 pp.

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The sudden collapse of communism and the subsequent spread of democracy in Central and Eastern Europe came as a surprise and led to considerable confusion among social scientists: How could have this have happened? How could we have failed to foresee this? Perhaps the surprise would have been smaller if one looked deeper into the communist past. In his new book *Communism and the Emergence of Democracy*, Harald Wydra aims to do what might seem paradoxical: to bring communism back into the study of democracy. Casting doubts on dominant structural and system-oriented perspectives on democratisation, he offers a fresh view on the active role of communist experience in shaping the post-communism order in the region.

At the core of his argument lies the idea of democratisation as an ongoing, potentially endless process of meaning-formation, in which significant role is played by transformative experiences. Such experiences reshape existing and generate new symbols, meanings, memories and expectations that contribute to the formation of sustainable democratic consciousness within the oppressed societies. The author presents an extensive analysis of such events, from the Russian Revolutions of 1917, to the Hungarian uprising of 1956, to the Prague Spring of 1968, and Polish ‘self-limiting’ revolution in 1980-1981. Even if, as he notices, they did not bring about democratic transitions as a new constitutional form of government, their afterlife constituted a powerful element in the political spirituality of democratisation (p. 242).

For example, the October Revolution, in the author’s view, not only institutionalised a new type of political regime, regarded later as totalitarian, but also gave rise to an entirely new form of political society. In workers’ perception, democracy and social revolution were both directed at the same goal, namely the political rejection of the “bourgeois” state. As Wydra notices, “it would hardly have occurred to any observers in late 1916 to dispute the socialists’ claim to belong to the ‘democratic club’” (p. 132). In a similar vein, the Hungarian, Czechoslovakian and Polish struggles, constituting existential crises for the

societies at hand are seen by the author as instrumental in creating a dissident ‘second reality’, or anti-politics, that at a later stage provided models, beliefs, and the spirit for overcoming autocratic rule.

Such an account goes far beyond the prevailing Cold-War perspective on communism as an essentially undemocratic, ‘wrong’ experience, or merely a burdensome legacy of totalitarian repression that preceded a new, democratic stage of political development. Moreover, the author eloquently juxtaposes the logic of outcome, dominant in ‘transitology’ studies that treat democracy as a developmental goal, a common destination or an imperative of convergence with the logic of experience that appreciates the multi-level links between a new order and the previous one.

In his critical analysis, Wydra also questions the declared triumph of both Western values and efficiency of institutional design in Central and Eastern Europe. Establishing democracy in the region, he claims, resulted rather from a “double rejection” – of external domination and of communism as a system of power based on dehumanizing violence and oppression. The author rejects the simplistic, in his opinion, interpretation of democratisation as a one-time, deliberate choice made by former communist societies at the beginning of the 1990’s based on “stable individual preferences for a well-articulated model of ‘liberal democracy’” (p. 255)

developed through reflection and rationality. Instead, he suggests, the success of democratisation was possible thanks to the lengthy formation of popular meanings and articulation of freedom in the situational logic of transformative events that took place back in the communist times. "Before democracy becomes a system in which all players play according to the rules, (...) the people in the community need to transform their spirit." (p. 280) As the author convincingly argues, we should see democracy as occurring not after the fall of, but 'within' communism.

Undoubtedly, the most valuable contribution of the book to both studies of democratisation and political inquiry more generally is the experiential approach to social reality the author introduces. It challenges a traditional way of classifying extraordinary, transformative situations that societies occasionally face as intangible disruptions to an otherwise predictable, measurable and peaceful reality. As he notes, "the crucial point is to recognise that structure and order are pregnant with disorder. This is because disorder is not brought from outside but because orderly structures bear inside themselves the potentiality of dissolution of order" (p. 43). Order-threatening, chaotic and hazardous as they are, transformative situations with their accelerated rhythms, intensified emotions, and bodily participation, the author argues, create an ontological openness in human beings and can profoundly alter cognitive frames. As a

result, they lay the ground for outcomes that are unthinkable before dramatic circumstances actually occur. The task of critical understanding, Wydra aptly remarks, should then aim at unravelling how the situational premises shift, develop, and transform from the rapture to the redress of a crisis.

The most confusing point of Wydra's work seems to be linking his well-articulated concept of democratisation as a long-term process of meaning-formation with a separate idea of democracy as a civilising process understood as the elimination of violence from power relations. Accurate as such a framing might be, it does not seem particularly novel. In particular, it can be tracked back to the analysis of the formation of modern Western societies. The concept is also influential in the theories of a state formation. Moreover, its elaboration seems confusing in the context of Central and Eastern Europe, where democratic ideas gained popularity even before communism. Finally, the argument goes beyond the central theme of the book, making it unnecessarily complicated and sometimes indeed difficult to comprehend.

Wydra's book can be of great importance given today's still unfulfilled search for the answer to why democracy works in some parts of the world and not in the other. Specifically, it provides a great insight into why democracy has endured in Eastern Europe: as its legitimation developed long before it actually appeared in a

form of constitutional government. Accordingly, we should not limit our perception of democratisations to merely setting institutional arrangements, but see them as longer processes of formation of popular democratic consciousness that take place in autocratic regimes. After all, as the author convincingly shows, democratic institutions – like medicines – succeed not only because of their quality or dosage, but also because of the nature of the body to which they are applied.

Rein Taagepera (2007). *Predicting Party Sizes: the logic of simple electoral systems*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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Building on Taagepera and Shugart's *Seats and Votes* (1989), *Predicting Party Sizes* (2007) aims to cast a new light on the voluminous and ever-expanding literature on electoral systems. Inspired by the lack of a paradigm in academic literature that would enable a consistent analysis of party systems, the author uses the simple electoral systems (First-Past-The-Post and List Proportional Representation) in order to create a model for predicting the number and magnitude distribution of political

parties. Taagepera's model stresses multiplications and power functions as the grounds for determining the relationship between the components of the electoral systems. In calculating the size of the party, Taagepera largely relies on the product of district magnitude and size of assembly, while the seat allocation formula and the ballot system - which he considers core components of electoral systems - are irrelevant to the model. *Predicting Party Sizes* is divided in three parts, with each of the chapters structured around the potential scope of interest of the three types of target audience: practitioners of politics, students of political science and researchers.

The first part of *Predicting Party Sizes* focuses predominantly on the rules of the game, emphasizing the idea from his 1989 book – that electoral systems are the Rosetta Stone for understanding some branches of the political science. The elaboration on the importance, origins and components of the electoral systems, helps understand the logic of functioning of simple and complex electoral schemes. By using the system of elimination, the subsequent chapters provide tools for understanding the deviations, the proportionality profiles, and the seat product in simple electoral systems. The first part ends with the analysis of the models constructed prior to data inputs – 'quantitatively predictive models' – which are used for calculating the 'functional form of relationship among variables' (pp.95). These models - a novelty compared to *Seats and Votes* - give an introduction

into the second part of the book, dealing with the logic of the simple electoral systems.

In the second part of the book, Taagepera develops a paradigm that defies the Duvergerian Agenda (explaining the logics of third party votes decline over the years), which was used for calculating the average seat and vote share distributions for over five decades. Instead, Taagepera advances a model that is able to describe the seat shares of each of the parties, the tenure of cabinets, the thresholds of representation and the institutional impact on votes. Aside from representing another novelty compared to the 1989 book, this paradigm offers a good lead into the last part of the book: expectancies from the electoral laws. There, the author focuses on the logic of designing electoral laws, and explains to what extent the party systems can be affected by institutional or 'politicized social cleavages', such as geography or ethnicity (pp. 277-8).

According to the author, the model makes a connection between the institutional inputs (electoral rules, etc.) and political outputs (composition of parliaments, tenure of governments), capturing the attention of a wider audience. Taagepera claims that his model will assist the practitioners of politics understand the mechanics and rules of the game, thus helping countries with short cabinet duration implement long-term policies. Certainly, he also pays attention to the pathologies of the electoral systems

(malapportionment, gerrymander, bipartisan gerrymander), yet treating them only as minor deviations, i.e. 'sources of increased noise' (pp. 36-37) in analyzing the regularities across the electoral systems. This might result as a problem for his second and third target audience - students of political science and researchers - both of whom would require a more elegant elaboration on the upshots of these pathologies on the model and their subsequent effect on the reality of party systems.

Yet, the lack of variables within the model and the substitution of theoretical deliberation with a model based on logics of sequential progression might be a direct consequence of Taagepera's academic background in natural sciences. Using the methods closer to physics than to political science makes the book appealing primarily to the analysts or scholars developing rational choice schemes. In fact, linear analysis of simple electoral systems is considered only one stage in constructing the wider model that would establish the correlations among numerous variables affecting the party sizes and seat distribution. In its final stage, this model would develop into an important tool for informed institutional design.

Similarly, the author's political activism in Estonia may have contributed to the form of the book, since each chapter initially starts with pragmatic advice for the practitioners, bullet-pointed for the purposes of clarity. The chapters further continue to explain more in detail the logical reasoning behind model, and

give it practical application in several countries, thus targeting students of political science and researchers. However, the attempt of drawing artificial lines between the three types of audience appears slightly exaggerated in the book, which might peter out the flair of Taagepera's model.

Overall, Taagepera's book is an interesting piece of reading – which still fails to address all of its target audience to the same extent. While the practitioners will probably find the extensive mathematical models tiresome, and will probably focus on the bullet-pointed summaries; the students and researchers of political party systems are likely to find these models interesting, yet they are likely to be dissatisfied by the conclusions the model proposes, as these hardly offer anything pristine. A further setback of the model is its way of dealing with the problem of endogeneity, whereby politicians decide on an electoral system which eventually reproduces the party system and congeals it in a certain form (p.7). Although Taagepera constructs a two-way relationship between the electoral system and the political parties, his model fails to consider the exogenous variables that could disturb this two-way relationship. As such, it has a higher value in description of the existing electoral systems than in analyzing or predicting the outcomes of fluctuations within those systems. Yet, as announced by the author, this model is only one stage in finding a better formula for more complex deliberations. This is likely to

occur after the adjunction of variables, which Taagepera considers important denominators for more precise predictions. Most readers of *Predicting Party Sizes*, thus, will be keen on finding out how the model develops with the inclusion of new variables.

Aliza Marcus (2007). *Blood and Belief, the PKK and the Kurdish Fight for Independence.* New York and London: New York University Press, pp. 395

Ali Kemal Özcan (2005). *Turkey's Kurds, a theoretical analysis of the PKK and Abdullah Öcalan.* London and New York: Routledge, pp. 310

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The Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) is one of the most important secular insurgent political movements in Kurdistan² and maybe even the Middle East. Unlike most Kurdish political parties, which adopted a rather conservative outlook and were organized around tribal leaders and structures, the PKK originated in the 1970s from the radical left in Turkey and drew its leaders, members and militants from the disenfranchised. Its

² Kurdistan refers to a geographical region in the Middle East covering large parts of Southeast Turkey, Northern Syria, Northern Iraq, and Northwestern Iran.

undisputed leader, Abdullah Öcalan, was born in 1947 to a poor family in Ömerli, a village in the southeastern province of Urfa, bordering Syria. The PKK's fierce stance, strong convictions, and disciplined but decentralized organization contributed to a steady rise and growing effectiveness of the party through the 1980s. After years of training, the guerrilla war for the political liberation of Kurdistan and a social revolution in Kurdish society was initiated with simultaneous raids on the gendarmerie stations and officers' apartments in the Eruh and Semdinli districts of Hakkari on the night of August 15th, 1984. When the PKK began its guerrilla campaign, the organization had no more than a couple of hundred armed fighters—within ten years this number had increased to 15,000–20,000. Today, the party is believed to have a guerrilla force of about 6,000 men and women, but its political influence on the Kurds and politics in the region exceeds this number. The PKK has been seriously understudied,³ but recently two books on the PKK have been published.

Turkey's Kurds, a theoretical analysis of the PKK and Abdullah Öcalan written by Ali Kemal Özcan takes as its starting point the question of how the PKK turned from a group of university students into a mass movement. Özcan wrote his book with inside knowledge. He received PKK educational training

in both London and the Party Central School at the Mahsum Korkmaz Academy in the Beka'a valley in Lebanon. As a trainee he interviewed Abdullah Öcalan twice. In Syrian-Kurdistan he spoke with family members of PKK guerillas who had lost their lives, and for his study in political sciences at the University of Kent he did field work Turkish-Kurdistan.

Özcan starts his analysis with a brief history of the PKK before it assumed its name, roughly the period 1971-1978. He discusses Öcalan's initial sympathy for the People's Liberation Party of Turkey THKO and the process underlying the formation of a party for the liberation of Kurdistan. This is followed by a rather extensive discussion of the PKK's political discourse and objectives, and alleged changes in these, during the two-decade period from the party's establishment in 1978 to the abduction of Abdullah Öcalan in 1999. A brief comparison of two party programs, that of 1995 and 2000, leads the author to the conclusion that the PKK has gone through a metamorphosis (p. 135). Özcan concludes that in this period the PKK emerged from (not to say threw off) its Workers Party of Kurdistan heritage, fundamentally transforming from a party of Kurdistan to a party of Turkey. This represents a profound shift indeed, certainly a metamorphosis, implying a recognition of Turkish national sovereignty (within which the claim is made for regional autonomy), rather than a fight for national independence (for what is currently Turkish

³ An exception is Paul White, *Primitive Rebels or Revolutionary Modernizers, the Kurdish National Movement in Turkey*, London & New York, Zed Books.

Kurdistan). However, such a conclusion needs more support than some evidence obtained from a comparison of two party programs. Moreover, this so-called political turn is already present in interviews with Öcalan from as early as 1993. This implies that the so-called metamorphosis is not a radical turn in politics following the detention of Öcalan, as is argued.

The discourse analysis is followed by a brief discussion of the relationship between the individual and the PKK, which revolves around the concept of ideology and party organization. The PKK, Abdullah Öcalan argues, is primarily a movement of articulating an ideology, and through this ideology the people is created. In the PKK, the Party Leadership, an abstraction referring to Abdullah Öcalan, is the ideological center. The great challenge and task every member and militant of the PKK faces is to understand Öcalan, and through him 'becoming PKK'. Ideological commitment thus becomes subordination to Abdullah Öcalan. The relation between the individual and the party is also treated through the strong commitment expected from party members. PKK membership is *all-day membership*, as it is termed, which, rather more than the name suggests, goes beyond full-time membership, abolishing the difference between public and private. Unfortunately, the author does not go beyond raising the issue. There are other points where Öcalan stops just as the discussion becomes interesting. For example, he mentions incidentally that when

husband and wife join the party, the responsibility for children is taken over by the PKK, and various arrangements exists for 'party children', depending on the condition in a particular country (pp. 158, 289). But this is all he says, no further elaboration on the kind of arrangements, the particular conditions, how the party takes over responsibility and the way these 'party-children' grow up.

Although the author has interesting data and raises interesting issues, *Turkey's Kurds* is ridden with incomprehensive language and bold generalizations. In addition to assuming, for example, that tribes are historically unchanged phenomena, the author also simply states several times that the PKK is a Marxist organization. The PKK's relation to Marxism has always been complex and it is a simplification just to hold up the PKK as Marxist. The long exposé on nation and nationalism in the beginning of the book and intended as a theoretical framework lacks clarity and focus, and only takes us to simple assertions such as: a nation is 'the population of a modern state' (p. 32) (while the fact that there is a Kurdish issue itself proves that a nation is not just the population of a state) and a nation 'is made of ethnicity' (where there is general consensus among scholars that nations are defined by culture) (p. 45).

Pertinently, Ernest Gellner, one of the leading scholars on nationalism and referred to several times in *Turkey's Kurds*, overtly rejects the idea that the

nation is an updated version of the 'ethnos', arguing to the contrary that nations depend on the abolition of the ethnos, with two empirical exceptions on this rule, the Somali's and the Kurds. This would have made an engaging starting point for analysis, but is passed over. All in all, it is to be regretted that Özcan put so much effort into summarizing different notions of nations and nationalism, which keeps on popping up in the book, rather than putting more effort into building up a case from his potentially rich empirical data.

Blood and Belief is written by Aliza Marcus, former international press correspondent who covered the PKK for more than eight years, first as a freelance reporter for the Christian Science Monitor and later as staff writer for Reuters. Through the eyes of participants, Marcus discusses PKK milestones, including: the foundation of the party in 1978 in a village called Fis, in the district of Lice, north of Diyarbakir; the struggle in Hilvan, where the PKK engaged in a fight with a tribe loyal to the state, but disliked among the local population; and the assault on Mehmet Celal Bucak, a high-ranking member of the conservative Justice Party and exploitive landlord in Siverek. The planned assassination was not only a spectacular example of propaganda-of-the-deed, in this case to announce the establishment of the PKK, but also revealed much about the PKK philosophy and *modus operandi*. It was a declaration of war against the *comprador*, the landlord class

collaborating with the Turkish state. Somehow missing, unfortunately, is a treatment of the killing of Haki Karer, in his student years a housemate of Abdullah Öcalan. Not a Kurd but a Turk from Ordu, Haki Karer belonged to the small group of confidants from which the PKK emerged. He was killed in Antep in 1977, allegedly by members of a rival Kurdish group. In the party's historiography, the death of Haki Karer is related to the decision to deepen and strengthen the struggle and to establish a party: the PKK. Yet his brother and co-founder of the PKK, Baki Karer, later claimed his brother had been killed after a disagreement with Abdullah Öcalan.

Even though *Blood and Belief* includes a small section treating the period 1999-2007, the book actually ends in 1999. This explains why the split of the PKK-Vijin group led by Mehmet Şener and Sari Baran is discussed, in interesting detail, but an internal struggle within PKK-KADEK in the period 2000-2004 is unfortunately not. The latter saw some high ranking PKK cadres trying to reform the party from within, and end the situation in which Abdullah Öcalan directed the party from the prison-island of Imrali through meetings with his lawyers. Following their failure to reform the party, this group of PKK cadres left the party – among them Nizamettin Taş, Central Committee member since 1986, and after Sari Baran's departure the highest commander of the ARGK and Osman Öcalan, the brother of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan. They established a

new party called the Patriotic Democratic Party (PWD).

Most striking is the section on the course of the war after 1993, when the army changes its strategy and the PKK begins to lose ground, literally. The new approach, referred to as the 'field domination doctrine' implied, among other things, that the armed forces would abandon the approach of garrison-line-of-defense and went instead for hot-pursuit. This new doctrine was also associated with the evacuation and destruction of thousands of rural settlements, according to many experts a constitutive part of the counter-insurgency of the Turkish Armed Forces. Quoting guerilla commanders at that time, Marcus gives ample evidence of how the new war strategy of the Turkish armed forces changed the relations in the field. Not only was the guerilla cut off from its support and supplies, the units were also immobilized. The PKK couldn't move around as easily as before (p. 223). Yet Abdullah Öcalan wanted his fighters to speed up the fight and increase the size of battalions to create liberated areas. The conditions of war have changed, however, and this strategy only resulted in more losses (p. 241) Not before PKK commanders have commented on this phase of the war, making their reflections among the most important in the book.

Aliza Marcus got most of her data from PKK dissidents. The list of interviewed dissidents is impressive, among them activists who already had joined the

organization before it became the PKK in 1978, and field commanders of the PKK's armed wing, the ARGK. The interviews with these dissidents are an important source of information and it may be a good idea to publish their transcripts, perhaps as an annex to the book in a second edition. If it comes to recommendations, a map of the Kurdistan region indicating the location of some of the frequently mentioned places, such as the Haftanin or the Lolan camps, would have been rather useful (in addition to the map of Turkey already included). A shortcoming for a book about the PKK is that no (senior) PKK member loyal to the party has been interviewed (e.g. Murat Karayılan, Duran Kalkan, Ali Haydar Kaytan, Zübeyir Aydar, and Cemil Bayık)

Blood and Belief has a clear structure, telling the story of group and party-formation, development and growth, and the major set-backs the PKK experienced. Nevertheless, the book does not follow a simple 'rise and fall' pattern. On the contrary, Marcus discusses how the PKK again and again succeeds in reinventing itself, coming back after virtual defeat. To its merit, the book is a good read, compelling and vivid, mainly because Marcus approaches her subject through the stories of those who once played a role within the PKK. As a result, *Blood and Belief* is a rich source and valuable contribution to the social and political history of the PKK in particular, and to the Kurdish national movement and Kurdish studies in general. Notwithstanding the omissions, it is

highly recommended to all those interested in the PKK and its wider context, guerrilla politics and the ongoing situation in the region.

Finally, the publication of these two books brings to our attention the fact that so little is written about the PKK in English. This is an enormous demerit of Kurdish and Turkish (and Middle Eastern) studies, since the PKK has been and still is one of the most important secular insurgent movements in the region.