

# Twisting in the Wind: The Politics of Tepid Transitions to Renewable Energy

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The book analyses the transition to renewable energy in Türkiye, which, according to the Bayulgen, is the country in the world that needs it the most to reduce its current account deficit, energy insecurity, and increasing environmental degradation. Chapter one is an introductory chapter and draws the general framework for the study. The main puzzle of the book is why renewable energy reforms stagnate over time despite favourable economic and technical conditions and why it is hard to increase renewable energy against fossil fuels. These questions are important to detect if the factors necessary to initiate pro-renewable policies are different from those that are necessary to sustain them. The Turkish case shows how governments can implement renewable energy reforms under external pressures to meet increasing energy demand without an ideological commitment to the environment. Therefore, clean energy reforms are not always motivated by societal demands. Once the reforms are enacted by the hand of a narrow governing circle more easily, more democracy is needed to sustain them to break the incumbent position of fossil fuel companies. Thus, the author claims that the drivers of initial reforms are crises, opportunistic elites, and concentration of power; while the drivers of sustainable reform are representative institutions and professional bureaucracy.

Chapter two focuses on governments' policies as the main determinant of the renewable energy transition by perceiving the sector as a baby industry which cannot be left to the "mercy" of market forces and should be protected with a strategic industry perspective. Oksan Bayulgen claims that without well-designed and sustained support, renewables do not have a chance against fossil fuels because, she argues that low energy density and the intermittent nature of renewable energy sources, along with the necessity of huge investments into transmission infrastructure between centres of demand and production and high capital expenditures of renewables function as barriers to wider utilisation.

Against this backdrop, the author claims that Türkiye is in an energy paradox in which country's long term energy and economic interests require further utilisation of renewables, but this cannot be achieved due to governments' short-term political interests. For this reason, despite abundance and feasibility of renewable energy alternatives, Türkiye cannot bypass the vested interests of the fossil fuel industrial complex. Therefore, the main barrier to renewables in Türkiye is the unsuitable policy environment. This is why the author argues that policy environments are a better predictor of the pace and nature of energy transitions than the market and technological barriers and that clean energy transitions are neither linear nor inevitable; the governmental policies define their success.

Chapter three asks why a global clean energy transition is not happening fast to effectively erode the dominance of fossil fuels, by problematising why and how politics matters for energy transitions and borrows from historical examples. The author observes that renewable energy reforms are generally triggered by a crisis or when governments find them "convenient"; and she anticipates that more democratic systems can rein the rent-seeking inclinations of politicians by forcing them towards comprehensive reforms. Here the problem is that clean energy transition is a political process which can only be realised politically and enforced through public bodies by escaping from carbon lock-in. Since the political settings are different, experiences of developed countries cannot serve as examples to developing or the least developed countries. The author answers how politics matter by analysing what she calls agency factors and landscape factors.

The agency factors depend upon advocacy coalitions framework; according to which, policy actors who share similar beliefs and interests, pursue parallel objectives. This framework highlights distributive conflicts among competing groups. On the other hand, the landscape factors are the demographic, industrial, economic, and geographic attributes of the countries in addition to features of the international system. Among the landscape factors, Bayulgen examines the role of crises in terms of weakening the opposition opening space to exogenous ideas, macro-level socioeconomic factors, and institutional factors.

Chapter four deals with the question why the Turkish government embarked on renewable energy reforms when it did, and what forces explain how the sector developed over time. The chapter examines role of energy and economic crises in energy reforms, exhibits how external actors pressure the government, and reviews the environmental literature in Türkiye with numerous interviews. In this chapter, the author argues that the grassroots pressures for clean energy reforms in developed countries were largely ineffective in Türkiye. Her second argument is that the main driver of the Turkish energy reform was calculations of governments to generate fast economic growth in order to increase electoral support. Thirdly, she defends that growth of renewables in Türkiye was realised because Turkish governments perceived them as a means to adapt to the internationally sanctioned neoliberal economy package. According to the author, from a historical perspective, early renewable energy development in Türkiye should be taken as a pragmatic response to economic crises and other energy related problems like price shocks and high dependency on foreign supplies.

The societal pressures is another issue on which the chapter focuses. Although Turks generally care about the environment, due to historically structured top-down decision-making mechanisms, policies are made with weak participation. The chapter examines several local environmental movements and finds out that both civil environmental organisations and business lobbying groups lack the cohesion and strength to influence policies. The author develops the discussion by asking what drove governments to promote renewable energy development initially. She claims that it was the ruling party's (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) obsession with economic growth; by promoting renewables, AKP targeted opening new fields for neoliberal economic growth and increasing energy supply security. Besides, new rent sources were created to feed the government's ambitions.

Chapter five deals with the question of what the Turkish governments' motivations are for insisting on the conventional energy resources despite economic, strategic, environmental benefits and external and domestic pressures for a clean energy transition. The author argues that the main motivation has been the governing elites' interest in legitimising and financing their hold on power; that is to say, energy policies in Türkiye have targeted reaping financial, electoral and external support for political survival. Therefore, AKP has bought the loyalty of the bourgeoisie with lucrative energy deals and provided financial support to the government. Additionally, some segments of society favoured AKP in exchange for jobs and subsidised energy prices. The author claims that the 2008 economic crisis set AKP free in concentrating economic power in certain "pro-government" hands in the absence of an external disciplining factor. Thus the governments have provided their supporters with guaranteed business opportunities through an aggressive commodification of the commons.

Bayulgen asks what explains this hybrid structure and finds her answer in historical legacies of state developmentalism in Türkiye and pragmatic political interests. All grandeur dams or nuclear projects were seen as symbols of developmentalism. Also, she identifies five mechanisms through which the Turkish governments boosted the fortunes of select energy companies as follows: exploiting deals for public procurement and privatisation; fine tuning deregulatory measures according to their own agenda; bypassing judicial oversight, and creating generous subsidies. Alongside these mechanisms, AKP secured electoral support with lavish energy subsidies; for example, free delivery of coal from municipalities or increasing share of social transfers.

Chapter six concludes the book. Firstly, the author stresses the significance of political reasons for why certain energy policies are prioritised and how energy restructurings are initiated and sustained. Secondly, she claims that energy transitions are not inevitable or linear and are affected by political interests. Thirdly, she endeavoured to shift geographical focus from western countries to developing countries which are also the largest carbon emitters. Lastly, she suggests that policy implementation as an overlooked dimension of policymaking is significant. Bayulgen concludes the book with these contributions to the field.

The book, with its clean narrative and systematic structure, is highly beneficial for researchers who ask why clean transitions are stalled and fragmentary. On the other hand,

it is not without problems as well. Particularly, the book lacks some concrete examples in especially two key points. Firstly, the book argues that more democracy can protect renewable energy reforms from stalling. Yet, this relationship between democracy and renewable energy is not presented well and concretely. Secondly, the book explains the unsustainability of energy reforms by mainly focusing on the political factors. However, the problem is that these political factors do not only affect the energy reforms, but also the entire liberal economy of the country. The Turkish economy becomes increasingly a state-controlled economy and stalling energy reforms may be a mere reflection of this trend. Yet a detailed analysis of this trend is out of the scope of the book. In general, the book is a significant contribution to our understanding about Turkish renewable energy policy reforms.