

KİTAP TAHLİLLERİ / *BOOK REVIEWS*

THE MIDDLE EAST AND EUROPE: THE POWER DEFICIT

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The book mainly focuses upon the new opportunities which Europe have in the Middle East after the end of the Cold War. North Africa is also included in the term 'Middle East' by the authors. It discusses about the changes in international politics by the end of the Cold War and the possible chances of Europe to restore its influence in the Middle East.

The book is composed of 9 chapters written by 8 different authors. The first chapter of the book -as the **introduction**- was written by **B.A. Roberson**. In the introduction, it is told about the European legacy in the Middle East and then about the US' becoming of the dominant actor in the region. Europe has very ancient ties with the Middle East. In the Ottoman period, the European states had Capitulations agreements with the Ottoman Empire. Via these agreements, the European states conducted significant economic relations with the region. The end of the First World War marked the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the Middle East region came into the influence of Britain and France. Britain and France controlled the region upon the mandates formed by their manipulations. However, after the end of the Second World War, the European states left their preponderance in the region to the United States. The US and the Soviet Union were the main actors in the region during the Cold War. European states, far from being able to exert influence, could merely support US policies in the region during the Cold War. The main focus of Europe became economic benefits it could reap by increasing its trade with the region. After the Cold War, the US continues to act as the dominant actor in the political sphere of the region. However, some objections started in Europe to the US policies. Europe is in an effort to rebuild its influence via its strong and ever strengthening economy. But the US is still the main military actor in the region and the world, which has also been playing a vital role in the defence of the European continent.

The second chapter of the book was written by **Ghassan Salame** and titled "**Torn Between the Atlantic and the Mediterreanean: Europe and the Middle East in the post-Cold War era**". There are significant differences between the European view of the Middle East and the expectations of the Middle East from Europe. While the Europeans view the Middle East with security concerns, the Middle Easterners expect Europeans to take steps for economic development, fair resolution of the Palestinian problem and free movement. There are 3 different views of Middle East from Europe: The first group even questions the European links with the region. The second group favors the minimization of relations with the region, and

the third group favors the stabilization of the region via solidifying links with the region. But, the third group started to be marginalized in Europe. Because Europe is concerned with 'more important' issues like the integration of Eastern Europe, the stabilization the Balkans. The biggest reason of the inability of the Europeans to form an integrated policy towards the Middle East is that: While the Europeans tend to view Middle East with security concerns, no competences exist in the framework of the European Union in the field of security. This leads to the situation that Europe can only exert influence in peace time in the Middle East. In addition, problems like the dominance of the US in the Gulf, its role in the Arab-Israeli conflict and many conflicts unresolved in the region limit the scope of the role that Europe may play. However, Clinton administration began to give priority to the Pacific region and this will increase the maneuver capability of Europe.

The third chapter of the book was written by **George Joffe** and titled '**Relations between the Middle East and the West: The view from the south**'. After the Cold War, there emerged sharp differences between the states in the region in terms of defining their national interests. Concepts like sovereignty, security, economic restructuring got more significant in this new era. The West was the key figure in citing these issues on the agenda of the Middle East countries. The Middle East peace process was also inaugurated with the initiative of the West. After the Cold War, the real pressing issue in the countries of the Middle East is the problem of the governments in providing themselves popular legitimacy. The interventions and reform demands of the Western world are being resented by the peoples of the region, since the conditionality of the international finance institutions like the World Bank and the IMF dictates neo-liberal solutions and these policies proved to be worsening the situation.

The fourth chapter was written by **Phebe Marr** and titled '**The United States, Europe and the Middle East: Cooperation, co-optation or confrontation?**' There seems to be no serious differences between the two sides of the Atlantic over the aims on the Middle East. However, there appears to be some different views about policy priorities, tactics and methods concerning the region. These differences do not seem to lead to the break up of the Atlantic alliance, but they may lead to some difficulties in creating out of area missions in the framework of NATO. Persian Gulf is the main cause of differences between Europe and the US. While the US exercises a policy of 'Dual Containment' against Iran and Iraq which are hostile to US, European states object to this kind of harsh policies and favor more accommodation with Iran and Iraq, since Europe has more economic interests in the region rather than the US. Then, the problem of burden sharing emerges in the sense that US is assuming most of the bill in achieving the continuous course of trade and the secure flow of energy resources from the region thanks to its military deployments, however, Europe is the main beneficiary of trade with the Middle East without seriously contributing to the regional stability in military terms. The Middle East peace process is an area of common interests, both for Europe and the US. However, any failure in the process may inversely increase the tensions between the two sides about the responsibility of that failure.

The fifth chapter titled '**Islam and Europe: An enigma or a myth?**' was written by B.A. Roberson. Islamic movements in the Middle East emanate from the low

quality of governance, low economic performance and corruption rather than the strength of Islamism as an ideology. The Europeans have started to see Islam as a threat to themselves especially after the Iranian Islamic Revolution and due to their experiences with the Muslim societies living in Europe. However, Islam is a pluralist religion composed of many branches and many kinds of different practices, it does not constitute a unit body although it gives its followers a common sense of belonging. So, Islamism does not have a potential of forming a serious threat to the western world, since the main causes of rising Islamism are in the framework of domestic grievances. The Middle Eastern states have a wide range of interests and a single definition of interests in the framework of a united Muslim state seems impossible.

The sixth chapter titled '**Western Europe and the Iranian revolution, 1979-97: An elusive normalization**' was written by Fred Halliday. After the revolution, the foreign policy of Iran was conducted by a revolutionary agenda in international politics while foreign policy was also influenced by more cautious and realist views. It was expected that Europe would have much warmer relations with Iran compared to the US, since it has more interests in the region economically and historically. But there were some issues like Rushdie, human rights, military expenditure, and the Iranian stance on the Arab-Israeli peace process which were forming a barrier to the further improvements of relations between Iran and Europe. Nonetheless, Europe also developed its trade with Iran despite not involving in closer ties like cooperation for the economic development of Iran. Iran's confrontation with the US was also another significant factor disaffecting the relations between Europe and the West. At the end of the 1990s, voices for moderation and more accommodation with the external world increased due to the poor economic performance of the Islamic Republic. These voices resulted in the election of Khatami, in 1997, which came with a more moderate stance.

The seventh chapter titled '**Turkey: Europe in the Middle East, or the Middle East in Europe?**' was written by Philip Robins. It is argued in this chapter that the end of the Cold War altered the strategic perceptions of Turkey in a significant degree. With the end of the Cold War, the main threat, the USSR, disappeared and that weakened the situation of NATO which was established directly against the USSR. This situation led to the questioning of Turkey's European vocation and even its will to join the EU. However, Turkey is transforming profoundly and its liberalizing economy is strongly connected with the European economy. Thanks to this intensity of economic relations with Europe, there is a strong support in Turkey for European integration. Although it is a reality that Turkey can not exclude itself from the politics of the Middle East, the majority of the Turkish population is not fond of a Middle Eastern identity and Middle East can not be seen as an alternative of Europe.

The eighth chapter titled '**Algeria: France's disarray and Europe's conundrum**' was written by Claire Spencer. The determination of the reasons and the responsible ones for the violence in Algeria constitute a challenge to Europe. This became more difficult for Europe in a situation that the EU was in talks with Algeria for concluding a bilateral EU-Algeria Association Agreement. Also international humanitarian law is weak in terms of external intervention in a situation when a government is not able to protect the lives of its own citizens. For effectively intervening

in order to prevent this kind of destabilizing events, a 'Charter for Peace and Stability', which was envisaged to be established in the framework of Barcelona process, may be effective. Nonetheless, it is questioned why Europe stayed so late in taking a step during a violent event, although Europe is so keen to establish new parameters for its post-Cold War security structures.

The ninth and the last chapter titled '**Middle Eastern trade and financial integration: Lessons from the European Union's experience**' was written by **Rodney Wilson**. In this chapter, the author defines some priority areas for economic cooperation in the Middle East and for economic integration. It should be firstly decided upon the form of cooperation: will a free trade area or a customs union or a single market be composed? The author states that a free trade area is the most viable form of economic cooperation between the Middle Eastern states, since all of them may easily participate in it. States may also form a monetary cooperation in the form of the Palestinian currency as a symbol while states are keeping their monetary independence or a common currency may also be established and the integration process may be founded upon that.

The book is an important source of information in explaining the situation and the alternatives of Europe in the Middle East. Almost all the authors accept that the Middle East is much more important for Europe than the US. However, while viewing the region with security concerns, the EU lacks an effective mechanism for conducting an effective common foreign policy. This book is original in examining the Middle East in terms of European politics and transatlantic relations, trying to explain the political situation from both economic and security dimensions.