

Olson, Robert. *Turkey-Iran Relations, 1979–2004: Revolution, Ideology, War, Coups and Geopolitics*. Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2004. 317 pp.

There is a good body of literature that addresses the complexity of Turkish foreign policy, including relations with the various neighboring regions: the Balkans, the Caucasus, Central Asia, Europe, and the Middle East (Idris Bal, ed., 2004; Lenore Martin and Dimitris Keridis, eds., 2004; Philip Robins, 2003; Nasuh Uslu, 2003; Stephen Larrabee and Ian Lesser, 2003; Michael Radu, ed., 2002; Hrair Dekmejian and Hovann Simonian, 2001; Barry Rubin and Kemal Kirisci, eds., 2001; William Hale, 2000; Heinz Kramer, 2000). Limiting his attention to the eastern semi-circle of the country, in an earlier study Robert Olson (2001) narrowed the level-of-analysis from region to country in assessing dyadic relations with Iran, Israel, Russia, and Syria. In *Turkey-Iran Relations, 1979–2004: Revolution, Ideology, War, Coups and Geopolitics* he narrows his scope even further for an in-depth look at the interactions between two important non-Arab, Muslim regional actors.

Given the dearth of literature on Turkish-Iranian relations, which launched the book project in the first place, Olson makes a significant contribution to the literature on the Middle East in general and Turkish foreign policy in particular. Also, the work provides a useful insight into Iranian foreign policy dynamics. He analyzes Turkish-Iranian interactions within the framework of Steven David's "omnibalancing theory," with homeostatic attention to a montage of external and internal threats facing a regime. The last three chapters, accounting for over one-third of the book, incorporate the Second Gulf War and provide a window into the war and "peace" in Iraq.

In addition to examining Islamic resurgence in Chapters 1–2, the first three chapters draw extensively on Olson's earlier work (2001) in exploring Kurdish nationalism. A leading authority on the matter, his expertise is manifest in these chapters in detailing changes in political environment and the resultant shifting alliances of the various Kurdish factions. Whereas the Turkish authorities are obsessed with the destabilizing consequences of Kurdish nationalism, and hence suspicious of continuing *peshmerga* presence in northern Iraq during coalition occupation, the author highlights a mirror-image for the Iranian leadership concerning Azeri nationalism. Even though Israeli access to Azerbaijan through the Turkish corridor was unnerving to Iran, and the latter's support for Armenia has been an irritant for Turkey, it is noteworthy that Turkish-Iranian bilateral relations were not ruptured. For its part, the Israeli card—and Iran's preoccupation with the Taliban regime in Afghanistan—emboldened Turkey in neutralizing Syria's maneuverability

regarding the Kurdish question and further weakened Iran's hand in dealing with Turkey.

Drawing attention to the Caspian Sea Basin the author underscores the geopolitical variable in Chapters 4–5. While the Caspian Pipeline Consortium—which included Oman, Russia, and the US (Exxon-Mobil and Texaco)—excluded Iran from the distribution network, Turkey agreed to complete the Tabriz-Erzurum pipeline for Iranian gas to reduce Turkey's dependence on Russia. In fact, as the author illustrates, *realpolitik* has given rise to strange alliances in the region: within the larger context of Azerbaijan-Georgia-Israel-Turkey entente versus Armenia-Iran-Russia axis, Iran and Turkmenistan joining against Azerbaijan over the Caspian Sea oil fields. Receiving the second largest share of Azeri oil exports Israel has its own stake in the Caspian Sea Basin. And the Israeli connection is valued by Turkey for closer relations with the US. Desiring lucrative trade for its defense industry, in turn, the Israeli link is a motivation for Russia's cooperation with Turkey.

There are a few minor caveats to this fascinating study, however. First, given that the chapters are not organized along the five variables identified, which are not even listed in the index, and scant attention is given to “Coups” (pp. 197–202, 241), it is not certain (to this reviewer) that much would have been lost without the subtitle. Second, the attempt to “decontextualize” (p. xxiv) the Turkish-Iranian dyadic relationship within the “penetrated subsystem” of the Caspian Sea Basin, which is a difficult proposition to begin with, was modestly successful. Third, with the attention to Azerbaijan, there is relative silence about pipeline politics for the huge oil reserves in Kazakhstan. Fourth, even though the difference is minuscule, instead of giving the range for public opinion polls the author settles for the higher favorable number (pp. 177, 189, 199). Fifth, the apparent rush to print has left a few typing errors, which reflect more on Mazda Publishers than on the author, such as identifying Turkey as a “non-Muslim” (p. 138) member of NATO. Finally, a list of acronyms would have been useful. Some would find the book a welcome countervailing argument against neoliberal institutionalism and the “democratic peace” theory—as well as Barry Rubin's (2002) “paradigm lost” thesis. The broader question of a US-Israel grand design, to the detriment of the Palestinians, is thought-provoking. For the author, what the Pentagon calls “Three Tiers of Defense”—local, regional, and the US (Jeffrey Leffbvre, *International Studies Perspectives*, May 2003)—connote a security pecking-order involving Turkey, Israel, and the US (pp. 105, 150, 251).

An outstanding research (including a Turkish language newspaper source) with interesting anecdotes—Islamic feminism, political assassination,

civil-military relations, pipeline politics, economic zone, neo-conservative indignation, Shi'ite intricacy—and insightful analysis, the lucidly written book is a treasure-trove of information. The maps are excellent, and the political group list and bibliography are helpful. Those specializing in the Middle East, particularly with an interest in Turkey or Iran as well as conflicts in the region, should not miss an opportunity to read the book.

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Mitchell, Timothy. *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity*. CA: University of California Pres, 2002. 413 pp.

*Rule of Experts*, an odd title for a book on modern Egypt, is an exhaustive account of the modern economic development of Egypt from about the mid 1930's to the present. It examines the creation of that economic life including the issue of "political expertise," in the "post colonial" period, meaning since independence. The study criticizes the work of the IMF and that of USAID, as to their adaptability and the assessment of their goals.

Timothy Mitchell is a professor of politics at New York University and his study is the result of several field-trips to Egypt, for over a decade. This first hand study observes the operation of Egyptian economic life.

Mitchell's study focuses on "techno-politics" which tries to administer the theory and practice of modern western economics in a tribal peasant economy. (This is similar to the attempts of the Lebanese government's techno-cratic cabinets trying to solve Lebanon's socio-political problems along western lines.) Perhaps the real problem is that the models do not fit the prevailing situations!

*Rule of Experts* repeats the omen that you can not graft western (modern) political democracy, economic capitalism or liberal socialism onto an Islamic, tribal, society, without major attempts at synthesis and accommodations. This study is an excellent lesson for other Third World nations. It is very well research from both Arabic and Western sources and studies.

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