

Women and Slavery in the Late Ottoman Empire: The Design of Difference

By *Madeline C. Zilfi*

New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 281 pages, ISBN 9780521515832, \$95 (hardback).

Professor Zilfi, a well-established, leading historian of the Ottoman Empire, has joined the small but constantly growing group of scholars interested in the study of Ottoman enslavement. Her current book is a most welcome addition to the second wave of studies devoted to the complex history of the practice, which is one of the most diverse and multi-faceted phenomena in the annals of human societies. While Zilfi clearly contributes to the discourse about the topic, she—refreshingly—does not pretend to reinvent the wheel, but rather treats the works of her predecessors with respect, fully engaging with their studies and demonstrating remarkable understanding of the intricacies they sought to explain in an area that had been uncharted territory.

The first wave of such studies began in the late 1970s and early 1980s, following the pioneering work of scholars like Brunschvig and Lewis, while the second came during the first decade of the twenty first century. These works were mostly concerned with locating the sources and providing the basic elements that made up the system of hunting down individuals outside the Empire, enslaving and transporting them into its domains, and then exploiting their labor and sexuality in urban and rural communities within its boundaries. They have, therefore, relied mostly on archival and narrative sources in manuscript form, and consequently utilized published accounts to a more limited extent. Madeline Zilfi reverses that order of things: she stresses the

accounts that had been neglected by earlier writers on enslavement, providing what is undoubtedly the most exhaustive synthesis of such sources (peppered with a few cases from the *Müftülük* of Istanbul, which, based on the author's previous work, offers less archival evidence than this reviewer had expected).

Thus, Professor Zilfi presents the most comprehensive treatment of Ottoman enslavement to date, in what might be described as a re-interpretive work, rather than one that unearths new and inaccessible sources. This is certainly not meant as a detraction from the clear value of *Women and Slavery in the Late Ottoman Empire*; rather, it is a tribute to the author, who managed to revise some of the main notions in the field about what enslavement was like for the individuals who endured it and for the men and women who enslaved them. Zilfi's reading of the sources and the literature brings to the fore the socio-cultural and the human, and positions her as the prosecutor of the Ottomans on account of this heinous practice. In that, she does not break new grounds, but rather stresses, underlines, and further elaborates the position taken by the leading writers on Ottoman enslavement, an achievement that is nonetheless well worth the effort.

Although *Women and Slavery in the Late Ottoman Empire* seeks to deal with just that, it is in fact a far more ambitious endeavor. It purports to provide a comprehensive account of Ottoman "state and so-

ciety,” as Chapter 1 clearly demonstrates. In *Empire and Imperium*, as the titles of the subsections indicates, Zilfi talks about: Imperial Istanbul, Seeing Like the Ottoman State, and Patriarchal Patterns. She identifies five hierarchical “dualities,” which undergirded the Ottoman worldview: the first was external, between the Abode of Islam and the Abode of War; the other four were internal, beginning with the Muslim/non-Muslim, going through the *askeri/reaya* and free/slave, and ending with gender categories. The author admits the overlapping that existed between these “polarities,” but still finds them useful in her attempt to grasp the vast notion of *Ottomanness*. The depiction of socio-cultural realities that precedes and follows that section is interesting and useful, but it really relates much more to Istanbul than to the rest of the Empire (see further blow on this).

Nevertheless, there are three major achievements in Zilfi’s book, which deserve mention even in a brief review. The first is her success in contextualizing Ottoman enslavement: socially, culturally, and politically. Following Peirce and myself, the author rightly sees military-administrative enslavement as belonging to the same category as the other, less glorified forms of bondage, which enables her to integrate all aspects of the institution. She goes beyond what has been achieved thus far in showing that enslavement was part and parcel of the Ottoman way of life, in fact inseparable from what the Ottoman Empire was all about. This also brings her to assign greater importance to enslavement in Ottoman societies than is usually acceptable in scholarly writings of the past quarter century (more on this below).

The second accomplishment is putting to sleep, once and for all, what I have called

the “good treatment thesis,” namely the apologetic argument that Ottoman, and by extension Islamic, enslavement was milder than slavery in other societies (the “part of the family” argument). Zilfi deconstructs the notion aspect by aspect, unrelentingly showing that in no part of the practice—including *kul*-harem enslavement—was there any possibility to sustain such a false, forgiving evaluation of what being enslaved really meant in the lives of the women and men who had to endure it. Although I have adopted a similar position on the issue, Zilfi’s forceful and passionate arguments surpass what has been argued in this regard before.

The third major achievement of *Women and Slavery in the Late Ottoman Empire* lies in the gendered view it applies to the study of Ottoman enslavement. Again, here Zilfi is not the first to be aware of the need to provide such perspective, but she does take it to new levels. “The centrality of women and female slavery, as social realities and as representations of Ottoman sovereignty and its vulnerabilities in the period of study,” she states at the outset, “constitutes the core argument of the book and the main counterpoint to the conventional wisdom.” (xi-xii) Indeed, her gendered reading of the sources provides new insights into not only enslavement, but also the entirety of social and political interactions in Ottoman societies, though I would not say it totally revolutionizes our view of them. To my mind, at least, Zilfi’s interpretation belongs here more to the “vulnerability” paradigm than to the “empowerment” one, a legitimate preference no doubt, but one that I would not fully embrace.

Such a wide-ranging project cannot be, almost by definition, free of faults, although in this case they are not major and do not

detract from the importance of the work. Professor Zilfi tries to explain why her emphasis on Istanbul does not make her book less about the entire Empire, because the fact that it was the largest city and the administrative center “deeply implicated [it] in the life and well-being of Ottoman subjects elsewhere.”(xi) True enough, but difficult to accept when Istanbul realities differed in so many ways from those experienced by much of the population living outside the capital. Even if we accept that Istanbul can serve as a model for urban life in other large Ottoman cities, we would still have to account for the vast majority of the sultan’s subjects, who lived in rural or pastoral communities.

In a way, only an historian who has not worked on the Arabic-speaking provinces can offer such a generalization. Zilfi does sporadically refer to Egypt, North Africa, and the Arabian Peninsula, but she appears to be somewhat removed from the discourse about those regions when writing about them. For example, my own *State and Society in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Egypt*,¹ published two decades ago, addresses many of the socio-cultural issues of Ottoman urban life that interest Professor Zilfi, with similar interpretations in most cases, but she seems unaware of it and its relevance to her current book.

Until now, the perceived wisdom in the field was that despite the interest in Ottoman enslavement, it was not as central to the Empire as slavery was to Atlantic societies. It was not economically essential as enslaved labor was to the US, Brazil, or the Caribbean, and enslaved military-administrative officeholders lost much of their political importance by the nineteenth century, it has been argued. Professor Zilfi believes to the contrary that enslavement

was much more central to Ottoman life, and that in many ways—social, cultural, economic, and political—it was germane to being Ottoman; in fact it constituted *Ottomanness*. As one who has devoted a significant part of his scholarly career to the study of Ottoman enslavement, I found this comforting and reassuring. However, and with all my sincere desire, I am yet to be convinced of this newly-found *raison d’être*; although I am willing to agree that we may have underestimated the role of slavery in Ottoman societies, we are still not at the point of embracing Zilfi’s all-important role thesis. This is, in a way, connected to my next and final point of mild criticism.

In order to be able to assign such an important role to enslavement in the Ottoman Empire, Professor Zilfi had to do two things simultaneously: she needed to augment the importance of Caucasus enslavement and the role of *kul*-harem slaves in the Ottoman body politic, and she needed to play down the numbers and significance of African enslavement in the Empire. When you do both, the net result is that you can prolong well into the nineteenth century the highly important role played by military-administrative enslavement until the eighteenth, with all the significant implications this carries for politics and the self view of Ottomans. Thus, Ottoman slavery becomes mostly white, and African women are relegated to a lesser role, relegated as it were to the margins not only of society (where they really existed), but also to the margins of the phenomenon of enslavement itself.

To do that, as Professor Zilfi chooses, you need to ignore Ralph Austen’s standard estimations of the traffic and the size of African diasporas in the Middle East

and the Indian Ocean (his article is cited in the bibliography, though) and privilege a recent study by John Wright,² which raises doubts about certain estimates of the numbers of enslaved Africans crossing the Sahara. Here again, I confess that I doubt that we have been given a solid evidentiary basis in order to revise the view that nineteenth century Ottoman enslavement was overwhelmingly female and African, and that the numbers of Circassians and Georgians enslaved by the Ottomans were not high enough to offset the picture. For the Caucasus, too, the figures we have been using tell us that it was mainly a story about enslaved women, much less about men, much less about the continued recruitment of *kuls*, although that practice was still in existence then too.

All that notwithstanding, Madeline Zilfi's *Women and Slavery in the Late Ottoman Empire* is an important contribution to the

growing discourse about Ottoman enslavement. It is a scholar's book for scholars, not intended for undergraduates enrolled in introductory courses about the Middle East or slavery. This is due mainly to its frequent recourse to the specialist's toolbox and vocabulary, which require prior knowledge and familiarity with the historical literature, methodology, and background. However, all specialized libraries and historians of the Ottoman Empire, the Islamic Middle East and North Africa, and those working in Enslavement Studies should definitely own it; and the author should be commended on her accomplished and valuable work.

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Endnotes

1. Cambridge University Press, 1990.
2. *The Trans-Saharan Slave Trade* (London, 2007).

A Moveable Empire: Ottoman Nomads, Migrants and Refugees

By *Reşat Kasaba*

Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009, 194 pages, ISBN 9780295989488.

Reşat Kasaba is a well-established, highly competent social scientist with a profound interest in the study of socioeconomic processes of change experienced in the Ottoman Empire. In this book that addresses the growing interest in migration as a social, and thus historical force, Kasaba offers his readers an excellent introductory study to human movement in the context of six hundred years of Ottoman rule. This book, in the end, is a valuable, but limited in its scope, textbook covering the Otto-

man Empire that can be used in the undergraduate classroom rather than a graduate seminar.

A Moveable Empire develops the theme of how migrants' and refugees contributed to human history in ways that allows social scientists to focus on institutions and their interrelationship with human communities in all their diversity. By placing his analysis within the larger context of the Ottoman Empire's development over centuries, Kasaba hones in on the evolution of

Ottoman's state management of its human communities. As a purely teaching tool, this approach is ideal to stimulate classroom discussions on a range of inter-related themes that are salient in today's world. As Kasaba's style of presentation is very accessible *A Moveable Empire* helps instill in the reader the need to appreciate the multiple functions of state policies and their unanticipated consequences when applied in the analysis of different conditions confronting the peoples of the empire. For the very fact that Kasaba highlights the diversity of experiences, as well as the multiple causes behind large scale migrations in the Ottoman Empire, this book is a valuable teaching supplement. Furthermore, he convincingly uses his examples of human movement to explain how such events actually helped the Ottoman Empire overwhelm neighboring powers.

Early on in the study, for instance, Kasaba highlights that "migratory habits became a constitutive element in making of modern states," (p.7) thereby successfully arguing that the fluidity and indeterminacy of Ottoman society, as it embraced a diverse range of peoples inhabiting the Eastern Mediterranean world, gave the empire an advantage over its historic rivals. This was reflected most clearly in the manner which peoples, conducting their spiritual lives in a heterogeneous environment, offered the Ottoman state effective tools in integrate rather than persecute newly "conquered," non-Muslim subjects. In this respect, as many of the empire's Muslim subjects consistently incorporated aspects of others' religious practices, such reconfigured associations with spiritual institutions translated into state policies that aimed to absorb human diversity, not oppress it. Such processes had important

implications for the manner in which the state encouraged diverse communities to cooperate with (and thus thrive under) Ottoman rule. Perhaps most importantly, according to this reviewer's reading of Kasaba's short book, was that the empire's ruling class adopted a plethora of laws protecting the rights of both its peasants against the incursions of nomads and their animals, as well as those same nomadic populations who, in other contexts in human history, have been treated as threats to state sovereignty. (p.29)

Here lies Kasaba's most valuable contribution to the study of human movement and how it helps interject possible comparative approaches to the analysis of world history. Kasaba's emphasis on the possibility for enduring, successful, and expansive empires to embrace human cultural and socio-economic diversity, ostensibly undermines the crude reductionism found today that equates cohabitation between peoples of different faiths as a recipe for violence. In making its areas secure upon conquering Byzantine, Habsburg, or various Arab emirate territories, Kasaba stresses that the process did not necessarily entail the creation of ethnically or religiously homogeneous communities and that the Ottoman state did not attempt to interact with the rest of the world behind the protection of militarized borders. To the contrary, as Kasaba reveals, the Ottomans made a point of maintaining largely open and mostly unmarked bordersthrough which merchants, nomads, and other itinerant groups and individuals continued to move. (p.54) Again, this constitutes a valuable corrective to the often hostile representations of the Ottoman experience through the popular theme of migration.

More generally, the use of the theme of mobility during the Ottoman Empire is an excellent way to vividly demonstrate to students the complexities of the larger “Islamic world,” and bring back into the study of this world the pedagogically neglected Ottoman case. That being said, it is advisable to be vigilant as a teacher using this small book; terms are thrown out quite liberally without much consideration for how they can be misleadingly reductive in the hands of the reader. Loaded terms such as tribe, citizenship, ethnicity, and even “Ottomans” require deeper introspection than simply evoking them.

One of the book’s main weaknesses, especially for scholars, is that it does a poor job of synchronising its sweeping conclusions with the current literature on migration, both within the field of Ottoman studies and in many other disciplines. I could easily count two dozen recent monographs that were not mentioned in Kasaba’s study—far more if we include articles—that could (and should) have been included. The almost non-existent use of primary sources also proves bewildering. Kasaba relies on impressions of scholarship drawn in the 1970s and earlier reflections by nineteenth century British travellers to Anatolia or Kurdistan. (p.121) He, therefore, misses a golden opportunity to bring together recent and useful studies on related themes, emerging in a variety of fields, with a multiple set of case studies drawn from Ottoman sources. As a result of this failure to consult with the wide breadth of existing literature on migration—theoretical and case-based—some aspects of human mobility are thus neglected in the larger study

of the Ottoman “case” offered here. For example, Kasaba only briefly touched upon the theme of economic migration as a contributing factor to the periods of urbanization that clearly proved a major force in Ottoman history. This aspect of both migration and settlement, a theme covered in largely abstract ways in chapter 2, deserves more attention. More disappointing is the failure to consider how pilgrimage, regional markets, and military recruitment contributed to the larger issue of mobility in the Ottoman Empire.

In the end, Kasaba’s *A Moveable Empire* can serve the teacher of undergraduate courses as a vital, easily accessible, teaching supplement to stress larger points we all try to make about the diversity of peoples that the Ottoman experience encompassed. Unfortunately, Kasaba’s short book does not clearly show how the various societies, living and sharing the Ottoman territories were governed in quite distinct socio-economic settings. For instance, the effects of policies adopted by a constantly evolving ruling class associated with Istanbul and its institutions often complicated the issues of land ownership, manifested by the nineteenth century in the shifting global economy that led to the commoditisation of land and its produce. By neglecting to develop the larger theme of human mobility within the context of these transformations, I cannot recommend this book as a truly corrective bit of research that fully addresses how voluntary and involuntary migration impacted Ottoman state policies.

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Cinema in Turkey: A New Critical History

By *Savaş Arslan*

Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, 319 pages, ISBN 9780195370065, \$35.00.

Cinema in Turkey differs from other recent books on the subject – notably Gönül Dönmez-Colin’s *Turkish Cinema: Identity, Distance and Belonging* (2008), and Asuman Suner’s *New Turkish Cinema* (2009) – in that Arslan focuses less on recent cinema in Turkey and more on the Yeşilçam era from the early 1950s to the late 1980s. More importantly, Arslan does not consider the cinema in Turkey either as ‘Turkish,’ or as expressive of a certain construction of national identity. Rather he employs a series of binary oppositions – the melodramatic and the realistic, the popular and the artistic, the forced and the spontaneous – to suggest that Turkish cinema is in a state of “perpetual ‘trans-ing,’ continual transition, translation and transformation.” (p.13)

Arslan does not view Yeşilçam cinema as a specific genre; instead he thinks of it as a popular film industry with its own specific characteristics of production, distribution and exhibition, which over time developed its own specific discourse and language. Most films in the early days were shot on tight budgets, using the most rudimentary equipment. There were no film schools, or state-supported enterprises to train aspiring filmmakers; they learned their craft through practice alone. Once the films had been completed, they often had limited opportunities for exhibition: most first-run theatres were given over to foreign films. In 1959, for instance, 95 domestic and 246 foreign films were exhibited to 25 million spectators. (p.76) As time

passed, so the conditions of production for Yeşilçam cinema changed; by the 1970s the major film companies controlled first-run theatres in and around Istanbul, which were reserved for their big-budget productions starring contract players. Meanwhile, the minor production companies produced the kind of films characteristic of B-movie fare – action-adventures, fantastic films, and sex comedies. As the decade unfolded, the majors adopted similar tactics to survive in a changing cinematic environment. While continuing to produce melodramas and comedies, they turned to sex films, directed towards a working-class male audience, to counteract the growing influence of television. Yeşilçam is not over now but has changed its medium: during its peak of popularity in the 1960s and 1970s, very few of the educated elite watched their films. With the advent of television, videotape, and DVDs, Yeşilçam’s core audience was introduced to foreign (especially Hollywood) films dubbed into Turkish. Such development encouraged the two groups – the elite and the populace – to learn one another’s language, hence increasing tolerance of each other’s tastes. Today’s Yeşilçam spectators have not given up their preferences, but have become more willing to enjoy other forms of cinema. (p.247)

Arslan proposes that Yeşilçam cinema should be seen in relation to the following notions: Turkification, *hayal*, melodramatic modality and *özenti*. Arslan identifies two forms of Turkification, which might best be described as ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-

up.' The 'top-down' approach deliberately emphasized the importance of national unity, particularly in times of conflict (for example, in Lütfi Ö. Akad's historical drama, *İngiliz Kemal Lavrense Karşı* (English Kemal Against [T. E. Lawrence] (1952)). The 'bottom-up' approach is symbolized by the popularity of *arabesk*, which grew with migration from rural areas to shantytowns (*gecekondus*) and found its way into the films of Orhan Gencebay, for instance. Slowly becoming mainstream, *arabesk* culture eventually came to be incorporated into upper-class urban practices. (p.69) Deriving from the Karagöz shadow-play, *hayal* translates into English as dream, imagination or specter. Arslan uses the term to describe the republican regime's project, as inscribed by Yeşilçam: "even if you try to change and westernize yourself and your country by erasing what has hitherto been a part of your culture, you would not be able to erase it altogether – hence the sublation. Instead it would stand out in the mirror when you see yourself, your image, your other. It is the specter in the mirror that is you but simultaneously not you." (p.98) Arslan uses *hayal* to demonstrate the interplay of hegemonic claims in Yeşilçam (is it 'Kemalist,' 'Islamist,' 'westernized' or 'Turkified?') as well as revealing its ambivalent practices. Yeşilçam's melodramatic modality helped reinforce these ambivalences: with its aspects of *hayal* and bottom-up Turkification it offered not only an ambivalent and alternative 'Turkification' to the Kemalist project, with all its national and local disputes, it also belonged to that imaginary world of nationality that the republican establishment attempted to impose from above. (p.95) Hence Yeşilçam presented a dream of bottom-up Turkification that was simultaneously traditional

and modern, Western and non-Western. *Özenti* further reinforces these ambivalences: in Arslan's formulation it can be used to describe "a dialectical movement in which it is impossible to return to an originary self already lost in the process of modernization and westernization [...] Yeşilçam's *özenti* produced ambivalent and contradictory responses to both West and East, and to both reform projects and antireformist tendencies." (p.133) Arslan exemplifies these ideas through a series of case-studies of ten Yeşilçam films, ranging from *Hayar Bazen Tatlıdır* (Life is Sometimes Sweet) (1962) starring Ayhan Işık, *Kara Sevda* (Unrequited Love) (1968), with Hülya Koçyiğit, *Bir Teseli Ver* (Give Some Consolation) (1971) with Orhan Gencebay in the lead, and *Şeytan* (*The Devil*) (1974), Metin Erksan's remake of *The Exorcist* which has become a cult film both in Turkey and the United States.

In a coda to the book, Arslan shows how the cinematic world has changed – while Yeşilçam continues to be popular with audiences (films are regularly shown on television, and re-released on DVD, as well as forming the subject of occasional retrospectives during film festivals), cinematic tastes have now diversified. In the Yeşilçam era there was no such thing as 'mainstream' or 'art-house' cinema, both of which exist in modern Turkish cinema. Moreover, modern productions have become increasingly transnational: Turkish films are regularly financed with foreign money, for example from Eurimages. This inevitably affects their 'Turkified' content. Nonetheless, Yeşilçam's legacy is still evident in the quickies produced as television serials (or *diziler*), while its basic themes continue to dominate big-budget epics such as *Eşkiya* (*The Bandit*) (1996).

Occasionally, Arslan's writing-style becomes prolix and repetitive, reflecting the book's origins as a doctoral thesis. Nonetheless, I believe that *Cinema in Turkey* is a groundbreaking work, the first of its kind in English that looks in detail at the con-

ditions of production and exhibition that shaped Yeşilçam's product over nearly five decades. It deserves to become a seminal text in Turkish film history.

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Headscarf Politics in Turkey, A Postcolonial Reading

By *Merve Kavakci Islam*

New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, 196 pages, ISBN 9780230106659.

The distressing photo on the cover effectively represents the content of this book. The photo depicts a junior high school student amidst male and female police officers who tear up her headscarf at the entrance of a school in 2001. We do not see the girl's face, but we can imagine her shame and fury for the act and the injustice of the ban. Author of the book under review, Merve Kavakci Islam was an activist for the Muslim women's right to wear the headscarf during her term with the Virtue Party. When elected to Ankara's Parliament in 1999, she was prevented from swearing into office, first, by an astonishing media campaign and, then, by the opposition of the leading party in the assembly. Later, she was stripped of her parliamentary immunity and of her Turkish citizenship by the Constitutional Court, which also closed her party for alleged threats to the state. Those were the aftermaths of the 28 February Process previous to the advent of the Justice and Development Party (JDP), a period when the secularist wing was attempting to reinstate the most severe form of laicism in the country.

Even if *Headscarf Politics in Turkey* is centred on this event, the book is a study of

the headscarf ban in Turkey and is divided into six chapters. The first one is dedicated to the introduction and to the author's theoretical framework of the interpretation of the headscarf ban employing the concepts of "Orientalism" and "Postcolonialism." Orientalism is used to delineate the image given by the secular elite of the '*başörtülü kadınlar*' (a term left in the original by the author to indicate the veiled yet educated women), women repressed awaiting liberation by their Orientalist saviour. Moreover, "the Orientalist bias does not ask women what they need or what they want or *if* they want. The state renders itself omnipotent. It claims the right to know what its female citizens want, or rather should want." (p.40) Moreover, despite the fact that Turkey never lived under colonization, the author argues, "the leadership of the Turkish Republic intellectually embraced an attitude of westernization that was colonial-like in their relationship with the majority of the population." (p.7) However, this interpretation risks being overly simplistic. Indeed, describing the secular elites in Turkey as an "Orientalized Oriental" alienated from the rest of the country and his culture (p.111) would prevent us from understanding the

fact that, though strongly committed to the 'Western' lifestyle, these elites adopted Ottoman methods of authoritarian reform from above and emerged from local institutions and from critical moments for the country when its existence was under threat. It is not by chance that the first to stress on the symbolism of fashion is probably Mahmud II. Moreover, today, their opposition is probably strengthened by the will to preserve their economic and social prerogatives rather than ideological commitment.

Chapter two and three are dedicated to a history of the ban and the regime's image of women first in the period from the National Struggle to the death of Mustafa Kemal in 1938 and then from İnönü's presidency to the 2000s. Here, wider space is dedicated to remember the "Kavakci Affair" (pp.75-79) that is representative of the stand of secular elites that, though a minority, have been capable of enforcing the ban on the headscarf from Turkish public spaces. In chapter four, the author analyses the social and political implications of the ban emphasizing how that prevented women from accessing universities or becoming public servants (just the opposite results expected from a policy of gender emancipation).

Chapter five is more dedicated to the prospects of the ban. Here, there is more than a hint of ungenerous critique of the JDP. According to the author, the JDP, under pressure from the Kemalists, chose to ignore the ban and to not address it. Such policy and attitudes corroborated and justified the system as well as it "contributed to new introductions of the ban and the entrenchment thereof" (p.138) A few pages earlier, the author criticizes the Gülen community—"a religious sect" (sic!)—for demonstrating a similar attitude of evasion

from frontal confrontation with the secular elite. For instance, the newly elected President Abdullah Gül tolerated members of the Armed Forces that left the protocol or official ceremonies to avoid the veiled First lady; the religious community enforced the headscarf ban at its schools throughout the country "to impress upon the state that he was working in accordance with the regime to secure his movement." (p.120) The disillusionment for the JDP is furthermore emphasised in the sixth chapter, which represents also the conclusions of the book.

The book may appear as repetitive to the long-time student of Turkish politics, who may probably prefer *Başörtüsüz Demokrasi* (İstanbul, Timaş, 2004) by the same author. This last book presents more biographical information and memories of the political campaign as well as notes from the aftermaths of her election to the Assembly, with interesting details on the already existing split in the Islamist movement that will lead two years later to the emergence of the JDP. Furthermore, in *Headscarf Politics in Turkey*, the author uses second hand sources for the historical background and for statistical material, sometimes making mistakes. For instance, Şeyhülislam Mustafa Sabri Efendi becomes "the last religious authority of the Ottoman Empire," (p.32) yet after him, the office was held by Medeni Mehmet Nuri for two years (1920-22). Another example is where the author refers to Turkish civil servants as "federal employee(s)" (p.80-82), whereas Turkey is a highly centralized state. The Turkish spelling is inconsistent in the text and in the footnotes. Moreover, it is an understandable choice to keep the Turkish expression '*başörtülü kadınlar*' throughout the text, even if tiring to the non-Turkish reader, because there is a particular dis-

inction between terms like *tesettür* or *türban* difficult to express in English. However, names of institutions like *Danıştay* or *Yargıtay* can be used in their English equivalents of Council of State and High Court of Appeals.

Overall, this book is recommended to the neophytes of Turkish politics because it

shows an unpleasant aspect of secularism in Turkey and the tribulation of '*başörtülü kadınlar*.' Usually the academic literature on the subject fails to explain the duress of the ban in full, but Kavakci Islam does it competently.

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Turkey in the 1960's and 1970's Through the Reports of American Diplomats

By *Rifat Bali*

Istanbul: Libra, 2010, 284 pages, ISBN 9786054326198.

Rifat N. Bali has done us a great service by publishing reports of American diplomats about Turkey in the 1960's and 1970's. The book consists of 35 reports and cables prepared by American consulates in Istanbul, Adana Izmir, and the American Embassy in Ankara. Bali has organized the classified reports into five categories: the "political and social situation in Turkey," "the situation after the May 27, 1960 Coup," "the Turkish general staffs ultimatum of March 12, 1971," "the Kurdish issue" and finally reports concerning minorities. It should be noted here that these reports did not exactly represent the views of the US government, but the views of serving American diplomats. Failure to distinguish between these two categories might lead to unwarranted conclusions.

It has always been interesting to hear the views of foreigners. The observations of an external actor, who does not belong to the local national culture and who can free himself/herself from the inevitable limitations on the perceptive abilities of a native citizen, can be highly informa-

tive. For example, *Democracy in America*, written by a visiting French man Alexis de Tocqueville, became an indispensable classic and a unique source in understanding America since the 19th Century. In a country like Turkey, which gives great weight to what the Westerners' think about it, what would look like a curiosity gains further impetus. These reports are significant for other reasons. They provide insights into what the Americans expected from Turkey, how they gathered information, and why they perceived Turkish affairs in the way they did.

An interesting report dated May 20, 1963, notes "...the conscious effort of educated Turks to avoid discussion of basic human values, of the 'good life' of the place of a man in the universe, i.e., of 'religious' questions." It notes that "attempts to discuss such subjects in an open, academic way with the 'enlightened' Turks often produce suspicion that the questioner is a secret reactionary. Or a conservative is likely to retreat to orthodox Islam; yes we should build more mosques." (p.66) Another re-

port dated June 12, 1964, accurately describes the autocratic tendencies of Turkey's reformist elite, which were revitalized after the May 27th Coup in 1960. Here are some excerpts: "...the reformers of Turkey have a deep-seated distrust of the masses," (p.80) and "... one seldom meets a Turkish reformer with any sense of compassion for the people whose lives he claims to be endeavoring to improve." (p.81) In another report dated March 9, 1965, which analyzes anti-Americanism, notes that many in the Atatürkist elite "see that the American advocacy of democracy and the open society is a threat to their own position." (p.103) It also characterizes the prevailing mood, as a "retreat into isolation, economic autarchy, disillusion with the United States, maintenance of the political power of a relatively small oligarchy, all properly adorned with suitably nationalistic slogans." (p.105)

Observations on the Kurdish issue are also realistic. One diplomat on October 19th, 1965 - after a tour of Diyarbakır, Elazığ, Siirt, Bitlis, and Van - wrote that he was "struck by the essentially colonial nature of Turkish administration." (p.227) "These people," who "are trained to ignore, in fact hold in contempt, the ethnic difference which are keys to the economic, social and political patterns of the area," he continued, "live together, eat together in the officers club, and feel themselves alone among an alien population. Most of them do not bring their families, and live for the day they can return to western Turkey." (p.227) It continues that "... the Turkish presence in the area is too light to be an effective instrument of "Turkicizing"" (p.227) And ends with a warning that "... Kurdish nationalism does pose a threat to the integrity of Turkey as now constituted..." (p.228)

This compilation of reports reveal that since 1945 politically ambitious Turks attempted to influence the United States and US diplomats were ready to establish contacts with potential political dissenters. We learn, based on a Report dated January 16, 1971, that General Muhsin Batur, an air force commander, told the American diplomat that "the Turkish military would be extremely reluctant to 'intervene directly' (read take over) and would do so only in extremes, after every alternative had been exhausted." (p.204) This meant that the military might intervene "indirectly," as it did two months later. General Batur, most possibly in an effort to ensure US support for upcoming coup, also stressed that "even if the military did take over as a last resort, it would not affect Turkey's relations with NATO and the US." (p.204).

Another report, dated March 28, 1965, includes acute observations about General Cemal Madanoğlu, who was amongst the perpetrators of the May 27th Coup (a life time member of the Senate) and implicated in various post-coup attempts to retain power. The report said that Madanoğlu thought that Süleyman Demirel's becoming head of the JP was a good thing, while İnönü and Gürsel should have been retired from politics long ago. He even went as far as to describe Gürsel's term of presidency as "a mockery of the office and a national disgrace." (p.188) Madanoğlu's ambition for presidency was an open secret, as he was trying to impress everyone that he was the most qualified man around! We also learn that on March 11, 1971, Aydın Yalçın, a member of the JP and Demirel's rival, told the diplomat that 15 to 20 of the JP MPs were determined to force Demirel's early resignation. Yalçın also said, "a military takeover is inevitable in a not too distant

future if Demirel does not depart scene in the meantime.” (p.206)

At times, the accurate diagnosis of Turkey’s political issues by these US diplomats is impressive. The report, dated March 11, 1971, says that they do not expect a direct military coup, but “the imposition of heavy pressure” upon Sunay and Demirel, “almost making the National Security Council the de facto government.” (p.208) Another report, dated March 15, 1971, notes that just because the March 12th Coup (year) came at the moment when the JP Government was beginning to crack down in earnest on disorderly and extremist elements, suggested that “pressure form military ranks for change” was very important. (p.213)

Diplomats are also on point when they emphasized, in a report dated April 26, 1963, that the Turkish peasant is not fanatical but conservative and is not a “...serious menace to the basic reforms of Atatürk that many educated city-bred Turks are wont to picture.” (p. 47) Another report, dated April 30, 1971, touched upon the heart of the matter when it said that just because the JP Government was the focus of attacks, extremist movements “managed to obtain a sort of tacit tolerance from Turkey’s traditional military bureaucratic elite, who while decrying violence saved the sharpest censure for the JP governments’ inability to control it.” (p.176) The Turkish businessmen’s tendency “to keep a foot in more than one camp” was well noted in a report dated June 18, 1964. (p.87). The danger of overreact-

ing to the threat of communism from the JP Government was regarded as the chief threat to continuing improvement of the quality of Turkish democracy” was written in a report dated July 31 1967. (p.141) One report, dated July 26 1963, observed that “...there is considerable discrimination (towards non-Muslim minorities) of an unconscious ‘folk-habit’ nature.” (p.253)

However, there are also mistakes of facts and (what “now” appears) misjudgments. In one report, dated May 20, 1963, Tercüman newspaper is said to be successful “mainly by appealing to nations Alevi (Shiite) minority.” (p.56). One diplomat, in his June 12, 1967 Report, concludes that “... the ‘minorities’ of Istanbul have an important role to play for the next generations.” (p.266)

Those who unrealistically expect that this collection would reveal unknown groundbreaking truths or novel facts will be disappointed. Nevertheless, the collection is a good read for both the students of Turkish politics and cultural studies as well as curious amateurs. Not only does it capture the moods of some American diplomats regarding Turkey of the 60’s and 70’s, it also provides an interesting perspective and information for those who seek to find an answer to the question of whether the observation and analysis of outsiders (i.e. foreigners) can sometimes produce superior accounts.

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Turkey's Entente with Israel and Azerbaijan: State Identity and Security in the Middle East and Caucasus

By *Alexander Murinson*

London: Routledge, 2010, 219 pages, ISBN 9780415778923, £80.00.

In this timely book Alexander Murinson explores the forces behind the entente between Turkey, Israel, and Azerbaijan. He juxtaposes these three countries, which he characterizes as “garrison-, like-minded, ‘Westernistic’, secular, constitutionally nationalist and lonely states.” (p.143) Those features depict the identity construct of the three states, which on the face of it, may seem to have conflicting interests in the turbulent Eurasian region spanning the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Middle East and the Balkans. Each of the three states is a *sui generis* actor on the global stage – post-imperial, western-oriented Turkey with global ambitions ruled by a post-Islamist party, a Jewish state encircled by Arab neighbors, and an oil-rich post-soviet republic with an autocratic regime. Thus, the author seeks to understand how the common identities of the three countries on the one hand led to the formation of this peculiar alliance, and on the other hand what factors could and in fact do undermine the Turkish-Israeli-Azeri security relationship. Departing from the more classic, neo-realist approach to international relations, where the homogeneous states – the so-called billiard balls are the sole actors on the world stage, the author draws from the constructivist importance of identity as the driving force of states’ behavior and their foreign policy. He looks deep into the tissue of the three states and the regional and global context to decipher the emerging patterns and trends in Ankara’s relations with Israel and Azer-

baijan. As “all the three states have special relations with the world hegemon,” (p.147) it is warranted to say that the United States is the “fourth leg” of this triangular axis. Washington plays a key role in regional affairs and is interested in forging cooperation between countries potentially capable of counterbalancing the regional alignment between Russia, Iran, and Syria.

In his book, Murinson comes up with an original theoretical framework that combines refined and enriched, multivariate constructivism with a transnational approach. Another original aspect of the book is that it examines the rapprochement between these three countries. Indeed, a “triangular relationship” or “trilateral axis” is a novel concept in literature as we are rather used to viewing international and interstate relations from a bilateral perspective. Thus, the author is right to contend that he contributes to the “debate about the nature of multilateral alliance formation in the post-Cold War era.” (p.6)

In chapters 3, 4 and 5, the author elaborates on the institutional drivers – both state and non-state of the rapprochement between the three countries, emphasizing the security dimension of the trilateral axis, which he calls the heart of the entente. “No analysis of the Turkish-Israeli-Azerbaijan axis can be complete without ascertaining the role the military-security institutions played in its formation in the 1990s and early 2000s,” (p.42) asserts rightly Murinson. In addition, he adds that this

“axis came into being because many strategic threats and interests of the three states overlap.” (p.94) The role of the military-security apparatus in Turkey, Israel and to a lesser extent Azerbaijan has been extensively researched elsewhere, nevertheless Chapter 3 is worthy of note as it sets a solid foundation for further analysis. One of the strongest points of the work is that the author does not limit his elaborations only to investigating state institutions. In Chapter 4, Murinson broadens his analysis by studying the informal networks and transnational levers of the axis, emphasizing the role of epistemic communities – “amalgam of intellectual and political networks” (p.63) which influence foreign and international policy indirectly. Here, the author examines the explicit role of the American Jewish community in cementing the triangular relationship, along with the lesser known think tanks and transnational corporations most interested in advancing the energy cooperation between the three protagonist countries. He notes that “in contrast to the United States, where epistemic communities have established their position in the policy process since the beginning of the twentieth century, think tanks and other independent research centers are still a novelty in all three countries under consideration.” (p. 82)

The book covers the period between 1992, the year Azerbaijan gained independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union and 2005, when the ruling Justice and Development Party in Turkey consolidated its power. The systemic changes, which took place after the demise of the communist block and bipolarity of the world system, unleashed new opportunities for the countries no longer constrained anymore by the cold-war confrontation and top-down im-

posed geopolitical roles. At the same time, the geopolitical revolution stirred up new threats, such as the Kurdish problem, rising Islamic radicalism, menaces posed by Syria and Iran, to name just a few, which were perceived as shared threats by the three countries and consolidated their alliance. However, the author missed a good opportunity to look at the developments beyond 2005, which have brought about the weakening of the ties between Turkey and Israel. The author is right to note, on the very first pages of his book, that the entente is “susceptible to fluctuations in domestic politics and shifts in the foreign policy calculations of its members,” (p.2) emphasizing the “fluid nature of international environment.” (p.8) The developments, which have unfolded in the past couple of years – both in the realm of the Turkish-Israeli relations, and to a lesser extent the weakening of the ties between Ankara and Baku demonstrate the volatility of the trilateral alliance. The shift in Turkish-Iranian relations (Turkey and Brazil brokered the nuclear fuel swap agreement which was rejected by the Western powers), rapprochement with Syria, attempts undertaken to normalize relations with the all-time foe Armenia have all proved crucial for the watering-down of the alliance. The author himself writes, “as a result of profound changes in the domestic and international arenas in the period between 1999 and 2005, an involution of the trilateral axis occurred. In other words, the axis became increasingly exposed to perturbations and fluctuations in the domestic politics of the three countries.” (p.115)

One major criticism that can be leveled at the book is that the author did not exploit Turkish literature sufficiently (especially Turkish newspapers would be a valuable

source of additional information on how the press reflecting the popular identities perceives the Turkish-Israeli rapprochement). Notwithstanding other minor flaws (the Turkish constitution was ratified in 1982, not a year before - p.32; the chief of staff in Turkey did not hold the post of secretary - General of the National Security Council as suggests Gareth Jenkins quoted by Alexander Murinson - p.157), Murinson's original and thought-provoking work is a major contribution to the existing (and in recent years proliferating) scholar-

ship on modern Turkey and the emerging strategic, geopolitical, and military constellations in the Middle East and the Caucasus. The book, as a whole, stands out not only as a valuable source of facts not widely known even among scholars studying modern Turkey and regional developments, but also as an inspiring work which helps readers look at international politics from a different theoretical angle.

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Shoah: Turkey, the US, and the UK

By *Arnold Reisman*

Charleston: BookSurge Publishing, 2009, 345 pages, ISBN 9781439240229.

"I was alive only because I had a Turkish passport," tells Lazar Russo in Arnold Reisman's *Shoah: Turkey, the US and the UK*. Lazar Russo was living in France when the Nazis occupied it. As with the other Jews, it was impossible for him to leave the country. However, remaining meant certain extermination. Only after the Turkish Consulate in Paris offered him a passport could he escape. He went to Turkey. It was an unusual move from a foreign country those days. But according to the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation, France was only "one of the countries where Turkish diplomats worked to save Jews."

Thanks to Professor Reisman's extensive research, many personal stories of European Jews who, like Russo, made it to safety through Turkey are accessible to the reader. Professor Reisman, a Holocaust survivor himself, combines archival documents with individual testimonies

throughout his book. The result is a work that bears the features of both a novel and a documentary. A plethora of first hand historical materials, previously unpublished, is undoubtedly an added value for future academic reference.

Professor Reisman argues that Turkey played an overall positive role during the Holocaust and that this fact has been widely omitted in English language literature. He goes even further, implying that Turkey was a prime player in helping Jews escape the Holocaust. Although not always in a consistent sequence, the author proves his point quite well. Supported by statistics, cables, individual stories and other valuable documentation from the archives of Yad Vashem, the FDR Library, the USG Shoah Foundation, the British Foreign and Colonial Offices (sic) and others, this work indeed shows that Turkey did much more than has been traditionally believed.

To explore and determine why and how Turkey behaved the way it did, Professor Reisman casts light on Turkey's official and unofficial policies in saving Jewish lives and compares them with the practices and laws effective in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada during the same period of time. Even though he acknowledges that Turkey could have done much more, as a place of refuge and a transit country for those escaping Nazi persecution, he stresses that in comparison to the restrictive policies of other states many immigrants considered Turkey a place of real refuge.

The huge waves of Holocaust refugees resulted in immigration unfriendly behavior in many countries. Immigration laws became stricter, sometimes even draconian, sealing virtually the borders. The question of immigration to Palestine also played a role, occupying countries that had high stakes in maintaining good ties with the Arab authorities and public, particularly the United Kingdom were reluctant to accept immigrants. Although many countries rarely accept immigrants en masse, even in days of prosperity, Professor Reisman's data in *Shoah* is striking by showing how restrictive immigration policies were towards the Jewish population trying to escape the Nazis during the 30s and 40s. For instance, 90% of quotas available for immigrants to the United States from Nazi territories were never filled.

The British policy, on the other hand, was largely based on the "White (Churchill) Paper," which aimed at keeping Jews out of Palestine entirely and, when that was no longer possible, a policy to halt "illegal" immigration was adopted. As for Canada, Professor Reisman's research reveals that only 5,000 Jewish refugees were able to enter the country between 1933 and 1948.

On a less "official" note, Reisman writes: "Surprising as this may sound to the current generation, Princeton University, like some of its ivy-league counterparts e.g. Harvard, Yale, and Brown, has *Judenfrei* faculties as a matter of policy. These institutions did not hire Jewish faculty members until after WWII." While this was a policy implemented on the American continent, "[I]n 1933 the Turkish government began inviting intellectuals who were fleeing Nazis and unable to go to America because of restrictive immigration laws... to live and work in Istanbul and Ankara." The move was a part of an official decision to modernize Turkey's higher educational system, which resulted in over 1,000 Jewish intellectuals and their family members settling in Turkey. Some other decisions were either personal choices, like in the case of the Turkish Consuls who risked their lives to help Jews, or they were penned officially. Some were at least tacitly accepted, occasionally at the level of ministries.

Despite extremely meager economic resources for its own population, Turkey in many cases granted citizenship to Jews. When other countries were sabotaging transits, Turkey was issuing transit visas to those who wished to continue to Palestine or allowing many of them to stay in Turkey when the transit visas expired.

Professor Reisman pays special attention to the research on the destinies of ships carrying the refugees. Altogether, fifteen refugee ships carrying Jewish immigrants to Palestine in the period between 1939 and 1942 were either given permission to pass Turkey, or the trips were orchestrated from Turkey. The author makes a great effort to relate the story of each and every one of these ships, be it the *Assimi*, *Velos*, or infamous *Struma*.

The book gives many opportunities to understand the author's appreciation of Turkey's Jewish policy. He also offers plenty of evidence to demonstrate that unlike other countries, Turkey substantially facilitated immigration to Palestine. Mossad (Mossad Le'aliyah Bet), for instance, when it was still "a small unorthodox organization whose main mission was to bring Jews to Israel," operated between 1938-1948 from Turkey. Other Jewish organizations from Palestine also had their offices in Turkey, which were under the supervision of Chaim (Charles) Barlas. Even the War Refugee Board, established only after the refugee scandal and Du Bois' memo, operated from Turkey, with Istanbul as the epicenter.

All these organizations were working with the Turkish Government's full knowledge, and many times clandestine operations were implicitly supported. Operation "Baptism" – a plan to baptize Hungarian (and other Central European) Jews in order to save them from annihilation – was created in and organized from Turkey. 80,000 certificates were granted as a result of the successful conduct.

Yet, the picture was not that "rosy." "Turkey had to be valued against the background of (its) geo-political scenario within and outside of Turkey," Professor Reisman writes. "Economic conditions coupled with stirring nationalist passions

gave rise to Law Number 4305, the Capital Tax Law (Varlik Vergisi Kanunu) passed by the Turkish Grand National Assembly on November 11, 1942." This law was used as an excuse for running anti-Semitic cartoons (Akbaba) and stories in the media. "Because of its coercive and discriminatory practices," Reisman continues, "the law was thankfully short lived, primarily due to external pressure.

Ultimately, the book demonstrates with academic precision the positive role Turkey was playing in the years prior to the establishment of Israel, and it should be included among the literature on Turkish-Israeli relations. Around 70 years have passed since these stories unfolded, today few would remember them. Perhaps, some may recollect that Turkey was the first Muslim-majority country to recognize Israel only one year after the Declaration of Independence. Instead, the latest developments in Turkish-Israeli relations, such as the "Davos incident" and the "Mavi Marmara crisis" are absorbing much of the popular attention in Turkey and abroad. It is, therefore, timely that this well versed account reminds us of another dimension of Turkey-Israel relations and tells us, as Stanford Jay Shaw said and Arnold Reisman quotes, "Turks and Jews have always collaborated in times of great crisis."

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Syria and the Doctrine of Arab Neutralism: from Independence to Dependence

By *Rami Ginat*

Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2010, 310 pages, ISBN 9781845193966.

Rami Ginat's monograph traces the development of Syria's foreign policy of neutralism during its early years of independence in until the fall of the Soviet Union. By situating the evolution of Syrian politics within a global framework that incorporates the diplomatic positions of emerging nations of the so-called Third World – particularly India, Egypt, Yugoslavia, and Indonesia – Ginat demonstrates the multifaceted face of neutralism that simultaneously united and divided nations seeking an alternative “third path” within the ideological struggle of the Cold War.

Reflecting the methodology of a political scientist concerned with the history of ideas, Ginat traces the mutually constitutive relationship among Arabism, elite politics, and the development of national geopolitical positions while stressing the ways in which inter-bloc and inter-Arab politics determined the outcome of these positions. Ginat's conclusions challenge the pioneering literature of Patrick Seale (1965), Fayez al-Sayegh (1964), and others on two principal points. First, while many contemporary Middle Eastern scholars agree that the ideology of Arab neutralism came into maturity during Nasser's first years of power in Egypt as a counterbalance to Western and Soviet hegemony, Ginat presents convincing evidence that “the roots of neutralism were already sown in Arab soil in the early 1940s.” (p.xiii) Specifically, contributions from Arab intellectuals – particularly from early Syrian

Ba'ath party leaders – during the French mandatory period had “created the ideological conditions... for the rise of neutralism,” well before the official formulation and implementation of the policy.

While previous interpretations of Arab neutralism stress the inter-Arab national politics that determined how leaders positioned their states within the polarizing context of the Cold War, Ginat shows how inter-bloc politics involving other non-aligned, non-Arab states such as India, Yugoslavia, and China played an equally important role in conditioning a nation's particular brand of neutralism at a given time. Neutralism evolved in Syria as a reflection of what Ginat calls the “utilitarian considerations” of the nation, especially following the end of World War II when Syrian leaders searched for legitimacy in the international scene and cultivated short-term national partnerships with other emerging nations. In a larger sense, Ginat shows how neutralism developed among non-aligned nations as a reflection of the “local conditions, political heritage and tradition, and special needs,” of each country. (p.xiv) With an eye for the dynamic between ideas and policy, Ginat questions the degree to which neutralist positions were the demonstration of an engrained ideology, or simply the *ad hoc* result of *realpolitik*. Based on the narrative he presents, the reader is left to conclude that Syrian foreign policy initially reflected the former, while slipping ever closer to the latter over time.

Chapters one and two trace Syria's early years of independence as national leaders courted relations with both the United States and the Soviet Union while developing strategies to consolidate power at home. Chapter three explores Syria's place in the emerging constellation of non-aligned Middle Eastern states and its ideological affinity with neutralist leaders in India and Egypt.

Chapters four and five illustrate the rise of complicated ideological factions within Syria and the slow takeover of Syrian political discourse by an assorted mix of Ba'athist, communist, and independents leaders. Ginat provides extensive evidence to show that between 1946 and 1961 Syrian foreign policy was "characterized by its constant search for foreign allies," (p.231) which resulted in a constantly shifting position *vis-à-vis* neighboring states. Moreover, unlike the majority of contemporary non-aligned states, the struggle for Syria between the two world super-powers was largely overshadowed by the regional struggles between the Soviet Union and Egypt. In this case, Syria became increasingly drawn into the regional power struggle, which culminated with its merger with Egypt in the United Arab Republic in 1958.

The final chapters and conclusion chart the cooling of relations between the USSR and the UAR after 1960, and demonstrate how Nasser's desire to eradicate internal communism and establish hegemony within the Arab world lead to the demise of the short-lived Republic. With the fall of Nasser and the decline of Soviet influence in Egyptian affairs, Syria became increasingly dependent upon Soviet aid, which trans-

formed Syria into a "virtual Soviet satellite in many international affairs." (p.230)

Ginat's goal of situating Syrian political history in a wider context of dialogue among non-aligned nations is a welcome development in the literature. In order to frame this narrative, however, Ginat relies heavily on a complex typology of the various brands of neutralism that typified Syrian foreign policy, which may be both the strongest and weakest aspect of the work. On the one hand, the general political narrative between 1945 and 1962 is meticulously researched and his claims concerning the early emergence of neutralist tendencies are supported by overwhelming evidence (diplomatic communiqués, speeches, and public records) drawn from archives in Britain, the US, Israel, Poland, and India. On the other hand, his discussion of the nuances that distinguished the eleven brands of neutralism at times dominates the text at the expense of important events that do not conform to the author's model. In a sense, Ginat fails to cleave closely enough to his stated focus on the relationship among ideology, policy and events on the ground. Clearly, ideology is the main focus of this book. Imposing theoretical order that would not necessarily have made sense to the historical actors themselves tends to obscure the historical process and foreclose alternate readings of the period. This relatively minor criticism notwithstanding, Rami Ginat's work is a considerable addition to the literature on the period and a worthwhile read for any student of Syrian history and Cold War politics in the Middle East.

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Questioning the Veil: Open Letters to Muslim Women

By *Marnia Lazreg*

Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009, 156 pages., ISBN 9780691138183, \$ 22.95.

Leaving aside the academic discourse, the “theoretical and methodological shields that usually ensure a semblance of detachment,” (p.ix) Marnia Lazreg, a professor of sociology at Hunter College and the City University of New York Graduate Center, adds her voice to the ever-expanding bibliography on the veil. Committed to writing this book, as she declaredly has reached a point where she could no longer keep quiet about the issue, (p.2) the author addresses Muslim women who either have taken up the veil or are considering wearing it. In doing this, she finds incumbent to reveal herself personally while recounting her experience as a Muslim woman growing up in colonial Algeria and that of several women she has interviewed over the past fifteen years in the Middle East, North Africa, France, and the United States. In each of her five open letters, Lazreg presents different veiling or reveiling experiences, interprets them and takes issue with their justification, pointing out that the custom of “covering” should be always regarded in its historical, political, and socio-cultural context, as long as “the veil is never innocent,” (p.125) it is both a discourse and a practice. Based on these grounds, in the Introduction, when clarifying certain terms used in the book, Lazreg states that by the expression “Muslim women” she refers to the “the women who have taken up the veil as a way for them to display their religious affiliation” (p.12) and she adds: “The best but cumbersome way to refer to these women would be ‘women-who-wear-the-veil-because-they-think-it-

is-a religious-obligation-in-Islam.’ There is no generic ‘Muslim woman,’ just as there is no generic ‘Christian woman’ – only concrete women engaged in concrete actions.” (p.12-13)

Chapter one debates the issue if wearing the veil is indeed a sign of modesty and starts with the observation that what the Quran mandates is rather ambiguous. Lazreg’s discussion relies on the idea that wearing a veil is not a mere individual act, but rather a social convention and therefore it never comes as a voluntary act. Even if it involves willful compliance, it always takes place in a social context and responds to specific social norms. The author of the book under review implies that the social pressure to conform to these norms obscures the stated purpose of the veil, modesty. “Were modesty truly the issue, there would be different ways of expressing it.” (p.36) She concludes that the singling out of women for veiling undermines the modesty argument by making them more, not less, visible and that the ideological use of the veil deflects the attention from a number of serious issues which confront women in their daily lives, it homogenizes individuals, social classes, and ethnic differences between women by emphasizing one common denominator: covering.

Chapter two counterpoints the argument that veiling has a protective function, meaning that it is the best way to ward off men’s advances. As Lazreg shows, a veiled woman is not immune from sexual harassment and “the fiction that the veil is an

antidote to sexual harassment is crucial to understanding the psychology of veiling:" (p.48) for a man, the veil is the marker of his masculine identity (masculinity is perceived in difference to femininity, a man is a person who does not have to wear a veil).

Chapter three discusses the argument that veiling is the assertion of cultural identity, of the right and of the pride to be different within the globalized cultures of the "West." "In the post-9/11 era, experimenting with the hijab (because for many it is an experiment) has emerged as an increasingly attractive method for women from Muslim communities in Europe and North America to display pride in their culture." (p.54) Although she recognizes that there are several obvious reasons for this and that it may be a response to the excesses of fear and prejudice against Islam, the author doubts that the reduction of Muslim culture to a garment is the only way to force respect from Western nations (p.63) and the best response to anti-Muslim prejudice. On the other hand, she equates banning, as a political act of "veil-obsessed governments," (p.62) with mandating: "Turkey (like France or Germany) is thus on a par with Saudi Arabia and Iran. Each sees the veil as standing for religious identity. Women are held hostage equally by radical secularists and Wahabists, Islamists and Shi'i Muslims. None of them trusts women with the capacity to decide for themselves how to manage their bodies and whether to wear a veil." (p. 60-61)

Chapter four, the most intricate part of the book, tackles the issue of conviction and piety and highlights it from different angles: Conviction as Strategy, Agency and Fear, Conviction as Visibility. On account of the organized character of the hijab revival Lazreg is questioning some of the

justifications offered by women for veiling considering that rather "it is emerging as a tool for engaging women in a conception of religiosity that serves the political aims of various groups scattered throughout the Muslim world, who are eager to demonstrate the success and reach of their views" (p.85) by increasing "the material visibility of Islam through the hijab." (p.95)

The final chapter of the book aims to advise women not to wear the hijab and tries to justify this position. It is, Lazreg asserts, physically uncomfortable and psychologically detrimental since a hijab makes a woman feel removed from her environment. It is also the symbol of inequality, of gender difference and the expression of a relation of power: "The state supervision and control of women's dress and bodies is not only humiliating but also inhumane. No man has the right to dictate to a woman what color or length of dress she should wear. This is the most blatant abuse of power." (p.100) While critically approaching non-Muslim women who, in the name of social science research and cultural relativism, "provide more mystifications of veiling" (p.126) reinforcing its rehabilitation, Lazreg calls Muslim women to stand for their obligation to history as agents of social change and "and put an end to the politics of the veil by simply not wearing it." (p.100)

Read as the author declares it to be, not a scholarly treatise, but a very personal inquiry, Marnia Lazreg's book is a rich and committed contribution to the current debate on the veil. Its inconsistencies in using anecdotal facts for psychological speculations and for inferring general conclusions will no doubt positively result in encouraging further the pro and con discussions of a topic standing in the limelight. In go-

ing through it, I have found the text most readable and powerful, despite that, as a researcher in cultural stereotyping, without distrusting the anecdotes meant as examples and support for the conclusions, I felt

uneasy discerning in many of them some much-peddled Orientalistic storylines.

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Citizenship, Security and Democracy, Muslim Engagement with the West

Edited by *Wanda Krause*

London: AMSS & SETA, 2009, 287 pages, ISBN 978156564443, £12.99.

The book under review regroups selected contributions from an international conference held in Turkey in September 2006 that was jointly organized by the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (UK) and the Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (Turkey). Reflecting the mission of this conference, the book is concerned with the challenges of security and democracy in relation to Islamic discourses and Muslim communities. In the Introduction, the editor, Wanda Krause, convincingly highlights the importance of these issues, especially after 9/11 and 7/7. She states that "both security and democracy are becoming ever less attainable in today's climate of increased division and cleavages along ideological lines and Islamophobia – an acute problem for citizenship in humanity" and calls for the need of variously angled analyses and critical solutions. (p. xv) The twelve contributions of this volume, which are classified in five sections, therefore offer multiple points of entry to this main problem through case studies, historical accounts, policy analyses, as well as reflections drawing upon Islamic jurisprudence and intellectual history.

Without a doubt, the great value of

this collection is to place at the centre of the discussion on issues of security and democracy concerning Muslims and Islam Muslim voices from within Islamic intellectual traditions that tend to be neglected by mainstream Western literature. This book contributes to the goal of reframing the terms of a debate, which often implicitly defines Islam and Western views as fundamentally opposed. To this end, Jeremy Henzell-Thomas's paper offers a reinterpretation of the story of the Tower of Babel from a Qur'anic perspective. His thoughts on the Qur'anic understanding of pluralism go against the "pernicious doctrine of the Clash of Civilizations" and "religious exclusivists." (p.35) and underscore the importance of "inter-cultural and inter-faith education." (p.37) Two other contributors highlight the intrinsic links between Islamic and Western intellectual histories. In his account of the Muslim tradition of nonviolence, Imad Ad-Dean Ahmad mobilizes illustrative moments from Muslim history such as the first Intifadah, as well as extracts from the Qur'an and the Hadiths, and compares them to American ideologies of nonviolence such as the civil rights movement's strategies and Henry David

Thoreau's writings. Such bridges between Islam and the West are also established in the article of Abdelwahab El-Affendi, who critically revisits Islamic revivalism through a highly referenced and well-articulated discussion of Western and Islamic political philosophy.

Other essays focus on the identity construction of contemporary Muslim diaspora in relation to the issue of citizenship in multicultural nation-states and provide strong historical and empirical evidence against the reification of "Muslimness." Elmira Muratova investigates the key roles played by Islam and national identity in the revival process of Tatars who returned to Crimea in the 1980s after a long period of forced deportation. Both the case studies of Mohammad Siddique Seddon on British Yemenis and Raana Bokhari on Gujarati Muslim women in Leicester show that identity construction consists of an "ongoing process of negotiation" that is informed on the local as well as the global level, and intersects with ethnicity, gender, and nationality. (Siddique Seddon, p.97) Both authors demonstrate how Muslim hybrid identity formations contribute to countering the hegemonic construction of "Britishness" as "white and Christian" (Siddique Seddon, pp. 97-99) or of British space as exclusively "secular" through the phenomena of re-appropriation and displacement. (Bokhari, p.157) All these discussions also shed light on the potential of the Ummah to provide resources for negotiating transnational identities in the context of globalization.

Pointing to a related issue, Hisham A. Hellyer's paper, despite its lack of contextualization, pertinently calls attention to the Islamophobic dimension of European debates on multiculturalism and citizen-

ship. The effects on Muslim minorities of post-9/11 and post-7/7 security discourses are, however, more systematically examined by Tahir Abbas and Lucy Michael. Abbas's essay warns against the growing pressure faced by young British Muslims who must "choose their loyalties," (p.126) as they become targets of radical external Islamic groups as well as the main focus of essentializing discourses on multicultural citizenship in Great Britain that in turn legitimize the stripping of their civil liberties. Michael's essay provides a highly productive account of the consequences of the British government's implementation of a "new social control agenda." She examines how the shift from the "equality agenda" to risk control discourses implying the "dangerization" of Muslims particularly affects Muslim leadership and local governance. The construction of Islam as the "new enemy to be fought and contained" (p. 51) is also pointed out in Anas Al-Shaikh-Ali's contribution about the role of popular fiction in shaping global public opinion on Islam and Muslims. Even though the causality that the author establishes between popular fiction and large public support for the Gulf wars would benefit from a more systematic discussion, his perspective remains one of the most original in this book and pertinently calls attention to the key roles that mass culture and the media play in Islamophobia.

As announced in the introduction of the volume, some contributions explicitly formulate critical solutions to the challenges of security and democracy that are considered by the editor as the "most pressing issues of 21st century." (p. XVI) In this regard, the crucial role of Muslim social scientists and humanists is emphasized by Charles E. Butterworth and Anwar

Ibrahim. Both expect Muslim scholars to exert self-criticism, to go beyond an “intra-civilizational clash” in order to “formulate a universal Islamic Weltanschauung,” (Ibrahim, pp. 4-5) and “to explain themselves as Muslims and their faith in all of its aspects.” (Butterworth, p. 120) *Citizenship, Security, and Democracy* certainly accomplishes a step in this direction. These selected conference papers, which are extremely diverse in discipline, length and approach, offer renewed reflections that address the concerns of scholars and policymakers, as well as a wider audience interested in those

topics. One should note that this diversity is also at the root of some of the shortcomings of the collection. Since some essays’ arguments suffer from a lack of clarity and empirical anchoring, the guiding thread of this collection remains barely identifiable for the reader. Despite its weaknesses, *Citizenship, Security and Democracy* constitutes a thought-provoking assembly of papers and one can hope that it will give rise to further public discussions, academic articles, and monographs.

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The Roots of Balkanization: Eastern Europe C.E. 500-1500

By *Ion Grumeza*

Lanham: University Press of America, 2010, 228 pages, ISBN 9780761851349.

In his book, Ion Grumeza ambitiously sets about “to fill a gap with authoritative material on how the process of Balkanization came about, to separate fact from fiction and trace the patterns of ethnic and cultural life that originated fifteen centuries ago.” (p. ix) Furthermore, the book “traces the creation of the present Balkan nations and examines their influence on Eastern Europe.” (p.xiii) With this impressive aim in mind, the author has studied some hundred historical books on the Balkans, or at least this is what we find in his bibliography.

Incidentally, Grumeza distinguishes between the Balkans, which includes “the Balkan Peninsula and its population up to the Danube river,” and Eastern Europe. However, a mysterious group of nations called “Balkanians” is singled out on p. xi, which, according to the author, “include

the Czechs, Slovaks, Hungarians, and Romanians, who belong to Eastern Europe along with nations once located beyond the Iron Curtain—Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine, and Russia.” Thus, from the very start a confusion sets in about who belongs and who does not belong to the doomed region, where, according to the author, “[i]nherited fears, suspicion, revenge, and religious fanaticism are as alive and volatile ... today as they were hundreds of years ago, all due to the legacy of Balkanization.” (p.v) To make this so-called legacy even more ominous, Grumeza adds to it an aspect of total dependency: “Balkanization” is “[t]his ethnic amalgam, and overall nightmarish human situation that no one can solve.” (p.ix)

The introductory pages suffice to discourage the book’s potential readership from reading on. I find it pointless to flog

a dead horse by listing all the distortions, factual errors, misrepresentations and dull ethnocentrism plaguing the book. For the sake of illustrating very briefly what awaits the readers, who might venture into the text, I will offer a few quotes, randomly chosen among many others. Contrary to the consensus view of most historians that Serbs and Croats are Slavic peoples, Grumeza, places their origins in the Middle East. "Initially the Serbs were Turkish people of Iranian extraction," the author claims. (p.31) "Croats were believed to be of Iranian origin, but they may have their origins in a group of Sarmatians who were dislocated by the Huns." (p.34) Moreover, the author does not show any research on how he arrived at these conclusions—and this is the case with most of the conclusions in his book.

Some parts of the book not only read like an elementary school textbook of a by-gone time, but also smack of ethno-racism. "Gypsies and Jews, two other migratory peoples who also came to Eastern Europe, did not impose themselves on existing settlements with the sword, but rather by providing help to everyone. They never constituted a nation ... While Gypsies were considered barbarians because of their heritage and unique behaviours, the Jews were acknowledged for spreading civilization through trade and for their dedication to scholarly work. Nevertheless, both peoples stood apart from the majority of the population in the Balkans because their looks and clothing were different from those of the other ethnic groups." (p.41)

Under the "Turks" label, Grumeza has included "groups of Arabs, Moors, Saracens and Seljuks—all Muslims who in later time period I call "Ottomans." (p.xi) Lumping these diverse civilizations, populations

and ethnic groups under the category of "Turks" on the pretext that they were all Muslims is reminiscent of the way in which Muslims of various ethnic backgrounds were commonly referred to as "Turks" in the Christian nation-states, which emerged in the Balkans after the break-up of the Ottoman Empire. As for the suggested overlap between "Muslims" and "Ottomans," this is a confusion on the term "Ottoman," which theoretically applied to all subjects of the Empire, Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

And so the story goes until the Epilogue, where we can find conclusions along the following lines: "Today, Eastern European cultures retain the same basic values they developed in the Middle Ages, regardless of what the western world considers moral and right. In the Balkans, the loss of one's ethnic identity is considered worse than dying, and clan dominance over a territory is still the main force that unites ethnic groups. This phenomenon is the product of ongoing wars in which both the victors and the victims are always ready to participate (sic!)... This is the main root of the Balkanization process." (p.209)

The above excerpts attest to severe deficiencies in terms of sources, references and approaches used. The book gives a highly distorted and derogatory picture of a region with a complex history, using unsubstantiated claims and sweeping observations as a major tool of representation. It is unfathomable that this book was actually published at all, and we can question by who and why this manuscript was recommended at the University Press of America for publication. Perhaps the so-called "Balkanization" was seen as an evergreen topic, securing immediate vast readership—which the paperback edition of the book also seems to imply.

The term “Balkanization” (which, as Grumeza correctly points out on p. v, appeared after the Balkan wars of the early 20th century) was powerfully propelled in both journalistic and scholarly writing following the post-1989 break-up of the Socialist Federation of Yugoslavia into a number of smaller new states. The post-Yugoslav recycling of the image of the Balkans as a place of never ending, centuries-old animosities and conflicts between different communities and groups mapped neatly onto earlier Western self-aggrandising strategies of representation, built vis-à-vis an inferior, internal “Other”—strategies, which were brilliantly described by the historian Maria Todorova in her authoritative study “Imagining the Balkans.”¹ It is interesting to note that this seminal reading in the field of the Balkan studies is not even included in Grumeza’s bibliography.

Two decades after the collapse of former Yugoslavia, we can find serious scholarly works, challenging the “Balkan ghosts”²-type mythology about the region. As it has been convincingly demonstrated, such myths served to mask the root causes of the post-communist conflicts in the region, causes related to increasing economic and social grievances, and aggressive nationalist identity politics.³ Despite that it unjustly vilifies the region and carries little explanatory value, the metaphor of “Balkanization” was turned into an easy, inflated and often

rather irrelevant tag for all sorts of divisive social dynamics, and indiscriminately used in both academic and popular writing.

The book by Grumeza reminds us, once again, that writers, dealing with complicated issues of history and memory, both in the Balkans and beyond, bear a special burden of responsibility. The recycling, endorsing and perpetuating of ethnocentric historical misrepresentations cannot be simply glossed over as banal, since they are, in the final analysis, inherently political.

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Endnotes

1. Maria Todorova. *Imagining the Balkans*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

2. I refer here to Robert Kaplan’s book *Balkan Ghosts*, which appeared in 1993 (New York: St. Martin’s Press) and can probably count as a corner-stone in the unleashed myth-making about the region as a place of “ancient ethnic hatreds.”

3. For a critique on “ancient ethnic hatred” constructions see, among others, Dubravka Zarkov, “Gender, Orientalism and ‘History of Ethnic Hatred’ in former Yugoslavia.” in Lutz, Phoenix and Yuval-Davis (eds.). *Crossfires, Nationalism, Racism and Gender in Europe*, 1995, pp. 105-120. According to Milica Bakic-Hayden, the “ancient hatreds” rhetoric is obscuring “the modernity of the conflict based on contested notions of state, nation, national identity and sovereignty” (“Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia.” *Slavic Review*, Vol. 54, N. 4, 1995, pp. 917-31, here p. 929).