

Defying Small-State Orthodoxy: The UAE's Outlier Trajectory toward Middle-Power Status

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New Order in the Gulf: The Rise of the UAE

By Dina Esfandiary

London: I.B. Tauris (Bloomsbury), 2023, 200 pages, £17.99, ISBN: 9780755645794

The UAE After the Arab Spring: Strategy for Survival

By Khalifa Al-Suwaidi

London: I.B. Tauris (Bloomsbury), 2023, 222 pages, £26.09, ISBN: 9780755648030

Smart Instead of Small in International Relations Theory: The Case of the United Arab Emirates

By Spyridon N. Litsas

Cham: Springer, 2023, 203 pages, €22.38, ISBN: 9783031446382

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Introduction

The political landscape of the Middle East underwent a re-configuration in the 2010s, as traditional centers of regional influence, such as Egypt, Iraq, and Syria, weakened, and new actors in the Gulf region, characterized by domestic stability, economic dynamism, and an increasingly assertive foreign policy posture, began to emerge. Among these emerging players, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) stands out as a remarkable and significant example. In this sense, the UAE case is critical because it exemplifies the transformation of a small state into a middle power, demonstrating how strategic capacity, wealth, and proactive foreign policy can extend the traditional limits of small-state behavior. Alongside other emerging actors, such as Qatar, and more traditional powers like Saudi Arabia, the UAE stands out as an outlier, revealing both how far a small state can advance and where the structural limits of a small-state power ultimately remain.

Comprising seven emirates and constituting the region's only federal system, the UAE slowly moved beyond the conventional boundaries of a small state, transforming itself into a proactive and agenda-setting power. The central argument of this review article is that the UAE's evolution from a small state to a middle power is rooted simultaneously in its domestic transformation and in its deliberate engagement with the fluid geopolitical environment that followed the Arab uprisings. This shift

cannot be understood solely as a reaction to external security pressures; rather, it is the outcome of a broader internal restructuring in which economic diversification, institutional consolidation, and strategic governance reforms together expanded the state's capacity to project influence.

Within this analytical frame, three studies offer matching insights into the UAE's emerging role: Dina Esfandiary's *New Order in the Gulf: The Rise of the UAE*, Khalifa Al-Suwaidi's *The UAE After the Arab Spring: Strategy for Survival*, and Spyridon N. Litsas' *Smart Instead of Small in International Relations Theory*. The three books converge on a common theme. All attempts to explain how the UAE moved beyond the behavioral constraints of a small state clarify a different dimension of this transformation. Dina Esfandiary focuses on the regional and systemic drivers that led Abu Dhabi to assertiveness in its foreign policy, highlighting how external shocks and shifting threat perceptions produced a sustained pattern of assertive foreign policy. Esfandiary's mention of shocks is not limited to the Arab uprisings but also includes earlier regional disruptions, such as the 1979 Iranian Revolution, post-9/11 dynamics, and fluctuating U.S. engagement. The Arab Spring accelerated these trends but did not solely produce them. She argues that Abu Dhabi's assertiveness emerges from this cumulative shift in threat perceptions, which becomes most visible, especially after 2010.

Khalifa Al Suwaidi turns inward, arguing that the UAE's post-2011 tra-

jectory is rooted in a reengineered political legitimacy formula in which identity politics, the securitization of Islamism, and state-led social transformation rendered external assertiveness both possible and desirable. Spyridon N. Litsas, meanwhile, reframes the UAE's rise as a theoretical challenge to IR orthodoxy, suggesting that the country illustrates a smart state model where strategic intelligence, institutional agility, and geo-economic capacity surpass traditional measures of size. Together, they present a multilayered interpretation in which structural security challenges and domestic recalibration intersect to explain the UAE's defiant evolution into a middle-power actor.

Each body of text approaches the UAE's ascent from a separate angle, examining regional realignment, regime adaptability, and the theoretical reconsideration of small-state behavior; yet, together, they express the same structural pattern. Read collectively, these studies reveal how the UAE has developed a multifaceted power profile that extends beyond the confines of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), influencing political and security dynamics across the broader Middle East, and increasingly engaging global arenas through diplomatic, economic, and technological strategies. This review article, therefore, integrates the arguments of the three books to examine how, since the early 2010s, the UAE has recalibrated its foreign policy and identity, ambitions, and instruments of statecraft. In doing so, it traces the country's trajectory from a conven-

tionally risk-averse small state to an influential middle power whose reach now spans the Gulf, the Middle East, and multiple extra-regional theaters. By synthesizing these works, the review article aims to demonstrate that the UAE's expanded agency is neither accidental nor episodic, but instead the result of a deliberate and internally reinforced transformation that has reshaped its role in regional and international politics.

Political Legitimacy, Outlier Behavior, and the Collapse of Small-State Orthodoxy

In the narrative of each book, the UAE stands out as a compelling case. By all conventional and theoretical parameters, population size, territorial scale, and historical depth, the UAE fits neatly into the small-state category. However, since the early 2010s, its internal political reconfiguration, its integration into global circuits of capital and technology, and its adoption of an unusually assertive foreign policy doctrine collectively reveal a pattern that strains, and at times subverts, the conceptual boundaries of small-state theory.

It is in this context that Dina Esfandiari, who is also a think-tanker for Middle East-related institutions/scholars, argues the UAE no longer behaves as a small state in any meaningful behavioral or strategic sense. For her, the Emirati shift toward assertiveness after the 2010s is rooted not merely in regional turbulence, but in a profound adjustment of risk

perception, autonomy, and strategic purpose. Crucially, Esfandiary contends that the UAE's assertiveness is no longer episodic or reactive. But it has crystallized into a systemic mode of statecraft. This transformation highlights the central point that smallness is not a material condition, but rather a behavioral expectation. The UAE's interventions in Yemen and Libya demonstrate that material smallness does not necessarily translate into behavioral restraint, and that the country has developed a degree of strategic autonomy inconsistent with traditional assumptions about small states.

In parallel, Khalifa Al-Suwaidi offers a complementary but differently grounded explanation, focusing on political legitimacy and the construction of identity. Al-Suwaidi's account is particularly interesting because he is an Emirati citizen, and the account holds a critical place in the literature due to its inclusion of local perspectives. For Al-Suwaidi, the UAE's post-Arab Spring assertiveness cannot be divorced from the internal restructuring of legitimacy frameworks at home. By analyzing the securitization of Islamism, particularly in the context of the confrontation with the Islah Movement and the Muslim Brotherhood, he demonstrates how the UAE has shifted away from traditional sources of legitimacy rooted in tribalism or rentierism, instead constructing a modern, state-centric identity sustained through national role conceptions. In this account, assertiveness outward serves a dual purpose. It protects the state's ideo-

logical boundaries internally and simultaneously generates the symbolic capital necessary to project a coherent role externally. Both Esfandiary and Al-Suwaidi thus converge on a shared conclusion. Emirati assertiveness is as much about defending political identity and stabilizing domestic authority as it is about shaping regional outcomes.

On the other hand, Spyridon N. Litsas approaches the question from a more explicitly theoretical vantage point, arguing that classical small-state theory has become analytically obsolete precisely because it is anchored in demographic and territorial variables that no longer determine influence in contemporary international politics. For Litsas, the UAE exemplifies a smart state paradigm, in which power is redefined through performance, diplomatic agility, geoeconomic leverage, technological sophistication, and precision military capability, rather than material mass. By challenging IR's size-deterministic assumptions, he positions the UAE as evidence of an emerging model of statehood in which small states can, under specific conditions, operate effectively as de facto middle powers through strategic innovation and institutional intelligence. Taken together, these three works reveal a converging analytical insight. The UAE represents an outlier that defies the behavioral expectations traditionally assigned to small states. Its trajectory suggests that agency, domestic transformation, and strategic imagination, not size, now constitute the decisive variables

in understanding state power in the contemporary Gulf and beyond.

Post-Arab Spring Assertiveness and the Making of a Regional Actor

The UAE's abandonment of the behavioral patterns traditionally associated with small states, such as its adoption of an assertive foreign policy, its willingness to intervene across the region, and the fact that this activism has evolved from an episodic response into a structural mode of conduct, constitutes a key conceptual puzzle in the study of Emirati foreign policy. By pursuing an assertive strategy, the UAE has shifted its policy orientation from that of the 1970s to 2000, which centered on consolidating the federation, gaining international recognition, and deepening defense cooperation with Western partners. Instead, it has pursued assertive policies in multiple theatres. While several factors lie behind this shift, all three authors examined here converge on a common analytical thread: post-2011 Emirati assertiveness is inseparable from changing threat perceptions and the transformation of identity politics within the state.

Esfandiary illustrates this dynamic most clearly through the empirical cases of Yemen and Libya, interpreting these interventions as manifestations of a broader assertiveness cycle. By contrast, Al-Suwaidi approaches the same phenomenon from a domestic perspective. He understands

the UAE's shift toward assertiveness as part of a larger project of securitizing Islamism and redefining political identity, which ultimately drives the state toward more agile postures.

At its core, Esfandiary's argument posits that the UAE's shift toward assertive behavior is structurally driven. According to her, the Arab Spring, the Obama administration's Pivot to Asia, and the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) collectively heightened the UAE's sense of strategic vulnerability. Faced with this altered threat environment, Abu Dhabi concluded that survival and influence required strategic diversification and a more activist foreign policy. Beyond these structural pressures, Esfandiary also highlights internal drivers: the leadership interprets its interventions as successful, and this perception generates a self-reinforcing motivation to continue acting assertively. "The deployment of the capabilities enumerated above may not be judged as 'successful' from an external perspective, but as long as the leadership perceives it as such, this will empower them to continue on their assertive track" (p. 8).

Thus, while the initial stimuli are external, the sustainability of assertiveness is grounded in internal psychological and institutional dynamics. Al-Suwaidi, however, emphasizes that assertiveness also functions as an instrument of domestic legitimacy production. The diagram in his book, on page 155, distills the book's core argument about how the UAE recon-

figured its political order after 2011. The author shows that the Arab Up-risings and the rise of Islamism created a heightened sense of existential threat for the Emirati leadership. This altered threat environment triggered a zero-tolerance approach toward any ideological or political challenge, leading the regime to construct a new legitimacy formula. In short, the diagram explains how external shocks produced internal ideological restructuring, and how this new legitimacy framework now shapes both domestic governance and the UAE's more assertive foreign policy posture.

In this account, assertive foreign policy becomes a mechanism through which the state transcends earlier bases of legitimacy, such as tribalism, rentierism, and religious bases, and constructs a modern, state-centric identity. In this context, identity politics play a crucial role. Assertive foreign policies in Yemen are domesticated through martyrdom narratives and national-building discourse, transforming external assertiveness into internal cohesion and regime resilience. The securitization of Islamism after the Arab Spring thus appears not only as an external threat but also as a catalyst for domestic consolidation. Through role theory, Al-Suwaidi demonstrates that, following the 2011 events, the UAE redefined itself from a cautious follower to a self-perceived regional leader with a mandate to intervene, manage threats, and reshape the regional order.

Litsas also complements these arguments by locating the UAE within a

broader theoretical shift. He contends that the UAE provides empirical evidence that strategic intelligence, institutional agility, technological ambition, and geoeconomic sophistication matter more than demographic or territorial size in determining state influence. His intervention reframes the debate by suggesting that the UAE exemplifies a transition from smallness to smartness, a new model of state power that destabilizes long-standing assumptions about what small states can or cannot do in international politics.

Taken together, these perspectives suggest that in the aftermath of the Arab Spring and in response to external developments such as the U.S. Pivot to Asia and the JCPOA, the UAE felt compelled to recalibrate its security posture. It increasingly adopted assertive foreign policy practices, combining elements of smart power with selective uses of hard power and soft power. In doing so, it has transcended the conceptual boundaries of the small-state category and begun to operate according to the logic of a strategically intelligent, intervention-capable regional actor.

Divergences in Approaches

While the thrust of this review has emphasized that the UAE's transition beyond the behavioral limits of a small state is anchored in both domestic restructuring and shifting regional conditions, the three works examined here do not arrive at this conclusion through identical

pathways. Indeed, although the authors share considerable analytical ground, most notably their recognition that the post-2011 period marks a decisive break in Emirati foreign policy, their explanations diverge in meaningful ways. It is precisely these points of divergence that this section explores. By unpacking where the authors disagree, we gain clearer insight into the conceptual choices that shape competing interpretations of Emirati assertiveness and can better situate our own argument within this intellectual landscape.

This article aligns with the common observation that the UAE's post-Arab Spring behavior cannot be reduced to a single causal mechanism. Yet, in contrast to the more siloed emphases found in three books, this review adopts a synthetic perspective. Systemic insecurity, domestic legitimacy reconstruction, and strategic-intelligence capacity are mutually reinforcing rather than mutually exclusive drivers. In practice, however, each author privileges one of these dimensions over the others, and it is this privilege that generates analytical divergence.

Esfandiary places primary weight on structural shocks and external threat perceptions, examining what changed in the regional and global security environment and how the UAE adapted to these changes. Al-Suwaidi, by contrast, turns inward, arguing that assertiveness became meaningful and sustainable only when embedded in a project of political legitimacy and identity re-en-

gineering. Litsas advances a broader theoretical claim, positioning the UAE as evidence that power in the contemporary international system is defined less by size than by strategic and institutional sophistication.

A position that bridges Esfandiary's and Al-Suwaidi's accounts appears more convincing: the UAE's assertiveness is catalyzed by external insecurity. Still, it is made durable and strategically intelligible by internal political transformation. Yet, following Litsas, this dual process also challenges the theoretical assumptions of small-state behavior. Examining where these authors diverge not only clarifies the stakes of each interpretation but also helps articulate a more integrated explanation of why the UAE has come to occupy a role that exceeds traditional small-state expectations. Thus, examining where these authors diverge not only clarifies the stakes of each interpretation but also helps articulate a more integrated explanation of why the UAE has come to occupy a role that exceeds traditional small-state expectations.

Conclusion

By analyzing the three works above, this article argues that the United Arab Emirates' post-2011 transformation cannot be explained within the behavioral boundaries traditionally assigned to small states. Rather than conforming to the passivity, risk aversion, or alliance dependency that the small-state literature prescribes, the UAE has demonstrated a sus-

tained pattern of strategic autonomy, assertive interventionism, and identity-driven statecraft. This outlier behavior is not the product of a single causal mechanism, but rather the convergence of three mutually reinforcing processes: structural shocks, domestic political reconstruction, and the emergence of a new strategic-intelligence capacity that enables the UAE to operate beyond its material size. The three books examined here collectively illuminate this broader argument, though each does so through a distinct conceptual and empirical aperture.

Dina Esfandiary's work engages most directly with the structural side of this article. She clearly demonstrates how the Arab Spring, perceived U.S. retrenchment, and the JCPOA reshaped Emirati threat perceptions, opening the space for a more autonomous regional posture. In many ways, her analysis substantiates the first pillar of my broader claim: post-2011 assertiveness began as a strategic recalibration induced by external insecurity. Yet Esfandiary's focus on structural drivers, while persuasive, also demonstrates the limitation of treating the UAE's behavior as a purely reactive phenomenon. Her own evidence inadvertently supports the arguments of this article, which assert that assertiveness later became a self-reinforcing identity and policy mode—one that structural shocks may have triggered but could not alone sustain.

Khalifa Al-Suwaidi's book, by contrast, speaks directly to the second

dimension of the argument of this article: that the UAE's foreign-policy transformation is inseparable from its internal restructuring of legitimacy and identity. His examination of the securitization of Islamism, the confrontation with *Islah*, and the emergence of a new state-centric identity aligns closely with my claim that assertiveness became domestically meaningful only after the state's political foundations were re-engineered. Al-Suwaidi demonstrates how foreign policy activism serves not merely as an external projection but also as an instrument of internal cohesion. This complements but also challenges Esfandiary's emphasis on external shocks by demonstrating that assertiveness is anchored in political identity as much as strategic necessity. At the same time, Al-Suwaidi's account occasionally overstates internal consolidation, leaving unaddressed the frictions and contradictions that activism generates. These tensions, however, ultimately reinforce this article's argument that domestic reconstruction is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the UAE's behavioral shift.

Spyridon Litsas offers the most apparent connection to the third pillar of this article's argument: the conceptual inadequacy of classical small-state theory. His reframing of the UAE as a "smart state" provides a theoretical vocabulary that aligns with my view that material size cannot explain the country's strategic range. Litsas captures the essential point that the UAE's rise is not an anomaly to be explained away, but

evidence of an emerging paradigm in which strategic intelligence, geoeconomic sophistication, and technological ambition redefine state capabilities. Yet his account also reveals a boundary that this article seeks to address: smartness enables agency, but does not erase vulnerability. The UAE's expanding presence, from Yemen to the Red Sea, and its global investment chains still expose it to reputational, economic, and geopolitical risks that smart-state theory tends to underplay.

Taken together, these works do not contradict the article's argument; they deepen, nuance, and sometimes partially challenge it, thereby strengthening its analytical robustness. Esfandiari clarifies the structural catalysts; Al-Suwaidi elucidates the domestic foundations; Litsas reframes the theoretical stakes. What this article adds

and what the combination of these texts ultimately supports is that the UAE's trajectory constitutes a qualitatively new form of small-state behavior, one in which structural pressures, legitimacy politics, and strategic creativity converge to produce a state that systematically defies established behavioral expectations.

In this sense, the UAE's rise is not merely a regional development but a conceptual provocation. It forces us to reconsider the assumptions embedded in small-state theory and to recognize that size no longer predetermines strategic ambition. The UAE, as the three books collectively demonstrate, has transformed smallness from a limitation into a platform for innovation, marking an outlier trajectory that compels IR scholarship to rethink its core analytical categories. ■



BOOK REVIEWS

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How to Get It**

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A Climate of Truth: Why We Need It and How to Get It

By Mike Berners-Lee

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2025, 386 pages, £14.99 (Paperback), ISBN: 9781009440066

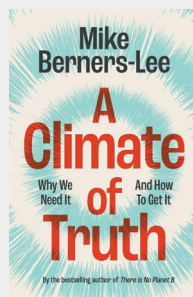
Reviewed by Mustafa Onur Yalçın, Sakarya University

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In *A Climate of Truth: The Science, the Solutions, and the Road to a Better Future*, Mike Berners-Lee offers a timely and accessible reflection on the current state of the climate emergency and the collective narratives surrounding it.

Berners-Lee is a climate scientist and author known for his work on carbon footprints and climate change. Building on his previous work on sustainability and carbon footprints, Berners-Lee turns his attention to what he sees as the deeper political, cultural, and psychological barriers to meaningful climate action. Rather than presenting new scientific data or technological proposals, the book focuses on the challenge of maintaining intellectual honesty and moral clarity in an increasingly polarized and overwhelmed public sphere regarding climate-induced issues. Written in an intriguing and sometimes conversational tone, the book seeks to portray the disconnection between what we know about climate issues and how we choose to respond to them, both individually and collectively. However, along with the challenging ideas, the book also has limitations in framing the issue.

The book's central idea is that the climate crisis is not only a scientific and technical challenge, but also a crisis of collective honesty. Berners-Lee argues that despite over-



whelming scientific consensus and growing public awareness, society remains trapped in denial, distraction, and moral evasion. He identifies a range of mechanisms regarding their rhetorical, political, and psychological context that allow individuals, governments, and corporations to avoid facing the

full implications of the environmental emergency. For Berners-Lee, these evasions are not only understandable but also dangerous, as they distort public debate and undermine the possibility of effective action against the climate issues. The book's key claim is that the most urgent task today is to “face the truth;” to resist false reassurance and to confront the realities of ecological breakdown with clarity and moral seriousness (pp. 3, 16-17).

The book is structured around 10 short chapters, each addressing a different part of the climate conversation, ranging from media narratives and political rhetoric to personal responsibility and global justice. It seems that Berners-Lee intentionally adopts a plain style and often uses rhetorical questions to engage the reader, which makes the book readable. However, this trait, which probably makes it easier to understand, sometimes comes at the expense of depth. While his call for honesty and moral clarity is compelling, the argument sometimes rests on broad generalizations and a tendency to assume shared ethical in-

tutions. For example, his critique of political inaction often avoids engaging with the structural conditions that shape policymaking, offering instead a primarily moral diagnosis of the problem. As a result, the book risks framing the climate issues as a matter of individual will and integrity, rather than confronting the more complex dynamics of power, inequality, and global capitalism that have been deepening the problem for years.

At the core of Berners-Lee's thinking is the idea of truth –not simply in the sense of getting the facts right, but as a kind of moral and existential clarity. He argues that our failure to act on climate change has not come from a lack of knowledge, but from our reluctance to fully face up to what that knowledge means. However, while this emphasis on truthfulness carries rhetorical force, it sometimes lacks analytical precision, which seems to be the biggest issue of the work. The book does not sufficiently differentiate between different kinds of truth claims –scientific, ethical, political– and how they function in distinct discursive arenas. Also, invoking truth as a unifying moral force might miss the fact that public discourse is often polarized. In calling for more honesty, the book implicitly assumes a shared epistemological ground that may or may not exist, especially in a post-truth political climate marked by deep ideological divisions.

Although the book makes repeated references to global inequality and the disproportionate responsibilities of wealthy nations, its perspective remains largely rooted in a Western liberal framework. Berners-Lee often writes from the vantage point of a concerned, yet relatively privileged citizen, speaking to readers who likely share his access to information, resources, and a sense of agency. While this makes sense given the

book's target audience, it also creates a gap, one that makes it harder for the book to fully connect with the day-to-day experiences of those most directly impacted by the climate crisis. The book generally tends to universalize moral imperatives without sufficiently accounting for structural injustice, historical responsibility, or the geopolitical dimensions of the crisis. As a result, the book sometimes slips into a form of moral persuasion that feels disconnected from the global asymmetries it briefly acknowledges.

Toward the end of the book, Berners-Lee offers a series of reflections on what individuals, institutions, and governments might do differently if they were to fully confront the climate truth. These suggestions include having more honest conversations, resisting despair, and making value-driven choices in everyday life. While these proposals are meaningful and carefully laid out, they mostly stay within the boundaries of personal responsibility and shifts in cultural attitudes. What's missing is a deeper dive into how actual policies are shaped, how collective action can be mobilized, or how larger economic systems come into play. This ultimately narrows the book's practical relevance. At times, the emphasis on mindset and moral clarity seems to overshadow the material and institutional changes required for meaningful transformation. In this sense, the book is more effective as a moral appeal than as a roadmap for systemic change.

A Climate of Truth makes a valuable and timely contribution to today's climate conversation, especially through its emphasis on intellectual honesty and moral accountability. Berners-Lee writes in a way that's clear, often compelling, and clearly rooted in a sincere urge to connect thought with action. Still, the very qualities that give the book its moral

weight also expose its limits when it comes to political impact. Its emphasis on mindset, truthfulness, and personal integrity sometimes comes at the expense of structural analysis and practical strategy. For readers already engaged in climate debates, the book may feel

more like a call to stay the course than a push into new conceptual territory. Nonetheless, its clarity, urgency, and sincerity make it a useful starting point for broader discussions about the ethical foundations and political limits of climate communication today.

Understanding the Syrian Refugee Crisis in Turkey: Perspective from Actors

By Emrah Atar

London: Lexington Books, 2023, 149 pages, \$95, ISBN: 9781666915778

Reviewed by Afifa Abdullahi Warsame, TED University

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The book *Understanding the Syrian Refugee Crisis in Turkey: Perspective from Actors* by Emrah Atar, a scholar with expertise in migration and urban governance, analyzes the Syrian refugee crisis's influence on Türkiye's healthcare and education system. The book draws from research conducted during Atar's doctoral studies, specifically his Ph.D. dissertation titled *Impact of Syrian Refugee Crises on Public Services Provision: Perspectives from Urban-Local Governance in Türkiye*. While the book bears a different title, it is a product of the same fieldwork in his doctoral research. The book highlights the perspectives of various actors involved in managing the Syrian refugee crisis, including policymakers, service providers, and some refugees themselves.

The book has an introduction, four chapters, and a conclusion. The introduction describes the book's objective and research methodology. The book uses qualitative methods, including interviews, focus groups, and secondary data from reports and other publica-



tions. The first chapter begins with conceptualization. First, the author briefly overviewed migration theories such as neoclassical economics, new migration economics, dual labor theory, and global system theory. Governance, government, and the public sector were then discussed, with the author arguing that

public service is one of the fundamental ways in which governments demonstrate their progress. He also emphasizes that public service supply should be based on a cooperative partnership based on co-governance, meaning finding independent parties to collaborate with the government to provide effective public service.

Chapter two examines Syrian refugee children's schooling in Türkiye. The author explains the situation of the Turkish education system and its openness to everyone, regardless of gender. The author outlines the efforts made by the Turkish government to provide education to Syrian children, including the establishment of language centers, temporary

educational centers, vocational training projects, and free education for all Syrian refugees. Despite Turkish efforts, Syrian refugees still struggle in education. Syrian children face language barriers, unpreparedness for school, family, and psychological problems, which decrease the children's integration into the education system and increase their absenteeism from school. In addition, one of Türkiye's domestic issues includes the insufficiency of schools and classrooms before the Syrians came, and the Syrians' arrivals made the situation worse, the author contends.

Chapter three examines Syrian refugees' health status and access. The author contends that Syrian refugees in Türkiye can get health services equal to the health services offered to Turkish nationals. Yet, Syrian refugees face health service issues, including language barriers between patients and doctors, the lack of IDs or registration, and the difficulty that Syrians can get healthcare service only in the place where they are registered, unless in an emergency. Another issue discussed is the lack of Syrian-specific equipment and physicians, particularly female ones. Some Syrian women refuse to undergo medical exams conducted by men. Syrian refugees face other issues, including a lack of family planning and untrained doctors for refugee management, insufficient funds for medical purchases, and scarce psychological support for those living outside camps.

Chapter four examines NGOs and civil society's involvement in the refugee crisis. The author underscores that these groups are facilitators, provide services, and help increase community awareness. However, NGOs face challenges such as a lack of funds, difficulties with registration and formalization -which takes a long time and includes the possibility of rejection- as well as a lack of strategic plan-

ning, limited capacity, and poor coordination and cooperation among NGOs. Competition among NGOs has hampered government-NGO collaboration, making problem-solving difficult. Their lack of communication has caused a misunderstanding regarding who is doing what and where.

The last chapter summarizes the four major chapters of the book, highlighting the findings of the study. The author argues that teaching Turkish to people who do not understand the language is a waste of time and effort. In addition, the attention that Turkish students seek has been neglected as teachers try to educate the refugees, which has led to Turkish families preferring their children not be educated with Syrian children. The author also states that making education a priority means burdening the Turkish government and diverting budgets from other sectors. The author not only highlights the problem but also recommends educational capacity building that includes improving institutional capacity, learning, teaching, and training capacity, curriculum development, and strengthening school-family partnerships. Moreover, he highlights that it is necessary to find capacity building in health care, to develop institutions, to conduct more training, to allocate resources efficiently, and also to find partnerships that promote health care. He then suggests that NGOs and civil society must be community-based and open to collaboration and coordination.

This book is truly significant and unique, as it focuses on only two sectors: education and health. The author has used simple and clear language that is straightforward to understand. He explained the concepts and ideas of migration, governance, and capacity building, making it easy for anyone to comprehend, regardless of their field of study. Moreover, he has succeeded in balancing the perspectives

of different actors, which means that he has clearly described the government's efforts, the problems faced by Syrians, and the service providers without offending any particular group. Moreover, the author has avoided overemphasizing any particular point, which shows his objectivity and how this information is based on the study he conducted.

One of the criticisms of the book is that the interviewees' statements are not interpreted in detail. There is much more to add or con-

sider from the participants' statements, but the author appears to have avoided critical interpretation. Likewise, for Syrian refugees, the author has generalized too much, implying they are all in the same situation.

In conclusion, this book connects different information and is useful in various fields, not just migration management, but also for health care, psychology, public administration, governance, education development, and even international relations.

Hidden Hate: The Resilience of Xenophobia

By Mathew Creighton

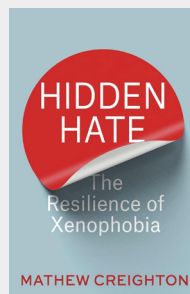
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Reviewed by Ramiz Abbaszada, Shanghai Jiao Tong University

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Hidden Hate: The Resilience of Xenophobia by Mathew Creighton revalues xenophobia as a dynamic and multidimensional phenomenon rather than simply overt hostility toward immigrants. Associate Professor Mathew Creighton of University College Dublin exposes, through creative survey studies, that prejudice is often prevalent but deliberately and strategically hidden beneath the surface of apparently tolerant societies. Rich theoretical insights, along with innovative survey studies in the book, expose how anti-immigrant sentiment could be openly expressed, deliberately veiled, or even unconsciously hidden.

Using diverse survey methodologies, Mathew Creighton investigates overt, co-



vert, and hidden xenophobic sentiments in *Hidden Hate: The Resilience of Xenophobia*. Chapter 1 defines the xenophobe using conceptual analysis, while Chapter 2 presents survey experiments to evaluate how anonymity affects the revealing of intolerance. Chapters 3 and 4 explain how political and economic changes affect the manifestation of xenophobia by means of anonymous comparative surveys before and after the U.S. financial crisis and Brexit referendum. In a similar way to surveys, Chapter 5 explores racial framing in European settings, meanwhile Chapter 6 examines Islamophobia in the United States, United Kingdom, and Norway, therefore exposing the mechanics of hidden xenophobia. Lastly, Chapter 7 investigates anti-refugee sentiment in

Norway and shows how social stigma shapes its expression.

In the beginning chapter, Chapter 1, Creighton redefines the xenophobe by straying beyond crude concepts of clear prejudice. Referring to classical theorists like Simmel and Goffman, the author affirms that the xenophobe is a strategic actor whose behavior fits the social setting. Addressing the foreigner as a socially constructed category rather than a fixed target, Creighton makes a characteristic distinction between obvious forms of prejudice and those that are consciously or unconsciously concealed. Even though the theoretical discussion part is quite complex, it succeeds in solid groundwork for empirical research in the later chapters of the book by questioning existing assumptions.

The expression of xenophobia based on the concept of social stigma is the main consideration in Chapter 2. Creighton openly states that for fear of social exclusion people are hiding their true prejudices, creating contradictions between what they say publicly and their private beliefs. The author also highlights traditional survey methods' applicability and how they're limited to measuring only publicly expressed opinions and proposes an innovative method of uncovering hidden prejudices through experimental surveys which manipulate conditions of anonymity. It's obvious that this relationship between stigma and implicit prejudices is difficult to clearly demonstrate empirically in this part of the book, however, the importance of understanding how data collected by traditional methods may under-represent the true extent of xenophobia.

In Chapter 3, the relation between the expression of xenophobic populist movements and economic crises has been analyzed. Creighton

uses the Great Recession as a case study and links it with how economic distress facilitates the open expression of existing prejudices rather than generating new ones. Based on the data from empirical surveys, in times of economic distress, people are more willing to openly express their hidden intolerance. It is also noteworthy to mention that the in-depth analysis related to how hidden prejudices can be mobilized by populist politics shows the direct link between economic conditions and the strategic use of xenophobia.

Chapter 4, in this regard, represents the analysis of Creighton related to the Brexit referendum as an important turning point in the expression of xenophobia. Creighton contends that the Brexit crisis laid the foundation for previously hidden attitudes against Muslim migrants to be openly expressed, with the outcome of intense political debates on national borders and immigration policies. The author's analysis clearly represents the case of how xenophobic discourses are enabled to move from the margins into mainstream political discourse.

Meanwhile, in Chapter 5, Creighton considers how race and xenophobia interact. He questions the idea that color blindness indicates less racial bias. Instead, his results show that concealed racial prejudices are much more apparent when survey participants are given anonymity. This implies that many people who profess to be objective could really have strong prejudices hidden within socially acceptable rhetoric. The study offers a strong normative critique, even if it mostly depends on survey data, which might not completely reflect all subtleties of racial dynamics. Furthermore, Creighton openly urges both academics and legislators to go beyond obvious policies and solve the ongoing issue of hidden xenophobia.

Chapter 6 covers Islamophobia as a separate type of xenophobia that is often expressed openly. Creighton notes how anti-Muslim attitudes are less stigmatized in some political environments and, hence, more likely to be shown in public. This chapter reveals that when the target of xenophobia is a Muslim immigrant, the societal expenses are less, therefore contrasting with previous debates of hidden prejudice. Given current political debates in Western countries, the analysis here is pertinent and contemporary. Though the treatment of Islamophobia is comprehensive, a more thorough investigation of intersecting factors, such as ethnicity and socioeconomic level, could have enhanced the debate even more.

In the final chapter, Creighton turns his attention to the politics of refugee migration. He points out the dichotomy of a culture that hides concealed xenophobic beliefs yet ostensibly supports a moral need to help migrants. Employing other survey studies, he shows that although overt hostility to refugees is unusual, respondents who feel safe in their anonymity expose latent prejudice. This chapter combines the theoretical and empirical threads of the book to underline the fact that covert bias is still a strong and recurring force, even in environments ostensibly friendly. Within this chapter, Creighton effectively underscores the need to include latent xenophobic attitudes into broader social and political agendas.

While survey experiments offer strong empirical data that the book heavily focuses on, they may ignore complex, qualitative experiences of xenophobia. Although Creighton's investigation of anonymous acts and masked intolerance is innovative, some readers could find the methodological explanations too dense, potentially limiting access for non-specialists. As this book offers strong theoretical and empirical foundations, it is best suited for scholars and advanced students in sociology, political science, migration studies, and social psychology. Its findings on hidden xenophobia can also help public officials and policymakers since they could guide their policy strategies in the fight against intolerance.

Hidden Hate: The Resilience of Xenophobia is a significant contribution to the research on migration, populism, and intolerance. Through its seven chapters, Creighton successfully develops a multilayered model that challenges accepted approaches to measuring xenophobia and provides sophisticated knowledge of how prejudice is both hidden and expressed. Using survey research under anonymity creatively offers strong proof that political upheavals and economic crises can expose hidden anti-immigrant attitudes. Creighton's work compels us to reconsider the nature of intolerance in contemporary society and realize that what seems to be a modest public expression of prejudice may really conceal a far larger reservoir of bias.

Algeria Politics and Society from the Dark Decade to the Hirak

By Michael J. Willis

London: Hurst Publishers, 2022, 526 pages, \$45.17, ISBN: 9781787384743

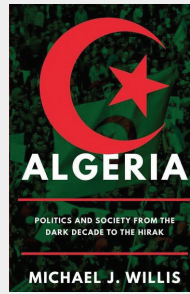
Reviewed by Abdulgani Bozkurt, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University

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The most problematic legacy of Anglo-French interventionism in Africa, and especially in North Africa, is imperialism. What proves most detrimental, however, is not merely the colonial past itself but the persistence of imperial practices well into the post-independence era. In fact, during the post-colonial period, many of Africa's new states have struggled to overcome the master-slave mentality inherited from the colonial era and have maintained a patronizing and imperious style of governance that falls short of understanding their own people.

The colonial perspective, which has continued after independence, also manifests itself in the academic realm. Most recent research on Algeria continues to focus on the French colonial period (1830-1962) and the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962). However, it is worth noting that studies focusing on modern Algeria have begun to make noteworthy contributions to the literature, albeit in limited numbers, particularly in light of the impact of the popular uprisings in the Middle East in 2011.

Although quality research on Algeria has increased in recent years, academic studies on the country's last few decades are still quite limited. Moreover, given that most existing studies focus on the state-building process and the economic dimension of power strug-



gles, the Algerian case is of considerable importance to both the political science and international relations disciplines. In this context, Michael J. Willis' book titled *Algeria: Politics and Society from the Dark Decade to the Hirak*, which focuses on both state-society relations and the country's foreign policy,

fills an essential gap in the literature of these two disciplines.

Willis categorizes his study under eight main chapters. The first chapter summarizes the French colonial period, the national movement organized against French rule, and the struggle for independence led by this movement, before focusing on the process of forming an independent state in Algeria. It includes an account of the founding leader of the state, Ahmed Ben Bella, as well as the period of Houari Boumediene that followed. At the end of the first chapter, the ideology of the new state and the ideological background of the founding elites facilitate an understanding of the state-building process. The last part of the chapter discusses the dynamics that paved the way for the rise of the Islamist movement in the country and the causes of the economic crisis in the same period, followed by an analysis of the political liberalization process that took place towards the end of the 1980s.

The second chapter of the study, entitled "Elite Politics," comprehensively analyzes the

era of Abdelaziz Bouteflika, an essential figure in Algeria's recent political history. In this framework, four different presidential terms are analyzed. The chapter provides a detailed account of Bouteflika's candidacy for a fifth term, only to be forced to hand over his post to Abdelmajid Tebboune in 2019 following the outbreak of widespread HIRAK demonstrations across the country (p. 89). The narrative not only provides a chronological political overview but also makes visible the social repercussions of these periods and the dynamics of the relationship between the political elite and the people.

In the third chapter, the author focuses on the regime's strategies in response to this new political equation following the successes of various Islamist groups in Algeria. Accordingly, the regime was divided between negotiating with the Islamists or eliminating them (p. 104). The author emphasizes that, despite a protracted struggle, "jihadism" ultimately failed and was unable to spread throughout the country (pp. 120-123).

In the following section, Chapter 4, the relationship between the economy and politics is analyzed. The discovery of oil in 1956, which had a significant impact on the country's economy, is emphasized (p. 135). However, it is noted that the decline in oil prices in the 1980s and 1990s had a profound impact on the country's economy, and the consequences of this situation are discussed (p. 138). It is noteworthy that the government had to agree with the IMF, and the revenues from this agreement were used to curb Islamist movements in the country (p. 141).

In the fifth chapter, the political opposition in the country is comprehensively evaluated through the lens of political parties, associations, and the HIRAK movement. In this

framework, it introduces the political parties in the country (p. 177), explains their rise and decline (p. 181), analyzes their relations with the regime in the 1990s (p. 183), and discusses the performance of opposition parties in the Arab Revolution process (p. 186). The chapter concludes that political parties failed to establish a significant presence during the Arab Spring. Furthermore, in the section on the relationship between the state and civil society, the impact of the HIRAK movement is analyzed in detail.

The sixth chapter of the book focuses on the relationship between the state and society. In this context, the finding that young people are not interested in the process of political participation stands out. In Algeria, where 54 percent of the population is under the age of 30, the effects of the tumultuous 1990s are believed to be still felt (p. 231). Nevertheless, there is a growing interest in change among young people. In recent years, this activism has manifested itself in various social movements, most notably the HIRAK movement.

In the seventh chapter, Willis examines the causes of conflict and rebellion in Kabylia, the Mzab, and the Saharan South. In Chapter 8, the author discusses the country's international position and evaluates Algeria's foreign policy and relations with the countries in the region. Furthermore, the country's position in the "global war on terror" is analyzed in detail (p. 341).

In the concluding chapter, Willis evaluates the future of Algeria. Although the HIRAK movement did not bring about the expected political change, the observation that the young population participated more actively in the process of social transformation, shaped around liberal values, is important. This suggests that transformation is not

only driven by mass mobilizations, but also by profound changes in values and political attitudes.

Willis's study fills a crucial gap in the literature with its comprehensive examination of the postcolonial period. His extensive use of primary sources enhances both the richness of the data and its analytical power. In terms of its scope and claim, the fact that there is no similar study on an identical scale in the existing literature makes it a privileged work in academic discussions. Therefore, Willis's work serves as a key reference for future scholars conducting academic research on Algeria.

Apart from a few easily overlooked typos and technical errors, there are no notable omis-

sions in the book. The main criticism concerning the content and language, though not very common, is the normative style that runs throughout the book, particularly when referring to Islamist groups in the country. Despite these shortcomings, the book is meticulously and comprehensively written, gaining important academic authenticity thanks to the author's recent fieldwork in Algeria. Moreover, the author's highly competent evaluation of secondary sources significantly strengthens the scientific value and credibility of the work. As mentioned earlier, the book not only contributes to the limited literature on Algerian politics but also stands out as a remarkable and well-qualified work in terms of offering original perspectives on the country's future after the Hirak movement in 2019.

Power of Bonding and Non-Western Soft Power Strategy in Iran: Comparing China and India's Engagement

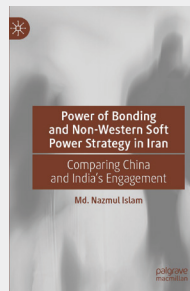
By Md. Nazmul Islam

Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2022, x+ 356 pages, £129.99, ISBN: 9783031198663

Reviewed by Subah Mutahhara Samiha, Marmara University

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In an era where Western-centric soft power strategies dominate global politics, the soft power practices of non-Western countries are often overlooked. This dominance creates a perception that Western soft power methods are the standard against which all others are measured. As a result, non-Western nations' unique soft power approaches are frequently marginalized or misunderstood. Nazmul Islam's work, *Power of Bonding and Non-Western Soft Power Strategy in Iran: Comparing China and*



India's Engagement, seeks to fill this gap by exploring Joe Nye's concept of soft power through a non-Western lens, highlighting how the two major non-Western Asian powers, China and India, vie for influence on Iran. Md. Nazmul Islam is a political scientist previously Associate Professor at Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University, also serving as the head of Türkiye, Asia, and Indo-Pacific Studies at ULİSA and recently appointed as Ambassador designate of Bangladesh to the Maldives.

The book is divided into eight chapters, each offering a unique perspective on why these strategies are crucial for the region and the world. In the introduction, the overall structure and content of China and India's Soft Power Strategy are analyzed, and a research methodology that combines quantitative and qualitative techniques is presented, including document analysis, literature reviews, interviews, and surveys.

The second chapter, "Theoretical Framework and Non-Western Soft Power Strategy," outlines the conceptual foundation of soft power from a non-Western perspective. By employing a new concept, "Power of Bonding," this chapter explores Joseph Nye's soft power theory and examines how countries like China and India implement distinct strategies (pp. 50-54). This chapter explores the contrasts between Western and non-Western approaches to soft power, providing a framework to understand how emerging powers leverage cultural, political, and economic influence on the global stage. It underscores that Western soft power is rooted in universal ideals, a top-down model of influence, and the promotion of liberal values. In contrast, non-Western soft power derives its strength from rich cultural heritage, emphasizes mutual benefit, and upholds the principles of pluralism.

The third chapter, "China's Soft Power Strategy," provides an in-depth analysis of China's approach to soft power, reconceptualizing it as the "Power of Bonding." This concept emphasizes that China's strategy focuses on building deep connections and mutual understanding through long-term partnerships and shared interests rather than just influencing others. The chapter examines how China employs various tools to enhance its global image and strengthen ties with other nations. Furthermore, the chapter discusses China's

use of media outreach, such as state-owned media outlets broadcasting globally, to shape narratives and present a favorable image of China to international audiences.

Chapter four offers an in-depth examination of China's soft power strategy in Iran, focusing on the profound historical and civilizational ties that have long connected these ancient cultures. This analysis situates their relationship within a broader historical framework, highlighting how centuries of interaction, including exchanging goods, ideas, and knowledge along the Silk Road, have laid a solid foundation for the modern strategic partnership between China and Iran. These historical connections are a cornerstone for China's approach, emphasizing mutual respect, shared heritage, and cultural understanding as the basis for fostering a robust and enduring alliance. The chapter explores how these deep-rooted ties have evolved into a comprehensive strategy that allows China to engage with Iran and the broader Middle East in ways that prioritize diplomacy, trade, and cultural exchange over coercion or military intervention. It argues that this approach, conceptualized as the "Power of Bonding," reflects China's commitment to building relationships based on mutual benefit and long-term partnership rather than domination or imposition.

Similarly, the fifth chapter comprehensively evaluates India's soft power strategy, focusing on how it is perceived and distinguished from Western soft power models. The chapter explores whether scholars and policymakers in India view the country's soft power as fundamentally different from the concept popularized by Western theorists, particularly Joseph Nye. It delves into the unique elements of India's soft power, such as its rich cultural heritage, spiritual philosophies, democratic values, and diplomatic efforts, to understand

how these aspects contribute to its global influence. Following the discussion of India's soft power strategy, Chapter six comprehensively evaluates India's soft power influence on Iran, delving into their bilateral relationship's historical, cultural, and strategic dimensions. The chapter begins by tracing the two nations' deep historical and civilizational connections, dating back to ancient times when trade, language, and religious philosophies crossed borders, fostering a unique blend of mutual cultural enrichment.

The seventh chapter, regarded as the most pivotal section of the book, offers a detailed comparative analysis of China and India's soft power strategies in Iran. This chapter comprehensively explains how these two Asian powers utilize soft power to influence Iran. Focusing on their engagements' cultural, economic, and political dimensions, the chapter explores China and India's distinct approaches to strengthening their presence and impact in Iran. Chapter eight, the study's concluding chapter, underscores the significant disparities in the approaches and outcomes of China and India in their respective engagements with Iran. It illustrates China's dominant position in Iran, achieved through a strategy that combines substantial economic investments with robust political support. This dual-faceted approach has allowed China to secure a commanding role in Iran's economic and geopolitical landscape. In contrast, India's influence in Iran is relatively modest and is primarily anchored in cultural diplomacy and shared historical ties. India leverages its long-standing civilizational and historical connections with Iran to foster goodwill and maintain bilateral relations. However, the chapter also identifies a critical challenge that constrains India's relations with Iran: its close alignment with the United States. As a key strategic partner of the U.S., India faces sig-

nificant diplomatic and economic constraints due to U.S.-imposed sanctions on Iran. These sanctions limit India's ability to expand trade and energy ties with Iran without risking repercussions from the U.S.

The book makes a significant academic contribution by focusing on non-Western perspectives and examining the soft power strategies of China and India, challenging Western-centric views on global politics. By analyzing the soft power strategies of China and India, the author broadens the scope of discourse, offering fresh insights into how rising powers from the Global South assert their influence on the international stage. The book's comparative framework is a strong point, though certain sections lack depth, particularly in examining India's soft power strategy compared to China's more thoroughly explored influence in Iran.

The author has presented several compelling facts to substantiate their analysis of China's role, offering strong evidence to support the narrative. However, the discussion on India appears comparatively less substantiated. Incorporating additional facts and examples could have enhanced the depth and balance of the analysis. Although it briefly addresses how external pressures, such as U.S. sanctions and European Union policies, influence Iran's relations with China and India, a more thorough analysis of global geopolitical dynamics would have enriched the discussion on soft power strategies. Additionally, the conclusion summarizes the findings well but could have been more forward-looking by offering concrete policy recommendations and exploring the future trajectory of China and India's influence in Iran, considering regional and global changes, for a more complete wrap-up. Despite its minor shortcomings, the book is likely to become an indispensable resource

for students and researchers in international relations and non-Western soft power, as well as for scholars seeking to understand the rapidly evolving landscape of global politics.

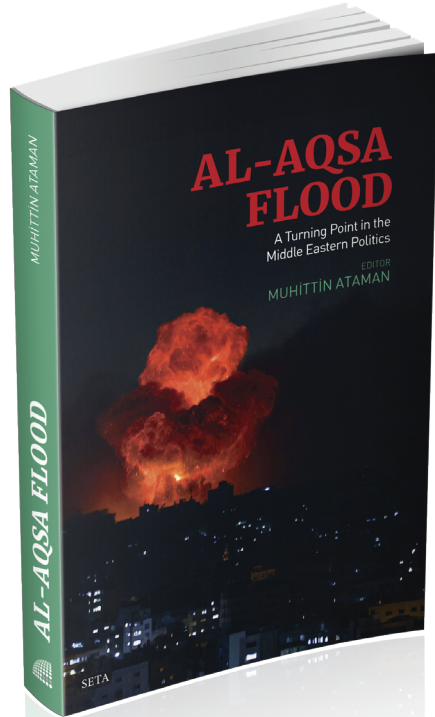
As the world moves toward a multipolar order, non-Western soft power is becoming

increasingly important in global politics. In addition to the countries mentioned in the book, nations like Türkiye, Qatar, ranging from media and sports diplomacy to humanitarian initiatives, to influence global perceptions and challenge the dominance of Western narratives on the world stage.

AL-AQSA FLOOD

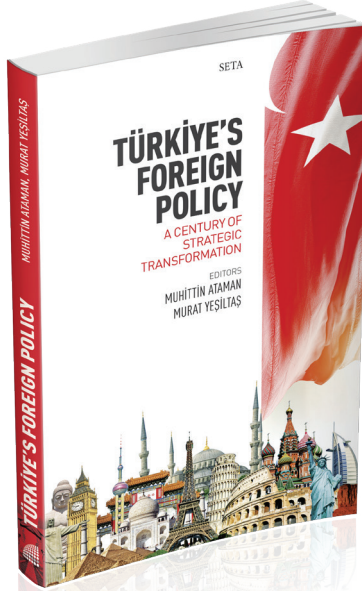
A Turning Point in the
Middle Eastern Politics

EDITOR
MUHİTTİN ATAMAN

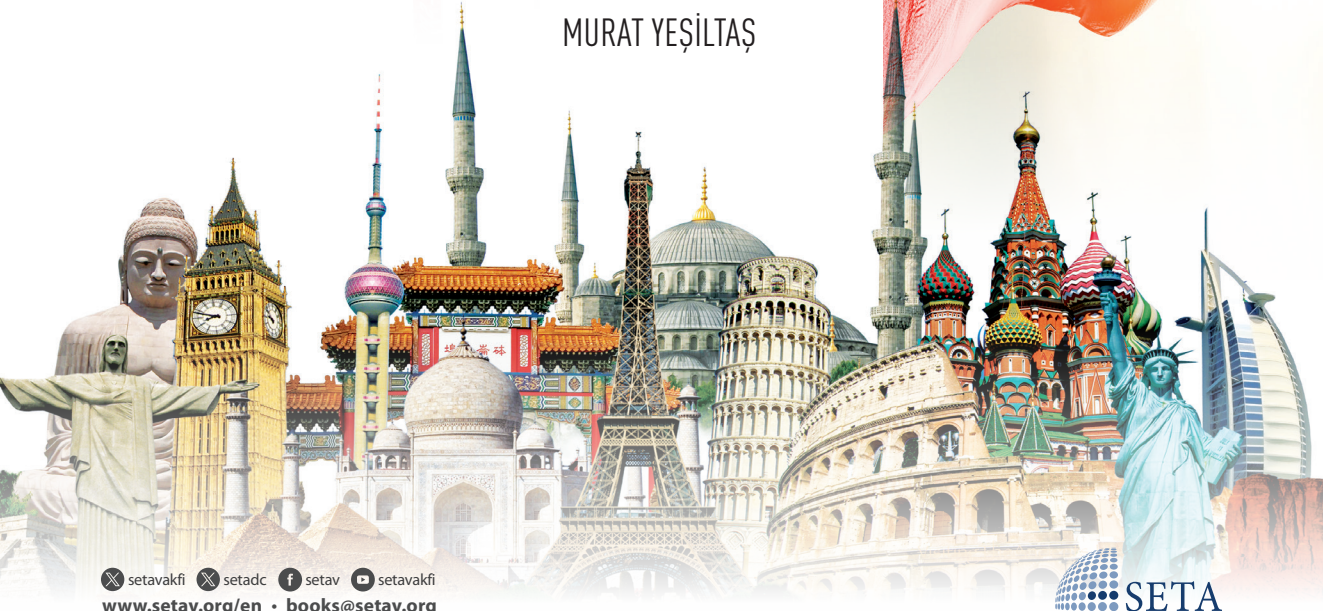


TÜRKİYE'S FOREIGN POLICY

A CENTURY OF
STRATEGIC
TRANSFORMATION



EDITORS
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MURAT YEŞİLTAŞ

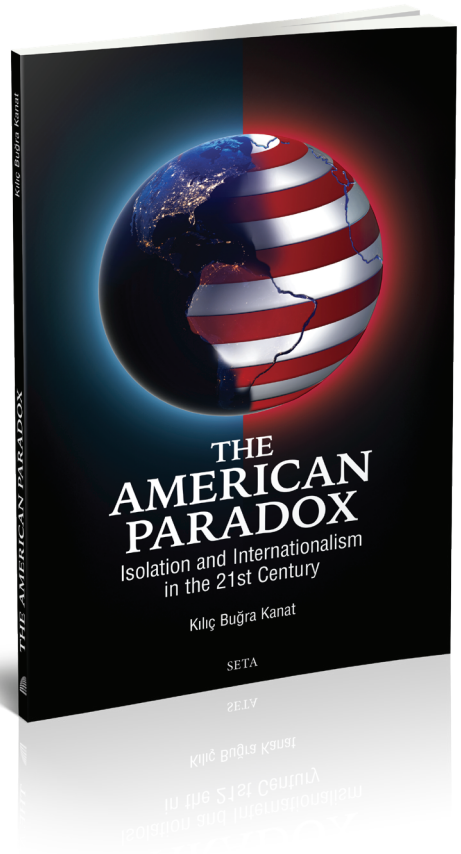




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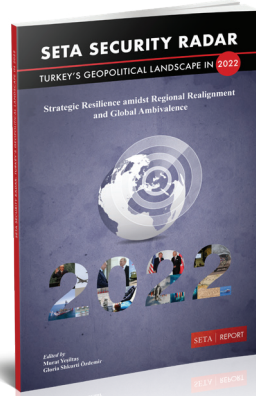
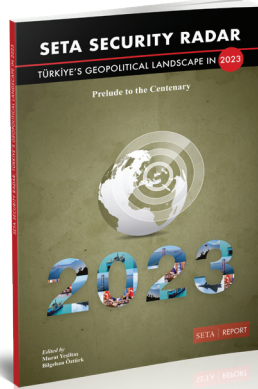
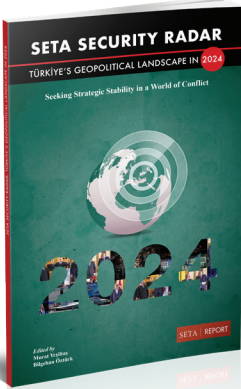
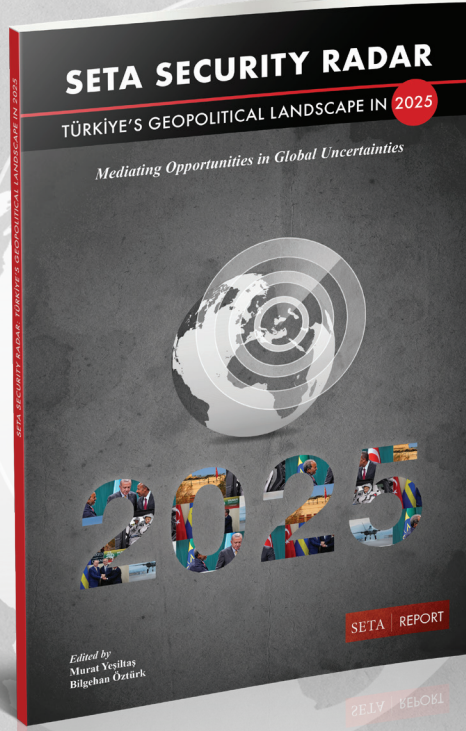
Isolation and Internationalism
in the 21st Century

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