

on the post-Soviet Caucasus (1991-2008) outlines the political conflicts within the Russian Federation and the Chechen wars, emphasizing the need for Russia's continuing power in the region.

The final arguments of the book express pessimism for the future of the Caucasus. In his concluding remark, as already signaled in the introduction, Marshall asserts that some western scholars and Jihadists alike have undeservedly glorified the Chechen independence wars. According to him, the USA and the EU aim to establish their agenda in the Caucasus and Central Asia through energy politics, democratization agendas, and other such means. Marshall's conviction that an assertive Russia remains the best hope for the successor states of the Soviet Union in the Caucasus and Central Asia is hard to justify on economic grounds. Moreover, the claim that the post Second World War formation of Japanese single party politics is a successful regional example for Russia to emulate is unsubstantiated. Based on my work on oligarchic markets, I would suggest that Russian capitalism, guided by the state ownership in the energy sector along with polar-

ized private market structures, has little or no resemblance to Japan's post-war industrial policy build up. The nature of the Russian political class and their counterparts in oligarchic market structures resembles Kazakhstan more than Japan. Therefore, to what extent Russia, alone, can be a reforming force or inspiration for the region remains to be seen.

Overall, this is an important book but should not be mistaken for a relaxing summer read! Marshall keeps the reader on her/his toes with a bewildering number of names, overly detailed accounts and takes the reader slowly through the tumultuous years of the modern Caucasus. It is better to digest it chapter by chapter. *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule* could have been more reader friendly if it had had a better-organized chapter format. Having no introduction and conclusion to each chapter makes it hard to follow the main purpose and argument of each chapter and the link among them. The real challenge for the reader is to avoid getting lost in the details.

**Gul Berna Ozcan**

*Royal Holloway, University of London*

## The Kurds and US Foreign Policy: International Relations in the Middle East since 1945

By *Marianna Charountaki*

London: Routledge, 2011, 320 pages, ISBN 9780415587532.

Through this thoughtful and carefully researched account of US relations with the Kurds, Marianna Charountaki seeks to place a superpower's relations with a non-state entity in context. She succeeds admirably. US relations with the Kurds might

seem at first glance incompatible due to the lack of an independent Kurdish state, but Charountaki in her book suggests otherwise.

In this respect, the book is something of a landmark, as it deals with and explores

the nature of engagement between the US (the sole superpower) and a weaker non-state political entity. US foreign policy towards the Kurds is a fascinating subject for two reasons. First, it shows that a superpower needs other agents to advance its interests. Second, it shatters the Realist notion that the international system is state-centric and that international relations are largely restricted to state actors. Charountaki also criticizes the current deficiency in contemporary scholarship towards political non-state entities, an area she argues should be addressed. Kurds were once largely neglected in International Relations scholarship, but their increasing proactivity and presence in the international relations of the Middle East makes this option no longer viable.

The Kurds in the Middle East arguably were the greatest losers in the aftermath of the Ottoman Empire's collapse in the early 20th century - the largest ethnicity in the region denied a state of their own after WWI. With their fragmentation into sizable minorities among major regional countries - Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria - Charountaki illustrates at great length the complex nature of the Kurdish Issue, which she eloquently describes as "multifaceted." The book describes the fragmentation of the Kurdish Issue, leading to the rise of several "Kurdish Issues," as opposed to one, each encompassing differing characteristics, and dependent on differing variables. The division of the Kurds among several nations, disunity and conflicts between the Kurds themselves, the hostile non-liberal nationalist character of the states they reside in and international powers' interests in maintaining regional stability are all contributing factors to this fragmentation. The author demonstrates that US foreign policy towards the Kurds is not mono-

lithic, varying in time and space. US policy towards the various Kurdish movements is different due to the non-state nature of the Kurdish issue and lack of a united US policy towards regional states. Thus, she explains it is impossible to describe a general US policy towards the Kurds.

The author also offers a critique of the available theories in International Relations for their lack of attention to the role, influence, and impact of non-state actors on international relations. The book starts with an excellent critique of all theories, challenging their neglect of the relations between state and non-state actors. Liberalism claims attention to non-state actors, yet fails to consider the role of political non-state actors and limits its focus mostly to transnational corporations and international institutions. State actors are no longer the only agents of the foreign policy making process.

Charountaki takes as her focus the years from 1945 to 2010. She persuasively demonstrates that US policy towards the Kurds has evolved through five distinct phases during this period. The final stage of which is an overt and official policy towards the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq, albeit it is unpronounced and within the framework of Iraq. The author narrates the transition of US Kurdish policy through these five stages, starting initially with "contacts" to a covert "relationship" and finally to an overt "institutionalized relationship" embodied in an official but undeclared US Kurdish policy. She illustrates the evolution from a Kurdish "thing" to a Kurdish "cause" and finally to a Kurdish "Issue," demonstrating the gradual and increasing sophistication of US foreign policy. The change of US interaction with the Kurds from humanitarian assistance to strategic partnership as a non-state ally

and an asset is testimony to the enhanced role of the Kurds in the international relations of the Middle East. Charountaki also illustrates that these five phases correspond to five changes in US foreign policy since World War II.

In doing so, Charountaki examines this intricate web of interdependency through two models. The first, demonstrating the complex relationships amongst the Kurds themselves on the one hand, and between regional powers and the US and the Kurds on the other. In the second, she uses a pivot diagram to demonstrate the Kurdish role in international relations through the position of the Kurdish Issue in inter-regional interactions and the role it plays between the latter and an external power like the US.

The book complicates its opening question on whether “the Kurds have influenced foreign policy,” as it distracts attention from the main thesis and subsequently does not deliver. The author rightly highlights the influence Kurds have had on the international relations of the Middle East, though it maybe an overstatement to propose that the Kurds have influenced US foreign policy. A more accurate assertion would be the role Kurds have played in advancing US policy through the changes of US strategy.

There is a lack of great depth with regard to US relations with the Kurds of Turkey, Iran, and Syria because her sources are scarce and somewhat elusive, as she has had to take a wide range of diverse material under consideration. Charountaki convincingly shows that International Relations theories are not sufficiently comprehensive and do not reflect the evolving nature of international affairs. However, she does not successfully establish a theoretical framework from which to examine the relations between state and non-state actors. There is also some confusion between George Bush senior and junior as well as in some of the dates provided.

Nevertheless, this work is an extensively researched and well written monograph, the author has made tremendous use of governmental archives and interviews. This is a remarkably useful book on a subject that demands attention. It fills a major gap in scholarship and is a necessary read for Middle East studies’ students, especially those dedicated to Kurdish studies. For students and scholars of US foreign policy it also provides fascinating insight into the consistency of US interests in the region.

Mohammed Shareef, *Durham University*

## The Militant Kurds: A Dual Strategy for Freedom

By *Vera Eccarius-Kelly*

Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2011, 259 pages. ISBN 9780313364686, \$49.95.

This is not just another book criticizing Turkey for its well-known Kurdish problem. Rather it is an ably crafted analysis full of useful insights regarding the Kurds within the context of Turkish politics. Its

main contribution is a very insightful analysis of the “politicizing [of] the Kurdish question in Europe by encouraging the formation of Kurdish special interest groups and intensifying political lobbying efforts”