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ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS OF THE MIDDLE EAST COUNTRIES, SECURITY POLICIES OF THE REGIONAL STATES

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ABSTRACT

States have advantages and disadvantages based on their location and geographical features on the world map. Its geostrategic location necessitates the more effective and careful use of national power elements to protect states' national interests and achieve its national goals. The aim of this study is to comprehensively examine the new threat and risk assessments made on different platforms for the Middle East; to investigate the security concerns created by the process of physically and politically changing the world map based on cultural, ethnic, religious, and sectarian grounds; and to reveal how other states, situated in the middle of a potential crisis region due to its geostrategic location, will be affected by this change. The importance of the subject stems from the belief that the survival of the states and their ability to become a regional actor depends on properly evaluating developments in the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean. The theoretical framework of this study is formed by constructivism (social constructivism), the theory that initiated the process of changing the world map and is based on the argument that the world is socially constructed, and the "Greater Middle East and North Africa Project (GMEAP)". In light of the available resources and interpretations in the study, a descriptive/descriptive approach was followed using content and discourse analysis, a qualitative research method, in order to create a conceptual, theoretical, and historical framework. The data used, the events in the historical process, theories/theses that gained or lost importance periodically, and the impact of the interaction between practice and theory on the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean region are presented holistically using a descriptive method.

Introduction

The Middle East region is of strategic importance because it is a nodal point for land, sea, and air routes connecting three continents; it possesses half of the world's oil reserves; it controls waterways and passages that concern all power centers; and it has rich cultural and historical values, along with values considered sacred by the three major religions. Monarchy and dictatorship, once universal forms of government, still maintain their influence as political structures in the Middle East. The instability in the political structure and the source of many ongoing disputes and conflicts stem from the fact that national borders were drawn by colonial administrations with specific agendas. Furthermore, the wealth provided by oil has created a fertile ground for exploitation by causing significant differentiation both between countries and within countries themselves; and the wealth derived from oil has not yet fully transformed the underdeveloped socio-economic structure in any country in the region (Shahin, 2019). When examining the Middle East, it is necessary to utilize the perspectives provided by political science and sociology, and to consider the role of existing international relations theories in achieving the hegemony sought in the region.

Research Problem

The following research questions were put forwards the relevance of the research topic:

1. Why is it necessary to analyze the Middle East countries' political and economic problems?
2. What security policy strategy do regional states have about this problem?
3. What new strategies can be developed about the problem?

Research Focus

The author focused on the Middle East countries geopolitical problems, and policy strategies of the regional countries.

Research Aim and Research Questions

To learn and analyze literature materials that search economic and political challenges of the Middle East is the main purpose of the study.

Materials and Methods

The author used the systematic review analyzing during the research. The materials that referenced selected Google Scholar, Elsevier, Dergipark sources.

Literature Review

When examining several studies that include the concept of "Middle East" in their titles, the first noticeable characteristic is that the scope of this concept expands, narrows, and differs depending on each study. All studies related to the Middle East begin by first defining the content of the concept and showing which areas are included within its scope. Each author can expand or narrow the scope of the "Middle East" concept; they determine its content somewhat according to their own preferences and aims. The concept of "Middle East," which Mahan and Chirol introduced to the English language, began to appear in dictionaries and book titles at the beginning of the century (Demir&Shahin, 2024).

Angus Hamilton introduced the concept of "Middle East" to the scientific world by publishing a book called Problems of the Middle East (London, 1909), while Lord Curzon, the regent of India, gave it a semi-official character by using the term "Middle East" in an official speech in 1911 to refer to places close to India (Shahin, 2019).

The National Geographic Society in the United States calls the map encompassing the countries of the region "Near East countries." While the term "Middle East" is now a preferred conceptualization worldwide, it should be noted that the term "Southwest Asia" is preferred, particularly in Asia and international organizations. Many universities in the West have research centers called Middle East Center or Near East Center. After World War II, when regional studies and research increased, these centers conduct studies on the social, political, economic, historical, cultural, strategic, geographical, and other aspects of the countries in the region. The countries included in the scope of these centers' studies do not show a definiteness, just like the ambiguity in the scope of the concept, and can be different from each other (Fishamn et.al, 2017). For example, some include Sudan, Libya, Djibouti, and Afghanistan within the concept of the Middle East, while others may exclude these countries from the scope of the concept.

To reach objective conclusions and findings by geographically limiting the subject, this study deliberately covers only the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean regions. The Middle East, Cyprus, and the Eastern Mediterranean are of strategic importance because they are all located within the same Regional Security Complex. According to Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, the Regional Security Complex is a region

where "the main securitization and/or de-securitization processes among the actors are highly interrelated and cannot be analyzed separately." The fundamental idea in this theory is that the fact that real threats are more effective in geographically close regions increases interdependence in security on a regional scale. In other words, since the main security concerns of the states in the region are highly interdependent, it is not possible to evaluate their national strategies separately (Yavuz, 2000).

In the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean region, which should not be considered separately; The continued existence of terrorism based on ethnic and religious rhetoric, international migration, anti-democratic forms of government, the struggle of great powers to control energy resources and corridors, the continuation of the Arab-Israeli conflict, particularly regarding the Palestinian state, and Turkey's security concerns, as it is geographically and historically a part of these regions, are increasing; because security is necessary for people, societies, states, and all kinds of living organisms as long as they exist (Demir et.al.,2024).

After September 11, 2001, the situation can be described as "no security; no stability either." With the collapse of the Soviet Union (USSR), ethnic nationalist movements increased; new states were established; regional conflicts emerged in the world; and balances were disrupted. To re-establish the disrupted order, the concept of a "New World Order" was put forward. The international system, which was sought to be reorganized by the President of the United States (USA), Woodrow Wilson, after the First World War, and by the US Presidents Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman after the Second World War, was once again attempted to be reorganized by the US President George Bush under the concept of a "New World Order." This order promises a unipolar world under American hegemony, economic stability, and security. While idealists claim that American hegemony is good and positive for world peace; Realists argue that this hegemony stems from a necessity as an extension of a legitimate self-defense situation and that their interests demand it; globalist/structuralists, on the other hand, state that it is a factor that ensures the continuation of underdevelopment and describe this situation as a negative aspect that must be overcome (Christopher et.al, 2017).

Following the September 11 attacks, the US intervened in the Middle East, primarily in Afghanistan and Iraq, for reasons such as eliminating terrorism which it assessed as originating from the region, facilitating the transformation of autocratic regimes into democracies that it deemed a threat to the Western world, and preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. It has guided its Middle East policies through constructivism and the Greater Middle East Project (GMEP), which began to be implemented in the mid-20th century. The Greater Middle East Project (GMEP) first gained prominence in October 2003 when US Deputy Secretary of State Marc Grosman articulated it as a means of ensuring the economic and political development of Middle Eastern countries. It was later shaped by speeches given by US President Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney in Davos in February 2004. Officially announced at the G-8 summit in Sea Island, Georgia in 2004, this project included Turkey and countries in the Middle East and North Africa (European Parliament Policy Department, 2017).

According to the US, as long as democracy is not established in the Middle East, it will continue to export violence to the world. For democratic governments to prevail in the Middle East and for this region to be freed from being a source of terrorism, the GOKAP (Global Democracy and Progressive Action Project) needs to be implemented with the support of Western countries. The aim of the project is not only to establish democratic forms of government in the specified countries, but also to revise, if necessary, the forms of government in countries where democracy has already been established and to end the status quo. What happened in the former USSR countries under the slogans of the "Orange Revolution" can be given as an example. To achieve the above-mentioned goals, projects based on neoliberal theory are being considered that pave the way for the implementation of GOKAP, such as

- changing radical and authoritarian regimes;
- ensuring that minority groups have a say in government;
- increasing economic and social development levels;
- raising education levels; and ensuring a free market economy and competitiveness.

Following the September 11, 2001 attacks, which had a devastating effect on the peace environment in international relations, it has been observed that ideas suggesting that the values of Western civilization (such as democracy, equality, and constitution) should be transferred to countries that facilitate terrorism, within the framework of constructivism, have gained prominence.

The Middle East, a crossroads of land, sea, and air routes connecting three continents, maintains its importance through the Suez Canal, Bab el-Mandeb, and the Strait of Hormuz. This is because the shortest trade between Europe and the economic giants of the Far East, such as China, Japan, and India, is conducted via the Eastern Mediterranean using these waterways. Furthermore, when we add the oil and natural gas trade

from the Black Sea, the importance of the Eastern Mediterranean in maritime trade becomes even clearer. According to the 2015 World Energy Statistics Report by the oil giant BP, 51.8% of the world's proven oil reserves are in the Middle East (European Parliament Policy Department, 2017). The Middle East is followed by South and Central America with 19.4%, North America with 13.7%, Europe and Eurasia with 9.1%, Africa with 3.5%, and Asia Pacific with 2.5%. Looking at oil consumption by region, the region with the highest oil consumption is Asia Pacific, which includes global economic powers such as China, India, Japan, and South Korea, with 33.9%. This region is followed by North America with 24.3% and Europe and Eurasia with 20.4%. When looking at the region that possesses oil and the region that uses and needs it, it is seen that the struggle in the Middle East is not a struggle for dominance between imperialist powers and Middle Eastern countries, but rather a struggle for control of Middle Eastern energy resources and corridors. The future of industrial giants such as the USA, European Union (EU) countries, Japan, and especially China and India, largely depends on Middle Eastern oil. Then-US President Richard Nixon expressed his country's view of the region as follows: "The interests of the United States and the entire free world in the Middle East depend on the fact that peace in this region is not violated by any country. Any power seeking to become dominant in the Middle East will exacerbate conflicts and political tensions in the region; it will negatively affect and endanger the security of America and the free world. America does not want to establish dominance in this region, nor will it allow any other country to become dominant here." (Shahin, 2019)

Results

The fluctuation and instability in national income is causing social and political tensions in the country and region. Therefore, the following assessment can be made: If the technological infrastructure required for energy production and export, and multi-dimensional alliances and policies for energy supply security cannot be developed, it is said that the losses for countries and peoples possessing energy resources outweigh the gains. American strategist Brzezinski defined American geostrategy as focusing on key players and accurately analyzing geography. To achieve this goal, he stated the necessity of identifying Eurasian states with the potential to influence other states in the international power distribution and possessing geostrategic dynamism, and neutralizing these powers in the region. The US is still acting according to these assessments; developing policies to control the energy needs of countries like China, which it sees as obstacles to its global hegemony, to prevent Russia's influence in the Middle East for geostrategic reasons, and to prevent the strengthening of countries like Iran, which it opposes. However, "in addition to its energy resources in Eurasia, Russia also has significant economic interests in the Middle East, ranging from nuclear energy to oil and natural gas. State-owned companies such as Gazprom and Rosatom are increasing their activities in countries such as Iran, Iraq, and Turkey, as well as in the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government and the Eastern Mediterranean, to establish consumer markets, oil and natural gas fields, and nuclear energy infrastructure." Global actors are developing policies towards the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean region; energy security is increasingly being discussed in the G7, UN, EU, and NATO forums (Yavuz,2000; Yilmaz, 2016).

According to BP's 2015 World Energy Statistics Report, 46.9% of the world's natural gas reserves are in the Middle East. The Middle East is followed by Europe and Eurasia, including Russia, with 31%, Asia Pacific with 8.2%, and North America with 6.5%. In terms of consumption, the region that consumes the most natural gas is Europe and Eurasia with 29.6%. This region is followed by North America with 28.3% and Asia Pacific with 19.9%.32 In markets such as China, India, and Japan in the Asia Pacific region, energy resources can find customers at higher prices due to transportation costs. This reason is leading all major powers to control Middle Eastern resources. In the European Parliament Policy Department's 2017 Energy Report, it is stated that in 2009, 280 billion cubic meters were found in the Tamar/Israel region; In 2010, 620 billion cubic meters of natural gas were found in the Leviathan/Israel region; in 2011, 140 billion cubic meters in the Aphrodite/Cyprus region; and in 2015, 850 billion cubic meters in the Zohr/Egypt region (European Parliament Policy Department, 2017).

The same report stated that the Russia-Ukraine-Europe natural gas crisis between 2006 and 2009 and the Ukraine crisis in 2016 showed the need to act together for the security of the energy supply architecture. These natural gas discoveries have accelerated drilling agreements between global energy companies and relevant states in the parcels between Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, and Crete; and brought the Israel-Cyprus-Greece pipeline project to the agenda (Yavuz, 2000, Sladden, 2017).

In addition to the importance of its geostrategic location, the region's natural gas potential has caused tensions to rise in the Eastern Mediterranean; This time, Turkey and major powers have sent warships to the region to protect their energy agreements and interests.

Discussion

Today, the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean continue to be the focus of the world due to their geostrategic location, energy resources, insufficient water resources, religious and sectarian polarization, regional wars and conflicts resulting from ethnic and ideological disagreements, terrorism, and the large arms and defense industry market dependent on energy revenues. Thirteen of the 15 countries included in the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's (SIPRI) 2016 World Military Spending Trends Report are located in the Eurasian region. In terms of military spending, the US ($611 billion), China ($216 billion), and Russia ($69.2 billion) share the top three spots.35 The same report lists Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Israel as the Middle Eastern countries with the highest military spending. According to another report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, arms imports by Middle Eastern countries doubled between 2013 and 2017 compared to the previous five years. In addition to the three Middle Eastern countries on the list, military spending by other Middle Eastern countries has turned the Middle East into a volatile arms market. While the struggle between major powers to gain a foothold in this multi-billion dollar market continues, tensions, crises, and conflicts persist in the region, whether existing or artificially created.

The Syrian crisis has brought international migration, one of the most important security problems in the Middle East, back to the world agenda. The crisis in Syria has had significant and profound effects on countries bordering Syria. According to the General Directorate of Migration Management's 2016 report, a total of 2,834,441 people migrated to Turkey from Syria with biometric registration. According to Human Rights Watch's 2016 World Report on Syria, the humanitarian crisis caused by the conflict led to 7.6 million internally displaced people and 4.2 million people fleeing to neighboring countries and becoming refugees. It would not be wrong to say that the real figures are much higher than those officially recorded. The migration and refugee problem is fundamentally a transnational phenomenon and should be solved with multilateral policies.

Conclusions and Implications

The understanding of security among actors in international relations is determined by power (political, military, geographical, economic, demographic, psycho-social, technological/scientific), goals (political, economic and geopolitical), and internal dynamics (perception of friendship-enmity among actors, internal political structure).

Chapters One and Seven of the UN Charter prohibit all states, member and non-member, from resorting to force or threatening force in international relations, with two important exceptions. These exceptions are "threats to international peace and security" and "the right of self-defense." While a Security Council resolution is not required for the right of self-defense, widespread human rights violations can be considered a "threat to international peace," and a decision to use the international force exception can be made in this context.

In 1999, the UN established the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) and prepared a report titled "Responsibility to Protect" (R2P). The report's fundamental principle was the "Sovereignty as Responsibility" approach. According to this, the responsibilities of states towards their own people and the international community have taken precedence over the concept of sovereignty. With this process, the Responsibility to Protect doctrine has emerged as a concept that re-examines the controversial concept of humanitarian intervention within the system. This concept, which was used in a way that undermined state sovereignty, especially after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, has formed one of the cornerstones of interventions in the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean. Interventions in the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean Regional Security Complex, under the responsibility of preventing terrorism, humanitarian intervention and protection, have, contrary to rhetoric, made chaos permanent in the region.

In these times when our world in general, and the Middle East in particular, is going through a very sensitive period, it is considered that continuous dialogue and cooperation between Turkey and the Arab world is of great importance for regional stability. Middle Eastern problems, especially the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which has caused wars in the past and conflicts today, cannot be resolved because Arab countries do not act together in the international public opinion. Turkey believes that the path to peace and stability in the region lies in a negotiated agreement within the framework of United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 of 1967 and Resolution 338 of 1973, and on the basis of the principle of peace in exchange for land.

The Middle East is at the very center of the world island. Its existing geostrategic and religious characteristics, along with its energy resources, have brought conflict to this region for centuries. Many civilizations have been established in these lands; ancient empires have fought for these lands; and even today, for religious reasons, as well as for energy and strategic reasons, these lands continue to be a playground for great powers. In the 21st century, evaluating the struggle in the Middle East with Samuel P. Huntington's

"Clash of Civilizations" thesis has paved the way for intervention in the region with the rhetoric of solving the problems of democracy, human rights, and terrorism. This thesis allows the real reasons for intervention in the region—strategic, economic, and political realities—to be ignored; because controlling energy resources, which can be described as the engine behind political and military power and the fuel of economic power and growth, has become more important than possessing them. Due to its geostrategic location, states, situated at the crossroads of regional energy markets, is working to be on the winning side in this energy game by integrating with other countries' energy markets and participating in alternative energy projects. The Iraq-Turkey Crude Oil, Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Crude Oil, Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas, and TurkStream Natural Gas Transit Pipelines and Projects; integration into European electricity markets with a permanent ENTSO-E connection and the transformation of Ceyhan into an integrated energy hub will make the states active players in these markets.

Under current conditions, in order to ensure the survival and security of the country, it is of great importance to become a member of international organizations and alliances in accordance with national security and foreign policy, and to develop national power elements comprehensively. While national security is broadly divided into internal and external security, the blurring of the line between domestic and foreign policy in the new globalized security environment necessitates the pooling of the efforts and skills of all individuals, institutions, and organizations for national security. In the new security environment, it is necessary to create asymmetry by anticipating emerging threats and organizing the organization, doctrine, training, and equipment to combat these new threats.

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