

Ahmet Davutođlu, *Systemic Earthquake and the Struggle for World Order*. Cambridge University Press, 2020, 333 pp.


*Değerlendiren:* Waseem Ahmad Hajam

What led to the crises that the current world is experiencing now and what is their scale and scope? What is the best approach to deal with them and restore the international disorder? Prof. Ahmet Davutođlu in his book *Systemic Earthquake and the Struggle for World Order* is meticulously trying to answer these and many other similar questions. The book's importance increases because its author is not just a professor of political science and international relations but also at the same time he has been politically at the most important positions in Turkey: Foreign Minister (2009-2014) and Prime Minister (2014-2016). The book reflects both theoretical as well as the practical dimensions of the author's personality. In our recent history, this unique mix of high-level political experience with academic prominence is extremely rare. Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski are the other two important figures of this prominence but both of them were never at the helm of affairs as Davutođlu was during his prime ministership.

The backdrop of the book *Systemic Earthquake and the Struggle for World Order* is to look at the approaches that the world needs to consider while taking the lessons from the human history. The author argues that in the current world politics there are two approaches to look out at the future of the world adopted by the political leaders. One approach to which he calls the *utopian optimism*, whereby it is being

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assumed that the world is going to a better future, present crises are just the rough edges and exceptions of that great pathway as is also held by the liberalism. On the other hand, the second approach, called as *nihilistic pessimism* gives the disappointed picture of the global politics and emphasizes that the world is in deep crisis and the future is too much chaotic and it is beyond the human power to reorder it. The author discredits both of these approaches and comes up with a third and an alternative approach to which he calls '*realistic optimism*', which in a sense is the combination of the two earlier approaches. Realistic optimism is neither to pass over the current crisis by underestimating them nor to get hopeless and leave it to get in order on its own. It is instead to act and try to solve the crisis while realistically following the events. In his words, "the methodology to get out of the vicious circle formed by this dual clamp is to show realistic optimism in determining and analyzing elements of tension in the international order, and visionary optimism in conceptualizing the future" (p. 5).

The author uses the analogy of an earthquake to make the sense of the existing crisis that befell upon the international politics and pushed it towards the disorder. Four systemic earthquakes- *the geopolitical earthquake* (fall of USSR in 1989–1991); *the security earthquake* (9/11 attacks on the USA in 2001); *the economic earthquake* (global financial crisis in 2008); and *the structural earthquake* (Arab Spring that began in 2010), shook the foundations of the European international order and every time, there was a mistake to cope up with it and lessen the future loss. This resulted in the nation-states becoming more fragile structurally, disturbing the regional power balances and above all, making key players dysfunctional to act when needed (p. 8). Based on the realistic optimism, it is quite possible to reorder and end the crisis provided that principal elements in order of the system are consolidated as in case of pre-earthquake preparation of consolidating the structures and making them earthquake-resistant.

The book is divided into two parts, with each part having four chapters. The first part is majorly the analysis of the world order we are in, its emergence, features, key actors, effects of the systematic earthquakes on national, regional and global structures and the consequences it has led to. The miscalculation on behalf of the US to create a new world order as they had assumed post-cold war an end of history further pushes the disorder into the swamps.

In the second part of the book, the author tries to present the vision and guidelines for the new international order, while learning lessons from the mistakes made during the four systematic earthquakes discussed in the part one. The new world order should be founded on 5 I's: inclusiveness, internal consistency (the

harmonization of values and mechanisms), interest optimization (the optimization of individual and common interests), implementation (of the power structure), and institutionalization. The author argues that “If a global order is to be established, it can no longer be achieved by means of a central military, economic, and political controlling power as was the case in ancient imperial orders, nor solely on the basis of the balance of power and international organizations on which the experiences of modernity have been based” (p. 225). To put it in other words, the new order would need to take into consideration the realities of non-Western, non-European world too, especially of the colonialisised countries and only based on that inclusive global governance, can the world come of the present disorder.

The book was a pleasure to read as it juxtaposes theory and practicality at the same time within the same lines. It is clear that the political experience of the author has made the book much more interesting and at the same time much more helpful to understand the ins and outs of the world dis(order) we are living in. In my opinion, this book would be of great benefit for those who are interested in understanding the dynamics of the current world order and the book could prove a good resource for those who are aiming at reforming and ordering the disorder of the present time world politics. Since the book is full of concepts and terminology used in Political Science and International Relations, it would be great to include the book in the syllabi of the world politics and other alike courses as a complementary material to textbooks because it operationalizes many of these concepts in a sophisticated way.

Throughout the book, the author has successfully identified the main problems of the current disorder and has also presented the timely solution to overcome it. Nevertheless it could have been much better, had the book elaborated more on ways and methods of the inclusive national, regional and global governances. Besides, the book seems to concentrate too much on a few regions’ politics such as the Middle East, US and Europe, while putting other parts of the world at the backstep- against his own idea of inclusive global governance.

Overall, the book is very useful, for it is not just an analysis of world politics from the traditional International Relations theories- realism and liberalism, viewpoint, but gives us an alternate perspective and approach to the future and provides a comprehensive strategy cum guide to come out of the disorder. One of the main contributions of the author to the academia in general has been the conceptualization of new ideas and the formulation of new concepts and analogies and it could be witnessed in this book also such as analogy of earthquakes, ‘realistic optimism’ and 5 I’s etc. compartmentalisation of the book is excellent and it acts as a mind-map for the readers if they feel lost in the book.