BOOK REVIEW

KİTAP İNCELEMESİ

The Borders of Islam-Exploring Samuel Huntington's Fault-lines, from Al-Andalus to Virtual Ummah

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Several academic and popular articles appeared about late Samuel Huntington's Clash of Civilizations article and his book in the 1990s and the terrorist attacks on 9/11 revived the argument and the debates on these works. Although numerous critics and praises about the argument raised since the first publication of the article, the discussions were further fuelled by 11 September 2001 attacks in New York, the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the bombings in Madrid on 11 March 2004 and in London 7 July 2005, the cartoons crisis in Denmark, and lately the referenda in Switzerland on minarets. The Borders of Islam edited by Stig Jarle Hansen, Atle Mesoy and Tuncay Kardaş and published by Hurst Publishers in 2009 is an important and critical book focusing on the argument of Huntington on problematic borders between different civilizations.

The book is organized into four subtitles and the contributors to this volume are area experts. Different chapters are penned by writers based on their research on these countries. Different from the books dealing with the Islamic world, this book focuses on the countries and problems at the intersection of the Islamic world with other religions. The arguments of Huntington were questioned several times; since the civilizations are not monolithic as he argued or not the civilizational links but national interests play an important role in decision making procedures. This book critically evaluates the arguments of Huntington with a different perspective in terms of historical experience of each country by referring to clash conceptualization between different religious/ideological paradigms.

The first part titled 'Middle East and Asia' takes Palestine-Israel and Lebanon

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as the borders in the Middle East and in the context of Asia the examples of Pakistan, Indonesia, Afghanistan and Philippines in order to understand the relationship between Islam and religions through a long time period. In this respect, it is stressed that economic deprivation and the desire of the Christians to protect their privileged status emanating from the colonial legacy lays at the core of the question in the case of Indonesia.

The second part deals with the examples of Nigeria, Somalia, Ethiopia and Sudan and the articles argue that Africa has a central place in the Islamic world since Islam expanded in this continent beginning with the conquest of Egypt just after the death of the Prophet Muhammad. The presence of Islam in this continent with centuries old impact is defined with the term 'Islam's Crescent' coined by Ali Mazrui and the book argues that to understand Islam in Africa we should also look to the poverty, lack of state authority and the search for foreign support.

The title of the third part is 'The "Old" European Border' covers the examples of Chechnya, Turkey, Bosnia and Spain and elaborates the old borders established during the times of different imperial rules. If we remember that the examples of fault lines of Islam and Christianity by Huntington were picked mostly from this area, the articles in this part become more important. In this part, contributors point that especially in the post-Cold War period the intermingling of nationalism and religion and depiction of Islam as the other in definition of identities played an important role in the emergence of problems in these areas.

The fourth part is titled as 'The New Borders' and dealing the Muslim communities, emerged as result of population movements, in Britain, France, Scandinavia and the United States along with the 'Virtual Border' on the internet. In this context, the authors argued that if a conflict would occur between Islam and the West; this would be in Western Europe and the USA. As a matter of fact, the Muslim communities living in Western Europe and the

USA are coming from different cultural background and migrated to these places in different periods of time. Consequently, it is impossible to talk about a unified or monolithic Muslim population.

One of the most defining characteristics and important contribution of the book in comparison with other academic studies dealing with this issue is its stress on the role of internet and communication technologies within the framework of theory of clash of civilizations. The book shows that the younger generations and immigrant communities who are moving away from their traditional values with the impact of internet are looking for teacher in virtual world. The book gives some stages of emergence of virtual borders on internet. First of all, an understanding of animosity is developed with encirclement psychology. As a result of that, the western societies in which these communities live are defined as 'dar'ul harb' and the answers of the Muslims should be hijra. Democracies are described as the enemy and the answer of hijra in this virtual world has two options: internal or external. With an internal hijra, these people became members of the radical groups within the western countries; whereas with an external hijra, these people move to countries where Al Qaeda has training camps.

Besides discussing the points where Huntington's arguments are falsified by different scholars, the book also covers the points where Huntington was right. In this context, a common example from different countries is the background of these radical youngsters. Before being members of these groups, these people were not obeying the rules of Islam and do not living within the parameters of Islam. The book argues that, economic deprivation plays an important role in the conflicts among people from different religious backgrounds and the real test case for Huntington's arguments will be Europe, where mechanisms of modernization are effective. Contrary to the European continent, they argued that factor that is effective in relations between different groups in Africa, Asia and the Middle East is the colonial legacy.

The radicalizing impact of communication becomes obvious especially in analyzing the mechanism of modernity in Europe and the USA. The radicalizing impact of communication lies behind rise of Islamophobia and emergence of arguments like clash of civilizations. As a result of this development, everything related to the Muslims is securitized. The editors of the book argue that, visual securitization is more influential than written securitization and it is possible to retreat from written securitization but it is nearly impossible to retreat from visual securitization. As a matter of fact, the images depicting the Muslims in a negative way played an important role during the cartoon crisis in Denmark and the referenda in Switzerland about the minarets.

The book may led to think you about a problem which should be left in the past, however, it is obvious that given the raise of Islamophobia the book introduced timely and very important issues that concern academics and policy makers. In this respect, one of the most important contributions of the book is the analysis of the topic by different scholars, who are experts of their field and also paying attention to the increasing impact of internet in the transformation of the societies.