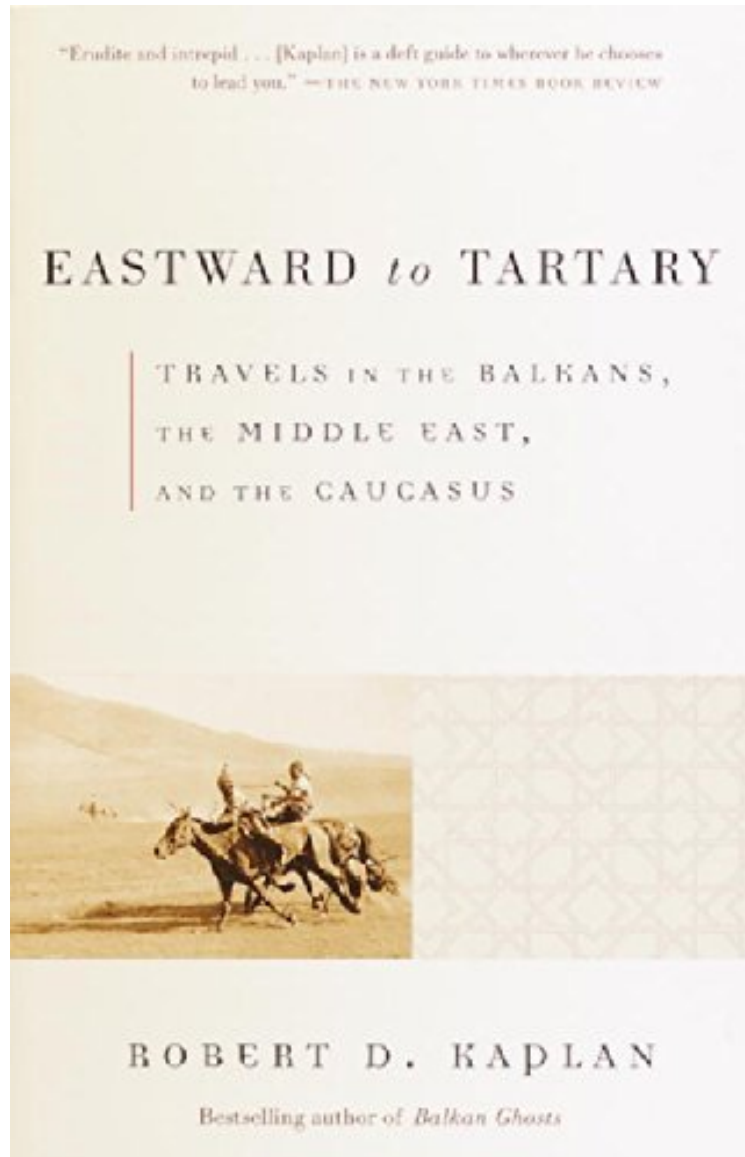


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Eastward to Tartary: Travels in the Balkans, the Middle East, and the Caucasus

Robert D. Kaplan

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#708893 in Books Robert D Kaplan 2001-10 2001-10-23Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.02 x .84 x 5.281, .62 #File Name: 0375705767384 pagesGreat book! | File size: 75.Mb

Robert D. Kaplan : Eastward to Tartary: Travels in the Balkans, the Middle East, and the Caucasus before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Eastward to Tartary: Travels in the Balkans, the Middle East, and the Caucasus:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. An entertaining and educational look at the "far" near eastBy D. D.

LeDuThis book is a sequel to Mr. Kaplan's "Balkan Ghosts", but will stand alone for someone who as not read "Balkan Ghosts". The author describes his experiences traveling and reporting on an extended trip from Romania to Turkmenistan. Mr. Kaplan is a perceptive traveler who travels light, and has a sympathetic understanding of the travails and character of the people he meets. My wife and I have traveled much of the route he describes. While he is a reporter and is most interested in politics, our experiences as trekkers parallel his so closely that I tend to trust him, also, on those portions of his journey with which we are not familiar. If there is a weakness to this book, it is that he is politically oriented. I wish the book were twice as long and that he had included more mundane, human experiences. That said, I found "Eastward to Tartary" to be educational and entertaining. He has encouraged us to continue our own journeys to more of those places that most Westerners have not heard of. I recommend this book highly. If the reader gets nothing else out of the book, he will (at a minimum) gain an insight into a part of the world that may well be the subject of headlines in the next quarter century.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I Trip You Will Never Make but Should Experience By D. B. Hopkins Kaplan takes us where most have never been or dreamed of going, but these are pivotal states and regions with tons of history. Trying to get your head around the power vectors of Persia, the Ottoman Empire, the Rise Fall of the USSR and the ethnic forces from the Mediterranean to the deserts and mountains of Central Asia is mind boggling, but Kaplan sorts it on the ground and up front and personal. Never has a region so distant and unknown been so critical to history in the making. This is one of my favorite Kaplan books since the balance between travel road-a-logue and geo-political analysis is just about right. The only thing better is reading this and Kaplan's To the Ends of the Earth which covers some of the same territory, but with a wider scope. Read and learn! You'll be glad you did and become a more knowledgeable citizen of the world.

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Descriptions, no prescriptions By Azblue Every author brings some baggage with him when he writes a book. Robert Kaplan brings a caravan. Variously known as "Mr. Anarchy" and "Mr. Chaos," Kaplan is a prolific writer of books on foreign relations and has written many articles for The Atlantic Monthly. He is best-known in foreign policy circles for his 1994 essay and subsequent book entitled "The Coming Anarchy." In them, Kaplan asserts that the world is on the verge of a crackup of Malthusian proportions. A recurring shortcoming of his writings, however, seems to be a lack of solutions for the problems he meticulously details. He has the ability to describe the human condition but has a singular inability to suggest fixes. What is Kaplan's purpose, then, in writing "Eastward to Tartary?" His mission seems to be to warn policy makers, and anyone who will listen, about the perils brewing in far off lands that may one day affect U.S. interests. He is more subtle and less bombastic in this book than in "The Coming Anarchy," but one can still clearly detect his world view that, "the end of the Cold War (has brought) on a cruel process of natural selection among existing states." His writings excel at describing a Hobbesian world where realist power politics must rule, but beyond that, he lacks any concrete prescriptions for what ails humanity. Suggestions for action are few. He is like a doctor who describes a disease, but has no treatment plan, other than to tell you what not to do. In Kaplan's case, he frequently suggests not introducing Western-style democracy too quickly. Kaplan makes this point by warning us that, "Democracy may not necessarily remain enlightened, or civil, in the decades to come." "Eastward to Tartary," is a travelogue about the Near East, where Kaplan chronicles the woes of local nations and populations but once again comes up with few solutions for their suffering. That essential part of the political equation is apparently left for someone else to solve. Taking his readers on an arduous 330 page journey through some of the most fragile and chaotic states on the planet, Kaplan obligingly relates all the social, economic, ethnic, religious and geographical ills befalling each country he visits, but offers scant solutions to the problems. A typical Kaplanian non-solution is to point out that many countries are simply not ready for democratic ideals and are incapable of supporting the institutions required for Western-style democracy. So, Kaplan's primary contribution is that democracy is not likely to be the sole solution for what ails the Near East, particularly in the trans-Caucasus area. Despite its lack of therapeutic action and its abundance of description rather than prescription, the book is an excellent overview of the vast and complex problems facing the U.S if America indeed wants to continue playing the role of global hegemon. In the trans-Caucasian region alone, we see through Kaplan's eyes that the task of U.S. management of global interests can be overwhelming. Kaplan's "You are there" descriptions of feral cities and states does a great service to readers - the book should be read by anyone who thinks that continued U.S. global dominance will be a cake-walk. If undertaken, the U.S. role of global Leviathan truly will not be easy, as we are seeing today in Iraq, Afghanistan, Israel, Lebanon and possibly one day in the Caspian Basin. We all strive to do what we are best at. Kaplan seems to be best at and most comfortable with identifying trouble spots and trends that may affect U.S. vital interests. He does not spend much time or energy looking for answers to the problems - he implicitly leaves that to other experts. He does a great service for Americans interested in making sense of a chaotic world. He does this by visiting and reporting from some of the most dangerous places on the planet. For this he is to be commended. Through his eyes we can see that simple platitudes are not enough to maintain U.S. hegemony in the world. It will continue to take much blood and treasure. Kaplan is preparing us for our possible future. Are we ready?

Eastward to Tartary, Robert Kaplan's first book to focus on a single region since his bestselling *Balkan Ghosts*, introduces readers to an explosive and little-known part of the world destined to become a tinderbox of the

future. Kaplan takes us on a spellbinding journey into the heart of a volatile region, stretching from Hungary and Romania to the far shores of the oil-rich Caspian Sea. Through dramatic stories of unforgettable characters, Kaplan illuminates the tragic history of this unstable area that he describes as the new fault line between East and West. He ventures from Turkey, Syria, and Israel to the turbulent countries of the Caucasus, from the newly rich city of Baku to the deserts of Turkmenistan and the killing fields of Armenia. The result is must reading for anyone concerned about the state of our world in the decades to come.

.com The master of the hardheaded travelogue, Robert D. Kaplan returns with a book on what he calls "the New Near East," an area stretching from the Balkans to Central Asia that "might become the seismograph of world politics" in the new century. That doesn't sound like good news: "The pitiless history of the Near East [is] dominated by marauding armies and earthquakes while peace treaties have merely formalized temporary stalemates on the ground." Kaplan has made a career of writing about the world's trouble spots "without illusions"--his books *Balkan Ghosts* and *The Ends of the Earth* are at once influential and pessimistic. *Eastward to Tartary* is a fascinating exploration of places Kaplan has not written about in depth before: "Third World Europe" (Romania and Bulgaria), Turkey, Syria, Jordan, and the confusing conglomeration of countries and peoples in the Caucasus. Smart observations leap off almost every page. "In every Arab city I have ever visited, people were polite and honest, running after you to return a loose coin you have left at a soft-drinks stand," he writes. So why hasn't democracy taken hold in the Islamic world? "The very perfection of the Islamic belief system begot a naive absolutism that made the compromises of normal political life impossible." In an aside on ancient Assyria, Kaplan notes, "The theme is always the same: Highly militarized and centralized states and empires, so indomitable in one decade or generation, hack themselves to pieces or are themselves conquered in another." Then he reminds readers that Assyria once bestrode present-day Iraq and Syria--a "hauntingly appropriate" coincidence. And surprising facts abound: "Turkey represents the most stable governmental dynasty in world history, with the Turkish soldiery able to trace the roots of its power to the Roman emperors." Fans of Kaplan's previous books won't want to miss this one, and neither will new readers interested in this part of the world. --John J. Miller
From Publishers Weekly
In 1993, as the blood-letting in Yugoslavia's ethnic civil war entered its fifth year, Kaplan, a foreign correspondent, wrote a history of that tragic region that became an instant bestseller. The war and its elements of genocide paved the way for popular reception of *Balkan Ghosts*, but it is Kaplan's name that will secure readers for his newest travelogue. In many ways, this book is the sequel to *Balkan Ghosts*, telling the story of those other orphans of the Ottoman Empire--the lands of the Middle and Near East. Kaplan's intention is to introduce Tartary (known today as Central Asia) as a place that has more in common with the Western Balkan countries than with the Oriental images conjured up by its exotic name. Walking the streets of Baku in Azerbaijan, he sees images of the Romanian capital, Bucharest; both reside in the 100-year-old shadows of a cosmopolitan Ottoman boomtown, and in the more obvious decay and disenchantment that is the legacy of the shorter-lived Soviet empire. In relating his travels through Syria, Israel and Lebanon, Kaplan focuses less on the effects of communism and more on the way Turkey remains a historical link between Arab and European powers. Whether he is analyzing the basis for Turko-Israeli alliances or pondering the likelihood of an ethnic "Balkanization" of the Middle East, Kaplan is thinking in terms of a new "seismograph of world politics in the twenty-first century." His readers will be left with a rich supply of historic, geographic and cultural cross-references to apply when they read the news about some of today's most strategic hot spots. (Nov.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. "Erudite and intrepid... [Kaplan] is a deft guide to wherever he chooses to lead you."--The New York Times Book "Packed with provocative insights."--Washington Monthly "A graceful writer... Providing historical (and cultural and religious) context is what Kaplan does best."--Los Angeles Times