the Shi'a: The Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon (Austin TX: University of Texas Press, 1987) and *Civil Society in the Middle East* (ed., 2 vols; Leiden: Brill, 2005).

When talking about *policy recommendations*, the 2006 war and its aftermath, as well as the currently prevailing internal crisis in Lebanon, have clearly shown that the country needs a *holistic* solution. Not one forced upon the country from outside, but rather from within. This 'holistic solution' would be the change of its antiquated constitutional and electoral system based on disproportional communalism, a system that is in no way representative of the actual situation in the country.

In closing, the key of the issue is thus the reform of the Lebanese state and constitution – a heritage of French colonial rule – which favours the rights of minorities, to the disadvantage of the Shi'ite relative majority. Featuring six chapters and a conclusion and which follows recent events up to August 2008, this slim but comprehensive latest updated paperback version of Norton's *Hezbollah: A Short History* is very helpful when it comes to look for solutions and to understand the role of Hezbollah within that setting. It is hoped that another updated edition will appear soon, as recent events in Lebanon warrant further evaluation. Norton would be particularly well-suited to do so.

Notes

1. See Christoph Marcinkowski, *Shi'ite Identities: Community and Culture in Changing Social Contexts*, Freiburg Studies in Social Anthropology 27 (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2010), 81ff.
2. The Amal Movement (*Harakat Amal*) is the more moderate predecessor of Hezbollah. Similar to Amal in the late 1970s and early 1980s, its somewhat more belligerent quasi-successor Hezbollah can well be considered as the *current* representative of Lebanon's Shi'ites at large, which form about 40 percent of the population.
3. See on the 'Baker-Hamilton Commission', Marcinkowski, *Shi'ite Identities*, 131.

Thilo Sarrazin, *Deutschland schafft sich ab: Wie wir unser Land aufs Spiel setzen* ['Germany does away with itself: How we are gambling with our country']

(Munich: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2010, 11th printing, 2010), 464 pp. ISBN: 978-3421044303. €22.90

Christoph Marcinkowski *International Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies (IAIS) Malaysia*

Perhaps *the* event on the German book market in 2010 was the publication of *Deutschland schafft sich ab: Wie wir unser Land aufs Spiel setzen*, a book which went into several printings in that year alone. Its author, Dr Thilo Sarrazin (b. 1945), is a serious critic of *unchecked* immigration, a German politician (Social

Democratic Party, SPD), who was until September 2010 a member of the Executive Board of the German Federal Bank (*Bundesbank*). The first edition of his book sold out within a few days.

Sarrazin's book, launched toward the end of August 2010, came under severe criticism for supposedly claiming that Germany's immigrant Muslim population is reluctant to integrate and tends to rely more on social services than to be productive. Sarrazin does advocate a restrictive and more selective immigration policy which would prefer the highly skilled and the reduction of state welfare benefits to foreigners – as well as locals. Furthermore, he calculates that the Muslim population growth may well overwhelm the German population within a couple of generations at the current rate. He proposes stringent reforms for the welfare system to rectify the problems.¹

Compared to certain other Western nations with past colonial (or present neo-colonial) aspirations in the Islamic world – Britain, France and the United States come to the mind – Germany has fared rather better in the consciousness of Muslims, as this writer has pointed out elsewhere.² Although written in German and although addressing issues that are somewhat wider than those pertaining to Muslims living in a non-Muslim-majority country,³ *Deutschland schafft sich ab* is therefore also of vital interest to Muslim readers of this journal as it offers deep insights into the minds and concerns of *real* people, the 'silenced majority' of a country of 82 million people right in the middle of Europe.

Sarrazin's book is made up of nine chapters and an extensive appendix which contains detailed statistical material to support his theses. He addresses the following key issues:

- how to maintain the welfare state for the *really* deserving ones while at the same time returning to principles that are based on merit;
- how to maintain an open and democratic society that welcomes *skilled* (rather than impoverished and largely uneducated) immigrants who are willing to integrate themselves and who are originating from a cultural background that ascribes to values that are similar to those on which Europe is based;
- how to enable Germans *themselves* to 'integrate' immigrants as only someone who is sure and knowledgeable about himself and his own culture and values will be taken seriously;
- how to improve Germany's currently rather 'ineffective' – at least in terms of the performance of students – primary, secondary, and tertiary education sector; and
- how to lead the country back to academic excellence for which it was once known internationally.

From this brief overview one can see that ‘immigration issues’ and the ‘Muslim question’ occupy only a part of Sarrazin’s book – which might come as a surprise to his hasty critics.

Sarrazin’s statements have drawn criticism from across the political spectrum in Germany – despite polls suggesting that almost half of the population (including SPD members) agree with his views and even 18 per cent would vote for his party if he started one.⁴ Others, however, have argued that in Germany freedom of speech is being lost, as pressure to conform to certain viewpoints is suppressing and silencing other opinions. Turkish and Islamic organisations, in turn, have accused Sarrazin of ‘racism’ and of ‘damaging Germany’s reputation abroad’. Other organisations, however – some of them representing the interests of immigrants – have even lauded Sarrazin’s ‘openness’ and ‘constructive criticism’.

This reviewer argues that Sarrazin’s book merits a more careful reading as his ideas seem to reflect wider sentiments in German and even European public opinion. To ignore those sentiments would actually play into the hands of populist extremists on both fringes of the political spectrum. One might share his views or not; but it is, nevertheless, remarkable that Sarrazin’s own political and family background⁵ is not to be sought in some ‘brownish’ Nazi milieu, but in mainstream society.

Sarrazin had access to the best available statistical material as a former member of the Executive Board of the German Federal Bank, whereas general talk is what distinguishes the current ‘political class’ in Germany. In contrast, Sarrazin’s work is carefully laid out and justified. It offers a differentiated and nuanced view of existing problems, allows the ‘deaf’ or ‘silent’ (and all too often ‘silenced’) majority to speak, and is supported by indisputable concern for the fate of the nation. It is so refreshingly different from the cry of those (established) politicians whose only concerns apply to the results of the next ‘Sunday question’ (i.e. “whom would you vote for if next Sunday would be election-day?”). Sarrazin’s approach also differs from those who want to maintain nothing but their prejudices without looking at the facts (p. 372).

In short, not everyone who is for the *Autobahn* – Germany’s efficient brand of highways initiated in the 1930s – is a fan of Hitler. Germany, like any other sovereign country on this planet, has the right (and duty) to administer its border and immigration regime in line with its international obligations, but also – and even above that – with its national interests. Unfortunately (to the mind of this writer), those ‘national interests’ have become increasingly blurred – after decades of visionless socialist-liberal and centrist-liberal post-WWII coalition regimes in the Federal Republic.

And also unfortunately, those who would like to see those ‘national interests’ in the forefront are all too often pushed into the rightist corner with other rather ‘unsavoury’ fellows. Significantly, in 2009 alone, for instance, 734,000 people

turned their backs on Germany and left the country for good – mostly due to the restrictive conditions for entrepreneurs and lack of opportunities for innovative spirits – while 721,000 have immigrated *to* Germany, many of them unskilled ‘economic refugees’.⁶ Patriotism, however, should be considered independent from the prevailing left/right scheme. Even though Sarrazin *does not* say so (and perhaps *would not* say so – although this writer *does and should*), it is about time to reinterpret those ‘interests’ and to consider Germany’s culture and history and its contribution to world civilisation *as a whole* rather than being taken hostage because of certain bleak episodes of the twentieth century.

Moreover, throughout his book, Sarrazin tries to avoid any *direct* criticism of Islam as a religion as he himself does not want to give too much prominence to religion – *any* religion, it seems. His approach is thus entirely different from that of Geert Wilders, the Dutch politician and leader of the Party for Freedom (PVV) in the Netherlands and maker of *Fitna*, the controversial 2008 film about his views on Islam. *Deutschland schafft sich ab* is thus not the product of ‘islamophobia’ – a neologism and catch-all term which should perhaps be avoided in scholarly debates as it places under the broad umbrella of ‘fear’ or ‘hatred of Islam’ discourses and criticisms that may have distinct sources, motivations, and goals.

Sarrazin, in turn, aims at a holistic reform of Germany’s society and the mindset of its people, where the immigration issue is only *one* among others. Unfortunately for Germany and her people, however, the currently prevailing political spectrum in that country gives little hope for any improvement. Greens, SPD, and the Left Party (the ‘former’ Communists of GDR times) are basically in favour of unchecked immigration and have nothing to offer when it comes to national and cultural identity, whereas the CDU/CSU (Christian Democrats) and the FDP (Liberals) are basically merely serving the interests of the industrialists and those who are better off. Sarrazin himself seems to be aware that, at present, there are no social or political majorities for any changes of policy (p. 373). He does not offer any kind of political alternative, any kind of political or changed constitutional framework that would address Germany’s burning issues of ‘aging society’, failed integration of foreigners, and the rather frightening lack of cultural identity and values among Germans themselves.

In sum, however, and contrary to many of his hostile reviewers in Germany – many of whom seem to have read a *different* book – this writer would argue that *Deutschland schafft sich ab* constitutes a very important and timely contribution that tries to do away with the ‘political correctness’ of the past in order to address burning problems affecting both Germans and immigrants.

In terms of possible *recommendations*, it could be argued that Asian countries – especially a Muslim-majority country like Malaysia, for instance, which currently displays rather flourishing economic circumstances and which therefore faces

similar issues with its own ‘economic refugees’ from certain neighbouring countries – should be able to understand well and appreciate Sarrazin’s views on a somewhat more selective immigration regime which would favour those who integrate well and actually contribute to their new host country. There is thus no need to apply double-standards, i.e. demanding ‘openness’ from Western nations while at the same time practising restrictive and selective immigration policies of their own. In particular Muslim readers would be well-advised to take more seriously the concerns of Western host-societies rather than to brush them away by the already worn-out term ‘islamophobia’ – the long-term wellbeing of Muslim minorities in the West depends on it.

Notes

1. “Immigration Provocateur in Germany Crosses the Line”, *Der Spiegel*, 30 August 2010, available online at <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,714567,00.html> (accessed on 24 November 2010).
2. See Christoph Marcinkowski, “Germany and the Muslim World”, *Islam and Civilisational Renewal* 1, no. 3 (April 2010), 519–22.
3. See on this issue Christoph Marcinkowski, *Islam in Europe: Reflections on Present Trends and Future Challenges*, IAIS Monograph Series 5 (Kuala Lumpur: IAIS Malaysia, 2011).
4. “18 Prozent der Deutschen würden Sarrazin wählen”, *Berliner Morgenpost*, 6 September 2010, available online at <http://www.morgenpost.de/printarchiv/titelseite/article1390251/18-Prozent-der-Deutschen-wuerden-Sarrazin-waehlen.html> (accessed on 24 November 2010).
5. As a matter of fact, Sarrazin was born in the Central German town of Gera to a doctor and the daughter of a West Prussian landowner. His paternal family – French *Huguenots* (Protestants) – originates from Burgundy, while his grandmother was English-Italian. Ironically, he has explained that his name means ‘Saracen’ (i.e. ‘Muslim’) and is common in Southern France, being derived from the Arab pirates which were called ‘Saracens’ in the Middle Ages.
6. See “Migration in Deutschland: Mehr Auswanderer als Einwanderer”, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 26 May 2010, available online at <http://www.fr-online.de/politik/mehr-auswanderer-als-einwanderer/-/1472596/4464748/-/index.html> (accessed on 21 January 2011). This reviewer, for instance, left Germany in 1995.

Barry Wain, *Malaysian Maverick: Mahathir Mohamad in Turbulent Times* (New York: Palgrave, Macmillan, 2009), 363 pp. ISBN: 978-0230238732. US\$ 81.00

Osman Bakar *International Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies (IAIS) Malaysia*

The content of this book under review seems to justify its title. Those who know Mahathir Mohamad – the former Malaysian Prime Minister – quite well both as a person and as a political leader would have no hesitation in agreeing with the book’s author to call him the *Malaysian maverick*. Barry Wain has the qualification to write about Mahathir’s political career and his successes and failures as a political