BOOK REVIEWS

Sedat Laçiner, Mehmet Özcan and Ihsan Bal – *European Union with Turkey: The Possible Impact of Turkey's Membership on the European Union*

(Ankara: International Strategic Research Organization, USAK, 2005).
280 pp. ISBN 975-982 8006. 30.00 YTL

Christoph Marcinkowski *International Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies*

Turkey's 22 July 2007 parliamentary elections resulted in a clear victory for the ruling Justice and Development Party, in Turkish known as *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* or AKP. AKP is part of the right-wing, conservative spectrum of the Turkish political arena. In the West (with the post 9/11 scenario of distrust of anything smacking of 'Muslim revivalism') as well as among Turkey's secular-minded elites and many citizens, the AKP is often perceived as 'Islamist' and thus as a danger and detriment to Turkey's EU membership, regardless of the fact that it had been the AKP government which carried out drastic reforms of its legal and economic, and institutional system.¹ Based on what it views as merely lukewarm support for its accession to the EU and alleged double standards in its negotiations, the Turkish public has become increasingly 'eurosceptic' in recent times, as revealed by several surveys. Ankara has been trying desperately to comply with EU legislation and standards, but Brussels has so far refused to back 2013 as a deadline for Turkey's EU membership. It is believed that the accession process will take at least 15 years, if not longer. In spite of Turkey's impressive record in terms of moving towards regional integration, the issue of the country's future EU accession constitutes to date the central controversy of the ongoing enlargement of the EU. Among the Turkish public as well as the present Turkish government (both of which had been rather enthusiastically supportive of the bid for EU membership in the past) significant changes of 'mood' in this regard are noticeable.

Published in 2005, the book by Laçiner, Özcan and Bal falls into the category of rather passionate support of Turkey's EU membership. Each of the three authors has contributed one chapter, Laçiner's being the longest. The publisher, the International Strategic Research Organization (ISRO, in Turkish: *Uluslararası Stratejik Araştırmalar Kurumu* or USAK), sees itself as a stern critic of a supposed domination of strategic and international studies by a 'Western' point of view and

as offering an alternative perspective. ISRO, its branches, and its publications are considered by some to have a highly nationalistic stance, particularly in issues regarding the Armenian Question.

The first part by Laçiner (pp. 15–86), who is also the Director of ISRO, tries to address the issue of a possible Turkish EU membership on EU foreign policy. He identifies the following areas where Turkey would – in his view – be able to leave a positive impact that would also reflect positively on the Union as a whole: the Balkans (Turkey as a mediator in the various conflicts there, in particular Kosovo), the Middle East (Turkey has diplomatic relations with Israel but is also a Muslim country which supports a “just” peace with the Palestinians; Turkey as a guarantor of stability in Iraq), the Black Sea region (Turkey reaching out to former Soviet bloc member states, such as Ukraine and Russia), the Mediterranean, Central Asia (Turkey as well as most of the Central Asian republics are Muslim and Turkic-speaking countries), and the Caucasus. Laçiner’s presentation, however, seems to overstretch Turkey’s actual capabilities and, more grave, seems to lack a proper understanding of what the Union is all about. Not unilateral steps to the advantage of individual states in order to revive the grandeurs of, for instance, Ottoman fame, but rather acting in concert with all the other member states is the key of a successful EU foreign policy. Laçiner’s concept of a more active role for Turkey would mark a clear departure from the path of the Republic’s founder, Atatürk, who disregarded adventurism and political interference outside the country’s borders. But even back in 1974 the Cyprus invasion could be seen as such an incidence. This reviewer has tried to address such utopias already in the review of another, somewhat more balanced book.² Laçiner’s conclusion, entitled “Before it is too late”, says it all: a rejection of Turkey’s accession would play into the hands of religious fanatics. One is left to wonder, however, as to why *Europe* should be responsible for solving Turkey’s *internal* political issues?

The shorter second part (pp. 87–134) authored by Özcan deals with possible influences of a Turkish membership on the internal security scenario within the EU. His focus is on the issue of illegal immigration to the ‘old’ EU member countries, and on the Turkish diaspora residing in them. It is perhaps the most balanced part of the book as it provides facts and figures. In his conclusion, Özcan focuses on Turkey’s role as a ‘transit’ country rather than a ‘source country’. Admission to the Union would, according to the author, ease the pressure on other EU member states. However, the answer to many a European’s burning question of how to integrate those millions of Turks who have already been living for decades in countries like Germany – countries with an entirely different cultural background – has been left unanswered. Özcan’s main argument in his conclusion seems to be that Turkey could ‘filter out’ certain ‘unruly’ elements on their transit via Turkey towards illegal

immigration in the core EU member states. However, as a matter of courtesy, this would also be expected from any other member state of the United Nations. To the mind of this reviewer then it does not appear why a full membership in the EU should be a requirement for this. Does this mean that Turkey would forward extremists who are 'on transit' straightaway to the Union in case the processing of its membership application would take 'too long'? Moreover, what would happen if Turkey's voters should one day decide to give up its secularist principles by bringing to power a government of a somewhat more decidedly 'Islamist' flavour than that of the rather 'mild' AKP?

Bal's contribution (pp. 135–66), the shortest of this book, is dedicated to the role played by Turkey in combating regional and international terrorism. Bal rightly argues that Turkey has during the second half of the twentieth century had its own experience with the fight against (internal) acts of terrorism – against political right and leftwing extremism and against violent separatists, such as the Kurdish PKK. He adds that those experiences could be of use to Europe as well. However, once again, it does not appear why an accession to the EU should be made a preliminary for forthcoming assistance from the part of Ankara in the fight against terrorism.

The book contains also an extensive appendix (pp. 167–270) with four EU documents that are basically supportive of Turkey's bid for full membership, one of them being a recommendation of the European Commission on Turkey's progress towards accession (COM (2004) 656 final, dated Brussels, 6 October 2004).

To the mind of this reviewer then, the *practical* arguments brought forward by the three authors for a Turkish full membership are quite weak. At times, the reader might get the impression that the main agenda of the authors is to scare (and even threaten) their opponents, as if suggesting that "if you don't let us in, you will be lost, as the Muslims here (and inside Europe) will be 'very very angry' at you". This and other vaguely hidden threats and rhetoric might only cause anxieties and would further repel wider strata of the European public, evoking similar, more drastic images of the sixteenth-century confrontation of Europe with 'The Turk', the powerful Ottoman Empire.

However, in spite – or rather *because* – of the controversial character of the contents, the book provides deep insights into the current discussion of the issue of a possible Turkish EU membership inside Turkey. To sum up, as the arguments *against* such a membership from the part of certain European countries have already been publicised well to a wider audience, *European Union with Turkey* could contribute well towards understanding the other side. The book should thus be on the shelf of any individual or institution concerned with the study of the relations between the contemporary Muslim world and Europe.

Notes

1. I have tried to address the pros and cons of a full EU membership of Turkey in somewhat more detail in my “The Islamic World and Europe at the Crossroads”, in: Christoph Marcinkowski (ed.), *The Islamic World and Europe: Managing Religious and Cultural Identities in the Age of Globalisation* (Freiburg Studies in Social Anthropology 24; Zurich: LIT Verlag, 2009), 17–37.
2. Christoph Marcinkowski, “Leaving the Gazi’s Path: Turkey’s Evaporating Eastern Dreams”, review of Idris Bal, *Turkey’s Relations with the West and the Turkic Republics: The Rise and Fall of the Turkish Model* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2000), in: *Journal of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations* [Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia] 3, no. 1 (2001), 104–7.

Paul Moses – *The Saint and the Sultan: The Crusades, Islam, and Francis of Assisi’s Mission of Peace*

(New York: Doubleday, 2009). xii+302 pp. ISBN: 978-0-385-52370-7. US\$26.00

Christoph Marcinkowski *International Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies*

This book by Pulitzer Prize-winning New York journalist Paul Moses retells the story of a meeting that took place in the summer of 1219 during the Fifth Crusade (1213–21) between Saint Francis of Assisi – one of the best-loved saints of Catholic Christianity – and the Ayyubid Sultan al-Malik al-Kāmil (r. 1218–38) in the Egyptian city of Damietta at the mouth of the Nile. In a dangerous and daring move by crossing enemy lines to advocate peace, St Francis and Malik al-Kāmil shared a brief dialogue about war, peace and faith in the One God. The conversation inspired St Francis to return home with a bold challenge to his fellow Christians: to live peacefully with the Muslims despite the war between their religious leaders and to stop warfare of any kind.

The Fifth Crusade was another attempt on the part of Christianity to retake Jerusalem and the rest of the Holy Land from the Muslims by first conquering the powerful Ayyubid state in Egypt. Due to famine and disease after the Nile failed to flood, al-Kāmil could not defend Damietta. This led to the fall of the city to the Christians in November 1219. The sultan withdrew to al-Manṣūrah, a fortress further up the river. After this there was little action until 1221, when al-Kāmil offered peace again, but was again refused. After their initial success at Damietta, the Crusaders for their part marched south towards Cairo in July of 1221. An attack by al-Kāmil during the night, however, resulted in a great number of crusader losses – and eventually in the surrender of the Christian army. The sultan agreed to an eight-year peace agreement with the Christians. He was able to retake Damietta in September 1221. In the following years, al-Kāmil was locked in a power struggle with his brother and was therefore willing to accept a peace agreement with the Holy Roman Emperor (and King of Jerusalem) Frederick II of Hohenstaufen (r. 1220–50), who was scheduled to arrive in the region for what became known as the Sixth Crusade (1228–29).