

## BOOK REVIEW

***Турска – регионална сила? [Turkey: A Regional Power?],* уредили Миша Ђурковић и Александар Раковић, Београд: Институт за европске студије, 2013, 293 с. ISBN 978-86-82057-45-1**

*(Turska: Regionalna Sila? Eds. Misa Cirkovic and Aleksandar Rakovic, Belgrade: Institut za Evropske Studije, 2013, 293 p.)*

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An edition book *Turkey: A Regional Power?* was prepared by the group of distinguished and relevant Serbian authors among whom some are experts on Turkish foreign policy, orientalists, journalists, religious figures, and politicians that had a chance to follow closely Turkey and Ankara's foreign policy in the Balkans for years. The book came out of the conference with the same name that was organized in 2012 in the Serbian capital Belgrade. After the rising interest of Turkey for the region, it was decided to make a comprehensive handbook about modern Turkey that would give answers to Serbian public about the overall strategies, intentions and the expectations of Ankara in the Balkans. The articles that

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were presented at the above-mentioned conference were put together into one edited collection. The book is composed of eighteen articles that analyze this country its both internal and foreign policy in-depth. Articles are divided into three thematically prepared parts, *Identity of Modern Turkey*, *International Position of Turkey* and *Turkey and the Balkans*.

Although it was prepared by the experts from Serbian that have expertise in various fields of social sciences, in general, the book *Turkey: A Regional Power?* is written in a pretty tendentious tone. It is not free of a subjective approach when it comes to analyzing Turkey's role in regional politics. Throughout the articles, the readers are often reminded of Turkey's "negative" role in Kosovo's secession from Serbia and during the 1999 NATO bombing campaign against the Milosevic regime. Readers are indirectly warned about Turkey's probable unclean intentions in the region emphasizing that Ankara is taking the side of Albanian and Bosniak interests against the Serbian ones. The work is also imbued with a culturalist tone, representing Turkey as a Muslim-majority regional power defending the position of Muslims in the region, while authors are addressing the problems of Ankara's role in the region as adherents of the Eastern Orthodoxy, representing the whole picture as a sort of "clash of civilizations" between the crescent and the cross. It is clear that some authors of the edition are uncomfortable, or at least worried, with the rising prominence of Turkey in the region and giving advice to Serbian political elite how to deal with Ankara. Turkey is often portrayed as NATO's 'Troyan horse' in the Balkans that is returning to the region with the "British-American help", where it is going to play a crucial role in the future by using its close relations with Albanians and Bosniaks to further divide not only Serbs but other Eastern Orthodox nations as well.

The first article of the edited book is by the renowned Serbian orientalist Darko Tanaskovic who had a chance to work in Turkey as an Ambassador of Serbia during the late 1990s. In the first thematical part of the book where Turkey's identity is examined, Tanaskovic gives a closer look to the rising tendency of Neo-

Ottomanism in the article named *The Contradictions of the Neo-Ottomanism as a Practical Policy*. Tanaskovic recognizes the Neo-Ottomanist tendencies in Turkish foreign policy much before the AKP came to power in 2002, and gives the examples of this doctrinal practice as early as the reign of Turgut Özal (1927-1993). He connects the rise of self-confidence among the political elite in Ankara to the end of the Cold-War and creation of a multipolar global order after the collapse of the Soviet Union. After the economic crisis that Turkey pass through during the 1990s, with the AKP, and especially with the Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu (2009-2014), Ankara has renewed the ambitious foreign policy. But on the other hand, Tanaskovic reminds the readers that Turkey's ambitious foreign policy goals came to test after few wrong foreign policy maneuvers by the AKP government which altogether has shown what the real limits of Turkey's power are in the world. Tanaskovic connects this failure to the contradictions of the very idea of Neo-Ottomanism, which in itself contains various uncontainable ideologies like Islamism, Turkish nationalism but some elements of secularism as well. It is important to underline that like many other authors of the in the book, Tanaskovic also has some tendentious tone in describing Turkey's ambitions in the region.

The second article by Goran Nikolic, *Turkey's Economy: State and Prospects (With Reference to the Demographics)*, is a valuable socio-economic work that gives a glimpse of the shape of the Turkish economy. The author gives a short historical review of the economic miracle that Turkey passed through under the AKP government but also warns of its weaknesses. Turkish economic growth is too dependent on the inflow of foreign capital which was the engine of the post-2002 growth. This has made Turkey very vulnerable to the condition of the global economy. In order to keep growing and overcoming the middle-income trap, Ankara has to introduce various structural reforms, expand the formal labor market and modernize the educational system. Otherwise, the country is in the risk of facing a serious crisis that has the potential to negatively affect the neighboring regions as well.

In the article *Role of the Army in Turkey, Through History and Today*, author Dusan Spasojevic gives a historical review of the role the Turkish army has played since the foundation of the Republic in 1923. The Turkish army was the central force in the state, often overthrowing governments, conducting military coup's and protecting the secular order by any means. Turkish army, the second largest army in the NATO, was crucial in preventing the fragmentation of Turkey along the ethnic lines by undertaking four-decades-long war against the insurgent Kurdish PKK. Under the AKP government, the army's central role in Turkish politics is marginalized.

*Cultural Policy of Turkey: Renewal of "Magnificent Century"* deals with a trend in Turkey where once negated Ottoman past became an omnipresent motive of Ankara's culture policy. With the AKP and end of the Kemalist elite as a ruling class in the country, the glorious Ottoman past has been emphasized in the mass media. Turkish series that try to portray Turkey's imperial past is very popular in almost all countries in the Balkans and promotes Turkish soft power. Renewed interest for the pre-Republican past is reflecting a cultural transition that Turkey is passing through under the AKP.

*Islamic Community of Turkey-Diyanet*, written by the former Grand Mufti of Serbia Adem Zilkic, is a review article that focuses on the work of Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet), a state agency that is in charge of religious affairs in the country. Contrary to the Balkan states, where Islamic Communities are independent of the state, Diyanet is part of it. The article also deals with the non-state Islamic actors (Cemaats) like the grassroots Gülen movement which has created a strong influence among the Turkish population.

The article *Fethullah Gülen and Cemaat Hizmet* provides a closer look to probably the strongest religious movement in Turkey which managed to create a strong network of people and institutions not only in Turkey but all over the world. The article provides a historical review of how the movement managed to

spread its network in only a few decades. Unlike the official Islam that is represented by the Diyanet, Fethullah Gülen has managed to blend the traditionalism with the modernity creating an unusual synthesis that has claimed millions of followers across the world. The movement is active not only in the field of religion but in the world of high business, politics, academia, media and many others. But, the activities of the movement did not without the controversy. Gülen's schools were often accused by some states for closely working with the intelligence agencies, like CIA, that might stretch the back the to late 1970s The movement also came under the criticism lately in Turkey where AKP, once a close ally, is now trying to limit its strength in the country.

One of the most controversial subjects of modern Turkey, the right of its non-Muslim minorities, was evaluated in the article the *Position of Christians in Contemporary Turkey*. Although the position of the Christians in Turkey has improved considerably under the AKP government, the newly achieved improvements were not legalized by the Turkish constitution and the laws. Without a legal basis, there is a fear that the improvement could be only a current trend. The community is raising expectations that the new constitution that is under the preparation by the government could provide a legal basis and give the community the rights that were denied by the previous governments.

The construction of the few ambitious gas pipeline projects on the Turkish territory has turned Ankara into an important energy corridor. Some of the Russian and Caspian gas that is planned to go to Europe will pass through Turkey that in return will provide Ankara a strong position in its relations with its European counterparts. After the construction of the Blue Stream pipeline that is providing the Russian gas to Turkey, Ankara has allowed ambitious South Stream to pass through its territory. It will be especially interesting to follow what will be Ankara's stance under the Islamist AKP government after Turkey becomes a crucial energy hub for the European energy market. Turkey's emergence as a regional power and an energy hub is evaluated in details in

the article *Turkey's Pursuit of Energy donor: Energetic Cooperation Between Russia and Turkey*.

The United States is one of the most important countries for Turkey. Especially military relations with Washington have played a very important role in the past. For Misa Djurkovic, the author of the article *Relations between Turkey and the United States*, these relations had a strong reflection in Turkey's internal politics as well. Along Israel, Ankara was once perceived as the main ally of the US in the Middle East. But, with the AKP there is a change in Turkey's perception of the relations with these two countries. After the bilateral quarrel with the Israel Turkey extended its hand to the Muslims of the Middle East leaving the previous attitude of NATO's gendarmerie in the Middle East. The eruption of the Arab Spring in 2011 and the War in Syria have forced Ankara to reconsider its new approach and to apply for realpolitik in dealing with the crisis in the Arab World.

The Middle East is one of the most important regions for Ankara in its ambitious foreign policy. Especially under the Islamist AKP, Turkey first time after the foundation of the Republic sees itself culturally close to this region, where millions of Muslims live and the world's largest oil and gas reserves are. Turkey's ambitious plans for the integration with the Middle East are not going without the problems. Turkey's recent intensified engagement in the region is raising eyebrows not only among the established Powers like the United States and Russia but among regional countries as well. The article *Turkish Policy in the Middle East* is evaluating Ankara's foreign policy in the region and all the implications of the renewed interest for this very turbulent but extremely important region.

Central Asia and the Caucasus are the first regions where the ideas of 'Neo-Ottomanism' and "Turkish-Islamic synthesis" were tested during the 1990s. The dissolution of the Soviet Union opened the gates for Turkey to create closer relations with its Turkic counterparts in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Despite having high expectations in the region, Turkey failed to fulfill the

set goals in these regions. Partly because of Russia's already established influence, but because of the wrong strategies Turkey has followed. The article "*Neo-Ottomanism*" in the *Caspian Region* is examining Turkish policy towards the Caspian region with all its successes and failures.

*Picture of Turkish Emigration in the Movies of Fatih Akın* is an article from the sphere of culture. Fatih Akın, a renowned German film director of Turkish origin, is famous for movies that portray the Turkish community in Germany. His movies address the social and cultural issues that this community faces in Germany. Although the first generation of Turks in Germany manage to preserve their identity the second and third generation are often torn between the two identities.

*The Two Empires: Brits and Ottomans (1774-1923)* gives a historical review of the British-Turkish relations. Fearing the Russian expansion and trying to preserve the balance of power on the European continent, the British Empire become one of the biggest protectors of the Ottoman Empire against the Russian expansion into the Balkans and Caucasus. When it comes to the attitude of London towards Turkey, the author of the article tries to provide parallels between the behaviors of the Imperial British policy with the policies of the United Kingdom today.

Today in Turkey live millions of emigrants from the countries of the Former Yugoslavia. Emigration of the Yugoslav Muslims started much before this country was founded in 1918 and later its Socialist follows up in 1945 and continued almost until the end of the 20th century. For different reasons, the emigration of the Muslim population from Yugoslavia was encouraged both by Belgrade and Ankara. The article *Yugoslav-Turkey Demographic Arrangements Until the Middle 1950s* focuses on Muslim emigration until the 1950s.

The Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia probably had the most pragmatic foreign policy among the Socialist countries of Eastern Europe. Although ideologically close to the Soviet Union, Stalin's aggressive foreign policy has forced the SFRY to nourish

close relations with the Western Bloc. In that sense, SFRY together with Greece and Turkey, both NATO members, formed the Balkan Pact in 1953. Soon after the foundation Balkan Pact became ineffective primarily because of the tensions between Ankara and Athens. The article *Greek-Turkish Conflict and the Middle East Policy of Socialist Yugoslavia (1954-1957)* analyzes relations between the three members of the Balkans Pact, Yugoslav foreign policy regarding the Middle East and the implications of the tensions in relations between Greece and Turkey to the Middle East policy of the Balkan Pact members during the three years period from 1954 to 1957.

Through its religious diplomacy conducted by the Diyanet Turkey become one of the most important religious players among the Muslim communities in the Balkans. Recognizing this reality Belgrade accepted Turkey to be the mediator in the schism that is shaking the Islamic Communities in Serbia for a decade. The process of Turkey's brokering was popularly known in the region as 'Turkish initiative for the Unification of the Islamic Communities in the Republic of Serbia'. Aleksandar Rakovic, author of the article *Turkish Diplomatic Initiative for the Unification of the Islamic Communities in the Republic of Serbia (October-November 2011)*, had access to the negotiation process as the employee of the Ministry of Religion of Republic of Serbia in the period from 2008 to 2012. Rakovic gives an insight of the negotiations defending the position of the Islamic Community of Serbia that was supported by the Belgrade from the very beginning explaining the reasons why the Serbian Ministry of Religion has recognized the legitimacy of the Belgrade supported Islamic Community and not to its Novi Pazar-based opponent that is extended branch of the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In recent years Ankara has shown some special interest for Bosnia and Herzegovina. Two countries have claimed special relations almost since the Bosnian independence. But Turkish political and economic activities in this country are mainly limited to one part of the country, the Bosniak-Muslim one. Ankara has failed to create stronger relations with the Bosnian Serbs and



Croats. Nenad Kecmanovic, former Bosnian Serb politician evaluates the relations Bosniaks have with Turkey in the article *Neo-Ottomanism or Panislamism: Reception of Neo-Ottomanism in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, claims that by focusing only on Bosniak part of the country Turkish foreign policy in BiH has gained a Pan-Islamist character. Kecmanovic raises the question how Turkey as an alleged US pawn in the Balkans can fulfill Washington's expectations from multinational BiH as a future EU and NATO member while following Pan-Islamist policies in this country by ignoring the Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats as a constitutive nation.

The article *Ottoman Empire (Republic of Turkey) and Europe: Contrasts and Overlaps* analyzes the relations between the Western and Islamic civilization by focusing on Ottoman relations with Europe. Since the early days of Islam, this religion was rejected as the civilizational "other" by the Europeans. One of the most important experiences that have shaped the "otherness" of the Muslims was Europe's experience with the Ottoman expansion into the Continent. In the late Medieval and the Early Modern times Europeans knew Ottoman as the fearsome warriors and the superior force threatening to conquer the "Christendom". This will change with the weakening of the Ottoman Empire, after which it was seen as the backward empire. Some orientalist clichés about the Ottomans have survived until today and often shape the view of the Europeans when it comes to modern Turkey. This orientalist approach represents one of the mental barriers in accepting modern Turkey as part of the European family.