

İlhan Uzgel, Bülent Duru (eds.), **AKP Kitabı – Bir Dönüşümün Bilançosu**. Ankara: Phoenix Yayınevi, 2009, 802 pp., ISBN 9786055738075.

The voluminous anthology edited by İlhan Uzgel (Professor of International Relations at the Faculty of Political Studies at the Ankara University) and Bülent Duru (expert on environmental and urban politics at the same institution) doubtlessly belongs among the most significant works in Social Sciences published in Turkey this year. The collective volume of thirteen papers reflects the development of domestic and foreign politics of Turkey since autumn 2002 when the Party for Justice and Progress, better known under its Turkish acronym AKP, formed the government and took over power in the country.

AKP Kitabı – Bir Dönüşümün Bilançosu (*Book on AKP: the balance of change*) is divided into ten chapters that cover the individual aspects of ideology and political practice of AKP. The first chapter focuses on the ideological profile of the party and its place in the Turkish party system. The second chapter offers an analysis of the background of the AKP electorate, Turkish countryside and urban peripheries. Other chapters deal with the issue of human rights and the questions of foreign, economic, educational, environmental and social policies. A separate chapter is devoted to the manner in which AKP addresses social issues (it includes a section on “AKP and Women”, pp. 614 – 632). To complete the list, let us mention a chapter on “Religion and Politics” (pp. 281–354) that examines probably the most problematic theme discussed in relation to AKP.

Authors of the papers are mostly renowned scholars from Ankara research institutions, especially the Faculty of Political Studies and Law Faculty at the Ankara University and the Faculty of Social Sciences at the Başkent University. When choosing contributors to this volume, entirely in accord with their political orientation and own professional views (also greatly influenced by their political beliefs), the editors approached extremely secularist academics whether it be Kemalists or proponents of various movements of the Turkish left. Their choice markedly affected the conception of the entire volume: for example, the chapter on “Religion and Politics” comprises of papers by three political scientists and political philosophers but not a single Islamic scholar nor a religion expert that could outline the perception of the relationship between religion and politics in religious circles.

A slight exception among the array of texts deprecating AKP politics (especially both contributions by İlhan Uzgel) or moderately criticising it (most of the other authors), is a study by Nuri Yeşilyurt and Atay Akdevelioğlu on the Middle Eastern policies of AKP (pp. 381–409). The authors discuss a significant improvement in the relations between Turkey and its Middle Eastern neighbours during the AKP government and also quite positively assess the more active role Turkey is now playing in the region after decades of non-intervention. Within this book, such a moderate praise is in sharp contrast with Professor Uzgel’s disapproval of the Turkish attempts to become prominent in the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa

as he regards them senseless and ineffective (pp. 36–37). On the other hand, it must be noted that the authors adjusted their diction to the concept of the whole volume as their texts and private discussions suggest that their positive evaluation of AKP's Middle Eastern politics is usually less restrained.

Reading the pages of Uzgel and Duru's voluminous anthology one must ask a question what had made thirty six elite scholars in Social Sciences compile a libel book of 800 pages and why is their undertaking considered both by scholars and the general public as a significant contribution to the academic as well as broad public political discourse in the country. The reasons for that can be found in the disposition of the current political scene in Turkey, and implicitly of the entire society. Moreover, also some wholly prosaic motives must be specified.

AKP and its leaders, that means especially the current Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President Abdullah Gül but also the new Minister of Foreign Affairs and the long-time author of AKP's foreign policies, Ahmet Davutoğlu, have brought many changes to the stale Turkish politics. Until the establishment of the Party for Justice and Progress, Islam-oriented parties such as Refah or Fazilet represented quite marginalized formations (the fact that the leader of the Refah Party Erbakan briefly held the post of Prime Minister was more of a proof of a crisis in the Turkish right than anything else). These parties (were they not banned) attracted only a relatively small proportion of voters – mainly because not even religious Turks living predominantly in the countryside were drawn to their programme in the context of tolerant and religiously relaxed Turkey. AKP's odd practices for gaining votes (e.g. relief distribution in neglected urban peripheries and slums, whereby the recipients of AKP's assistance had to swear on Koran to vote for the party) and its radical rhetoric on the verge of law alarmed some secular Turkish circles despite its marginal importance in the same way as marginal extreme right arouses apprehension and precaution in Western Europe. Subsequently, when the inner leadership circle of the newly-banned Islamist party Fazilet, including Erdoğan, decided to found a catch-all-party that would abandon the ills of its very radical predecessors, concerns of secularists were surely apropos.

Why though is this nearly fanatical hatred towards AKP manifested even today, after six and half years of its rule, especially when AKP's politicians did not try to introduce Islamic law nor tuned Turkey into a satellite of Iran? A partial explanation offers the fact that although in a different sense, changes brought by AKP into Turkish public life are truly radical. Throughout its entire period in power, AKP has been systematically and step by step weakening the traditionally influential role of the army, it has relaxed Turkish minority policies, and reduced state interventionism in the economy but also the education. These reforms could at first sight seem very pro-Western and liberal and are thus correspondingly quite positively evaluated by Western observers. However, apart from a moderate economic growth they have yet another effect: they enfeeble the traditional secularist elites that see the reforms as a direct assault on Atatürk's state achievements.

There is another hint that AKP's politics might be designing: the protracted law suit Energekon against an allegedly extremely Kemalist terrorist group that supposedly planned attacks on the current government. The fact that most of the indicted "terrorists" are scholars, journalists but also high state officials – many of them in their retirement age – indicates that the trial might have some political motives. Special concerns about best Turkish universities, until recently never contested elite institutions that have for decades been producing highest state representatives, can point to AKP's emphasis on private universities, often financed by Islamic circles. More and more state employees graduated at one of these universities and the traditional state universities thus have a good reason to worry about their exclusive positions. These fears, although not admitted in the volume (but confirmed in a private conversation with one of the editors) are also one of the reasons why *AKP Kitabı* was published.

However disputed the objectivity of this volume might be, it is still worth reading. It brings a very substantial and well-formulated manifestation of that part of the Turkish elite and middle class that feels harmed by the current political development in the country. This book offers answers to readers of Economist and other prestigious news weeks that publish eulogies on Erdoğan's "liberal" politics, who could wonder who are these people that do not (contrary to most Western commentators) praise the current, according to many objectively set standards, successful government. The fact to be born in mind is that the proportion of people fundamentally objecting to AKP's politics is around thirty to forty per cent in the deeply fragmented Turkish society. Every scholar pursuing any sort of research on the current Turkish politics should thus pay due attention to their voice and should not be blinded by the loud chanting of "*Allāhu akbar!*", a slogan of AKP's campaigns.

Kamil Pikal

Melanie Ilic (ed.), *Stalin's Terror Revisited*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, 256 pp. ISBN 978-1-4039-4705-5.

More than seventy years have passed since Stalin's Great Terror erupted, but this topic has never ceased to attract extraordinary interest of historians. Foundations to the research of the Great Terror as one of the most salient phenomena of Soviet history lay British historian Robert Conquest, who also coined the term. However, his conception is in many respects outdated: during the last forty years of research some crucial moments have moved the study of this topic forward. The most important of these was the Archival Revolution in the Soviet Union towards the close of 1991. The declassification of a number of key documents of the probably