

REDISCOVERING THE COMMON
NARRATIVE OF TURKEY AND EUROPE

**FINDING
COMMON
GROUNDS**



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FINDING COMMON GROUNDS



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FINDING COMMON GROUNDS

Rediscovering the common narrative of Turkey and Europe

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INTRODUCTION

LUCIA NAJŠLOVÁ

The collection of essays offered in this volume contains some of the ideas that came out of the brainstorming and the long and insightful conversations that were held in various European cities. Whether it was in Bratislava, Budapest, Prague, Warsaw and of course Istanbul, the authors engaged in a process that could best be described as looking for a way out of the Turkey-EU drama. The authors could be compared to a very atypical group of passengers who found themselves in the same carriage of a train that was speeding towards a point where the track might end. Some of them were searching for a way to stop the train and bring it back to a junction from where they could travel more safely to the desired destination. Others were convinced that there was no way to stop it and they were rather trying to see how to build a new track so that the train could carry on.

While several approaches were employed in this brainstorming, their common denominator was constructive optimism: an effort to deconstruct the clichés and outline concrete steps that needed to be taken to overcome the crisis in EU-Turkey negotiations. The two main characters that are the subjects of these essays could in fact compete in the disciplines of being complicated, stubborn and unpredictable. Hence our level of analysis also has more layers and the thoughts and the evidence presented in the articles range from focusing on the role of media, to analyzing “technical” aspects such as the institutional preparedness of both players to make policy-oriented remarks dealing with the current state of the negotiations and what was expected of the Czech presidency of the European Union.

The bottom line of the texts you are about to read is that, despite the complexity, both Turkey and the EU must find a way to live and work together – if not for a noble reason then at least for a purely pragmatic one: they still have a lot of common enemies.

It was not an easy endeavor for the authors of this collection to put together some rational and forward-looking remarks on this subject. What once (not long ago in fact) used to be interesting, even a bit

exotic, and a promising story with an almost inevitable happy ending, quickly turned into something like a taboo. Discussions among academics, think-tankers and journalists, – or should we say, organized discussions, such as workshops and conferences, on this topic have become trendy over the past few years. But when a less subtle “yes-or-no” question is posed, most participants just look aside and utter “no, it will not happen”. The trust between the two sides of the equation has evaporated. Turks are likely to say “I don’t believe the EU is serious with us” the EU-peans keep repeating “I don’t believe the Turks are serious with the reforms”.

In such an atmosphere, it takes a lot of motivation to think progressively and look on the bright side. Thus, most people dealing with the subject are likely to conclude, off –the record, that they are in fact tired of the whole story and would like to read or watch something new. After hours of drama, even if artistically well conceived and reflecting a serious social phenomenon, there is a secret desire for a kitsch comedy.

Yet why are these expressions of hopelessness more often than not off the record? For in fact a very simple reason: all hope has not been lost yet. The recurring efforts of various individuals and groups and institutions to search for a way to restart the Turkish EU journey are solid proof that the relationship of the two intransigents is not something hatched in the heat of the moment, but a very natural and vital bond. It will not be forgotten, it just needs to be fixed.

Now, it is clear why these conversations have taken place in Istanbul, but where do the four Central European capitals fit in the picture? Don’t the “newly European” member states have enough dreary issues of their own to deal with? Yes they do but – and that is perhaps the best answer for the curious reader – during their own very recent accession experience they have learned that an inward-oriented approach to policy-making is not an option if they want to be successful. And the approach of “first deal with things domestic then come to things foreign” as well does not seem to be an alternative.

Moreover, in a painful process of disentangling themselves from their authoritarian pasts and coming to terms with the pros and cons of becoming sovereign states with market economies and the rule of law, and at the same time striving to find their place back on a world (or at least European) map, they have learned a very tough lesson on what it means to be an outsider. Having this experience, their understanding of Turkey’s backsliding on its own promises as well

as Turkey's fights with the EU, is authentic, not formal. It is not a coincidence that new members have a more pro-future-enlargement spirit than old ones.

Yet the enlargement-friendly spirit sometimes stays behind the door when it comes to making or, what is more important, initiating decisions in the EU arena. Most observers conclude that when it comes to controversial issues many of the new tend to be conspicuously timid, more often than not walking in the footsteps of the older and the bigger. Thus, one of the recommendations of this volume is for new EU members to amplify their voices in EU politics on issues beyond budget and agricultural subsidies.

The problem however lies also on the other side of the equation - Turkey itself at times tends to underestimate the allies it could gain among Europe's newcomers. Overemphasizing the rhetoric of "the big" it whips itself into depression over a cold and grudging EU, overlooking the friends it has among those whose hour of influence has yet to come. And so these essays are also an effort to refocus the Turkey EU debate onto a ground as yet almost untouched by serious consideration: to look at how the country can benefit from learning from the successes and mistakes of Central European EU accessions.

The collection starts with contribution of Hurriyet Daily News editor-in-chief David Judson, who in his essay looks on what media can and cannot do in breaking the obvious communication divide between the EU and Turkey. Then we follow with four articles looking at EU decision-making vis-à-vis Turkey. Adam Szymański writes about the EU's fears vis-à-vis Turkish membership and suggests some policies the EU had better employ now. David Král looks at what could be expected from the Czech EU presidency and Deniz Bingöl McDonald and Peter Balazs analyze the roles of conditionality and public opinion in enlargement. Ceren Ak, Sylvia Tiryaki and Mensur Akgün evaluate the Union's approach after last year's evaluation report. We close the volume by another reflection - an essay on "talking Turkey" in Slovakia or what it takes to mainstream a seemingly marginal topic.

FIRING THE IMAGINATION IN THE NARRATIVE BATTLESPACE OF OUR AGE

DAVID JUDSON

It will surely happen. In some distant future, historians and archeologists will show up from whatever civilization emerges in the 31st Century from the post-mordial sea created by global warming in the 21st. They will want to come back and excavate the ancient civilization that embarked in the middle of the 20th Century upon a project to create the first semblance of continental unity in Europe since the Romans.

In our time, the standard rule of thumb for archeologists probing a lost civilization in some place like Turkey - where I happen to live and where there remain many unexplored Roman ruins - is to start in what they suppose to have been the northwest corner. This has always fascinated me, for knowing nothing about archeology my own impulse would be to look first for the emperor's palace or the senate. But archeologists don't think this way. They want to first probe into the likely intersection of intellectual and political life, understand the rules of commerce, examine how the rich interacted with the poor and find the symbolic heart of this "lost civilization." In short, they want to begin with the basic "narrative."

So, at least when digging in Turkey, the best bet is to start at the northwest corner. Archeologists are not quite sure why. Perhaps because of prevailing winds this section was saved from the stench of Iron Age hygiene. Or perhaps due to the advantage given by this geography to view the stars, this is where the thinkers came. In any event, this is where the presumed "action" was. For whatever reason, here is where one is deemed most likely to find the most interesting stuff.

To complete my tenuous metaphor, where will be the retrospective “northwest corner” of the European Union 10 centuries hence? Were I to advise the team coming back to the ruins of the EU to dig for clues, I would advise against starting in Brussels. For starters, any records remaining will be coded in the cuneiform code of Eurojargon (just what did they mean by “comitology?” they will wonder.) Secondly, what little evidence of culture exists in Brussels today will surely be long obliterated. Lastly, Brussels is hardly where the meek and the mighty of the EU ever really interact. Never mind any discussion of intellectual life. The “narrative” will not be found here.

No, my advice to the future would be to commence this continental dig in Prague. In this case, it is not in the northwest corner of the EU, a distinction belonging to Denmark’s Faroe Islands. In fact it is at the very center of the EU if we include the accessionary hopefuls; given the 1,000 years I am allowing this exercise, this does not seem too presumptuous about the pace with which these matters of accession will proceed.

In any event, this should be the spot where the “narrative” of the European project suddenly unraveled and disappeared. In other words, late 2008 and early 2009 may for our visitors from the distant future be the equivalent of 476, when the Barbarians finally did in the last Roman Emperor. That is unless you prefer the “Greater Empire” version of history whereby Rome became a goner in 1453 as the Turks embarked on their first serious European integration project with the sacking of Byzantium.

What they find does not necessarily have to be a failure scenario. Conversely, it may in my analogy be something comparable to 221 BC, the year the Ch’in first unified the warring dynasties of China. More than two millennia without a name change would seem some measure of endurance. If what they are to find is success, maybe it will be something like 1648. Maybe this period we are now going through will be viewed by future generations as the equivalent of the treaty of Westphalia, which ushered out the 30 Years War and ushered in the concept of state sovereignty. They got some things right back then.

CAN THE EU REDISCOVER ITS NARRATIVE?

Of course the “story” has yet to be decided. For while the EU narrative has been in deep trouble for some time – for a whole litany of

reasons about which you can read in this volume - now, in early 2009 is where the “narrative” will succeed or fail. Is this to be the “rule of big states,” the vision of French President Nicolas Sarkozy, who on Jan. 1 pretended to surrender the rotating EU Presidency only to effectively snatch it back again with an early January peacemaking visit to Israel? Or is to be something more inclusive, actually giving real authority to the first former Warsaw Pact nation, namely the small Czech Republic, to be the nominal president for the first six months of 2009?

Is the EU to operate as basically an aggregation of crisis management tactics, or as an entity with some coherent strategy that gives real meaning to the notion of “soft power?” Will the test of wills see the triumph of public leadership amidst an economic crisis as advocated by the Czech Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek? Or will his formal partner and informal archrival, Czech President Vaclav Klaus become the one with the vision that wins out, one of deregulation, laissez-faire and an EU whose official policy is that “freedom and prosperity are much more endangered than the climate?” Yes, Klaus actually said and believes that.

Either the Big Bang is coming at the EU. Or the Grand Collapse. That the clash - no, not in the EU, let's say “extreme cohesion challenge” - comes amid the concentric circles of an overnight reversal of the assumptions dominating global economics for the past 30 years, within the worst plunge in markets in 70 years, makes this rather dramatic. Hence my notion that Prague would be a fine place to establish where it all came from, and where it all went, were one to visit on a time-travelling site excavation.

OK. I realize this has been an unorthodox introduction. Be forewarned. If you choose to continue it is only going to become more so. Just pretend you're stuck in a crowded train compartment with a loquacious American with an Inter-Rail pass. Be polite. My argument is this: the European Union has been losing its narrative, its defining story, for some time. Suddenly, but from my perspective tragically, all the competing symbols, visions and semiotic elements are near complete collapse. Today if the EU narrative were a novel, it would be one that begins as an epic in the style of Ernest Hemingway or John Steinbeck. This novel was already losing its theme and focus. And now we see it transformed into a work of Lewis Carroll. One wonders what derogations Carroll's “Wonderland” might seek during the screening phase toward adherence to the *communautaire acquis*? The narrative, or narratives, have just disappeared.

By profession I am a storyteller. So loss of narratives are disappointing; it must be something like what an environmentalist feels when a species disappears into extinction. That the EU story once represented to me something near to the crowning achievement of civil mankind makes today's reality not just disappointing, but tragic. So allow me to explain just why I think "narratives" are so important.

In many late night discussions on the nature of the news business, I have often found myself advancing the following argument: Despite the fact we perceive our work as a matter of gathering each morning to decide what "stories" we will write in the course of the day, the larger reality is something different. Rather, it seems to me, journalism is more akin to a game of Scrabble with a limited number of letters on the table. It is our task to pick among them and assemble the best word we can. The difference between Scrabble and journalism, however, is that we don't pick from among letters lying upon the table; we pick from the available "narratives" given us by culture and convention. We then cobble them together as the elements from which to create the day's news against the contour of this template. To move outside an essential narrative is to spell a word that the Scrabble board has not provided. Therein lies journalism's fundamental dilemma.

I argue that the same could describe the fast-failing European Union: the available narratives simply don't square with the reality. Said differently, the pieces in the Union's Scrabble set fall short of the elements needed to construct a narrative. As this line of argument relates to my profession, I realize it is not one to be found in any journalism textbook. And on more than one occasion I have found myself labeled a heretic by my peers for suggesting it. Which only proves my point, I will argue. For the notion of heresy cannot really exist unless supported by the broader Judeo-Christian narrative of morality.

I again realize the oddity of introducing a set of thoughts on the state of the European Union, the prospects for Turkey's development within the context of the values represented by the EU and the relationship of all this to the newest members of the EU club. But now some three years into a discussion of all this, a conversation hubbed through Bratislava by the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, I have a few thoughts. I am not about to offer bold insight. I have no paradigms to shift. I can't even offer up the kernel of an idea that might lead to a grant under the terms of the 7th Framework to nurture

greater cross-border cohesion in support of multi-cultural dialogue. But I have a few ideas I have been asked to share. I should disclose that these are the thoughts of an outsider, who runs a newspaper in an outcast country.

Elsewhere, you will find ample analysis of the precipice upon which the Turkish-EU relationship now pivots. The most recent I have read is one of the best. "Turkey and Europe: The Decisive Year Ahead," by the International Crisis Group, produced in late 2008. It notes that Turkish public support has dropped from a high of 65 percent to a low of 27 percent in one poll in 2007. Nationalist sentiment is on the rise, and anti-European attitudes have become mainstream, the report argues.

From the European side, the growing ill will of the French, the Germans and others has set in motion a "vicious circle" in which "European slights are interpreted by Turkey as reasons to do nothing and Turkish inaction is interpreted (in the EU) as disinterest in the EU." And downward we collectively spiral.

Without discounting the accuracy of this diagnosis, my view of the problem is quite different. It boils down to this: The real crisis faced by the EU is not Irish selfishness, French arrogance or Polish fecklessness in the face of exception-making to the country's inclusion in the bounty of the Common Agricultural Policy. Rather, it is the collapse or disappearance of any coherent "story" as to what the EU is all about.

From the perspective of a newspaperman in İstanbul, the implications of this "collapse of narrative" are further confused by the emergence of new and competing anti-narratives. There are those that come from within the dialogue, such as Angela Merkel's "privileged partnership" or Nicolas Sarkozy's "Union for the Mediterranean;" these may well have innocently grown out of sincere initiatives to strengthen ties but they are perceived and discussed where I live as prototypes of "Plan B". There are other "Plan B" notions coming from outside the dialogue also astir in the collective Turkish consciousness: a "Eurasian" alliance of some kind with the resurgent Russia that is fast becoming Turkey's most important trading partner is one. Some find the idea of a more robust embrace of "Muslim brethen" particularly appealing if it involves siblings with access to a Sovereign Wealth Fund such as those belonging to Kuwait or Dubai. I found one of the findings in a recent study on political views in İstanbul's sprawling shantytown fascinating. Respondents to a survey voiced

growing frustration with what they perceived as the hypocrisy of the European Union; when asked to suggest remedies, most voiced interest in deepening Turkish ties with “Turkic” kinsmen in places like Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kirghizia.

From a storyteller’s perspective, I might crudely reduce this dilemma of an all-but-stalled EU reform and accession process to that of a “non-narrative” competing with emergent “anti-narratives.” The result is incoherence. I will come back to this matter of the European Union, and why I believe that any sincere effort to rescue the club from the centrifugal forces tearing it apart should be informed by a thorough discussion of human cognition and the importance of narratives. But first I need to explain the narrative of the Daily News, a 47-year-old English language newspaper in Turkey. For this is really the experience that has been driving my thoughts on the DNA of narratives.

After more than two decades working in the U.S. media, I swore off the profession in 2000. An academic project brought me back to Turkey in 2001, a country where I lived as a teenager and young adult. In 2004, the fates brought me back to journalism, initially to edit Referans, Turkey’s national business daily, part of the Dogan Media Group. Among the newspapers, magazines and television network owned by the sprawling Dogan is also the country’s English language daily. I run what is surely the smallest division in a sprawling company. As one might imagine, the logic of keeping the company’s lone American at a Turkish language newspaper when the English newspaper was suffering began to feel the strain. After more than a year’s resistance, I finally moved back to work in my native language in 2006. As an experience within a complex and multi-faceted organization, the experience has bolstered my respect for Hans-Dietrich Genscher. It has also, however, diminished my esteem for the institutions of the EU.

What really convinced me to do it were the results of an informal but months-long discussion among several leading minds in the company. These included Eyüp Can, the editor-in-chief of Referans, Sedat Ergin, the editor-in-chief of Milliyet, a host of thinkers outside the company and Vuslat Dogan Sabancı, my boss and the publisher of Hürriyet, the company’s flagship. Our fundamental conclusion was that there are really just five “narratives” about Turkey in play in the European media. They are as follows:

- The Turkish-Kurdish ethnic conflict.

- The issue of “Armenian genocide,” alleged if you ask Turks, a historical fact if you ask Armenians.
- So-called “honor” killings, the practice of murdering female family members who betray the familial trust with such “crimes” as an inappropriate love affair. The standard narrative generally makes this a “Kurdish” problem.
- Freedom of expression, particularly the notorious “Article 301” of the penal code that used to make insulting “Turkishness” a crime, now downgraded to an offense only when one insults the “Turkish nation.” It should also be mentioned that this narrative really has just three protagonists: novelists Orhan Pamuk and Elif Şafak and the murdered Armenian-Turkish journalist Hrant Dink. The hundreds of other journalists involved in 301 cases (including those who work for the Daily News) don’t exist.
- Last is the cultural symbolism of the Islam vs. secularism, the headscarf issue, the debate on secular fidelity that of late has been the most dominant narrative, the leitmotif of so many stories that are nominally about other issues.

This really is the Scrabble board for the 130 or so accredited foreign journalists in İstanbul and the 25 or so in the capital of Ankara. Sure there are the exceptions that prove this rule. Cyprus. Meddlesome generals. Foreign investment. Or the inevitable shopping delights of İstanbul or the bars of Bodrum. But the basic material for communicating Turkish reality is limited to the above. Turkey’s EU accession process is rarely a narrative in itself; inevitably it is a derivative blend of the above five-part menu. To offer overly simplistic examples: “Turkey should join the EU once it resolves the Kurdish-Turkish” conflict.” Or no, “Turkey should be outside until it faces up to the Armenian genocide.” These would be two convenient ways to approach a discussion. While these are not good bar lines to pick up girls in İstanbul, they are quite serviceable at any expatriate coffee-house where a would-be “western journalist” seeks to establish him or herself as a “deep thinker.”

IN THE SEARCH FOR A MAGIC HAND

I should emphasize here that I am only using the Turkish case as a sort of laboratory to discuss these issues of communication and perception. All societies, or at least most, suffer to one degree or

another from the paucity of relevant narratives. The poor Czechs have only had one spring season, back in 1968. Finland is most often referred to in the world's media not as a country, but as a verb, as in Russia's "finlandization" of Georgia or Iraq's attempted "finlandization" of Kuwait some years back. Danes will be forever regaling guests at dinner parties with the story of how their king pinned the Star of David on his chest in solidarity with the country's Jews during the Nazi occupation. Never mind that this particular narrative was the figment of novelist Leon Uris's imagination. Danes really have no other transcendent narrative with which to communicate their many virtues. If you have any doubt about this latter point, please read "Smila's Sense of Snow" by Peter Hoeg (1992 in Danish, 1993 in English).

Which then brings me to the point I sought to make at the outset, that most often, this impoverished package of narratives is all the news media has to work with. There are shelves full of books that seek to understand why the media so often seem to work in lock-step. Every journalism school has its resident theorist ready to recite Noam Choamsky or others claiming to have found the magic hand(s) which guide(s) all this. To be honest, I spent many years seeking this "magic hand" myself.

And I found it. Not in a book on journalism, interestingly enough. But rather in "Six Degrees - The Science of a Connected Age" by Duncan J. Watts. A mathematician by training, Watts' work is an endeavor to explain the formation and operation of networks, such as the Internet. There are a lot of interesting examples of how circles of communication work. For example chirping crickets. "The question in my mind was, Who was listening to whom?" Watts asks in explaining his study of cricket sociology. "Surely there was no master cricket from which all others took their cues. But if not, then how did they manage to synchronize so well?"

For the full answer you will have to read the book, which explores much more than crickets. But this lesson from biology's science of emergence, of unplanned and random but critical "triggers" being the key to network synchronization, sheds more light on the way reporters work than anything I have yet encountered. For after all, reporters are very social creatures and they exist and operate in very tight social networks. Journalists generally hate this caricature. So be forewarned that they will only admit to this late at night, after drinking large amounts of alcohol.

Rather than chirp like crickets who harmonize as the sun sets over the swamp, we tend to harmonize our chirping with various exercises in narrative calibration. These occur as we read one another's work, "compete" within the confines of implicitly agreed consensus or trade our stories during working hours on the same buses or airplanes or after hours in the same bars and beds. One of the few helpful books to emerge from our craft on this is "Boys on the Bus" by Timothy Krause. It was written back in the Pleistocene Age of 1972 but its insights are timeless and universal. The unwritten rule is to be careful and not stray too far from the consensus truth.

An excellent example of the way this works in the Turkish context came recently when the foreign press corps in Turkey finally approached a complex reality involving the ruling Justice and Development Party, or AKP. They began to observe that Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has begun to act of late with all the finesse, tolerance and democratic spirit of, say, Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe in his formative years. Stories on the AKP, of course, are required to be constructed according to the architecture of Narrative No. 5 on the list I shared above. This is always a binary narrative casting the pious "conservative democrats" from the Islamic heartland of Anatolia against the near-fascist "Kemalists" of the leafy precincts of Istanbul and Ankara.

A good place to further explore Narrative No. 5 is the website of the European Stability Initiative, a partially EU-funded project chaired by Nobel laureate Matti Ahtisaari. This particular narrative, sometimes constructed around the phraseology of "Black Turks" vs. "White Turks," actually traces back to seminal work done on center vs. periphery dynamics done by the eminent political theorist Şerif Mardin beginning in the 1960s. It is a useful tool, whose analytical value might be comparable to use of the Protestant-Catholic schism as an explainer of the dichotomies in Belgian domestic politics. This is fine, just so long as the analyst does not overlook the history of the Netherlands and its relationship to Flanders. Which, if you allow me the use of this analogy, is exactly what Ahtisaari's group does and which is why I think he should be asked to return the Nobel Peace Prize.

But let us return to Narrative No. 5 as it is used by journalists. While elements of this did indeed inform Turkish journalists in the early days of the AKP, most long ago abandoned it as their understanding of this dynamic political party became more textured. The

foreign media did not. Until last November, when they abandoned it in near unison. An editorial we ran in the Daily News on December 1, 2008 is useful in understanding this. It ran under the headline “Gambling in Casablanca? We are shocked!”

“We are all familiar with the means by which pedestrians of Turkish cities collectivize their will to brave traffic: a phenomenon of density and unspoken social cohesion. Going solo against aggressive motorists is daring. But if, say, four or five pedestrians step into the crosswalk at the same time, this challenge to the oncoming taxi usually works. Sadly, the media in all societies tend to work the same way. A trend, a development, a shift in political wind may be sensed by the lone newspaper or magazine. But seldom do they write until what social psychologists call “groupthink” provides confidence. Journalists tend to shuffle together, particularly when confronting the traffic of a new narrative.

On groupthink cue, the Economist, the New York Times, Reuters and Newsweek have collectively discovered that Turkey’s Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has developed an authoritarian edge. “We are shocked,” might be a way to express our reaction, paraphrasing Captain Renault’s discovery of gambling in the epic film “Casablanca.”

For as the Hürriyet Daily News & Economic Review’s İrem Köker reports in today’s newspaper, these are the same international media organizations who have long criticized Erdoğan opponents of being “staunchly secular” and resistant to change. They reached different conclusions to explain Erdogan’s migration from “reformist to autocrat.” But finally they noticed what their Turkish colleagues have been writing for months.

We wish, of course, that the international media had been vigilant last spring when the PM was using the public seizure of an opposition media group to convert a political crony employing his son-in-law into a media baron with the aid of \$800 million or so in questionably secured state funding. We were disappointed with many of our international colleagues’ silence when the PM called on followers to boycott this newspaper and others in the Doğan Media Group for reporting a German corruption prosecution – and conviction – of Erdoğan allies.

When the prime minister launched his new “love or leave it” rhetoric of intolerance at a speech in Hakkari some weeks back, we expected more

international notice. And the stripping of seven reporters accredited to the prime ministry of their press cards a few weeks ago was a tactic that should have received far more international condemnation than it did. A Turkish phrase comes to mind: "işte buyurun."

Knowing our prime minister as we do, we expect the next move of his defenders will be to decry "conspiracy" and concoct nutty theories about the synchronized nature of the new criticism. This should be ignored.

For "groupthink" is a curse of lazy journalists everywhere. More important, we believe, is that the "group" finally summoned the courage to step off of the curb."

To summarize: a paucity of narratives, and the intellectual erosion of narratives, lead to poor journalism. This in turn leads to a kind of counter-evolutionary cognition on the part of the news-consuming public. The virus, surely, spreads to public officialdom, a sort of self-reinforcing feedback loop of ignorance takes hold. Democracy becomes something less than that; civil society becomes less civil and often downright dumb.

THE SECRET OF DIVERSITY OF PERSPECTIVES

Welcome circa 2009 to most discussions on the future of the European Union. But wait! I should also emphasize here that I am not making the case for propaganda. When the odd Turkish official or public relations executive has had the patience to listen to the case I have just argued, they tend to nod in agreement before every point. Then comes the "ah hah!" remark and I watch and listen as my reasoning is transformed into a case for telling Turkey's "real story." There needs to be more advertising on CNN or more "student ambassadors" visiting young people's club in Europe or more meetings with editorial boards in London or Lyon. Maybe a website or two. The Dutch Europarliamentarian Joost Lagendijk has even gone so far as to suggest the solution to this might be handing out brochures to visiting European tourists on Turkey's Mediterranean coast.

And here we part company. For this is about the game of Scrabble. Not the game of Charades.

The five narratives I mention above are all very real. Often they are treated in a shallow fashion. They also reveal only a narrow slice of Turkish reality. In the Turkish context and others, the operating narratives do not need to be “countered” as first reflexes often command. They need to be deepened and expanded upon.

As I have tried to argue throughout, this is the European Problem: the EU has no narrative(s). So where does one go from here? The volume for which this chapter is written, I am told, is supposed to help us move toward solutions. As I confessed, I am not about to offer bold insight. I have no paradigms to shift. Not only am I no expert on Europe and its Union, I am not even European although if it helps, my grandmother was Alsatian. She liked stories, so let me conclude with one on this unresolved matter of narratives, the mysterious tectonic plates that, however unseen, define the fault lines of human communication.

Every September I have the privilege of attending a one-week gathering on the coast of California, near where I was born and grew up, at a venerable research center and think tank called the Esalen Institute. My ticket into this venerable institute (worth Googling if you have not heard of it) is an ongoing program called the Global Potentials Program. It actually grew from an initiative years ago that brought then little-known Boris Yeltsin to his first visit to the United States. Many argue Yeltsin's epiphany at Esalen changed the world. Today the working group of GPP is 25 or so very smart people (plus me) who have an ongoing conversation about the state of the planet. I have learned many things there but my own more modest epiphany came at the last gathering. I found myself trudging to breakfast at 7.30 in the morning with Alok Srivastava, an MIT biochemist. Alok, you will be happy to know, is leading a team of cancer researchers who are about to make biopsies, MRI scans and colonoscopies obsolete. Colonoscopies were not his topic at that hour, however.

No, Alok was trying to finish a point he had begun to make the evening before about the influence of Sir Francis Bacon (or the lack of it) on such Indian writers as Arundhati Roy and Jhumpa Lahiri. In turn, I was mumbling something about the Daily News, our many challenges and the sheer density of the perspective diversity that defines our remarkable newsroom. “Of course,” Alok responded, typically with a question. “How else could you fire the imagination in the narrative battle space of our age?”

That line stopped me in my tracks. I had to borrow Alok's pen to write that line down on a napkin I found in my pocket. For me, Alok posed the question of our age. For me the answer is perspective diversity. In response to the dilemma I posed above, we have created a newspaper whose team's native languages include four Arabic speakers, three Kurdish speakers, two Ladino speakers, two Armenian speakers, one Farsi speaker, one Georgian speaker and one Greek speaker. And that is just among the "Turks" at a newspaper in a country which - as seen from Europe - only has two ethnic groups. Among the international staff, we have one New Zealander, two Australians, a Finn, a Greek, a German, three American citizens, an Indian, an Iranian and a Pole.

I recently discovered, looking through CV's, that if the publishers decide next week to switch the newspaper's language of publication from English to French, about two thirds of the staff are already prepared. There's a serious Marxist cabal, perhaps a third of the staff fasts during Ramadan; we have all three branches of Monotheism covered plus one Zoroastrian and until recently, the sports editor was into Rastafarianism. The dreadlocks disappeared about two weeks ago and I have not yet established why. We all disagree on many issues, in lifestyles in modes of thought. But we do have a common narrative. In this essay, I hope it has emerged. If not, I am sure the archeologists of the 31st Century will understand.

WHAT DOES THE EU NEED TO DO AND WHAT ARE ITS FEARS?

ADAM SZYMAŃSKI

There are a lot of obstacles on the Turkish way to the EU. Turkey itself must overcome most of them. European politicians such as EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn repeat as a sort of mantra that this country must speed up the reform process slowed down after the beginning of the accession negotiations in October 2005.¹ Turkey must first of all improve the fulfillment of the political Copenhagen criteria. It still does not guarantee minority rights (Kurds, religious minorities), freedom of speech or rights of women. It is too hard to control the army and too easy to ban political parties. The political developments in 2008 (the application to the Constitutional Court to close down the AKP and the Ergenekon case) also show old problems about respect for such democratic rules as the rule of law or the separation of powers.² In order to avoid even more serious internal instability (connected with tensions between the secular establishment and the religious-conservative groups) and consolidate its democratic order, Turkey has not only to adopt the new “civil” constitution or implement the “road map” for the period of 2007-2013 and the National Program for the Adoption of EU Acquis, but also to solve the systemic problems. They go beyond the question of the model of state and society and have a lot to do with the pillars of the Republic connected with the Kemalist ideology.

1 Cf. O. Rehn, *Şimdi AB zamanı*, “Milliyet”, 25.08.08, www.milliyet.com.tr/2008/08/28

2 Cf. G. Tahincioğlu, *AKP'ye ağır suçlamalar*, “Milliyet”, 16.03.2008, www.milliyet.com.tr/2008/03/16/siyaset; E. Ezber, E. Alus, M. A. Erdem, *Komutanlar çekyatta sabahladı*, “Milliyet”, 03.07.2008, www.milliyet.com.tr/2008/07/03/siyaset/?ver=86

When it comes to Turkish obligations concerning its foreign policy, the Cyprus issue, as well as disputes with Greece and Armenia, remains unsolved.³

There clearly are, however, obstacles on the European Union side too. The policy of the EU and the member states happens to affect the Turkish pre-accession process negatively. This policy is quite often a result of Europe's problems that come to light when the Turkish case comes up. Actually, each of the previous rounds of EU enlargement "has been a stimulus to reflect on the nature of the EU's identity, to reinvent what it does, how it sees itself."⁴ The 2004 enlargement already showed the Union's problems, among others the adjustment difficulties of the "old" member states.

In many cases European actions only aggravate the above-mentioned internal Turkish problems. It must be underlined that there is a vicious circle concerning the relations between the prospects of Turkish EU membership and internal changes in that country. Turkey needs more political and economic reforms in order to gain the ultimate goal, i.e. membership of the EU. The prospect of Turkish accession is, on the other hand, an indispensable incentive to carry out such reforms. When the EU gives signals that it is not certain about Turkish membership then Turkey loses the factor that mobilizes elites and society to continue with changes in their country.

This article is an analysis of these "European" obstacles on the Turkish way to the EU. Three dimensions of problems are taken into consideration, i.e. formal-normative, political, and socio-psychological. It is argued that although all of them are important, the key issue is to solve the problems in the third dimension concerning above all the negative attitude of European public opinion towards Turkish EU membership and fears connected with it. The author proposes some

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- 3 All these problems are mentioned in the latest EU reports (European Commission and European Parliament), for more, see: *Commission Staff Working Document. Turkey 2007 Progress Report*, Brussels, 6.11.2007, http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2007/nov/turkey_progress_reports_en.pdf; *European Parliament resolution of 21 May 2008 on Turkey's 2007 progress report (2007/2269(INI))*, Wednesday, 21 May 2008 - Strasbourg, www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2008-0224+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN
- 4 K. Dyson, *Reinventing Europe? Turkey, European Union Accession and Europeanization*, in: E. LaGro, K. E. Jørgensen (ed.), *Turkey and the European Union. Prospects for a Difficult Encounter*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingtoke, New York 2007, p.51.

solutions that must be treated as illustrations only. Their effective implementation is not easy, but possible.

THE FORMAL-NORMATIVE DIMENSION

The first group of problems on the EU side concerns the formal and normative issues. There are still problems with defining the *finalité politique* of the Union. European politicians are not sure if this should be federation or intergovernmental organization and whether it will be characterized by more “differential integration”. They do not know if it should be more internally or externally oriented, playing the role of a global actor on the international scene. Finally, although there are some principles included in the treaties on which the EU is based, Europeans still think about values that can be components of the European identity of the Union. Depending on their political profile politicians in Europe treat the cultural (Christian democrats) or political (social democrats) issue as a core element of this identity.⁵ The lack of answers to these questions stops progress on the Turkish way to the EU. These dilemmas have a lot to do with the different interests of member states or the political profile of their leading parties. It is not realistic then to force European politicians to make the final decision in a short time. However, it is possible to start a matter-of-fact public debate on the above-mentioned dilemmas.

The “committee of wise men” can initiate it. Such councils of experts have often been able to provide ideas about the process of European integration. The committee “would find it possible to do things which are simply out of the question in the narrower political decision-making sphere.”⁶ They would focus on strategic questions, e.g. how the EU can preserve its significance in the global context, to avoid getting bogged down in details. However, the public debate initiated by the committee cannot be like the discussion about the future of the EU, raising a lot of questions and actually not answering the core ones. Within this debate all the arguments “for” and

5 See more: A. Szymański, *Turcja a tożsamość europejska - konfrontacja dwóch wizji Europy* (Turkey and European Identity - Confrontation of Two Visions of Europe), in: F. Gołębski (ed.), *Tożsamość europejska* (European Identity), Wyd. Instytutu Nauk Politycznych Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa 2005, pp. 128-169.

6 M. Chardon, D. Hierlemann, S. Seeger, *A Chance for Wise Man*, “Spotlight Europe”, October 2007, Center for Applied Policy Research (CAP), Munich 2007, p. 6.

“against” a specific solution should be thoroughly analyzed. On the other hand the EU can also be forced by reality to define the ultimate goals (the problem of *finalité politique*), especially that concerning its role in the world.⁷

The second issue concerns the old dichotomy of widening vs. deepening. The negative result of the referendum on the Lisbon Treaty strengthened the argument about the need for EU reform before the next enlargement rounds and the debate between countries supporting the widening of the EU and those that treat deepening as a priority.⁸ Of course, it is beyond question that the Union needs to be reformed. However, it should not be a tool in the discussion about EU enlargement and the accession of such candidate countries as Turkey. The admission of new member states is possible, although more difficult without a new treaty. Besides, the Constitutional Treaty and the Lisbon Treaty are about many things, but not necessarily about EU enlargement, as many citizens think. It is certainly not the main issue in the substance of the Treaties.

It is not, however, very probable that countries skeptical about EU enlargement would be convinced by opponents. There is a need, then, to recognize the reality and find a reasonable solution based on compromise between the two groups of countries. One example is the introduction of a system in the EU that provides for the sequence enlargement-reform.⁹ However, the point is that it can discourage supporters of enlargement from continuing their policy towards such candidate countries as Turkey.

The third formal-normative issue concerns the enlargement strategy of the EU.¹⁰ The current new strategy potentially creates

7 Cf. E. F. Keyman, Z. Öniş, *Turkish Politics in a Changing World: Global Dynamics and Domestic Transformations*, İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, İstanbul 2007, pp. 48-51; A. Szymański, *Turcja a tożsamość europejska - konfrontacja dwóch wizji Europy (Turkey and European Identity - Confrontation of Two Visions of Europe)*, pp. 128-169.

8 It was broadly commented, also in the Polish press. See e.g.: *Tusk krytykuje Sarkozy'ego i Merkel* (Tusk criticizes Sarkozy and Merkel), “Gazeta Wyborcza”, 20.06.2008, <http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/Wiadomosci/1,80708,5335408.html>

9 Cf. K-O. Lang, D. Schwarzer, *Die Diskussion über die Aufnahmefähigkeit der EU*, SWP-Studie 31, Berlin, Dezember 2007, www.swp-berlin.org/common/get_document.php?asset_id=4558

10 For more see: *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council. EU Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2006 – 2007 (including annexed special report on the EU's capacity to integrate new members)*,

some problems for the Turkish case. It concerns its two main principles, i.e. conditionality and EU absorption or, rather, integration capacity. EU accession conditionality is not effective any more. There are two main conditions that must be fulfilled to make this principle work: the presence of the EU membership incentive and relatively low costs of internal adoption of the EU rules.¹¹ The first issue concerns the Union's approach. At present it is noticeable that the prospect of Turkish EU membership is rather unclear. Some member states emphasize the open-ended nature of negotiations and start talking about alternative concepts.¹² Because of this Turkey loses the factor that mobilizes elites and society to continue with the necessary changes in the country. Moreover, conditionality does not help solve many dilemmas on the Turkish way to the EU. It is silent about many political problems (e.g. 10% threshold), ineffective when it comes to implementation, and not adjusted to the political reality in Turkey, which is characterized by internal balances between many groups in society. The other problem is the strengthening of the political character of this principle (more on this below).¹³ This shows clearly that conditionality must be modified. It is important first of all to strengthen its holistic approach in order to take into consideration the all-important issues, including the implementation of reforms. The political nature of the problems appearing within conditionality should be translated into firm rules, conditions and benchmarks that will help to define and understand the content of the conditions more clearly.¹⁴ It will be more difficult to restore the clear prospect of Turkish accession.

Brussels, 8.11.2006, Com (2006) 649, http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2006/Nov/com_649_strategy_paper_en.pdf

- 11 Cf. F. Schimmelfennig, S. Engert, H. Knobel, *Costs, Commitment and Compliance: The Impact of EU Democratic Conditionality on Latvia, Slovakia and Turkey*, "Journal of Common Market Studies", Vol. 41, No. 3, 2003, pp. 499-501.
- 12 See more: A. Szymański, *Alternatives to EU Membership. The Case of Turkey*, "The Polish Quarterly of International Affairs", 2007, no. 4, pp. 55-72.
- 13 Cf. N. Tocci, *Report, Unpacking European Discourses: Conditionality, Impact and Prejudice in EU-Turkey Relations*, in: N. Tocci (ed.), *Conditionality, Impact and Prejudice in EU-Turkey Relations*, IAI-TEPAV Report, July 2007, www.iai.it/pdf/Quaderni/Quaderni_E_9.pdf, pp.9-15.
- 14 Cf. M. Aydın, A. T. Esen, *Conditionality, Impact and Prejudices: A Concluding View from Turkey*, in: N. Tocci (ed.), *Conditionality, Impact and Prejudice in EU-Turkey Relations*, *op.cit.*, p. 132.

This is a task for EU members that are for EU membership for Turkey. They should counterbalance the position of skeptics, underlining that Turkey can be an EU member in the future (if it fulfills the Copenhagen criteria) and that the EU states have some obligations since they agreed on the candidate status of Turkey.

The capacity of the EU to absorb new member states has to be modified as well. It still lacks clear meaning. It leads to a situation that is misused by those European politicians who are against Turkish accession. Deconstruction of this principle is consequently needed. It means that some of the more objective and precise phenomena of the EU integration capacity must be defined. Until now it only concerns the proper functioning of EU institutions, budget and policies. A group of CEPS analysts propose in addition to this: the capacity of the EU goods and service markets, labor market and society to absorb new member states, as well as the Union's capacity to assure its strategic security.¹⁵ An IAI-TEPAV report proposes "to undertake an in-depth analysis of Turkey's impact on the Union, its institutions, its budget and its individual member states responding to the concerns (...)."¹⁶ The impact studies, i.e. documents assessing the impact of the accession of one country on particular EU policies that are now prepared by the European Commission are going in the right direction in this context.¹⁷ It is, moreover, important to have a dynamic approach by means of a detailed definition of the EU integration capacity. It means that it is not reasonable to discuss the question of today's integration capacity, because the accession of new member states would take place in the long perspective. In the meantime many factors change.¹⁸ This concerns first of all Turkey, which could be an EU member by 2015 at the earliest.

15 Cf. M. Emerson, S. Aydın, J. de Clerck-Sachsse, G. Noutcheva, *Just what is this 'absorption capacity' of the European Union?*, CEPS Policy Brief, No. 113, September 2006, http://shop.ceps.be/BookDetail.php?item_id=1381, pp. 9-10.

16 Cf. M. Aydın, A. T. Esen, *Conditionality, Impact and Prejudices*, *op.cit.*, p. 134.

17 In the case of Turkey the Commission has prepared a report on energy supplies. Cf. *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council. Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2007-2008*, Brussels 6.11.2007, COM (2007) 663 final, http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2007/nov/strategy_paper_en.pdf, p.12.

18 Cf. M. Emerson, S. Aydın, J. de Clerck-Sachsse, G. Noutcheva, *Just what is this 'absorption capacity' of the European Union?*, *op.cit.*, p. 11.

THE POLITICAL DIMENSION

The second group of obstacles from the European side on the Turkish way to the EU are of political nature. Politicians from some member states skeptical about Turkish EU accession (France and Austria among others) have misused the Turkish case to achieve political goals going far beyond blocking the entry of this state. It is noticeable both in the case of the pre-accession process and accession negotiations and that of the national or European Parliament elections.

The principles and rules of the EU enlargement strategy and the Negotiating Framework for Turkey are being misused.¹⁹ This concerns the conditionality analyzed above and the EU's integration capacity, which have consequently become politicized. About the first case Nathalie Tocci wrote as follows: "the interests and views of several member states have led to internal EU pushes to 'condition' Turkey's accession process to obligations relating to Armenia, the Aegean and Cyprus."²⁰ The preparation of the report of the European Parliament on Turkish progress on the way to the EU in 2006 (Camiel Eurlings report) shows this phenomenon best. During work on the final version of the report in the Foreign Affairs Committee, the Belgian deputy Veronique De Keyser wanted to introduce a clause that would state that recognition by Turkey of the Armenian massacre as a genocide is a requirement for becoming an EU member. Giorgos Dimitrakopoulos - a deputy from Greece - insisted on mentioning the obligation of Turkey to recognize the genocide not only of Armenians, but also Pontic Greeks.²¹ Some EU states focus selectively on internal Turkish problems. They emphasize the problem of article 301 of the penal code and the need for protection of the rights of women and religious minorities, but forget to talk about economic problems or rights of Muslim minorities.²² The principle of conditionality is also misused in the case of the Negotiating Framework for Turkey. France, for instance, is using the mechanism of *benchmarks*

19 See more: *Negotiating Framework for Turkey*, www.europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/docs/pdf/st20002_en05_TR_framedoc.pdf

20 N. Tocci, *Report, Unpacking European Discourses*, *op.cit.*, p. 14.

21 Cf. *Amendments 1-343. Draft Report Camiel Eurlings, Turkey's Progress towards accession (2006/2118(INI))*, 4.7.2006, <http://jmp.iku.edu.tr/European%20Parliament-Ammendments%20on%20Draft%20Report%20on%20Turkey-July%202006.pdf>, pp. 28 and 48.

22 Cf. N. Tocci, *Report, Unpacking European Discourses*, *op.cit.*, p. 14.

- requirements for opening and closure of negotiation chapters - to block the opening of some chapters and progress on the Turkish way to the EU. For instance, it proposed to set as a condition for closing the chapter "Science and Research" the introduction of the fulfillment of the Copenhagen criteria into the EU's negotiating position. Then France had objections concerning economic and monetary policy and this chapter has provisionally not been closed.²³

There is the same problem concerning the EU absorption/integration capacity. The EU member states skeptical about Turkish accession treat it as an absolute priority and do not take into consideration the other side of the coin underlined in the EU enlargement strategy, i.e. the geopolitical significance of the process. One effect of the policy of their representatives is for instance the report on EU enlargement (Elmar Brok report) adopted by the European Parliament in 2008. Integration capacity is present in almost every paragraph of the text.²⁴ It is a useful tool that helps European politicians block the accession process of Turkey and other candidate countries. The principle of integration capacity is used "to erect seemingly 'objective' barriers to integration, primarily with Turkey"²⁵, instead of facing challenges connected with internal political problems in EU countries that the Turkish case raises among electorates. "In other words, instead of paving the way for an informed, rational debate by providing facts and balanced arguments on Turkey's accession, most of the EU leaders have so far played into the misinformed public fears of Turkey's membership."²⁶

This opinion points out the essential problem of the policy of some EU member states towards Turkish accession. It is noticeable that the internal situation in countries like France, Austria or Germany influences the attitude of their governments to this issue. They formulate and conduct policy towards the EU membership of Turkey with an eye to their own socio-economic problems. They have used such issues as the problem of building a multicultural society and integration of

23 Cf. H. de Breson, P. Ridet, *Bruxelles attend les choix de M. Sarkozy sur la Turquie*, "Le Monde", 24.05.2007.

24 See more: *European Parliament resolution of 10 July 2008 on the Commission's 2007 enlargement strategy paper*, 10 July 2008, www.europarl.europa.eu

25 S. A. Düzgüt, H. Altınay, S. Benhabib, C. Özdemir, J-F. Leguil-Bayart, *Seeing Kant in the EU's Relations with Turkey*, TESEV, İstanbul, December 2006, p. 13.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

minorities, criminality and unemployment, to create Islamophobia or xenophobia within their own societies (see more below).²⁷ It is very difficult to force European political elites to “disentangle the question of Turkey’s accession from the fear of Muslim immigration”²⁸ which is recommended by some analysts and scholars.

These phobias are exploited by politicians when EU membership for Turkey is at issue. This is very clear, especially when it comes to elections. In the presidential election campaign in France in April-May 2007 the Turkish issue was one of the main election topics. It was used first of all by Nicolas Sarkozy to gain support from the French electorate, with its negative attitude towards Muslim immigrants.²⁹ Immigration fears and their impact on the labor market were the main issues forming the negative attitude to EU membership in the parliamentary election campaign in Austria in September 2008. The Austrian People’s Party (ÖVP), one of the two main parties in this country, linked the negative attitude to EU membership for Turkey to the problem of safe borders and limiting migration of workers. The Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) was more radical. It played on the xenophobic feelings of citizens in its election manifesto, underlining that there were too many foreigners in Austria and then that Turkey was an alien body to Europe.³⁰

What can be done in this situation? First, the “sizable and vocal pro-Turkey coalition in Europe”³¹ consisting of such EU countries as the United Kingdom, Sweden or Poland should counteract the use of the Turkish case by some other member states. Actions against the

27 Cf. G. Austin, K. Parker, *The Mono-cultural Delusion: Turkey and Migration Politics*, in: S. Twigg, S. Schaefer, G. Austin, K. Parker, *Turks in Europe: Why are we afraid?*, The Foreign Policy Centre, London, September 2005, pp.28-42.

28 Cf. A. R. Jimenez, *Tackling Turkey’s Image Problem in the European Union*, Policy Watch #1367, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 30 April 2008, www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateCO5.php?CID=2820

29 Cf. A. Szeptycki, *Problematyka międzynarodowa w kampanii wyborczej we Francji (International Issues in the Election Campaign in France)*, “Polski Przegląd Dyplomatyczny” (Polish Diplomatic Review), 2007, no. 3, pp. 56-60.

30 Cf. *Neustart für Österreich*, www.oevp.at/Common/Downloads/Wahlprogramm_innen_Ansicht.pdf, p. 22; *Österreich im Wort*, www.fpoe.at/fileadmin/Contentpool/Portal/wahl08/FP_-Wahlprogramm_NRW08.pdf

31 Z. Öniş, *Turkey’s encounters with the new Europe: multiple transformations, inherent dilemmas and the challenges ahead*, “Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans” 2006, no. 3, p. 297.

last French initiatives show that it is possible. The above-mentioned committee of wise men will not be working on the issues of Turkish accession or the borders of Europe (at least it should not do so). The Mediterranean Union was in the end replaced by the concept of a Union for the Mediterranean, which should give new life to the Barcelona Process.³² France was also not successful in deleting the word “accession” from official documents concerning Turkey (e.g. the common position of the Association Council).³³ The pro-Turkey forces should also be more active in the political debate on Turkey at the European level. They can introduce to the discussion more balanced arguments on Turkish accession based on pure facts, instead of presenting poorly justified, exaggerated opinions for which counter-arguments can be easily found (like in the case of the “bridge role”).³⁴

It is very difficult to give any recommendations regarding the use of internal social and economic problems to oppose Turkish aspirations, because here it is all about changes in the economic and social policy of EU countries. It is easy to underline the importance of more interest in EU countries in demographic change, but it is difficult to implement this kind of policy.³⁵ However, something can be done e.g. in the case of the migration problem. The European governments should pay more attention to the “ideology of migration”. They should promote more the virtues of migration like it has been done in the USA, Canada or Australia. More attention to this ideology should mean posing the question of whether migration is good or bad and what should be the principles of a country’s integration policy. Normalization of cultural diversity should also take place within the European ideology of migration.³⁶ It is connected with the need for the EU to promote the concept of citizenship based on multiple identity.

32 See more: *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council. Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean*, Com (2008) 319 (Final), Brussels 20/05/08, http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/euro-med/com08_319_en.pdf

33 Cf. S. Kohen, *Yeni AB belgesi ile yola devam*, “Milliyet”, 28.05.2008, www.milliyet.com.tr/Default.aspx?aType=YazarDetay&ArticleID=760052&AuthorID=58&Date=28.05.2008

34 See more: A. Giannakopoulos, K. Maras, *Der Europäische Türkei-Diskurs: Eine Vergleichsanalyse*, in: A. Giannakopoulos, K. Maras (Hrsg.), *Die Türkei-Debatte in Europa. Ein Vergleich*, VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, Wiesbaden 2005, pp. 218-224.

35 Cf. Austin, K. Parker, *The Mono-cultural Delusion*, op.cit., p. 44.

36 Ibid., pp.35-37 and 44-45.

THE SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSION

The third, socio-psychological factor, connected with other dimensions, seems to be the most important obstacle to be overcome. The key issue here is the negative attitude of the public opinion of many EU countries towards Turkish accession, based very often on prejudices and stereotypes. Results of Eurobarometer survey 66 done in September-October 2006 show that 87% of Austrians, 78% of Germans and 77% of Luxembourg citizens are against Turkish accession. According to FT/Harris of June 2007 big majorities of French (71%) and German (66%) adults said no to EU membership for Turkey.³⁷ It is a huge problem, because EU citizens have more and more to say on the continuation of EU enlargement. A direct influence on that process is possible, due to the principle of communication included in the new enlargement strategy. It says that European citizens must be informed and consulted about EU enlargement policy.³⁸ There will also be referenda, especially on EU membership for Turkey in some countries (e.g. France, Austria). European public opinion also has an impact on the prospects of EU membership for Turkey and other countries by influencing the decision of politicians, also regarding the future of the EU. It is important to remember that public opinion is a potential electorate and its point of view is taken into consideration to gain support. That is why this socio-psychological factor is so important.

The question is why so many European citizens do not want Turkey in the EU. There are many reasons for this phenomenon, but the main one lies in their heads. Generally speaking European citizens have an oversimplified view of Turkey, one that, additionally, is based on stereotypes and prejudices. It is one shaped first of all (if not exclusively) by different media that show only a part of the picture. An example is the Polish TV and press. On television, like in Western channels, "Turkey means minarets, headscarves and the Bosphorus Bridge."³⁹ People treat Turkey as a typical Muslim country, because

37 Data: *Standard Eurobarometer 66*, Autumn 2006, http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb66/eb66_en.pdf, p. 401; *Many European Adults Believe that the European Union Should Not Take in New Members*, The Harris Poll® #59, June 20, 2007, www.harrisinteractive.com/harris_poll/index.asp?PID=775

38 Cf. *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council. EU Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2006 – 2007*, op.cit.

39 Katinka Barysch here quotes Paul Taylor, *Reuter's European affairs editor: K. Barysch, What Europeans Think About Turkey and Why?*, Briefing Note,

they do not see e.g. Atatürk's Mausoleum or things proving that Turkey is a secular state. That is why they often do not see any difference between Turks and Arabs. "The otherness" of Turkey is emphasized in media reports by showing oriental, "Eastern" aspects of the country that can hardly be seen in Europe. Media very rarely show e.g. the modern parts of Turkish cities. People in Europe see differences, not similarities, then and start thinking of Turkey as a country that does not belong to Europe. Moreover, Polish press articles on this country are dominated by negative issues such as terrorist activities, political assassinations, army interventions or human rights abuses. Because of all this Polish citizens have the impression that Turkey is some kind of Islamic religious state and a military dictatorship at the same time. It is influenced by the phenomenon that in the European education system values prevail over interests in the assessment of a country.

The image of Turkey, full of prejudices and stereotypes, is of course also created by the above-mentioned European politicians from such countries as Austria, Germany or France who misuse the Turkish case for their political benefit. Because of their policy people believe that Turkish accession would certainly mean unemployment because of the migration of millions of Turks, too much public money going on the EU budget, the end of the EU (which would be no more than a free trade area) or an EU with Turkish-dominated institutions, the end of European identity and culture, the Islamization of Europe, the development of an Islamic fundamentalism associated solely with terrorism and an unstable neighborhood.⁴⁰ European citizens are convinced by politicians who are against EU membership for Turkey, because their arguments concern immediate and personal issues: loss of jobs, security or threats to national culture. The pro-Turkey camp presents benefits that are "strategic, long term and rather abstract: economic growth, a stronger EU foreign policy, energy security."⁴¹

The most important thing that must be done to change this situation is to prepare and implement a new communication and information strategy for the EU countries – both old and new ones, "pros"

Centre for European Reform, September 2007, www.cer.org.uk/pdf/essay_turkey_barysch_25sept07.pdf, p. 1.

40 See more: C. Aktar, *Cliches Against Turkey's EU Membership*, "Zeitschrift für Türkeistudien", 1+2(2003), pp. 259-266.

41 K. Barysch, *What Europeans Think About Turkey...*, *op.cit.*, p. 2.

and “cons”. It is first of all a task for Turkey, but it needs cooperation with Europeans, on the one hand NGOs (including think tanks), media and academicians – supported by governments that are often under pressure from civil society, and on the other hand – the European Commission. The Commission can actually be co-designer of the project. The main principle of this new strategy should be diversification. It means, firstly, that it must be tailored to each EU country individually and secondly, that it should provide for different means and actions for elites and for ordinary citizens. When it comes to the first issue, each EU country actually needs a different strategy to be convinced about Turkey. This is because of the different interests as well as perceptions of Turkey and Europe itself in these states. Different approaches are needed in the case of countries for which the Turkish issue is part of the debate on national identity politics (e.g. France, Germany, Austria, Denmark) and for EU states whose debate on this problem has little or nothing to do with Turkey (e.g. the United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, Finland, Sweden, Poland or Slovenia). Different arguments must be used in the case of countries that have close contact with Turkey or Turkish issues due to geographical proximity (e.g. Greece), existence of big Turkish or other Muslim immigrant communities (e.g. Germany) as well as minorities influencing the debate on Turkey (e.g. Armenians in France) or developed socio-economic relations (e.g. Germany or the United Kingdom) and countries that have less to do with Turkey (e.g. Poland or Finland). The same differentiated approach must be applied in EU countries that see the Union through the lens of domestic policy (e.g. Germany or France) or foreign and security affairs (e.g. United Kingdom or Poland).⁴²

Both European elites and ordinary citizens need more general information about Turkey. It is necessary to enable them to develop their knowledge of this country and to see the full picture of Turkey. First of all they have to find out that this country is not black and white and that all of its aspects are very complex. There is no one Turkey (the western and eastern parts are completely different) or one Turkish Islam or nationalism each of which has its own specific character anyway. There are many divisions in Turkish society that are complex as well. In this context talking nowadays about the confrontation between Islamic and secular circles is also a simplification (although sometimes unavoidable). Turkish identity has different di-

42 Cf. N. Tocci, *Report, Unpacking European Discourses, op.cit.*, pp. 25-28.

mensions as well. It has its Western and Eastern aspect, which is hard for Europeans to understand.⁴³

Apart from general knowledge about Turkey, the new communication and information strategy should focus on different EU-related issues and introduce them into the European debate about Turkey. First, it must present not only difficulties on the Turkish way to the EU, but also the advantages of Turkey as a Union member (but without the populist slogans) – first of all in areas of the economy, security or foreign policy. It should explain to European citizens that although they are long-term and abstract, they do matter for their lives. Sometimes it requires the explanation of the EU itself or of certain political processes. For instance, it is necessary to present such issues as the need for the diversification of supplies of energy resources to European countries in order to show the role of Turkey as an energy hub. The positive sides of the whole process of EU enlargement must be underlined as well in order to fight against the “enlargement fatigue” that influences the Turkish case. The geopolitical factor, very important in previous enlargement rounds, starting with Greece in 1981, must be more visible and certainly not dimmed by the previously-mentioned integration capacity of the EU.

Second, as was repeated many times in different debates, Europeans should be aware of the possible consequences of leaving Turkey and other candidate countries outside the EU. They must have the opportunity to compare the alternative scenarios, not just to see the impact of accession. Europeans must know more about the negative consequences of an EU enlargement blockade, including the threat to the Union’s credibility.

Third, it is important to show (also by governments) the real picture of the last EU enlargements in 2004 and 2007 and their impact on the Union as well as on member states. A distorted picture of this last round of enlargement has a negative influence, especially on Turkish membership prospects. It is necessary to explain to the citizens of such countries as Austria especially that the accession of the 10+2 countries brought benefits to the Austrian economy. The actions of the government of Wolfgang Schüssel, which after 2004 pointed out the export surplus of 1.5 billion Euro and 60,000 new jobs, went in the right direction, but they must be continued for a long period.⁴⁴

43 See more: A. Szymański, *Turcja a tożsamość europejska...*, *op.cit.*, pp.145-161.

44 Cf. *Stenographisches Protokoll. 58. Sitzung des Nationalrates der Republik Öster-*

There are different tools that can be used to meet the above-mentioned objectives. When it comes to general knowledge about Turkey, the best way to spread it among the European public is to organize cultural events that will be attractive and appeal to people. It can be film shows or book fairs (like in Frankfurt last year where Turkey was a special guest) that would familiarize Europeans with a real Turkey. It can also be music and drama festivals or painting exhibitions that would prove that there are many similarities between Turkish and European art. Not only Turkish, but also European NGOs and media can play a vital role here. The Turkish side can initiate some events, but very often civil society organizations in European countries are able to carry them out, because they are on the spot, know the people better and can access many different measures. Turkey can also be explained by European media, with the help of feature articles or TV documentaries. All these should be confidence-building measures. Europeans must be willing to be convinced and a real picture of Turkey can help in that case. It would enable European citizens to see that “the others” are at the same time “we”, in some areas at least. Trying to learn about other cultures used to be one of the principles that determined the actions of Europeans.

When it comes to European elites, other tools can be effective as well. The task for scholars – especially European (Turkish researchers have more limited access) – is to work on deep analysis of Turkey-EU relations. It is precisely researchers and analysts, following the rules of objectivity and scientific rigor, who can prepare studies or realize projects that can shed new light on the arguments presented in the European debate on Turkey, e.g. presenting the above-mentioned scenarios of an EU without Turkey. The condition for their effective influence is that the research or analyses will include some practical recommendations and reach European elites. It can be done e.g. by organizing seminars and meetings (by universities or think tanks), directed at these elites, which will not just be more conferences on Turkey-EU relations. European media and civil society organizations can also help to disseminate the results of studies to the public – by using a different idiom and type of text (e.g. summaries). When it comes to Turkish and European NGOs, they too can try to organize some visits to Turkey to show the issues important for Turkey-EU

reich, XXII. Gesetzgebungsperiode, Mittwoch, 5. Mai 2004, www.parlament.gv.at/pls/portal/docs/page/PG/DE/XXII/NRSITZ/NRSITZ_00058/fname_021013.pdf, p. 48.

relations. The European side can invite representatives of Turkish elites who will be listened to by the European public, e.g. famous artists, sportsmen or scholars. There are such initiatives, but more has to be done.

CONCLUSIONS

The European Union and its member states have a lot of work to do to eliminate hurdles on the Turkish way to the EU, as well as that of other candidate countries. Some of the Union's problems concern the enlargement process directly (e.g. an imperfect EU enlargement strategy). However, a lot of them are essentially EU dilemmas that are simply more visible in the context of the Union's enlargement, especially as regards Turkey. The Turkish case gives a clear signal to Europeans that they must talk about *finalité politique* and carry out some reforms on the EU level as well as revise many aspects of their economic and social policies on the national level.

The key issue is to change the negative attitude of European public opinion towards EU membership for Turkey and the entire process of EU enlargement. It itself is a huge problem as it has a lot to do with the fears of European citizens regarding different processes in Europe. Additionally, it also has an impact on other EU dilemmas - in the formal and normative or political dimensions. There are some solutions to European problems in the area analysed, although their implementation would be very difficult and possible only in the long term. A vital role should be played here by different groups in the member states (and Turkey itself), depending on the problem. In the most important socio-psychological dimension the key role must be played by European and Turkish civil society organizations - NGOs, media or academicians.

THE CZECH EU PRESIDENCY AND TURKEY: IS MORE THAN THE MINIMUM POSSIBLE?

DAVID KRÁL

In January 2009 the Czech Republic assumed its first ever presidency over the EU Council. Big expectations and big concerns are being attached to how the Czech Republic will tackle its role of EU leader. The Czech presidency comes at a time when the world economy is in the turmoil of a global economic crisis. EU external relations are challenged in areas such as the resurgence of Russia at its Eastern border, strained relations with China and the new US administration taking over the leadership of the United States, the most important strategic ally and partner of the European Union.

In the midst of this, the EU is striving – though painfully enough – to complete its process of internal reform by pushing ahead for the continuing ratification of the Lisbon Treaty. At the same time it is carrying on with its most ambitious foreign policy tool – EU enlargement. All these issues are to a large extent interlinked with the aspirations of Turkey to negotiate its membership in the European Union – the issue that the Czech government and its diplomats, whether they like it or not, will have to address while leading the EU through these turbulent times.

In this chapter we argue that despite the generally pro-enlargement drive of the current centre-right Czech government, one should not have too high expectations about EU enlargement in general and

Turkey in particular. The relative lack of mutual interest on the part of Turkey and the Czech Republic however, should not be used as an excuse for inaction on many fronts where, despite the expected lack of progress in the accession talks, the two parties have converging or possibly overlapping interests. The Czech leadership could be more creative in envisaging different ways in which Turkey should be engaged. This in turn could have positive implications for the future of the accession process as such and contribute to renewed confidence between Turkey and the EU in the long run.

GOOD WILL STRIKING THE WRONG NOTE?

An account of Czech external relations priorities for its EU presidency has to start with underlining the strong commitment of the current Czech government to carry on with EU enlargement. The overall motto of the presidency - 'Europe without barriers' - implies the need not only for internal openness (in the sense of completion of the internal market and liberal intra-European economic space, including removal of existing barriers), but also for outward openness. This also includes the continuing process of EU enlargement and a more pro-active role for Europe on the world stage. Enlargement is singled out among the foreign policy priorities of the Presidency, included under its third priority area - 'Europe in the World'.

Also, the Czech government does not formally differentiate between countries in line for membership, attaching strong value to the conditionality principle ('those who meet the criteria should be admitted'), although from the official statements of key politicians it can be deduced that somewhat stronger emphasis is put on the accelerated accession of the Western Balkan countries and especially Croatia. All this seems to be good news for Turkey, and the expectations from the Czech presidency could thus be relatively high. This is even more since the Czech presidency will be followed by Sweden, a big supporter of the European aspirations of Turkey.

Czech public opinion still backs EU enlargement quite strongly, with 62% of the population supporting it according to the latest Eurobarometer poll. Although one has to be cautious about its decreasing tendency, the drop is not strong enough yet to suggest that the trend is reversing. All the major political parties strongly favour continuing enlargement of the EU, although with different degrees of enthusiasm, but again are unlikely to make a U-turn in the near future.

What hampers Czech determination to put enlargement at the heart of the EU foreign policy agenda is the uncertain fate of the Lisbon Treaty. For the Czech Republic this situation is even more precarious, as the ratification process has not been completed yet with another constitutional review pending and the President's signature missing. To anyone closely following developments at the EU level the link between the Treaty's fate and the future of enlargement cannot be more evident. The failure to have a clear vision of whether the Treaty can be adopted will hamper any substantial progress on the EU enlargement front. The French president Nicolas Sarkozy when negotiating with the Czech Prime Minister Topolánek bluntly suggested that, without the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty in the Czech Republic, he would not back further expansion of the Union. This point has been recently reiterated by other senior EU figures, including the (now former) President of the European Parliament Hans Gert Pöttering. Although the Czech government refuses a trade-off between the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty and the continuation of the enlargement process, the reality of the current EU is such that it will eventually be a trade-off.

Moreover, in the first days of the Presidency, the Czechs were faced with arguably more pressing issues in the foreign policy arena than enlargement – the Gaza conflict and the gas crisis. This has consumed much Czech political and diplomatic energy. It seems as if among foreign policy priorities, enlargement is giving way to much more pressing issues and to crisis management rather than long-term strategic thinking. Eastern partnership, relations with Russia and getting the US on board for the Copenhagen global climate change summit seem to top the Czech agenda now.

Selling enlargement will be more difficult to a public opinion already quite sceptical in EU-15, one that can be further alienated by the bad shape of the European economy and the impact of the global economic crisis, surrounded by uncertainty as to when we will hit bottom. The controversy that surrounds Treaty ratification in the Czech parliament,¹ and even more so the openly hostile attitude of

1 The Senate (upper Chamber of the Czech Parliament) referred the Treaty for review of compatibility with the Czech Constitution. In November 2008 the Court ruled that the Treaty is fully compatible with the Constitution on the six points raised by the Senate. However, the opposition from some ODS senators remains quite strong, and they might try to relaunch the case on other points. Furthermore, President Klaus signaled that he would not sign the Treaty before the positive outcome of a referendum is secured in Ireland.

the country's President Václav Klaus are likely to deprive the Czech leadership of the necessary leverage to push for a more ambitious and robust enlargement policy in the next half year, despite the fact that it could be backed by many of the EU governments. This is coupled with the lame duck leadership of the outgoing European Commission, which is unlikely to be a decisive driving force for enlargement in the coming months. Thus, Czech politicians find themselves in a strange dilemma when they generally strongly support EU enlargement, but at the same time a strong part of the political class is considerably opposed to the Treaty that should pave the way for it. A more articulate and visible determination to achieve Lisbon Treaty ratification would be highly desirable if the ambitions of the Czech presidency in the area of EU enlargement are not to be in vain.

IS TURKEY RELEVANT TO THE AGENDA OF THE PRESIDENCY?

For Czech policy makers, Turkish accession is still a rather haphazard issue in which they do not seem to have any vested interest, apart from having general pro-enlargement attitudes. Bilateral relations are not strained by any particular controversies. This has a both positive and negative impact on the potential for closer cooperation during the EU presidency. On the one hand, there is nothing that would hamper potential progress (both in terms of accession negotiations and EU-Turkey co-operation in areas such as foreign policy or energy). On the other hand, there are no strong stakes and incentives on either side.

In the past few years the Czech Republic and Turkey have enjoyed flourishing economic relations. Turkey is a priority country for Czech exports. The turnout of mutual trade exceeded 1.5 billion USD in 2007², keeping Turkey among the top 20 trading partners, which reflects the size of the Turkish economy in the global context. Still, many economists argue that mutual economic relations are below their potential. It seems that for the highly export oriented Czech economy Turkey represents a potentially very interesting market, especially if the traditional West European markets (especially Germany) continue to be hit by the current economic crisis. The gradual progress of the crisis from the West to the East is, however, already hitting Turkey more seriously than many would have thought some

2 <http://www.businessinfo.cz/cz/sti/turecko-obchodni-a-ekonomicka-spoluprace-s-cr/7/1000802/>

months ago. Economic growth in Turkey might drop below 2 per cent in 2009, as the OECD has warned³. It is doubtful whether under these conditions Turkey can substitute for vast Western European markets for Czech exporters at short notice.

The big economic players, especially the majority state-owned company ČEZ (Czech Power Company) is looking for possibilities of further expansion into the Turkish energy market, after some acquisitions that have already been made by ČEZ⁴ and which are a logical geographical way of expansion for this company, focused as it has been in recent years on the Balkans and Eastern Europe⁵. This can have implications even at a political level, especially in the area of energy diversification and security, in which both the Czech Republic and the majority state-owned ČEZ have strong stakes. Businesses, and especially exporters, are becoming stronger political stakeholders on the Czech scene, as their co-ordinated push in the course of 2008 for a swift adoption of the Euro has shown, and it will be interesting to see whether businesses can potentially prove to be the major driving force towards more intensive relations with Turkey and the main advocates of Turkish EU accession in the future.

Speaking in political terms, Turkey is very much a non-issue in the current Czech discourse. The emotional arguments common in other EU countries relating to cultural differences or historical grievances are largely missing, or used only occasionally by individual politicians rather than parties or major political forces, and by some organizations that do not represent mainstream discourse. There is no important Turkish minority in the Czech Republic feeding into debate as there is in some neighbouring countries, notably Germany and Austria, nor a significant Muslim minority such as fuels public debate in countries such as France or the Netherlands. As a Czech 'national' discourse on Turkey is non-existent or strongly underdeveloped, political actors tend to follow arguments already present in other countries, most importantly in the neighbouring countries – Germany and Austria.

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- 3 Today's Zaman: Turkey's Economic Growth will Drop Below Two Percent, OEDC Warns, 3 February 2009, <http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/detaylar.do?load=detay&link=159810>
 - 4 In February 2009 CEZ will acquire one of the electricity distribution networks in Turkey, after takeover of the formerly state-owned SEDAS company. This will be the biggest Czech investment in Turkey to date.
 - 5 Acquisitions include investments in Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Turkey

At a political level, however, the ODS-led government has been sending rather strong signals to Turkey. During an official visit to Ankara in October 2008 prime minister Topolánek fully endorsed Turkish aspirations to join the EU, claiming that the Czech Republic is 'supporting Turkish membership in the EU unconditionally, not being in favour of any kind of substitutive membership, second class membership, privileged partnership or different programmes in the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean or other instruments'⁶. During his meeting with Ali Babacan in November 2008 Karel Schwarzenberg, the foreign minister, highlighted that the Czech Republic would like to speed up the negotiation process and open at least two other negotiating chapters during its Presidency.⁷ On the other hand, due to the low intensity of mutual relations and the lack of genuine interest in the Turkish issue, the Czech Republic is rather unlikely to achieve a major breakthrough in the sense of unfreezing the eight key internal market chapters in EU-Turkey accession talks. Its leverage to facilitate a deal on the solution to the Cyprus problem, which is the major pre-condition for unblocking the current negotiation deadlock on these issues, is very limited, and it is not a government priority. Likewise, the Czech leadership seems to have no leverage on France's continuing to oppose the opening of those chapters that, in the French view, imply full-fledged Turkish membership of the EU. It also remains questionable to what extent the rhetoric of the current government reflects the reality of what seems to be a general political consensus on Turkey. It can be argued that the Czech attitude to Turkey is more complex. At first glance there is a large degree of alignment among the mainstream political parties in support of Turkish accession. The only notable exception is the junior partner in the government - the Christian Democrats (KDU-ČSL). Although they were never outspokenly against Turkish membership, when the negotiation framework between the EU and Turkey was agreed in 2005 they pushed the government to allow a clause confirming the open-ended nature of the accession negotiations, with no ultimate guarantee of accession⁸.

6 <http://www.vlada.cz/cz/media-centrum/aktualne/premier-m--topolanek-v-turecke-ankare-podporil-vstup-turecka-do-evropske-unie-43090/>

7 http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/tema/index_view.php?id=342892&id_seznam=49

8 Král, Kazmierkiewicz: 'Turkey and Ukraine: Wanted or Not? Central European Reflections of Their EU Membership Perspectives', page 18. EU-ROPEUM Institute for European Policy, 2006.

The most important variable is how the two major parties – the ODS and ČSSD – view the prospect of Turkish accession in relation to internal developments under way in the EU in relation to progress towards closer political integration. At the moment, they both support Turkey in its efforts to join the EU. The tricky thing about this consensus is that the motives and calculations underpinning their thinking are rather different, if not completely opposed. To illustrate – the ODS supports Turkey for a number of reasons, one of them being a strong role for Turkey in NATO that could lead to better EU-NATO co-operation and a strengthening of the Atlantic element in ESDP. For the Social Democrats, who are in the long run much more in favour of a stronger ESDP independent of NATO (or at least the US), strengthening the links to NATO through Turkish accession to the EU does not necessarily have to be a strong incentive. Some members of ODS (for instance Jan Zahradil, ODS leader in the European Parliament) believe that the accession of Turkey will lead the EU to change priorities in budgetary spending and to revise its most costly policies, such as the CAP, as with Turkey on board it will not be sustainable according to the current system⁹.

While the ČSSD is in principle positive towards some changes in EU expenditure like cutting agricultural subsidies, in the long run it is not in favour of reducing the European budget, which in the event of Turkish accession might be an option pursued by many EU countries not willing to pay too much for Turkey. Many people in the ODS tend to see that with Turkey on board it will be more difficult to proceed quickly with building a stronger, more political or perhaps even federal Europe. They also see Turkey as a potential ally in balancing the dominant role of the Franco-German tandem. The ČSSD is in the long run interested in building a strong political Europe and should the potential Turkish accession to the EU hamper this aim, it might be faced with a dilemma. I would think that the Social Democrats would rather opt for a stronger, politically integrated Europe.

The current ČSSD leadership also seems to be more liable to sway with public opinion on many controversial issues. In terms of public perceptions, and despite the generally strong pro-enlargement sentiments in the Czech society, Turkey is definitely not the most favoured country for a future expansion of the Union. According to Eurobarometer 66 (published in the autumn of 2006), only 30% of Czechs support the accession of Turkey. This puts the Czech Re-

9 Ibid, pg. 25

public slightly above the EU-25 average (with 28% support). But it also makes Czech public opinion converge with attitudes in Western Europe rather than in some other new EU member states which exhibit significantly higher support (e.g. 43% in Slovenia, 40% in Poland, 39% in Hungary or 35% in Lithuania). The analysis of public opinion further shows that Turkish membership tends to be more supported by younger people, by voters of right wing parties as well as people holding executive or managerial positions, while left-wing voters tend to be more opposed¹⁰. Should public attitudes remain the same and public opinion remains without substantive shifts, the attitude of the Social Democratic party will probably be much more lukewarm about the prospect of Turkish accession.

It looks as if the Czech presidency of the EU will not take a strong lead on Turkey during its half year of glory. Still, there should be greater exploration of how there can be more interest taken in Turkey during the Czech presidency, not because of the accession process itself but because of other potential issues that are going to feature high in the Czech presidency's programme. There are at least three areas of external action among Czech priorities for an EU where Turkey is potentially a strong stakeholder and partner: the energy policy of the EU, improving NATO and EU relations and EU policy towards countries and regions bearing a high strategic and security importance for Turkey. Looking more closely at the possible overlaps and convergence of interests of the Czech Republic (as the presidency country) and Turkey might provide some guidance for building mutually beneficial co-operation and engagement, despite the stalemate in the accession process.

ENERGY: TURKEY AS A DIFFICULT BUT INDISPENSABLE PARTNER?

One area where the Czech Republic should certainly engage strongly with Turkey is energy security. The bitter experience of the Ukrainian - Russian gas dispute of January 2009 has shown how much Europe is vulnerable to external pressures, and that it can easily find itself a hostage to disputes among countries outside the EU.

¹⁰ Eurobarometer 66, National report for the Czech Republic, published in autumn 2006. It is interesting to see that the support for Turkey goes hand in hand with support for e.g. the Lisbon Treaty (it is mostly supported by the same kind of social groups, except that in the latter case it doesn't correlate with the positions of the parties they vote for).

This bitter experience, however, has its positive sides too. It plays well into the plans of Prime Minister Topolánek in his attempts to create a European framework for external energy supplies and securing new transportation routes for natural gas and oil from the Caspian Basin and potentially also from Central Asia and other areas. The long-term goal of the Czech Republic is to limit European dependence on supplies of both key energy commodities from Russia, with the underlying assumption that the current Russian leadership is too prone to use energy as a political weapon. Some people in the Czech government believe that the whole dispute of January 2009 was primarily about discrediting the Ukraine in the EU and undermining the new initiatives that the Czech Presidency is planning to launch ceremonially, such as the Eastern partnership. Moreover, the similar 'accident' of the short interruption of supplies from Russia through the 'Friendship' pipeline in July 2008 just after the Czech Republic signed a missile defence treaty with the United States confirmed many senior figures in the current Czech administration in their view of the enduring policy of the Kremlin of using its control of energy resources for political ends. For this, the question of finding viable supply and transportation alternatives as well as developing a more consensual approach and solidarity at the EU level to diversification of external supplies of strategic forms of energy becomes a top priority for the Czech government in the EU presidency¹¹.

After the bilateral deal between Germany and Russia on the North Stream pipeline that was heavily criticised particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, much of the debates now focus on the so-called Southern Energy Corridor. The Czech Republic now faces two competing projects in the EU aimed at securing the southern transportation route of Central Asian and Caspian gas to the EU. One of them is the Russian-backed South Stream initiative, aiming at bringing natural gas from Central Asia and Russia under the Black Sea to Bulgaria and then further to Greece and Italy, with a northward extension to Serbia, Hungary and Austria. This project is a Russian initiative, resulting from bilateral negotiations between Russia and the countries through which the new pipeline is to run (Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary, Austria, with possible extensions to Greece and Italy).

11 For a further reference, see for instance the speech of PM Topolánek at the Nabucco Summit in Budapest, January 2009: <http://www.eu2009.cz/en/news-and-documents/speeches-interviews/speech-by-mirek-topolanek-at-nabucco-summit-7778/>

The other project is the Nabucco pipeline, developed and supported by the EU (under the Trans-European Energy Network programme), which would bring natural gas from the Trans-Caspian gas pipeline via Turkey to Europe. For obvious reasons, the South Stream project is rejected by the current Czech government. The main grounds on which the Czechs oppose it is that it uses the 'divide and rule' tactics of the Kremlin to kill the nascent energy security consensus among EU member states, to continue making bilateral deals as in case of the North Stream and to enhance its political presence in the Black Sea region, exerting more pressure on those countries that might want to look to Brussels rather than to Moscow.

For political reasons the Czechs tend to favour the Nabucco project because it is aimed at limiting European dependence on Russia in both source and transportation. The Czech support for Nabucco is, however, currently hampered by several factors. Unlike the South Stream, where Russia has secured the sources to fill the pipeline with enough natural gas from Central Asian countries through contracts with individual source countries, no such supplies have been secured for Nabucco except for Azerbaijan, and these are not going to suffice in the medium to long term. Although there are various possibilities of involving other source countries, many of them have not been welcomed enthusiastically in Europe, or have met with outright refusal. For instance Iran expressed interest as a potential supplier but Europe did not take this offer up because of the strong opposition from the United States. Moreover, the recent negotiations on Nabucco showed the lukewarm attitude of Turkmenistan towards the whole project, as Turkmenistan sees it also as too political since it tries to bypass Russia, something which was clearly articulated during the recent visit of Turkmen president Karimov to Bulgaria¹².

Where does Turkey come into play in the case of the Nabucco pipeline? Naturally, it is a key transit country in the event of the pipeline's being built, regardless of where the gas eventually comes from – whether from the Caspian Sea, from Iran or Iraq. But there is quite significant opposition, or at least hesitation, to the project expressed from Ankara over the recent months. Firstly, Turkey has expressed some concerns over insufficient sources of gas being secured for the Nabucco pipeline, with the Azerbaijani Shah Deniz field not being able to meet the demand that would make Nabucco worth investing

12 Source: www.businessinfo.cz (official Czech portal for entrepreneurship and export)

in¹³. This has even led to some Turkish senior figures (such as foreign minister Babacan or BOTAS CEO Duzyol) arguing that Russian gas should also be used as a source for Nabucco¹⁴. This argument is likely to alienate the Czech presidency, as it runs contrary to the *raison d'être* of Czech support for the project. Secondly, Turkey does not seem to be too happy with being only a transit country for Caspian gas and collecting transit charges but wants to try to maximize its commercial interest in participation. This risks delaying the start of the project and puts it at a comparative disadvantage to the Russian-backed South Stream. If the Czech Republic remains determined to support the Nabucco project politically, winning the confidence of Turkey in the project and heightening concerns about insufficient sources to fill the pipeline are essential. At the same time, Turkey has to realize the costs of playing its opposition too hard. If practical obstacles continue and other countries were to lose interest in the viability of Nabucco, it would be Turkey that would suffer the biggest loss because it would be excluded from transit altogether¹⁵.

Thirdly, we have recently witnessed attempts to link Turkish support for the Nabucco pipeline to EU-Turkey negotiations. During his visit to Brussels Prime minister Erdogan reiterated that if Turkey is to back the project, the EU should move forward in opening the energy chapter in accession negotiations¹⁶. This might open a window of opportunity for the Czech Presidency. As the energy chapter is not linked directly to the internal market and customs union as are the others that are being blocked by Cyprus, the Czechs could possibly convince it to lift its veto. At the same time, it would assure the Czech Presidency of the support of a key partner for the Nabucco project, not least because the Nabucco summit in Budapest backed the signing of an intergovernmental agreement in the first half of 2009¹⁷.

Furthermore, the Czech Presidency is about to organize the EU-Caspian summit in May 2009 with the countries that can act as poten-

13 This concern was voiced during PM Erdogan's visit to Brussels in January 2009, as well as by for example the Turkish state-owned gas company BOTAS (see also <http://www.businessinfo.cz/cz/aktuality-z-teritorii-turecka-firma-bota-k-projektu-plynovodu-nabucco/14630/>)

14 <http://www.templetonthorp.com/en/news77.html>

15 The South Stream project (which is the most likely alternative to Nabucco) is intended to bypass Turkey by routing the pipeline on the Black Sea seabed directly from Russia to Bulgaria (Varna)

16 <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/english/domestic/10818773.asp?scr=1>

17 http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-01/28/content_10727368.htm

tial suppliers for Nabucco, including Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan as potential source countries and Turkey and Georgia as potential transit countries. This is likely to further alienate Russia, and to some extent Iran as well, as the whole project will bypass them. In this respect, it will be quite important to keep Turkey on board, not only because of its interest as a potential transit country, but also because of its leverage in the region as such. The worst that the EU could hope for is to see an Iranian-Russian energy alliance emerging in the East, hoping to exert pressure over what the southern corridor for supplies of gas to Europe should look like. The improvement of relations between Iran and Turkey in recent years could be used as a means to reduce the potential opposition of Iran to a Trans-Caspian pipeline¹⁸. The opposition to potential engagement with Iran on the European side might also not be so strong in the upcoming years with the prospect of improving the relations between Iran and the new US administration, and Turkey can be used as a mediator to facilitate potential inclusion of Iran as a source country for the southern gas corridor. Furthermore, Iraq is being singled out as a potential supplier for the Nabucco pipeline¹⁹. This increases even further the potential of Turkey as the energy hub of the region. Keeping Turkey engaged even when negotiating with the supplier countries is thus an important opportunity that should not be missed by the Czech presidency.

THE CZECH REPUBLIC, TURKEY AND ESDP

In the area of European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), the opportunities for progress during the Czech EU presidency seem quite promising. At first sight, the Czech Republic and Turkey seem to have different goals and starting points. The Czech Republic is part of ESDP and NATO and as such participates in all the decision-making in these two organizations. Turkey has been denied access to ESDP decision-

18 Turkey and Iran signed a Memorandum of Understanding, as well as a Framework Agreement, in the area of energy co-operation. However, no Turkish investments in Iran are envisaged until the political controversies surrounding Iran are settled (BOTAŞ statement to the Czech Embassy in Ankara, <http://www.businessinfo.cz/cz/aktuality-z-teritorii/turcka-firma-bota-k-projektu-plynovodu-nabucco/14630/>)

19 The main concerns relating to possible inclusion of Iraq as a source country for Nabucco are non-clarified competencies between the central government and the Kurdish Autonomous Authority over the gas fields in Northern Iraq.

making (as a non-EU member of NATO), as a result of which it has been blocking EU-NATO co-operation on automatic EU access to NATO planning capacities for crisis management. But Turkey is eager to be included in ESDP decision-making, especially as many ESDP operations have been taking place in Turkey's immediate vicinity (for instance Western Balkans, Caucasus or Moldova) and Turkish participation has proven to be a huge asset to many of the ESDP operations. But Turkey is not willing to participate further without having a substantial (if not full-fledged) say in the decision-making. The current Czech government, on the other hand, is not overly enthusiastic about emancipating ESDP totally from its dependence on NATO and is determined to put NATO back at the heart of EU security arrangements. Taken either way, however, both countries share the same goal – improving the communication and co-operation between the two organizations.

The Czech determination to push for the resuscitation of the role of NATO seems to have more practical connotations, namely with regard to NATO's KFOR mission in Kosovo. Turkey has been blocking the adoption of the updated version of the operational plan for this mission, making its approval conditional on a broader discussion of arrangements between NATO and the EU. Settling this issue complies with twin interests of the Czech Republic in both the Western Balkans, where regional stability and especially the future of Kosovo are at stake, and the improvement of EU-NATO relations that is another imperative of the Czech presidency. It is difficult to imagine at the moment whether the Czech Republic can come up with a constructive proposal to unblock the EU-NATO deadlock and what exactly the EU will be willing to offer to Turkey to give the EU better access to the operational and defence capabilities of NATO, given that talks on the Turkish involvement in the ESDP planning process collapsed relatively recently – as lately as June 2007. One hopeful development might be overcoming the opposition of Cyprus, facilitated by the progress of bi-communal talks between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, although it remains to be seen what progress is actually made in the course of 2009. The other one might be the 60th anniversary of NATO, where the symbolic unblocking of EU-NATO co-operation could be viewed as a sign of rapprochement between the two organizations. In any case, the unwillingness of Turkey to commit itself to continuing involvement in ESDP operations will seriously hamper the effectiveness of ESDP in the long term. Firstly, Turkey has in the past years improved its defence capabilities to an extent that the EU

cannot afford to ignore, especially in view of their potential inclusion in the European Rapid Reaction Force²⁰. Secondly, Turkish opposition to ESDP operations in its immediate vicinity, such as the Balkans, the Caucasus or the Middle East, would seriously undermine the effectiveness and legitimacy of such operations from the point of view of Turkish security concerns and Turkey's position as a NATO ally, possibly resulting in further alienation between the EU and NATO. This issue turns out to be even more pressing, as the bulk of future ESDP operations are likely to be in some of the hotspots where Turkey has legitimate security interests. Thirdly, the continuing exclusion from ESDP might cause Turkey to consider alternative security solutions outside the ESDP and NATO frameworks, for instance by developing informal or even institutionalized security dialogue with Russia.

All these points give further incentives to the Czech presidency to push for the unblocking of EU-NATO co-operation. It would make NATO more relevant to the EU (and ESDP) by giving it access to NATO capabilities, leading over time to better political co-operation between the two. Turkey will be once again firmly anchored in the Western security structures, enabling both organizations to benefit fully from its increased military capabilities, and limiting the Turkish appetite for seeking alternative security arrangements.

THE CZECH PRESIDENCY, TURKEY AND THE GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS OF CO-OPERATION

The two areas where potential co-operation between the Czech presidency and Turkey would be extremely important and beneficial can also translate into a more focused co-operation towards certain areas and regions where Turkish interests and the foreign policy priorities of the Czech presidency overlap, despite both countries' lack of recognition of such overlaps. Looking at the list of Czech priorities in the area of foreign policy, one can see that all of them are areas of particular interest to Turkish foreign policy, too.

Transatlantic relations

The first area relevant to both actors are Transatlantic relations. The current context is predominantly determined by the undergoing

20 Tatli Erdal: 'Turkey Turns Cold to European Defense: Implications for Western Security'. The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, June 2008

change of presidential administration in the United States. This is extremely important both for the Czech Republic's EU presidency as well as for Turkey and its foreign policy.

Undoubtedly, the Czech Republic will try to use its position as a strongly Atlanticist country in the EU to meet the huge expectations that Europeans have in relation to the incoming Obama administration and put the transatlantic agenda at the heart of its presidency priorities in the foreign policy arena. The presidency will have to address a variety of issues in which Europeans and Americans did not find a common language under the previous administration: energy and climate change, approach to international law and organizations, balancing soft and hard power in international relations and many others, such as the topical issue of the global financial crisis. The Czechs are also likely to try to use American support for further EU enlargement and perhaps make it more credible in relation to more sceptical European countries. The question now is where Turkey fits into this. The previously articulated support for Turkish accession on the part of the USA was not met with overwhelming understanding in many European countries, so the Czechs should use different tactics here.

Much of this has to do with expectations of improvement in US – Turkish relations as well. These have been quite cool in recent years, following the Turkish parliament's opposition to using Turkish airspace and soil in the campaign against Iraq, as well as subsequent US support for Kurdish autonomy in northern Iraq and disagreements over preventive Turkish strikes against the PKK. As developments in Iraq seem to be taking a more positive turn and with the promise of the US pulling out of the country in the near future, the prospects of subsequent improvement in US – Turkish relations seem to be realistic, with the USA adopting a more balanced approach towards Iraq, including less vocal support for Kurdish autonomy. This can be used by the Czech presidency and other countries in the EU supportive of Turkey's membership bid (especially Sweden, which takes the Presidency after the Czechs) to exert concerted pressure with the US on the government in Ankara to pursue reforms and comply with its obligations under the accession negotiations. This has to be done carefully, as public opinion in Turkey is currently relatively hostile towards both the United States and the European Union²¹.

21 See for example the annual Transatlantic Trends survey, published annually by the German Marshall Fund, available at www.gmfus.org

Unblocking the NATO - EU deadlock over access to planning and defence capabilities, which has already been discussed, would be another possible step forward. It would not make much sense for the Czech Republic to try to convince the new US administration to exert pressure on individual EU capitals in support of Turkish membership. It should rather focus on improving US - EU - Turkey relations and mutual restoration of confidence among the parties involved. Both the EU and the US should send signals to involve Turkey in various regional initiatives, especially in the Middle East and the Caucasus. This could improve their standing in the sight of the AKP government, as it would be a sign of recognition of Turkey as a strong regional actor and stabilising element. It would also show that the EU and US (particularly the former) do not only engage with Turkey when it is indispensable, e.g. in the area of energy security as was explained previously.

The Middle East

The Czech Republic has been neither a strong player nor a strong stakeholder in the Middle East, especially in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the broader concept of regional stability including Syria, Iraq and Iran. Turkey, on the other hand, naturally plays a very strong regional role, which arguably has even increased in recent years with the AKP government in power.

Right at the beginning of the Presidency, the Czech government was confronted with the need to address the crisis in Gaza, which broke out in the last days of 2008 and made a very harsh start for the Czech Presidency. The EU Delegation to the Middle East, headed by Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg, did not manage to strike an armistice deal between Israel and Hamas, and confirmed the idea of the Czech Republic's not having strong leverage over regional developments.

Moreover, the Czech Republic's attitude towards the Middle East conflict has changed significantly compared to the position of communist Czechoslovakia, which tended to adopt strongly pro-Palestinian stances. In the course of the 1990s the country focused on building strong relations with and political support for Israel, although Czech foreign policy claims to be in favour of a balanced approach and even support for an independent Palestinian state, naturally under very stringent conditions. Strong links to Israel tend to be the main imperative of the Czech approach to the Middle East, demon-

strated by Prime Minister Topolánek's official visit to Israel in March 2009. He expressed support for Israel and condemned the activities of Hamas, Hezbollah, Syria and Iran for trying to undermine regional stability and the peace process²². The Czech MEP Jana Hybášková became head of the European Parliament delegation to Israel and in the European Parliament has significantly raised the Czech profile in relation to the Middle East. Regarding the Czech presidency agenda, perhaps the most significant items in this respect are the Czech plans to upgrade relations between Israel and the EU. Israel is being singled out as one of the focal points of the Presidency in the foreign policy arena, given the expiration of the European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plan in April 2009.

This largely pro-Israeli position of the Czech government now causes some substantial problems. The statements of the Prime Minister's spokesman in January 2009, claiming that the Israeli strikes in Gaza were an act of legitimate self-defence, not only caused a lot of indignation not only among the leaders of countries neighbouring Israel but also precipitated the protests of their ambassadors in Prague. It was also very negatively received by many EU counterparts, not least its presidency predecessor France as well as the presidency successor Sweden.

It is likely that such a Czech position will complicate further initiatives of the Czech presidency vis-à-vis Israel such as hosting the first EU-Israel summit, which would be a sign of upgrading the mutual relationship and perhaps winning more trust and support for the EU in Israel. It is very doubtful whether the other EU member states would agree to this after an escalation of violence in Gaza, many civilian casualties and a situation close to humanitarian crisis. Similarly, Czech plans to upgrade the relations with Israel in the framework of ENP are put in doubt by questions over the willingness of fellow EU member states to give the green light in view of the events in question.

The relations between Turkey and Israel have also traditionally been very good, especially in military and intelligence co-operation. However, the conflict in Gaza led Prime Minister Erdogan to clash quite strongly with Israeli President Peres at the World Economic Forum in Davos, where Erdogan quite bluntly condemned improper use of force by the Israeli military. This points to a quite sharp contrast in approach to the conflict between Turkish and Czech foreign

22 <http://zpravy.ods.cz/prispevek.php?ID=6399>

policy, despite the fact that the Czechs are trying to play a more neutral role because of the Presidency.

In recent years, moreover, we witness an overall shift of Turkish foreign policy in the region, resulting in Turkey's becoming a more credible partner for many Muslim countries in the Middle East, including Syria, the Palestinian Authority and Iran. The great achievement has been the talks on the settlement of the future of the Golan Heights between Israel and Syria, where Turkey assumed the role of a mediator, something that the EU could barely have hoped for²³. The ambition of Turkey to play a stronger regional role has also been illustrated by the approval of sending troops for the UN mission in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in September 2006, despite the fact that this was a decision quite heavily contested both by the parliamentary opposition and public opinion. Apart from this, it showed the Turkish commitment to supporting the EU, which was supposed to contribute the bulk of the UNIFIL force, although the European contribution turned out to be much more modest in the end.

From what has been said, it seems evident that both the Czech Republic and Turkey are aiming to raise their profile in Middle Eastern affairs. The former mainly because of the implications attached to the presidency agenda, where it has to address more seriously issues such as the Middle East peace process, Syria or Iran. In the latter case it is mainly because of the rediscovery of its role as a regional power and because of its legitimate security interests in the region. It would definitely be beneficial if the two actors could envisage ways of co-operating more closely in relation to the Middle East. Unfortunately, the recent developments seem to point to the positions of the two actors diverging rather than converging. Moreover, the Czech interest in the Middle East is unlikely to go beyond anything that can be called crisis management. Czech foreign policy basically gave up playing any role more active than this in the Mediterranean Union to the French, partially also in hopes of winning French support for the upgrading of EU-Israel relations, which are now in doubt. The overall strategic focus of the Czech Presidency is likely to be on Eastern Partnership. The Middle East is hardly an area in which a closer Czech - Turkish co-operation can be envisaged under current circumstances.

23 The Turkish mediation was, however, suspended in December 2008 due to the conflict in Gaza.

The Balkans

Similarly, policy towards the Western Balkans features very high on the Czech agenda for the EU. This underpins the long-standing aspiration of the Czech Republic to achieve stability in the region and to anchor these countries firmly on their way to the EU. One can assume that Turkish aspirations will be the same. The Balkans are the traditional field of operations for Turkish foreign policy, motivated by the geographical, cultural and historical proximity and the direct impact of developments on Turkey. The Turkish involvement can be illustrated by its participation in the KFOR mission in Kosovo, as well as a number of other EU-led missions such as EUFOR ALTEA in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Also, Turkish investments in the Western Balkans are not negligible, which makes Turkey even more of a policy driver in the region.

The position of Turkey towards the region is, however, a bit awkward. It is already an actor in the region, due to its military and civilian presence and economic interests. At the same time, however, it is a competitor with almost all the countries in the region in its aspirations to join the European Union. In what ways is it important? Naturally, progress in the EU-Turkey negotiations predetermines the behaviour of Turkey towards the Western Balkans. If the negotiations between the EU and Turkey go well, or at least if there is some progress, it is more likely that Turkey will be aligning with EU positions in the region rather than trying to follow unilateral strategies or interests. If not, Turkey can become an actor that undermines the European approach, because it will lose the incentive to pull in the same direction as the EU. In any case, the Czech Republic should stick to its current position, which is not to decouple the Turkish EU accession from the rest of EU enlargement agenda EU (particularly when it comes to Croatia). This might convince the current Turkish leadership that there is no particular preference on cultural or historical grounds for some countries in the accession process, which in return would keep Turkey positively engaged towards developments in the Western Balkans, and would more likely make Turkey support the EU approach.

The Black Sea Region and the Caucasus

In relation to Black Sea synergy, the Czech government and foreign office are rather sceptical towards the concept as it might potentially undermine the ENP, and especially the Eastern Partnership

initiative, which enjoys strong Czech support and which will be developed further under the Czech presidency with the first summit in the format of EU-Eastern partnership countries (27+6)²⁴. Obviously, Turkey is not included in the Eastern partnership, which makes sense, as Turkey is a candidate country with a structurally different status from the Ukraine. But in many ways it would be beneficial to include Turkey in the Eastern partnership with observer or 'associated' status²⁵. Firstly, Turkey borders on the two countries involved in the partnership - Georgia and Armenia, enjoys strong historical, cultural and linguistic ties to another country- Azerbaijan, and finds itself in the strategic vicinity of the Ukraine because the two countries are the largest Black Sea littoral states. The recent psychological rapprochement when President Güll visited Armenia gives a ray of hope for a continuing improvement of relations, where the Eastern partnership could prove a useful platform giving more credibility because of the EU involvement.²⁶ The very good relations with Azerbaijan can be used in favour of the EU, which needs Azerbaijan since at the moment it is the only reliable and committed supplier of natural gas for the Southern Energy Corridor. On the other hand, the inclusion of Turkey and exclusion of Russia (even as observers) from the Eastern partnership is most likely to be viewed negatively if not refused outright by Russia and most probably many other EU member states that enjoy ostensibly highly amicable relations with the EU's biggest Eastern neighbour. The argument which can be used for the inclusion of Turkey and non-inclusion of Russia can be, precisely, that Turkey enjoys structurally different relations with the EU as a potential member while Russia does not. A possible reason for a hesitation on the part of Turkey about being included in the Eastern Partnership on a more permanent basis might be the perception that this is yet another way to exclude Turkey from EU membership. The counter-argument could be that Turkey is also included

24 The summit will be held in Prague on 7 May 2009 and will include the representatives (heads of state and government) of all the EU member states and those of the Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

25 The Commission Communication elaborating on the original Polish - Swedish Initiative, published on 3 December 2008, opens the floor to the inclusion of other countries in the work of thematic platforms, initiatives and panels on a case by case basis.

26 See Duleba, A.; Najšlová, L.; Benč, V.; Bilčík, V.: *The Reform of the European Neighborhood Policy*. RC SFPA: Bratislava, 2008.

in the Union for the Mediterranean and this does not preclude the EU membership prospect, as the Czech Prime Minister Topolánek reiterated.

Perhaps the most challenging issue at the moment is that the Eastern Partnership is not really filled with substance. It is supposedly up to the Czech presidency to give it a boost with concrete policy initiatives prior to and during the first summit. At this stage it could also lead to more concrete thinking about whether and in what ways it would make sense to include Turkey and in what ways, and whether a more permanent inclusion of third countries is actually desirable and acceptable to the member states.

In any case, the Czech Republic should have a strategic interest in keeping Turkey strongly engaged as a potential counterbalance to Russian influence. The EU views itself as a strong player in the Black Sea region and in the Caucasus, but in reality it is Russia and Turkey that matter much more. The realpolitik in the region seems to be shifting more and more in favour of Russia, especially after the conflict in Georgia in the summer of 2008, and perhaps even more so after the Ukrainian - Russian gas dispute. Keeping Turkey on the European part of the Black Sea chessboard can again swing the balance of power in favour of the EU, or at least enhance it. It is also possible that Turkey will become strongly engaged for a number of reasons: because it will not like to see its position as a reliable energy corridor to Europe endangered, and because it will not like to see the increased Russian presence in the region, including a military build-up in its immediate vicinity (for instance in South Ossetia). The potential problems that might emerge between Russia and the Ukraine over the status of the Russian Black Sea fleet will probably make Turkey even more suspicious of a future Russian presence. This might again bring Turkey closer to Europe than ever before.

CONCLUSION

It is generally not assumed that the Czech Republic will achieve much during its presidency in relation in Turkey in terms of a substantial breakthrough in the EU accession negotiations, settlement of the Cyprus issue or steering Turkey towards more progress in terms of internal, EU-conditioned reforms. Moreover, this process is more in the hands of the Commission than the Presidency, and the Commission will be weak and unwilling to take politically strong and far-

reaching decisions with its end of term approaching rapidly. However, due to its role in the Council the Presidency will have a strong drive in areas linked to the external action of the EU. Reviewing the priorities of the Czech presidency for EU foreign relations, one can see a striking overlap with many issues that are of vital interest to Turkish foreign policy. This opens interesting options where a closer dialogue and alignment with Turkey might open new opportunities for the Czech presidency also.

It is doubtful what can be achieved in reality during the very short term of the presidency. The Czechs are already struggling with many unexpected issues on the agenda. At the same time the relatively low legislative activity in the EU and the outgoing Commission and Parliament might open a window of opportunity for the Presidency to focus on proper work in the Council and at least put some of these ideas on the table to be taken up by future presidencies. Moreover, it is something that can contribute to bridging the confidence gap on the Turkish side showing that there are countries in the EU willing to engage with Turkey seriously despite the lack of progress in the accession negotiations. Finally, such initiatives can build a bridge to the Swedish EU presidency that can take many of these thoughts further and consider whether they can be practically implemented. Despite the lack of expectations, the EU, the Czech presidency and Turkey should all be creative in envisaging ways of co-operating in the immediate EU neighbourhood. The worst that can happen to both parties would be to lose interest and capacity to act together before full Turkish membership in the EU is accomplished.

THE EU'S EXPERIMENT WITH CONDITIONALITY AND PUBLIC OPINION MAKING

PETER BALAZS
AND DENIZ BINGOL MCDONALD

Enlargement is often spoken of as the EU's most successful foreign policy, and at the same time its most important challenge. Five years after its 'big bang' expansion, students of the EU have been taking a tally of its successes and its failures. Since its foundation with six members in 1958, each enlargement has altered the character as well as the composition of the Union. With the enlargement to include ten Eastern European candidates in May 2004 the EU became a Union of 25, and two others were added in January of 2007. The real possibility of inclusion of two remaining countries, Turkey and Croatia, was raised at the European Summit, December 17th, 2004, while the EU decided to open membership negotiations with Turkey on October 3, 2005. Meanwhile Icelandic politicians and Brussels are mulling over the prospect of an Icelandic application for EU membership. Croatia, given its candidate status since June 2004, has made significant progress in completing the necessary chapters, while Macedonia, after becoming a candidate country in December of 2005, signed its Accession Partnership in 2008.

In the EU-15 prior to the big bang enlargement there had been significant variation of public support for enlargement, and an even more significant variation of support for the admission of this or that candidate country. This chapter addresses this variation of public support as well as discussing the major differences of perception of membership of the CEE-10 countries and the remaining three can-

didates. It also aims to assess the lessons that can be learnt from the cases of the new members by Turkey and its Balkan neighbors.

A SPECIAL CASE?

The decision to open negotiations with Turkey had been preceded by earlier decisions by the Helsinki European Council in 1999 to grant candidate status to Turkey. Turkey subsequently embarked on a wide-ranging reform process to meet the EU political and economic criteria to qualify for negotiations.¹ The 2005 European summit was preceded by a bitter debate in Europe on Turkey's eligibility for membership and its 'Europeanness' among supranational and national elites as well as the European general public, divided as it was on the issue of Turkey. In the debate over Turkish EU membership it is often asserted that Turkey is a special case. By examining opinions on Turkey alongside opinions on other potential EU members, we hope to show how the Turkish case is evaluated both as a 'sui generis' case and also as part and parcel of the larger scheme of further enlargement of the EU. Though Turkish accession prospects have parallels with those of earlier enlargement debates, we would argue that debates about the prospects of Turkish membership, along with that of several candidates and prospective candidates in the Western Balkans, differ with respect to earlier enlargement experience. These differences stem from what EU conditionality actually managed to achieve in the CEE 10 and so far performed in the western Balkans and Turkey.

Conditionality, as the European Union's enlargement tool, could be interpreted as one of the most successful tools of democratization. Conditionality involves the EU's linking perceived benefits to another state, such as financial assistance, trade concessions, cooperation agreements, political contacts and eventually membership, to the fulfillment of certain conditions. These normally relate to the protection of human and minority rights, the advancement of democratic principles and, in some cases, willingness to engage in regional cooperation.

1 See Kirisci, K. (2004) 'Assessing the 16-17 December 2004 European Council Decision on Turkey: Is It a Historic Decision?', tusiad.org.tr and Onis, Z. (2003). 'Domestic Politics, International Norms and Challenges to the State: Turkey- EU Relations in the post- Helsinki Era,' in *Turkey and the European Union: Domestic Politics, Economic Integration and International Dynamics*, Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Such conditionality is justified on the growing international consensus (as witness recent opinion polls, media concern and UNSC resolutions) that human rights are universal principles and that expressing concern about violations cannot be considered as interference in the internal affairs of a state. EU conditionality, coming as an outcome of many intergovernmental debates amongst the EU member states, could be considered more acceptable than one state's dictating conditions in exchange for aid.

Conditionality, however, is not an easy instrument to use. There are no scientific rules covering democracy and there remain different interpretations of human rights. Judging whether a state has met rather vague political criteria is bound to be highly subjective. In the application of conditionality the EU has preferred positive to negative measures, imposing sanctions only as a last resort. Positive conditionality, though, is not always applied consistently. In December 1991 Croatia was recognized even though it had not met the conditions outlined by the Badinter Commission², whilst recognition of Macedonia was withheld even though it had met the conditions. In the field of development assistance there has been a steady decline in assistance to those states such as Kenya, Malawi, Sudan, Togo and Zaire, which have violated human rights); and an increase to those such as South Africa, Burkina Faso and Zambia showing positive trends.

Summing up EU conditionality's performance with respect to the 2004-7 enlargements and looking towards possible future enlargements, one main question arises: do the 'carrots' go beyond accession?' This is an especially valid question given public support for ongoing reforms. In both of the latest enlargement cases, long transitional periods were set in e.g. free movement of labor, and safeguard clauses inserted at the last minute, which makes observers more apprehensive about a future multi-tier EU; the subsequent budget renegotiations in the case of Poland, and with the CAP and structural funds in the case of Romania, were only some of the developments we have experienced with respect to the two waves of enlargement not foreseen by the Commission at the start.

2 The Badinter Arbitration Commission, consisting of presidents of Constitutional courts in the ECC, was established to provide international legal advice and opinions on the post-secession international borders involving the breakaway republics of Yugoslavia.

Conditionality mechanisms were thought to create or feed into mechanisms that would help aspirant countries fulfill the conditions for membership. Firstly, conditionality was thought to promote healthy competition amongst the countries lined up to join in a region. Secondly, throughout the process of fulfilling conditions for membership, they were expected to initiate regional cooperation in order to share policy know-how. Moreover, a group of countries in a region with converging policy goals could act in unison in their negotiations with Brussels. A substantial example emerged in the cooperation of the Visegrad Four (Slovakia, Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic), which arguably helped to negotiate conditions of entry wholesale with Brussels. Another mechanism that conditionality was thought to nurture was how one country could learn by example from another country, perhaps one more in a front-runner position. The front runner country's policy processes and formulas could teach the less experienced or laggard country how it could be done. Last but not least, sticks and carrots of conditionality were thought to coax different political actors towards a consensus on political and economic reforms necessary to graduate to the next stage of accession.

The past record of conditionality could be compared with the dynamics regarding the ongoing processes of enlargement to include the Western Balkans and Turkey. Such a brief exercise of taking stock of past experience could highlight what lessons can be learnt and what can be done differently in the next possible round(s) of enlargement.

The significant differences in perceptions and in public opinion on the accession of the CEE and Western Balkans in Western European members of the Union show that while the adherence to conditions and the efforts made by the aspirants in CEE were considered in a very positive light, the Western Balkan countries are perceived as less likely to catch up, except for Croatia, which has been supported both at the political elite level and by wide public opinion in old member states such as Germany and Austria and new ones such as Slovenia and Slovakia, as well as in Hungary. Paying more attention to public opinion about policies concerning further widening (as was the case at the Nice Summit) and deepening (as the two noes on the EU constitution showed) was seen as a way to deal with the often highlighted problem of democratic deficit, endemic in the EU institutional set-up. Public opinion about the accession of Turkey in

Outcomes	CEE	SEE-WB
Healthy competition	Yes: Slovakia, Lithuania, and Latvia catching up post- Luxembourg.	No: Each country focusing on its own bilateral rela- tions.
Regional cooperation	Yes: Visegrad-4 group nego- tiating with EU	No: Regional antagonisms.
Learning by example	Yes: Slovak-Czech example.	Maybe: Macedonia-Croatian or Slovenia-Croatian learning-by-example experiences.
Reform consensus	Yes, (in CEEC 10, less consensus on Stabili- ty Pact goals and on reform of the welfare state post- accession)	No: Macedonia, Serbia affirmative examples and Bosnia negative example.

particular is something EU policy makers as well as national politicians have managed to bring to the fore, perhaps from a desire not to repeat the mistakes of the two enlargement waves.

CREDIBILITY GAP

The main pitfalls of conditionality come to light as the EU continues to deal with the prospect of Turkish membership, a large state, situated as it is on the fringes of Europe, with an overwhelmingly Muslim population and socioeconomic conditions below the EU average. In this often-heated debate many arguments can be raised. Some reflect genuine problems, while others are of a more emotional nature³ The European Union keeps negotiations open-ended, for reasons that could be summarized as credibility gap and difficulties surrounding absorption capacity, but we would argue that these are in no way particular to the Turkish case. The lack of finalité and the

3 The TEPAV- collection of viewpoints from specific members for Turkish membership are becoming a valuable contribution to the annual Euro-barometer opinion surveys

credibility gap have repeatedly been raised both by aspirant country elites in the Western Balkans and the Commission respectively.

While the momentum of accession reforms was lost after 2006 in Turkey, both the Turkish and the EU sides lament the deficit of commitment to the process of passing legislation and implementing reforms that have been passed by the Turkish parliament in the last six years. Several other critics of the EU's shortcomings in integrating Turkey emphasize that with Turkey the EU keeps falling into its own rhetorical trap. Schimmelfennig⁴ explains "rhetorical trap" as a situation in which the EU cannot avoid including the Central and Eastern European members in its declared commitment to the democratization of these states. It could be argued that the EU fell into a rhetorical trap, in reverse, once it admitted the Republic of Cyprus despite its unresolved problems with Turkey and that now the EU does not have enough room to maneuver. The conflicts between Turkey and new EU member Cyprus led to the suspension of eight critical chapters of *acquis*, resulting from Turkey's refusal to open its air and sea ports to Cyprus.

The above mentioned credibility gap also turned into a decline in support for EU membership in Turkey in the past three years, reflected by the lack of progress on the EU side. The negative decision by the European Council Summit that year will have been considered as confirming Turkey's deeply rooted perception of rejection by Europe, with less-than-perfect compliance with membership criteria serving as an excuse for the real reason: religious and cultural differences. The erosion of public support and the likely emergence of a more visible opposition to EU membership could decisively weaken the Erdogan government and bring the transformational process to a more definite halt, as indicated in the report of the Independent Commission on Turkey (composed of public officials in Europe that have held high public office, with professed commitment to European integration).⁵

Another pitfall of conditionality with respect to Turkish accession could be described as the 'politicization' of political conditionality. The objective political conditions demanded compliance in areas that could be regarded as political dynamite, especially in the areas of freedom of expression, association, and minority rights. It may be

4 Schimmelfennig, F. (2001) 'The Community Trap: Liberal Norms, Rhetorical Action, and the Eastern Enlargement of the European Union'. *International Organisation*, 55:1, 47-80.

5 Report of the Independent Commission on Turkey 2005, available at, <http://www.independentcommissiononturkey.org/newsroom.html>.

argued that these reforms in line with EU accession conditions have led to a change in the balance of power between staunch protectors of the centralist-unitarian Kemalist state and the more libertarian and moderately Islamist ruling AK party. Similar changes in the balance of power between reformers and preservers of the status quo occurred in former enlargement cases, but there is something fundamentally different in this third wave.

The EU faces its own uncertain future with the Constitutional Treaty in the coming decade, as confirmed by the referenda and the unfavorable opinions about institutional deepening in Eurobarometer polls. Thus the EU cannot offer Turkey and other problematic potential candidates in its neighborhood any concrete deadlines for absorbing them, unlike its uncompromising position on the necessity of a 'return to Europe' for the CEE candidates in the previous two waves. The EU's interpretation of its normative goals and its political conditions remain 'hostage' to its now 27 members' changing goals and interests on the one hand, and on the other hand, to the ever-changing geo-political and economic developments in the region, very much due to Russia's new exercise of influence in its immediate vicinity.

PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF FURTHER ENLARGEMENT: A VIEW FROM EUROPEAN UNION EUROBAROMETERS

As stated above, Brussels policy makers and national politicians started to pay more attention to how the 'European demos' perceives further enlargement in the mid 90s. The attention to public opinion polls on EU level was raised to a new level with the discussion of democratic deficit in the formulation of the EU Constitutional Treaty. The Eurobarometer poll (including 25 countries) released in May 2006 suggested that despite the misgivings about enlargement and the constitution, European Union citizens interviewed from February to March 2006 remained positive about further integration, though many were worried about the impact of enlargement, along with increasing globalization, on domestic labor markets.⁶

Majorities in 21 countries agreed that enlargement was positive on the whole and majorities in all 25 member states wanted to see more

6 Eurobarometer polls available on the EU website, as well as: <http://www.gesis.org/dienstleistungen/daten/umfragedaten/eurobarometer/standard-special-eb/>.

decision-making at EU level across a variety of issues. On average more than half of EU citizens (55 %) see enlargement as positive, but those in new member states are more optimistic about the benefits of admitting more countries (69 %), than those in older ones (53 %). The five countries where respondents were most likely to agree that 'overall, the enlargement of the EU is something positive' had all joined the EU the previous spring: Slovenia (76%), Poland (73%), Cyprus (71%), Lithuania (69%), and Slovakia (68%). A significant difference emerged with the EU countries that joined the bloc more than a decade ago; the five least enthusiastic countries joined the bloc a decade or more ago, Austria (40%), France (42%), Finland (45%), Luxembourg (48%), and the UK (49%).

People in most member states believe that 'further European Union enlargement improves the influence of the EU in the world.' But although majorities in 23 countries agreed, there was skepticism in the two older members, Austria, where only 43 percent agreed (49% disagreed), and France, where 50 percent agreed (40% disagreed). The conviction that the EU gave Europeans more international influence was strongest among new members: more than 7 out of 10 in Cyprus (80%), Slovenia (79%), Poland (76%), the Czech Republic (73%) and Slovakia (71%). The only older member states to express similar levels of conviction were Belgium (74%) and Greece (72%).

On major debates and issues, Europeans seemed ready to see Brussels take on more responsibility. The conviction was strongest however in issues that concern the enlargement prospects of the EU, such as security, the fight against terrorism, the promotion of democracy and peace in the world, and organized crime. On average 80 percent wanted more EU involvement in the fight against terror (12% less), 77 percent wanted the EU to play a larger international role promoting democracy and peace (12% less) and 75 percent wanted the EU to do more to combat organized crime (16% less). The desire for greater EU involvement was somewhat weaker on economic and social issues, such as the fight against unemployment, the protection of social rights, the protection of agriculture, and ensuring economic growth.

Public opinion polls also testify to the divergences in EU debates leading to the EU big bang enlargement and those regarding prospective enlargement to include the Western Balkans and Turkey. This next section will deal with public perceptions about the future accession of Turkey and the Western Balkans and then we

will look at the special position of Austria and whether it could be considered the 'deal breaker' with respect to the three current candidates. Austria along with Germany has had a special role in the CEE-10 accession. Austria continues to make or break the case for acceding to its hinterland in the western Balkans and extending its civilizational posture towards Turkey, which it has defended more strongly since post WWII in connection with reformulating its national identity and its policy of 'neutrality'.⁷ Is Austria a barometer or a bellwether for the EU's willingness to engage in the next stage of enlargement?

A FUTURE RE-SHAPING OF THE DEBATE AND POTENTIAL PROBLEMS FOR THE W. BALKANS AND TURKEY

The perception of Turkish membership should be considered in the broader context of an analysis of opinions toward a possible geographical range of potential members, including Russia, Ukraine, Caucasus and the Black Sea. A perusal of the European news media and op-eds in main European journals reflects both existential questions such as 'Who are the Europeans?' and "Where does Europe begin and end?" The proponents of enlargement in general argue that the inclusion of these Central and Eastern countries would benefit European economies by providing new markets while stabilizing emerging democracies in the east of the continent. Opponents however, argue that enlargement would have adverse effects on employment by providing the Eastern European workforce rights of mobility to work in European countries, and to benefit from generous social welfare benefits. The contemplation of Turkish membership raises considerations of the practical benefits and costs of Turkey's membership to the European economies and the political and security structure emerging in Europe, as well as existential questions about the "Europeanness" of Turkey.

The limited literature on mass public opinion in the current member states may reflect the limited role citizens of the member states have in the process of EU enlargement that we discussed in the previous sections of this contribution. Unlike treaty revisions, which frequently give rise to popular referendums, accession is

7 Pelinka, A. and Wodak, R. (2002) *The Haider Phenomenon in Austria*. New Brunswick: Transaction.

rarely the subject of a referendum in any of the existing member states (with the notable exception of the French referendum on UK membership.) The literature on attitudes of current EU members to enlargement has been limited to assessment of elite level opinions about enlargement. The discrepancy between opinion about enlargement on the elite level and on the level of the public at large may be a result of a democratic deficit and, mainly, of the informational asymmetry between elites and public about the future of the EU. Students of European integration repeatedly find that 'support for a European political federation emerged much earlier, and was more widespread among elite groups than mass public.'⁸ Europe remains an 'elite project, especially so in the less developed countries'.⁹ The opinion of the public at large about enlargement is too little studied, even though the enlargement process has economic and political repercussions in the daily lives of the citizens of the current members.

Stephen Wood, a political scientist specializing on public opinion in Germany, drew a line between public and elite support for enlargement, arguing that the Eastern Enlargement that was to include the countries of the CEE (Ost-Erweiterung) had largely been an elite enterprise in Germany. German politicians after 1990 have, except for a few dissidents, envisaged no alternatives to an eastward widening of the EU, while the German public had provided no positive endorsement of its own. In early 1996, only 11 percent of the German public favoured the addition of new members as an option for the immediate future of the EU. According to the 1997 Eurobarometer, just before Agenda 2000, 29 percent of Germans were in favor of eastern enlargement and 46 percent were opposed.

Aside from the more commonplace socio-economic arguments by EU member states against Turkish membership to the EU, one country's opposition stands out from others. Austria has physical borders with nearly all past and present candidates. With respect to Turkey, Austria is amongst the countries with a substantial Turkish minority. Just as with Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and France, Turkish membership is seen through the prism of the expe-

8 Wessels, W. (1996). , 'The Modern West-European State and the European Union: Democratic Erosion or a New Kind of Polity', in S. S. Andersen and K. Eliassen (eds.) *The European Union: How Democratic is it?*. London: Sage Publications.

9 Kohli, M. (2000) 'The Battlegrounds of European Identity'. *European Societies*. 2:2. 113-37.

rience of Turkish immigrants who often find it hard to integrate into the societies of host countries. An interesting comparison could be made between Austria's support for the accession of Western Balkan candidates, principally that of Croatia, and its clear opposition to Turkey.

THE CULTURAL-IDEATIONAL DIMENSION OF AUSTRIA'S SKEPTICISM ABOUT TURKEY

The main factors determining negative attitudes towards Turkey's membership of the EU are phrases such as 'cultural differences', including the historical past of the Ottoman empire in relation to the Habsburg imperial domain. The size of the country's population and the fear of a new flood of immigrants are accompanying factors. More prosaically, there is little inclination to accept additional financial burdens in order to bring Turkey's economy up to European standards.

Thus, public opinion in Austria concerning Turkish and Croatian membership offers special insights. On the heels of the Thessaloniki Summit of 2003, confirming the accession prospects of Western Balkan countries including Croatia, the next major turning point came when Turkey and Croatia's destinies were to be decided in the European Council Summit of June 2004. Austria, holding the presidency of the Council weighed in with its unfavorable opinion of the former, indicating its preference for enlarging into the Western Balkans. The time period leading to the Austrian elections highlighted some of the major themes that arose with respect to Turkish accession. These themes converge on two main planes, namely, the civilizational/cultural and politico-economic planes. Fears of Turkish accession were often instrumentalized to gather support for EU-skeptic parties (verging on the xenophobic) in the run-up to the Austrian elections, as was evident in the electoral campaigns of the Freedom Party and its counterparts in Germany and during the Presidential elections in France (ending in the election of the candidate that indicated his clear opposition to Turkish membership during his campaign speeches, Nicolas Sarkozy). Not long ago before this was written, Austria decided to put admission of Turkey to a public vote if the Union agreed to accept the Turkish Republic's bid. 'Coalition parties have agreed to go for a referendum if Turkey's accession talks are concluded in favor of a decision to prepare a membership agreement' Austria's

Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik told newspapers in August 2008. She added that Turkey's membership would add a new dimension to EU integration and the EU. The chances for the public vote to be against Turkey's membership in the event of a referendum continue to be high.

Public opinion polls in Austria show the disapproval rating to be as high as 80%, making Austria the most skeptical member. The new government decided to keep the referendum pledge after its election in September 2008. The reception in Brussels circles was that it was largely an Austrian election ploy, but it does not diverge from Austria's disproportionate skepticism about Turkish membership, and Austria's preference for giving membership to certain western Balkans before Turkey. This could be regarded as an ideational issue for Austria with respect to her relations to Europe, and also as an extension of the reformulation of her strategic position during and after the Cold war between Western Europe and communist Central and Eastern Europe. The Central European Initiative (CEI) and the Danube Cooperation were two significant manifestation of this special position that Austria held vis-à-vis the admission of the CEE-10.

On the eve of June 5, 2005 Austria at the last moment withdrew its demand that Turkey should be offered an option short of full membership and, by giving the go ahead to Croatia, Austria's last objections to negotiations with Turkey were removed. The Austrian foreign minister justified this opposition by saying that 'her country was listening to the people' by questioning full membership for Turkey. So why was Austria especially sensitive to the 'people's misgivings' towards Turkey's accession? Looking at the public opinion figures, we can establish a trend against Turkish accession but in favor of accession prospects of most other countries on the waiting list. Mr. Schuessel, the Chancellor of Austria contributed to the debate by arguing that there were double standards about the Turkish Republic's and Croatia's membership, that 'everyone shut their eyes on the human rights issue in Turkey while Croatia was to be refused the start of negotiations because a single general - one who was not even in Croatia - had not yet been yet delivered up to the Hague Tribunal.'¹⁰

¹⁰ Eupolitix, Sept 28, 2005, EMI Newsletter, available at http://europaeische-bewegung.de/fileadmin/files_yes/Temporary/EMI_newsletter/EMI-news_01.htm#4a.

The Brussels summit in itself foreshadowed the Austrian Presidency's Balkan priority. The Austrian EU Presidency has supported Balkan countries, both on the Enlargement and European foreign policy front. The text prepared by the Austrian Foreign Ministry on the 2006 Austrian EU Presidency says that "In June 2005, the European Council reaffirmed that all the Balkan States have a "European Perspective" and thus the possibility to accede to the EU, provided they satisfy the conditions for membership. Austria has always supported this policy. We are convinced that the future of all the countries in the Western Balkans lies within the European Union" (EU Council 2005).

Concerning the Enlargement debate, the text that the European Council published underlines that the decision on whether or not accession negotiations would start with Macedonia might be taken under the Austrian presidency in 2006. On Turkey and Croatia, it was stated that the first reports on the screening process would be presented during the Austrian presidency, and later it was announced that Austria would also start the negotiation of the initially envisaged relatively easy chapters such as Science and Technology with Turkey. The Council of Ministers would then decide by unanimous vote whether or not individual negotiating chapters would be opened. Despite a small crisis during this period that step was taken. As for Romania and Bulgaria, the text underlines that the Commission might recommend that the entry be deferred for one year, should it decide that the countries do not fulfil the conditions for EU accession on 1 January, 2007.

As a further thought on the future of enlargement, the Council presidencies of the new member states, starting with the Czech Republic in the first half of 2009, would be a special case for the utilization of this most successful democratization tool and its perception by the European population at large. The EU of 27 could be expected to have a more pragmatic approach to future membership prospects when it comes to extending the strategic position of the EU in its immediate neighborhood. Possibly one of the biggest lesson learnt from the past enlargement experience by the countries of Central and Eastern may be the emphasis on such pragmatism and the dangers of politicization of conditions.

Once old candidates turn into new members different dynamics will be added to the already complex issue of using EU sticks and carrots to democratize the European neighborhood, and to incor-

porate reliable partners and future members. The switch from the position of supplicant to new positions of power for the new members could be an ideal test case with respect to the new shape the EU would take. The new countries' publics could be more empathetic to adjusting the conditionality mechanisms that may not work to the desired degree for candidates, and perhaps these new members have sympathy with the struggles and different dynamics and expectations co-existing within the aspirants to the EU in the Western Balkans and Turkey.

CHALLENGES 2009: EU-TURKEY RELATIONS ON THE ROAD TO...?

CEREN ZEYNEP AK, MENSUR AKGÜN,
SYLVIA TIRYAKI

It is acknowledged by all parties at this time that EU-Turkey relations have reached a low point, the Turkish side questioning whether the EU will keep its promises and the EU struggling with an internal consolidation in relation to Turkey's membership and asking whether they should trust Turkey with regard to its commitment to the negotiation process. The challenges in EU-Turkey relations should be considered as a twofold concept. Although every problem that will be pointed out in this section seems to be a challenge for the Turkish side, the internal debates these issues create within the European Union itself also constitute a challenge that needs to be examined.

When, therefore, it comes to the enlargement debate in the EU, the Turkish question is not only a question of another country's membership but also has become the "ultimate test for the EU" and, as some claim, has brought to light a dilemma inherent in the EU itself:¹ how to find the right balance between a European identity that encompasses the diversity of the Union and the ability of the Union to act unanimously as a global actor with regard to foreign policy issues. The idea of the EU acting as a global player has produced challenges for the Union itself, if we consider the divergence on certain foreign policy issues even among the member states themselves.²

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- 1 Yotov, Stilian Y. "Turkey and the EU: The Ultimate Challenge". *Critique & Humanism*, vol 27: February 2008. pp. 7.
 - 2 See further Luif, Paul. "EU cohesion in the UN General Assembly", Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies, December 2003.

TURKEY'S DIFFERENT LEVELS OF PROGRESS

The current situation in the Turkish accession talks is clearly indicated in the progress reports prepared by the European Commission. The recent report that was published in November 2008 outlines the difficulties Turkey faces and the progress that was achieved in certain problem areas compared with those that still pose a serious challenge to EU member states where Turkish membership is concerned.³ So far, eight chapters have been opened in the accession negotiations. With regard to the relations between the EU and Turkey, the report states that enhanced political dialogue continued in the year 2008, including regular discussions of foreign policy issues related to regional areas of common interest such as Iraq, Iran, the Middle East and the Caucasus. Financial relations, i.e. the Customs Union agreement, further contributed to an increase in bilateral trade. However, the December 2006 Council decision⁴ is still in force and hampers Turkey's commitment to continue the accession process and the implementation of certain reforms.

The first matter set out in the report relates to political criteria. With regard to the criteria Democracy and the Rule of Law, the constitutional court applications to dissolve the AKP, the governing party, for alleged anti-secular activities and the Democratic Society Party⁵ (DTP) for allegedly engaging in activities against the unity and integrity of the country, had a negative impact on the smooth functioning of the newly elected parliament. The AKP case resulted in an order to cut off 50% of the government funds that were supposed to be allocated to AKP and the DTP case is still pending before the Constitutional Court.⁶ The preparation of a civic constitution is also

3 See http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/press_corner/key-documents/reports_nov_2008/turkey_progress_report_en.pdf

4 The December 2006 Council decision declares that negotiations will not be opened on eight chapters relevant to Turkey's restrictions regarding the Republic of Cyprus and that for the time being no chapter will be closed until the Commission confirms that Turkey has fully implemented the Additional Protocol to the Association Agreement. For further details see COM(2008)674.

5 A closure case against the DTP is still pending at the Constitutional Court with the indictment that speeches and actions by party leaders have proved that the party has become a focal point of activities against the sovereignty of the state and the indivisible unity of the country and the nation.

6 For the Constitutional Court decision see <http://rega.basbakanlik.gov.tr/main.aspx?home=http://rega.basbakanlik.gov.tr/eskiler/2008/10/20081024.htm&main=http://rega.basbakanlik.gov.tr/eskiler/2008/10/20081024.htm>

mentioned in the report, praising the efforts of the current government to bring academics together to revise the 1982 Constitution with the aim to align Turkey with international standards on fundamental rights.

However, the point of criticism still holds, for the government has not publicized the draft of the new constitution nor has it prepared a clear timetable for its discussion. One of the positive developments has been the amendment to the Law on elections and electoral rolls that extended the right of Turkish citizens living abroad to participate in parliamentary elections. At several points in the report, the AKP government is commended for its expression of commitment to the EU accession process and to political reforms. However, the current government is also harshly criticized for not keeping its promise to implement a consistent and comprehensive program of political reforms despite its strong political mandate.

One of the issues that raise concerns about the democratization process in Turkey is the jurisdiction of the military forces and civilian oversight of security forces. It is stressed in the report that no progress has been made on civilian supervision of military forces and defense expenditure. On another note about Turkey's democratization efforts, the report portrays the draft judicial reform strategy as a positive development; however the continuation of the reform process and the consultation with all stakeholders is strongly encouraged. Moreover, it is stated that concerns about the impartiality and independence of the judiciary still remain valid.

With regard to human rights criteria and the protection of minorities, it is claimed that Turkey has successfully implemented a number of ECtHR judgments. Yet it has been noted that further efforts are definitely needed in this context and that the institutions necessary for the promotion and enforcement of human rights lack independence and resources. Moreover, it is stated that there have been limited efforts to prevent torture and ill-treatment; the allegations of torture and ill-treatment during detention and outside official places of detention need to be addressed. In addition, although good progress has been made on improving infrastructure and on training of staff in detention centers, shortcomings related to the restrictions on prisoners' conditions, on solitary confinement and on occasional ill-treatment remain causes for concern.

It is further noted in the section pertaining to human rights that the efforts to strengthen safeguards for freedom of speech together

with the amendment to Article 301 were highly welcomed and the implementation of the revised article is further encouraged together with more reforms to ensure full respect for freedom of expression both in law and in practice. Although the legal framework on freedom of association was substantially improved, disproportionate administrative difficulties and judicial proceedings are still present. However, it is stressed that there has been real progress on certain key problem areas, especially with the adoption of the Law on Foundations.

Yet it is also claimed that the implementation of the law on property-related issues concerning Non-Muslim minorities remains a challenge. It is advised by the Commission that Turkey make further efforts to carry out initiatives that will create an environment conducive to full respect for freedom of religion.

In continuation of the section related to human rights, it says that the legal framework guaranteeing women's rights and gender equality has been successfully adopted, however, further efforts with regard to reducing the gap between men and women are urgently needed. Finally regarding the protection of minorities and cultural rights the report clearly states that Turkey has to step up reforms and promote respect for cultural diversity. It is stressed that certain restrictions still continue and reforms have to speed up immediately.

When the report comes to foreign policy as one of its final issues, it acknowledges Turkey's efforts to maintain regional stability and to take up the role of mediator in certain regional conflicts. It is, moreover, stated that Turkey has achieved broad alignment with common foreign and security policy statements and declarations of the EU while improving bilateral diplomatic relations with its neighbors, including Armenia. It is indicated that Turkey's intensified diplomatic exchanges are perceived as crucial by the EU, especially in the common foreign policy and security areas of interest to both parties. In conclusion it is stressed that Turkey is contributing substantially to ESDP and enhancing its positive role of regional stabilization, particularly in the Caucasus and the Middle East.

Overall, Turkey has shown different levels of progress in the problem areas that are of importance to the continuation of the accession process. Although there are still some restrictions in the implementation of the reforms that have been adopted and further efforts are necessary in most of the problem areas, Turkish officials continue to express their commitment to the accession talks. Moreover, although

it may be the case that public support for accession has decreased on both sides, in Turkey and in EU member states, the aspiration to EU membership cannot be said to have disappeared. For both sides it may be openly claimed that there is still support.

In comparison to previous progress reports, the 2008 report perhaps portrays the problems related to the EU accession process with a more balanced approach. Issues such as minority rights or the drafting of the new constitution are evaluated in a more analytical way and include certain suggestions. While noting the commendations of Turkey's attitude towards the conflicts in the region the report, however, fails to mention the Union's acceptance of its responsibilities that would complement Turkey's efforts in issues such as Cyprus. Moreover the report lacks constructive proposals that would help to overcome the current stagnation in the EU process. Although the report contains a somewhat positive perspective on issues such as foreign policy when compared with previous years and acknowledges Turkey's importance in certain areas like transportation of energy, it still does not touch on some of issues of real importance to the continuation of the negotiation process.⁷ This aspect of the report makes it especially difficult to overcome the perception in the Turkish press and civil society that the Commission is biased against Turkey.

TOO MANY OBSTACLES

Although the public support on both sides seems to be decreasing, it should be noted that public opinion is not as low as it was in 2004 and the numbers also show that there is an increasing trend towards supporting Turkish membership. As a result, it is crucial that the Turkish government continues the reform process while EU member states prepare their own public opinion about Turkish membership, as the challenges stand in the way of both parties. It should also be noted by both stakeholders that the problems that seem to stand in the way are affecting both sides and therefore should be overcome by mutual cooperation.

The greatest problem that stands in the way of Turkish politicians who support the accession process is undoubtedly the backlash in public opinion and the loss of trust in the EU. The general belief in Turkish public opinion is that there is to be an endless wait for

⁷ See further <http://www.euractiv.com.tr/ab-ve-turkiye/article/ikvden-2008-ilerleme-raporu-hakkinda-gorus>.

Turkey to enter the European Union. According to a recent survey published by the International Republican Institute (IRI), trust in the European Union in Turkey is, on a scale of 1 to 4, around 1.99, which may be seen as proving claims that the EU image in Turkish public opinion suffers significantly from the idea that it is useless to adopt the reforms required by the EU since Europeans do not want Turkey inside the Union anyway⁸. Nor do leaders in Europe help improve this setback to the EU image either. The main source of this dividing line between EU member states and Turkey seems to be the cultural argument, i.e. religion. These factors giving force to the backlash in Turkish public opinion - including the open-endedness of the accession negotiations and the stream of statements from Turko-skeptic leaders of European Union member states, e. g. Angela Merkel and Nicolas Sarkozy - also strengthen the general public perception that the EU is a “Christian club”. Moreover, Sarkozy’s pledge to hold a referendum on Turkey’s accession and the idea of “privileged partnership” has fed into the skepticism about the EU.

Still, the most important factor that has led to the current stagnation in the accession process is the Cyprus problem. As one may remember, right after the rejection of the Annan Plan by the Greek Cypriots it was officially declared by European leaders that the result of the referenda and the attitude of the then Greek Cypriot government was a total disappointment for the EU. Promises had been given to overcome the economic isolation of the Turkish Cypriots. Yet, to this date the isolationist policies towards the Turkish Cypriots still continue although there is no clear legally binding argument that lifting the isolation would amount to recognition of the TRNC.⁹ Since 2004, only the Green Line Regulation has been realized; it did not however help to end the economic isolation of the Turkish Cypriots. Moreover, the Financial Aid Regulation has not been fully implemented, which has also further aggravated the situation on the Turkish side

8 Williams and Associates, “Survey of Turkish Public Opinion, March 29 - April 14 2008”, International Republican Institute, 21.07.2008. See further <http://209.85.129.132/search?q=cache:Lh4kIrSsfQgJ:www.iri.org/europe/turkey/pdfs/2008%20July%2021%20Survey%2000-f%20Turkish%20Public%20Opinion,%20March%2029-April%2014,%202008.pdf+Turkish+Public+Opinion+surveys+2008&hl=tr&ct=clnk&cd=1&gl=tr>.

9 Akgün, Mensur et al. “A Promise to Keep: Time to End the International Isolation of the Turkish Cypriots”. TESEV Publications, Istanbul. June 2008.

of the island. [One of the founding principles of the EU had been not to import conflict into the Union.]

As has been stated elsewhere, Republic of Cyprus (RoC) admission to the EU without settlement of the Cyprus problem complicated Turkey's accession process too¹⁰. Fearing domestic reactions to the allegations of recognition of the Greek Cypriot administration's jurisdiction over the entire territory of the 1960 Cyprus Republic, the Turkish Government extended the scope of the Customs Union territory first to 9 member countries and later to 10, but abstained from using the constitutional name of the RoC. After protracted negotiations, a protocol extending the Custom Union to the 10 new member states was signed by Turkey and the Commission on 29 July 2004. Turkey attached a six-point declaration on non-recognition of the RoC's jurisdiction over the territory controlled by the Turkish Cypriots. In the meantime, the issue was further politicized and went beyond concerns over recognition. Turkey linked opening of its ports and airports to RoC flagged vessels to lifting the isolation imposed on the Turkish Cypriots.

Many in Turkey seem to believe that complying with the Customs Union requirements amounts to unrestricted opening of ports and airports to RoC flagged craft. This may not only entail recognition but will also mean financial subsidy for the Greek side of the island as their ships would be carrying cargo to and from Turkish ports while the Turkish Cypriots were suffering from the consequences of political and economic isolation.

Moreover, the serious reaction from Turkey has also made the current state of affairs look like a political choice. As we stated elsewhere, the Turkish Cypriots are not able to take part in certain football matches that are organized by FIFA. Having seen this and been influenced by the proto-nationalist opposition both in and out of the Parliament, Prime Minister Erdoğan established a political connection between the lifting of the isolation and the opening of ports and airports to vessels flying under RoC flag, as this was continually demanded and desired by the Greek Cypriot leadership then in power. As the situation worsened in the new state of affairs, the problem of isolation started to be perceived as a political choice.

¹⁰ See further Mensur Akgün et al. "A Promise to Keep: Time to End the International Isolation of the Turkish Cypriots". TESEV Publications, Istanbul. June 2008.

On the other side of the coin, as Eurobarometer surveys show, there has been a visible decrease in support for Turkish membership in EU member states, especially France, Germany and Austria¹¹. In addition to this, Eurobarometer surveys of December 2005 and May 2006 conducted in different EU member countries showed that, although France is leading, it is not the only country where there is strong opposition to Turkey's membership¹². In Germany, where there is a large Turkish community, the support for Turkish accession is relatively lower than might be expected for a country with such a high population of Turkish descent. The reason for this low support is put down to the relatively traditional appearance and attitudes displayed by Turks living in Europe.¹³ In Austria, where surveys again show very high numbers when skepticism about Turkey is at issue, the unsuccessful integration of Turkish immigrants paints a pessimistic picture, since the two biggest political parties conduct anti-Turkey campaigns and the media takes an anti-Turkey stance.¹⁴

Furthermore, like France, the Austrian government has promised to hold a referendum when the accession treaty is signed. As is evident from all this, the increasing opposition to Turkish membership is considered by public opinion in Turkey not so much as a challenge as a hypocrisy, indecency and unwillingness to accept Turkey as a full-fledged member.

PERCEPTIONS BASED ON SCANT INFORMATION

Another challenge in Turkey-EU relations that is widely discussed and seems to involve many attendant problems is the lack of information in EU member countries about Turkey and Turkish membership. Turkey is perceived by the public in EU member states only through the eyes of the media or the political elites. In many coun-

11 See further Eurobarometer 'Standard Eurobarometer', December 2005 and 'The Future of Europe', Special Survey, May 2006 and <http://www.euractiv.com/en/opinion/turkey-eu-public-thinks/article-171187>.

12 See further Eurobarometer 'Standard Eurobarometer', December 2005 and 'The Future of Europe', Special Survey, May 2006 and <http://www.euractiv.com/en/opinion/turkey-eu-public-thinks/article-171187>.

13 Kirişçi, Kemal and Refik Erzan, "Turkish Immigrants: Their Integration within the EU and Migration to Turkey", *Employment and Immigration Issues in Turkish-EU relations*. European Stability Initiative Briefing.

14 See further Eurobarometer 'Standard Eurobarometer', December 2005 and 'The Future of Europe', Special Survey, May 2006 and <http://www.taurillon.org/Austria-and-the-Turkish-Referendum>.

tries the stream of consciousness is not positive or pro-Turkey. What is more, the Turkish question is frequently used by EU leaders during election campaigns for domestic political purposes.¹⁵ The economic, demographic and strategic benefits of Turkish membership, whether it be its younger population, or bigger market, or energy transportation hubs, or security in its neighborhood, are not clearly communicated to EU public opinion molders.

In fact, one of the most outspoken criticisms is that EU citizens do not know about Turkey and they will be the ones to vote in the referenda whenever and wherever they are held. It is frequently argued that one of the fears that are endemic in EU member states is the possibility of a mass migration from Turkey after a full accession. However, it was clearly stated in a study by Ayhan Kaya that contrary to expectations, the Turkish immigrants living in Europe would tend to come back to Turkey once full membership is achieved and, although there will be free movement, the number of people expected to migrate is less than the general trend of migration numbers at present.¹⁶

Moreover, it is argued that a strong Turkish economy may be a boost to the EU economies, especially considering the recent statements by EU-4 that the Union is going through a serious recession. According to surveys, the issue that attracts most attention from the EU public about Turkish membership is the issue of security. More than 50% of Europeans believe that an EU with Turkey has more chance to promote peace in the Middle East and to help maintain stability in the EU's neighborhood¹⁷. The benefits of Turkish accession, whether it be demographics, that is, providing a younger population, or economic, the Turkish economy's providing a boost to the recession in European markets, or security-related, Turkey's playing a role in promoting peace and stability in the Middle East and Caucasus, EU citizens are not clearly informed outside of elite circles.

The lack of information inherent in member states is also reflected in Turkey. Pre-accession debate on the EU is almost non-existent in Turkey, and since the AKP government has not been very active

15 Güngör, Bahar. "Turkey Fears Anti Turkish Campaign Before EU Elections 2009", Deutsche Welle: 2008 and Katrin Bennhold. "Sarkozy's Question: Who is European?", International Herald Tribune: 8 September 2006.

16 See further <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2005-10-04-kaya-en.html>.

17 See further <http://www.euractiv.com/en/opinion/turkey-eu-public-thinks/article-171187>.

in implementing the necessary reforms in the last two years, it is becoming more and more difficult to convince Turkish public opinion of the need for further reforms. Support for a pro-EU government is necessary for the continuation of the accession process, and therefore platforms for the exchange of ideas and views that will create public consensus on the EU should be established by policy-makers. This is also evident in the backlash in public opinion, the only topic discussed about the EU and Turkey's membership being the open-endedness of the negotiation process.

Every statement by EU leaders has different repercussions in the Turkish media. Speeches that would not be of that much importance in EU member states or in European media, sometimes grab the headlines in Turkey. In other words, public opinion is molded through these reflections in the media. As is to be expected, this has many repercussions for Turkey's EU accession process and the EU's image in Turkey. First of all, Turkish public opinion reacts very quickly to negative news because of the inherent lack of trust in the EU.¹⁸ The quick and intense reaction on the Turkish side is a result of a sensitivity that has formed in the Turkish public because of the volume of criticism delivered by the EU -- many times on just grounds but also quite often using obvious double standards. Following upon this, an EU image that has been already formed and gives a negative impression is strengthened and, as time passes, it becomes more difficult to break this stereotype. This is automatically reflected in the elections and the internal political situation, as the incumbent party will be seeking reelection and, public opinion being negative, the political parties will drop their EU aspirations. It therefore becomes more and more difficult for pro-EU politicians to defend their points while negative messages are transmitted to Turkish public opinion through the media.

As a result, any statement made by an EU leader gets more attention than it deserves in Turkey and helps to form opinion about the EU and the accession process. Since most statements that get enough attention to be published are anti-Turkey statements, public opinion lacks the information that is necessary to support reforms. This puts the current government in a really difficult situation, as it wants to be reelected and hence acts according to the dynamics of internal politics.

18 See Williams and Associates, "Survey of Turkish Public Opinion, March 29 - April 14 2008", International Republican Institute, 21.07.2008.

Another fear that dominates the agendas of European leaders and media as well as having a significant influence on European public opinion is related to population numbers in Turkey. The French in particular believe¹⁹ that their country is losing its role as an important and strong member within the Union due to the last enlargement wave in 2004 and that if Turkey enters the Union, this would further weaken its influence. According to this argument it is estimated that by the time Turkey becomes a full member its population²⁰ will exceed 80 million. In that case, Turkey would surpass Germany with the biggest²¹ population in Europe, which would complicate things further. This has already ignited many discussions about institutionalization in Europe and the power structure within those institutions. Since this would add up to Turkey's sending the largest number of MEPs to the European Parliament and obtaining a dominant position in the Council, it has become even more difficult to convince European public opinion.

TOO IMPORTANT A NEIGHBORHOOD

One of the most praised matters that seem to have become more of an asset than a challenge in Turkey-EU relations is Turkey's bilateral relations with its neighbors. As Turkey continues its efforts for the normalization of relations with Armenia, the intensified exchange of diplomatic dialogue between the two countries further reflects Turkey's commitment to contribute to regional stabilization in the Caucasus as well as its consistent policy of rapprochement with its neighbors.

The recent rapprochement started with president Gül's visit to Yerevan and went further with the invitation of president Sarkisyan to Ankara. Moreover, civil society dialogue continues between the two countries as an example of second track diplomacy. TESEV has recently organized a conference in Yerevan on Turkey-Armenia

19 See <http://www.euractiv.com/en/opinion/turkey-eu-public-thinks/article-171187>.

20 For population demographics of Turkey see http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreTablo.do?tb_id=39&tb_adi=N%C3%BCfus%20%C4%B0statistikleri%20ve%20Projeksiyonlar&ust_id=11. Last updated 31.12.2007.

21 For population demographics of Germany see <http://www.destatis.de/jetspeed/portal/cms/Sites/destatis/Internet/EN/Navigation/Statistics/Bevoelkerung/Bevoelkerung.psm1;jsessionid=DE3CD3D5A8FD2A04E-4363BE3D57BA9C2.internet>.

relations in collaboration with the Caucasus Media Institute based in Yerevan²². During the TESEV workshop in Yerevan the latest developments in Turkey-Armenia relations were analyzed and the foreign policy priorities of both countries were discussed, including the Karabakh and Cyprus questions. This workshop aimed to have a positive effect on the civil society dialogue that has been initiated between the two countries.²³ Among the other examples of dialogue between the two countries, one can also speak of cultural and social activities including both sides' hosting performances by artists from the other country.

It may seem as if public opinion has seriously declined on both sides for Turkish membership; it should, however, be taken into account that public opinion statistics were lower in 2004 when compared with recent polls and even today there is some indication that support is still going up, although it fluctuates from time to time.²⁴ Turkey and the European Union may not be on the best terms at the moment with regard to discussions, but it is of the utmost importance that the AKP government takes up the reforms from where it has left off and get back on track. It should be stressed at this point that Turkish public opinion is still interested in EU membership.

Moreover, even though the progress report does point to restrictions and limited progress in certain key areas as well as make further calls upon the Turkish government to implement the reforms they have adopted in a legal framework, still Turkey has shown significant progress in certain problem areas and expressed further commitment to follow up on those areas where progress has been limited or nonexistent. Turkey's alignment with common foreign and security policy declarations further showed its commitment to become a part of the Union. One of the concrete examples of this alignment, which is reflected in the 2008 Progress Report, is Turkey's efforts for the Middle East peace process. In the last year, the Turkish government has taken up the role of negotiator between Israel and Syria while trying to bring together the leaders of the Middle East for further talks. Turkish foreign policy is strictly aligned with EU policies towards the

22 See further www.tesev.org.tr.

23 See further www.tesev.org.tr

24 See further <http://209.85.129.132/search?q=cache:Lh4kIrSsfQgJ:www.iri.org/europe/turkey/pdfs/2008%2520July%252021%2520Survey%2520of%2520Turkish%2520Public%2520Opinion,%2520March%252029-April%252014,%25202008.pdf+Turkish+Public+Opinion+surveys+2008&hl=tr&ct=clnk&cd=1&gl=tr>.

Middle East, and this was discussed in detail in the progress report. It should be noted however that as Turkey tries to prepare its own public opinion for membership, parallel efforts have to be shown on the side of the European Union so that the public in Europe can be prepared for Turkish membership. It should be clearly noted that, although there are problems that relate to Turkey's accession, the current situation is not as negative and as doubtful as some in Europe may claim.

On a final note, after the declaration that was released by the European Council on December 8, the process of negotiation with Turkey and Croatia in 2008 was discussed. With respect to Turkey's accession process, the Council expressed its welcome for the Turkish government's commitment to advance the necessary reforms, they also however highlighted their disappointment about the limited progress in political reforms. One of the most striking points that were emphasized in the declaration was the classification of the need for Turkey to normalize relations with Greece and Cyprus as "urgent". In a nutshell, the Council was more critical of Turkey's position in the negotiation process than was the Commission in the progress report. While the emphasis was on political reforms in the progress report, in the Council declaration a significant share was given to the Cyprus issue and the limited progress in the normalization of relations with the Republic of Cyprus and Greece. It was clearly expressed that a comprehensive solution to the Cyprus problem and a commitment to implement the necessary reforms will determine the future of Turkey's accession process. In this respect, Turkey needs to clearly express its belief in a comprehensive solution to the Cyprus problem while reminding the EU about its commitments in regard to it. It should not be forgotten that it is only through a constructive approach and a full commitment from all parties that a solution to the Cyprus problem can be found. Therefore the EU and Turkey acting together in the negotiation process going on in Cyprus and support for both Turkish and Greek Cypriots would be vital for the continuation of the talks between the two communities.

It is certain that the year 2009 will serve as a milestone of Turkey-EU relations. The disappointment expressed in the Council declaration with regard to political reforms and its description of the need to solve the problems with Cyprus as "urgent", especially given the fact that Turkey can hardly take any unilateral step towards a Cyprus settlement, underlines the risk of further dragging out of the

negotiations. However, it must be emphasized that for Europe the costs of losing Turkey are substantial as well.²⁵ The repercussions of suspending and even dragging out negotiations with Turkey will not only be economic losses for the EU but will also serve as a political message to the Islamic world that a Muslim country is not compatible with the values of the European Union. In Turkey's case, the Council declaration should not be taken as the only reference point. The issues that have created the current disappointment on the side of the EU have also been up to a point created by Turkey-skeptic EU states as well as by the demotivation caused by German and French opposition to Turkey's membership and the position of the EU on the Cyprus issue.²⁶

Moreover, Turkey's position in key foreign policy issues should also be taken into consideration as it is mostly complementary to the position of the EU. At this point in time when Turkey-EU relations are rather up in the air, both parties should work towards their promises, whether it be Turkey's implementing the reforms necessary to being a part of the EU or the EU's showing its commitment to lifting the isolation imposed on the Turkish Cypriots. These small steps are actually going to determine the future of Turkey's accession process and show both parties' commitment to move together to solve the issues of common interest.

25 Pope, Hugh. "Time for EU-Turkey 'Urgency'". Refer to <http://www.destatis.de/jetspeed/portal/cms/Sites/destatis/Internet/EN/Navigation/Statistics/Bevoelkerung/Bevoelkerung.psml;jsessionid=DE3CD3D5A8FD2A04E4363BE3D57BA9C2.internet>.

26 Pope, Hugh. "Time for EU-Turkey 'Urgency'". Refer to <http://www.destatis.de/jetspeed/portal/cms/Sites/destatis/Internet/EN/Navigation/Statistics/Bevoelkerung/Bevoelkerung.psml;jsessionid=DE3CD3D5A8FD2A04E4363BE3D57BA9C2.internet>.

TALKING TURKEY IN SLOVAKIA: IN SEARCH OF THE PROPER CURE FOR AN UNCERTAIN DIAGNOSIS

LUCIA NAJŠLOVÁ

“**A**nd to conclude, I would like to apologize to all Turks for what I thought about them before,” wrote one of my college students, as part of the conclusion of a paper submitted three years ago. My first reaction when grading the paper of course was: a stylistic lapse, things like this might belong in an essay but hardly in an academic paper supposed to be focusing on a specific aspect of the Turkey-EU conundrum. In a few seconds I realized that what I had just seen was in fact wonderful. For this (and in fact the content of most papers I received) points to something very encouraging: once people are engaged in a fact based discussion, asked to look for evidence and question what they have held for years to be indisputable truths, then it is not so difficult to strip the public debate of mythology. One does not need to apply any super-secret methodology to achieve this. For a while I indulged myself in the idea that a simple training in argumentation might be just the missing piece of the puzzle we need to put in place in order to have a more informed public, demanding more reasonable policies.

I do not intend in this article to elaborate on whether Turkey and the European Union have common interests - I consider it as a given that they do. Neither shall I write about specific areas of these interests or about where the negotiations stand at the moment and

why this is not benefiting either of the two. Although I originally intended to contribute to this volume with a study on communication aspects of the EU-Turkey relationship, in the process of writing something kept tapping on my shoulder telling me that a more personal contribution might be refreshing. I decided to go along with it. I shall rather share a few reflections of a practitioner, trying to bring the complex narrative of Turkey and “Europe” into the public discourse of a small post-communist state.

The opening anecdote about the student is an encouraging one, but moments of optimism in the realm of EU-Turkey relations are unfortunately scarce. To illustrate just how complex “talking Turkey” in Slovakia might be, allow me opening number two. A few months ago I was taking a Turkish friend to a wine-tasting in a small town near Bratislava. We got on a local train that I had not taken for ages and I was not sure at which station to get off. A couple of countrywomen were in the compartment with us, so I asked one of them for directions, switching from an English conversation to Slovak. An expression ran across her face that usually appears when people suddenly solve a mystery that has been occupying their minds for a while: “So you are Slovak – we were wondering which of you two is English!” I smiled and replied “Actually, neither.” “How come?” the woman went on, “which language were you speaking then? I am sure it was not German... But you know, what do I know ... in our times we had to learn only Russian”. I said “She’s Turkish.” “That can’t be,” reacted the woman immediately. “Where is the veil?” I was not surprised, only entertained and I went on with the usual “Turkey for beginners” – saying that not everyone in Turkey wears a veil and there is a considerable difference between Turkey and Saudi Arabia for example. At the same time I tried to briefly translate the conversation for my friend. She laughed (and she too was not surprised) and asked me to tell the woman that “You know, many in my country would actually like to see me veiled”. I tried hard to find a few accurate sentences that would grasp Turkey’s complexity, but unfortunately, the conversation could not continue, as we had to disembark from the train.

For a few days following this encounter I wondered how this conversation would have continued had we had a couple of hours journey ahead. Sooner or later, I am sure, we would have got to a broader discussion of women rights – somehow always the first topic when talking about the “Muslim world”. Then we would proceed with the

news coverage from “that part of the world” - (call it the Middle East) - terrorists, shooting, kidnapping, poverty and scarcity, in short, nothing positive. Maybe we would stumble over the image of Ottomans (here always referred to as “the Turks”) in Slovak national(ist) historiography and literature - plundering barbarians mostly. And maybe she would say that anyway, Turkey and its likes are just so far away and working nine hours every day in a grocery store (and five more around the house) the only thing she is keen to do is to have a good sleep or watch a movie. Could we blame her? Surely not. Like many other Slovaks, Central Europeans or EU-peans in general, she is struggling with her own private life and big “politics” are just genuinely beyond her orbit.

The public opinion polls tell us quite clearly that most EU-peans are not keen to see the Turks as “one of us” - no matter whether the Turks will adopt so-called EU standards. At the same time, more than one EU-pean has a distinctly blurred and distorted vision of who the Turks are and what they want. Contrary to the general perceptions, there is more than one reason why Turks and EU-peans should look for ways to find a common communication frequency. It might though be very useful, if in parallel to finding frequency with Turkey EU elites would strive to find a common frequency with EU citizens.

As is evident from the two stories sketched above, it somehow would be more desirable if our public debate on foreign policy were driven more by people who have information, as opposed to those depending on twisted accounts of Europe’s “others”. But such a public arena will most probably not emerge bottom up, i.e. it is unlikely that people who have so far ignored the facts or have not had access to them will spontaneously rise and search the libraries. It is the responsibility of the elites of every country to facilitate the creation of forums for open exchange.

THE BEGINNINGS

When we were starting in 2004-2005 with colleagues from the Turkish think tank TESEV and later also with ones from the Turkish Daily News (now Hurriyet Daily News and Economic Review) to ponder what we can do jointly between Turkey and Slovakia, the atmosphere was much different from what it is now in 2009. The European Council was about to say yes to the opening of accession negotiations, many in Turkey were enthusiastic. In the EU of that time, “enlargement fatigue” was not yet such a specter.

We wanted to facilitate a more informed expert and public debate on Turkey in Slovakia - at a time when more myths than facts were surrounding Turkey and its accession prospects. The usual "too big, too poor, too Muslim" completely overruled "European interest" in the debates, and the reasons why the European Council decided to open accession negotiations with Turkey remained unknown to most.

Meanwhile many things have happened. Soon after the opening of accession negotiations (2005) they were suspended (2006), and more than one EU leader has voiced stronger and stronger concerns over Turkey's capacity to fulfill the criteria of accession. In fact, the Turkosceptics are rarely so concrete as to refer to accession criteria - for most it suffices to declare that Turkey is simply not a European country and imply that to debate its tentative membership is a waste of time.

And just as the debate on Turkey in top European political circles was subsumed to the mood of doom, so were our think-tank debates: from the enthusiastic conviction that all that needed to be defeated was ignorance on the side of "ordinary people" we came to be more reluctant. The umbrella of "Finding Common Grounds" that became a label for our meetings - not ignoring the different, but rather focusing on what we have in common - did not run out of ideas (we generated many). But we slowed down a bit in activity and took some time for reflection. Though I cherish the belief that civil society organizations can make a difference, I doubt, that they can do so unless the ideas generated by them become part of nationwide policies. That is in fact evident in the story of Central Europe itself - and Slovakia especially - in the tough times after the fall of the communist regime, civil society organizations gave birth to a number of innovative ideas. But change was achieved only when these ideas were taken up by policy-makers, who then "changed the system". This however does not seem to be happening when it comes to our country's (and the EU's) policies vis-à-vis Turkey. It is essential to talk and to meet, but it can become frustrating if there is no "tangible achievement".

CAN THINK TANKS MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

When think-tankers meet, the very first thing they come up with is a workshop, a conference, or a policy brief. And we did some, and they generated a number of interesting thoughts and established

many productive contacts. It is hard to evaluate whether we achieved a policy change. In the big picture we most probably did not. Slovakia (and perhaps Central Europe on the whole, with maybe the exception of Poland) are not among the priority targets of Turkish foreign policy. Similarly, relations with Turkey and its EU integration prospects don't seem to be a foreign policy priority in our region.

The Central European think tanks can and should - at most - try to lobby their governments into not being negative when it comes to Turkey's accession and into engaging in curriculum change so that their respective societies would be more cognizant of things European. The frustrating thing about the first task is that most probably these countries will not be the proponents of a "Turkey in EU" policy - although it would be nice if they were. In fact, small countries, which for example Slovakia is, could indulge in the luxury of having a principled foreign policy and establish a group of countries that would counter the loud "Turco-doubtful" bloc notoriously led by the French president and German Chancellor. But somehow this idea has not acquired traction.

One might think that this is because Slovakia's capacities for know-how about other countries are limited, and that prevents development of a deeper policy debate. But more than once it has happened that even if world-class people are brought here to discuss issues on which there is not enough domestic expertise, our policy makers do not miss a chance to miss a chance. A good example is a conference we organized in June 2009 - with panels focused on TR-EU negotiations and Cyprus, the Black Sea, Turkey and the EU's Eastern policy, and the EU and Turkey in the Middle East. At least one of these issues belongs to the top three priorities of our foreign policy. While the conference had a nice attendance from diplomatic corps accredited in Slovakia (including ambassadors who, one might think, should pragmatically be less interested in some of the issues than Slovak diplomats), only one representative of the MFA bothered to come. The rest were obviously busy.

Regarding the second task for think tanks, feeding public debate and contributing to education, here I must admit that this is a realm quite underestimated by many in our ranks. Activities for "invitees only" take precedence over activities aimed to involve larger segments of society. And while many think-tankers are involved in teaching at universities or occasionally "the high school circuit" with lectures, the know-how potential of our experts is still not exploited

sufficiently to generate bottom-up demand for a more responsible policy. Given the ignorance of many decision-makers when it comes to responsible policies vis-à-vis Turkey, it is in fact surprising that we have not invested more effort in education and creating more bottom up demand for reasonable policies.

Still, Turkey does receive considerable moral support from the EU-pean think-tank sphere. In fact, think tanks are substituting for some EU governments, consistently honoring the *pacta sunt servanda* principle. You will hardly find an article or policy brief arguing against membership. At the same time, Turkey does receive much more attention than many other countries that might in fact be easier to swallow for the EU or at least not be so divisive an issue when it comes to public opinion.

In the fall of 2008 our partner institute Europeum was organizing a conference in Prague on the eve of the Czech presidency. One of the five panels was dealing exclusively with Turkey. Given the number of challenges facing the EU at that time and the ailing state of talks with Turkey, this was a big thing. As a Macedonian analyst remarked in the corridors of Černín palace where the conference was held, “Turkey is lucky to have all this support.” I retorted that obviously “all this support” was not leading anywhere at the moment, when key EU states seemed to be ignoring the recommendations of most EU think tanks, be it big or small. He smiled and responded: “sure, and can you imagine how much worse it could have been if you had not kept the issue on the table?” He was probably right – it could be much worse.

This strong support is suspicious to some though. One scholar dealing with the economics of post-communist states recently remarked in an off-the-record conversation that he thought that almost all analysts and academics were “pro EU membership for Turkey”, because it was “politically correct” and they were afraid to write anything else. Well, this remark is still a mystery to me – a conspiracy of academics? Cooking up fake facts and figures? To what end? But this scholar had to be credited with one thing – really, there is rarely such a topic in academia/the think-tankosphere on which there would be such a rare consensus as there is on Turkey-EU. I also keep wondering how it is possible that we have such a discrepancy between what academics and pundits write and policy-makers do – especially when we see that it is less so when it comes to other matters. The primary role of think tanks is indeed to generate ideas and suggest policy alternatives and in many other issues they are much more successful.

But think-tankers' consensus is obviously not enough. As foreign policy increasingly rises from smoke-filled diplomatic closets and gets to be decided more and more on the street, the messages should somehow be brought "to the people". Are the think tanks just too detached? Should our hopes for a balanced and informed debate rest mainly with the media?

WILL THE MEDIA DO THE MAGIC?

Communicating "things European" certainly is a challenge. One of the biggest questions in Europe today is how to close the gap between the declared, the implemented, and the felt. The "European interest" standing so proudly on paper in so many European documents simply does not translate into EU citizens' behavior or even thinking. Remember the woman on the train? Just like millions of other EU-peans, be they "new" or "old", she will not go online and check government policies and party programs even when it comes to things more directly related to her life, not to speak of foreign policy related issues.

As most numbers show, she is most likely to get most of her information about the outside world from TV. David Judson in this volume writes that foreign media have five basic narratives about Turkey - Turks vs. Kurds; Armenian genocide; honor killings; free speech and Islam vs. secularism. To these narratives, let me add a few remarks on the perspective from which it is not uncommon for many mainstream media to approach Turkey-related topics.

First, in the eyes of EU-peans, Turkey is a periphery - although portrayed as "the most progressive" "Middle Eastern" country, still one that wants to reform itself according to a "European model". Hence it is portrayed as being in a situation inferior to the rest of Europe. Second, it is an exotic periphery - most EU-peans like exotic stuff only on holiday (if they do at all), once a year, for two weeks at most.

Third, Turkey is a problem. Following the golden rule of "good news is no news", Turkey will mostly pop up on your TV screen when something "interesting" is happening there. This should not surprise us and it is unlikely to change any time soon. Just try a random press scan with the keyword Turkey. Or google the word- after a number of pages showing Turkey as an ideal holiday destination we get to news articles where some of the other keywords will be "conflict", "struggle" and their synonyms. Most probably, this is not going to change and any attempt to do so would be a fool's errand.

At the same time, Turkey is merely one of many issues on the current EU-pean agenda and media just reflect this - sometimes in a balanced, sometimes in a biased way. Where think tanks can however be useful is in engaging in deep debate with journalists. While most of the latter are unlikely to show up at a seminar/workshop organized in Bratislava (foreign news desks are usually understaffed and editors usually will not let them out for longer than an interview or a news conference), it is not so difficult to bring them out of the country - we did this a couple of times as part of FCG and I would say it was a very successful endeavor.

The thing is that usually think-tank and journalistic debate in Slovakia - unlike in Turkey - go in parallel and rarely meet. Sure, there are a number of off-the-record coffee/beer meetings, when journalists/politicians/think-tankers exchange views, but these talks rarely happen in a semi-formal round table, especially when it comes to talking about foreign policy. How formal/semi-formal debates usually happen is that when some issue arises a journalist calls his/her fellow think-tanker and asks for comment or background information on the current issue. I have seen much less journalist-think-tanker-politician round table in Slovakia than I have in Turkey.

So we tried it in FCG - inviting journalists along to debate (not only to cover, to *debate!*) and some fruitful exchanges were started and some more balanced articles were written. I would like to highlight that such roundtables have the capacity to create a very constructive atmosphere, since the academicians/analysts have to drop their usual "journalists just distort the reality" and the journalists know the debate would not get very far if they stayed with the usual cliché that "academics just speak in a manner too complicated and incomprehensible to 'ordinary people'". Sitting at one table, with a given topic, they have the opportunity to engage in discussing the limits and opportunities of their professions in contributing to a more open debate in their respective countries.

After one such event Slovak news TV even covered the event itself - I could not believe my ears when a journalist called me to come and explain why the workshop was happening etc. Usually we go there to comment on election results etc, and it would never have occurred to me that a boutique workshop can make it to the opening interview and story of a weekly foreign policy compendium, when larger conferences sometimes cannot - because they are simply not considered events. And yes, we sat there in a studio, discussing the importance of communication, erasing stereotypes, learning etc.

While a few informed individual journalists can (and do) make a difference, media as such cannot be expected to fulfill the role an educational system should. And here we get to a more optimistic story briefly hinted at in the introduction.

MAINSTREAMING TURKEY

Recall the girl from the opening of this essay “apologizing” to all Turks, one of those who give me optimism about the future of European politics. The interesting thing was however that she did not come out with this knowledge from an EU integration or Turkey focused course. No, it was a simple freshman “Academic communication” course, considered as a “boring must” in the Anglo-Saxon education system. Yet it was unfortunately a very new thing in Slovakia. The department of European Studies at FSES Comenius University in Bratislava is a relatively new one. But it became among the first in Slovakia to introduce a course focused on writing and speaking, and it is still among the few exceptions.

With Peter Drál, a friend and colleague working in Milan’s Šimečka Foundation (an NGO doing mostly human rights education) we developed a syllabus and decided from the outset to introduce a bit of experimental learning. We didn’t simply want the students to learn the technique and the “proper structure” of a paper, how to cite and which words to avoid. We wanted to teach them how to “get into” the writing/speaking process, think critically and express themselves. We wanted them to know why they were using certain sources and certain arguments. Since we both are former journalists, we thought that the best way to achieve this would be if from the beginning the students were to work on one “story” and learn about its characters, plot and nuances. We split the course into two groups and asked them to sign up, at the very first class, for either “Roma in Slovakia” (one of the challenging topics of domestic politics) or the “Turkey and EU” topic. They were supposed to learn their writing and speaking basics on one of these two stories.

Many friends and colleagues asked us if we were serious, whether this wasn’t going to be too much, too difficult, when the students had absolutely no background in these topics. Well, we had doubts too, but we decided to hit the road anyway and the process and results were fascinating. I believe they brought more lasting results than most of the work we ever achieved for so-called “expert audiences”.

I will not elaborate here on everything that we experienced in the three years we were teaching this course – the struggles about workload, accuracy, validity of sources and plagiarism (yes, a frequent phenomenon). It would be the subject of a different article, since the Slovak education system still suffers from many ills of the previous era. But let me emphasize that we engaged in hours of fruitful debates on “culture”, “Islam”, “European”, “tradition”, “value”, “interest”. All these words or concepts that seem to have such clear meaning became subject to detailed deconstruction. And it was amazing to observe how in a few months of these debates people, most of whom did not have the slightest idea about what is happening between the EU and Turkey, came up with contributions, papers and observations that sometimes do not occur to many people paid to deal with EU politics.

And this I believe is the key to the question of making the EU-Turkey debate less about mythology and more about facts and figures. If we are able to reform our education systems so they are more open to debate and also deal with current issues, then we can have a more healthy society and do not have to lament “misguided” public opinion. But can we achieve this in a country that is still looking more inward than around?

OR, NOT JUST TURKEY

Perhaps this essay should have started with listing all the reasons why Central Europe should care and which comparative advantages it possesses that make it a likely champion of responsible European policies and politics. Unfortunately, our awareness of our responsibilities (and possibilities) seems to be low and this is a crucial problem to be addressed by policy-makers and intellectuals in our geographical space.

One facet of this could be grasped as a schizophrenia between the on-the-record “Yes, we can” and the off-the record “Are you crazy? Of course we can’t”. On the one hand, documents abound speaking of our global responsibilities and potential to deal with them, on the other hand, more than one policy-maker will scorn the idea that these should be followed by real actions or, more importantly, that real actions pursued by an entity with Slovakia’s leverage will indeed make any difference. Definitely, the rhetoric and actions of the big might make a bigger difference, but then, something is wrong with

the world order of nation states. Why don't we just pick 10 relevant countries and make the rest their dominions? Absurd? Sure, but that is exactly the message sent by proponents of "no, we can't." Sadly enough, one can hear this attitude from people of all classes and types of education. The complex of inferiority seems to be deeply entrenched in Slovakia.

Another element is that of catching up with the "West", though not so much in freedoms as in indulgence. Contrary to what many might have thought (the books about post-Communist countries have stressed more "newly found freedoms" than "newly found wealth"), it is material deprivation that many people, even 20 years after the fall of the Iron Curtain, would like to remedy first. Then, it might be a misnomer to say that Central Europe turned from unfree to free. Rather it turned from poor to wealth-seeking. And while many reforms were accomplished since the change of regime 20 years ago, the realm where we still have to catch up is education. Though there are more and more exceptions, the schools through which most people pass, do not give them an opportunity to learn/adopt "life skills" but instead force them to memorize things they will never ever use. Outdated methodology and often unrevised content every year produce tens of thousand of people who do not want to have anything to do with education after they pass the compulsory core.

And while non-post-communist Europe often suffers from similar ills when it comes to public debate, in the case of Central Europe I believe we had the advantage of a big reform momentum that unfortunately was not (thus far) used to its own potential. Until we opt for a major change in the system of education, I fear that in the near future we will be reading very gloomy articles about the state of Europe. But if we try, the results might be better than expected. Thus, talking Turkey in Slovakia is more about Slovakia than about Turkey. Trying to understand this might offer some relief to the Turkish public and/or policy-makers. The negative messages and widespread ignorance are not mainly a reflection of "how Turkey is" or what we think of it, but, they are a mirror of who we are, how we here in Central Europe interpret the world around.

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