

## EDITORIAL

Membership negotiations between the European Union and Turkey were never meant to be easy. Sooner or later, they had to hit rough waters. In order to put such situations in perspective, it would have always been useful - and will remain useful - to keep in mind the character of EU-membership negotiations. On the one hand, they are not real negotiations as the European Union is not prepared (and has no reason to be so) to put any aspect of its *acquis communautaire* in doubt. Membership in the EU means recognizing the structures, rules and, most importantly, objectives of the EU. This was never held in doubt during all past accession processes and it will not be different in the Turkish case. On the other hand, accession negotiations are part of a process that encourages a candidate country to recognize EU standards, subscribe to EU criteria and norms and gradually implement them in the accession countries' legislation. Sticks and carrots of different sorts may accompany the process. They may prolong the process. But it would be counterproductive to stop the process because of a lack of progress. Should this happen, the perspective of all actors involved will immediately shift from the desire to achieve progress to the fearful game of blame and scapegoating. Who lost whom? will always be a sad and unproductive question. The answer can only be: the interest to invest into a future that enables reform and a common good needs to prevail. This is the overriding lesson for the first difficult period in the accession negotiations with Turkey. Whenever there is light at the end of a tunnel, somebody may like to prolong the tunnel. The majority on both sides of the tunnel should not wish to let this happen.

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José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, and Olli Rehn, Commissioner for Enlargement, at the European Parliament in Strasbourg on 26 September 2006.  
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## THE COMMISSION'S REPORT ON TURKEY Where is the Progress?

Andreas Marchetti

It was widely expected that the Commission's Progress Report on Turkey, presented to the public on 8 November, would not be very flattering. To the contrary, commentators, analysts and politicians had expected a critical report that would point to numerous shortcomings. Interventions of the Union's Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn or Commission President José Manuel Barroso had clearly hinted at this since summer. The report now issued is perfectly in line with the expectations incited during the past months: "precisely because Turkey is a negotiating country, our expectations of Turkey have naturally increased."<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, just because the report is in line with prior expectations, the report

is not as devastating as some might have feared - or hoped for. Although having to touch on highly politicised issues, the Commission has been able to present an objective report based on empirical and reviewable assessments. The neutrality of the Commission has even been reflected in the way Olli Rehn presented the report to the public.

### Persisting Problems

One major criticism of the Commission is not concerning any particular issue but rather a general phenomenon: Since the start of accession negotiations on 3 October 2005, the pace of reforms has slowed down considerably. In addition, although legislation required by the EU has been passed in various areas before and during the period assessed in the report, its implementation is not always timely. The ▶

► Commission therefore urges Turkey to live up to expectations and to increase its efforts towards general improvement.

Among the EU's concerns certainly feature the issues widely discussed over the past months such as the application of Art. 301 of the new Penal Code, intended to protect some vague concept of "Turkishness". The Commission criticises the occasionally very broad interpretation of this article, effectively restricting the freedom of expression. So far, the case law established has produced an ambivalent picture. Apart from that, the report still does not see the independence of the judiciary guaranteed, corruption is still wide-spread and the human rights record is still flawed, although slowly improving. The same holds true if it comes to the freedom of religion for non-Muslim religious communities and the respect for minority rights.

Among the many points mentioned by the EU, two issues merit particular attention: civil-military relations and the continuing conflict over Cyprus. These two areas are currently among the Union's major concerns. The Commission criticises the persisting structure of civil-military relations in Turkey because the military continues to "exercise significant political influence". Accordingly, civil control over the military is still very limited - not only in budgetary terms but also in terms of military employment and strategic choices. Since the EU's ideas of civil-military relations are partly contradictory to the image of the military in Turkey - besides the President the institution that stands for the secular orientation of Turkey - the necessary changes will cut deep into the self-understanding of the armed forces but also of the Turkish Republic. Accordingly, change must be introduced and implemented with caution. Besides, the military needs to be offered a new *raison d'être* as a sort of compensation for its eventual loss of political influence. The EU could play a central role in this by proactively integrating NATO-partner Turkey into design and operations of the European Security and Defence Policy.

If it comes to direct EU-Turkey relations, the Commission cannot identify any progress with regard to the "full, non-discriminatory implementation of the Additional Protocol, and the removal of all obstacles to the free movement of goods, including restrictions on means of transport." In the new Enlargement Strategy, also published on 8 November, the Commission once again underlines the Union's position: Turkey is expected to - de facto - recognise EU-member Cyprus. The Commission does not yet recommend any restrictive measures, but - responding to exigencies of some EU-member states - emphasises that it "will make relevant recommendations ahead of the December European Council, if Turkey has not fulfilled its obligations." The crucial

point is the question of access of Cypriot vessels and planes to Turkish harbours and airports. So far, the Finnish Presidency's efforts to find a compromise have not been successful. Every good-willed actor on the EU-side should bear in mind though that the room of manoeuvre for any Turkish politician in this highly emotionalised issue is very limited at present with presidential elections and parliamentary elections approaching in 2007. In one year's time, progress in this issue might be easier to attain. Although some statements from Ankara signal the willingness to deliver - on diplomatically acceptable grounds - the struggle over Turkey's treatment of Cyprus will be the biggest stumbling block so far encountered during negotiations because the EU has now clearly demanded advancement by mid-December.

### Turkey's progress

Although the Commission's report is indeed quite critical and identifies numerous points where progress has fallen short of expectations, the report also gives credit to Turkey's continuing efforts in various areas. The evaluation of the state of the art in the different negotiating chapters speaks a clear language: The Commission points out only one chapter (fisheries) where "no progress" has been made and merely two chapters (free movement of capital, public procurement) with "very limited progress". In 21 chapters the EU identifies at least "limited" or "some progress". On the positive side, Turkey has made "progress" in five chapters<sup>2</sup> and even "good progress" in two (enterprise and industrial policy, education and culture).<sup>3</sup> All in all, on a quantitative basis and considering the projected way ahead, Turkey's general advancement can be considered average with a positive tendency.

Even in areas where the Union still identifies major shortcomings, at least some improvements could be identified. In the area of human rights, the report highlights that Turkey has ratified various Protocols, especially concerning the abolishment of the death penalty. Although Turkey's record does not yet comply with European standards, less cases of torture and ill-treatment have been registered. Administrative transparency and accountability has been increased, inter alia by the establishment of an ombudsman.

In technical terms, the successful conclusion of the screening process in October and the provisional closure of the first negotiated chapter on Science and Research in June are at least symbolic acts that testify for the every-day commitment in the negotiation process. Although the EU also points at some critical points here, like e.g. the under-staffing of the Secretariat General for EU Affairs, the process appears to be on track.

On the economic scene, Turkey has made substantial progress in various areas. The Progress Report clearly states that Turkey has considerably advanced in meeting the economic Copenhagen criteria, i.e. the existence of a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the EU: The Turkish economy has continued to grow considerably and Turkey has maintained a successful disinflationary policy, while consolidating public finances. At the same time spending on education increased. The investment climate has been improved and the structural transformation of Turkey's economy continued. The main concerns are attached to the labour market, though. Despite good macroeconomic figures, the unemployment rate remains at almost 10%, young even face more significant unemployment and female employment continues to be low.

### Perspectives

The Commission's balanced assessment leaves no doubt that progress has been slower than expected or demanded - but that there has been progress nonetheless. This fact should not be neglected by exclusively pointing to the well-known and generally recognised critical points that have already fuelled discussions over the past months. Besides, progress has been realised on many levels and to various extents - without a clear membership perspective it is doubtful whether this would have been accomplished at all.

However, the Progress Report also makes clear that more efforts are needed. Especially in sensitive points, Turkey will soon have to take decisive steps. In a certain sense, the Progress report can be of help to continue reforms by openly recognising Turkey's strengths and efforts, the Commission failed though to take temporary constraints for Turkish policy more into consideration.

1) Olli Rehn: "Turkey: state of play of the accession process", European Parliament, AFET Committee, SPEECH/06/392, Brussels 20 June 2006.

2) Information society and media, Economic and Monetary Union, Regional Policy and Coordination of Structural Instruments, Consumer and Health Protection, External Relations.

3) Since the Progress Report clarifies for chapter 33 that "the *acquis* does not require transposition" in this chapter, it is not considered for the present list. Chapters 32, 34, and 35 that are not explicitly dealt with in the report are also left out.

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# "THE TURKS ARRIVE!"

## European media and public perceptions of Turkey

Ellen Svendsen

On the international Women's Day 2005, Turkish women demonstrating in Istanbul were violently attacked by Turkish riot police. Only minutes after the violence broke out, the event was broadcast to European citizens. The extensive media coverage that followed proved an example of particularly bad timing for Turkish authorities, who on the very same day had met with EU representatives to discuss future membership negotiations.

This was not the first, nor the last time Turkey was to be exposed in European media as a ruthless violator of human rights. In other words, the media coverage of this particular event can be interpreted against the backdrop of numerous similar events. Hence the interrogation of the present article arises: what characterizes this context of media reports, and how does it influence the way Europeans form their perceptions of Turkey?

### The nature of perceptions

Firstly it should be stressed that as regards human rights violations, there is no denying that Turkey does have a sinister record. What interests us here however, is not only facts about Turkey, but how Turkey is *perceived* through media constructed presentations of facts.

A person's perception of an event is an

expression of how this person *interprets* the information she has of the event. And this interpretation in turn depends on a broad range of cultural, social and individual factors having shaped the intellectual horizon of the person in question. Perceptions are important because they constitute the basis of our actions. Indeed, the poststructuralist idea according to which one acts on what one *perceives something to be*, and not how it *is*, has gained momentum in much recent literature on international politics.

I argue that if the above hypothesis is true, it could have serious consequences for Turkey's application for membership in the EU. This is because popular referenda in some EU member countries, notably France, are likely to determine the outcome of the negotiations. Since popular referenda often are expressions of popular perceptions, the need to clarify some aspects of how perceptions of Turkey are shaped appears pressing.

### The role of European media

Evidently, as pointed out by way of introduction, media plays a crucial role in forming peoples' perceptions. However, both European journalists' approach to Turkey, as well as peoples' reactions to their work, are not spontaneous creations *ad nihilo* of the media alone. Public perceptions as well as media tales are also products of deeply entrenched structures of thought that

imbue collective narratives in a society. Such discursive structures, as the philosopher Michel Foucault would name them, form our ways of thinking. They often function as ideological structures incorporated into *doxa* and give rise to stereotypes. The upshot is that what most of European media report about Turkey only takes on meaning against the backdrop of these underlying discursive structures that determine our conception of reality. In this perspective, the media's power to create perceptions and their dependence on historically formed stereotypes of Turks, form a complex background for how Europeans perceive Turkey and Turks.

### Negativity and fear of Islam

Yet how do then Europeans perceive Turkey and Turks? Is it even possible to speak of a common European public perception of Turkey? Starting with a survey of some of the most important European newspapers<sup>1</sup>, at least two central aspects of European media's presentation of Turkey can be identified.

The first aspect is negativity. Most news from Turkey concerns catastrophes, bomb attacks, bird flu and violations of human rights. This stream of negative news easily overshadows any positive connotation Turkey may have as an attractive holiday destination. When one adds that the average newspaper reader only reads about 20 minutes every day, the

## CHRONOLOGY

compiled by Volkan Altıntaş

**2006 31 July:** Turkish President Ahmet Necdet Sezer appoints General Yasar Büyükanit to become new chief of the Turkish military. He will replace General Hilmi Özkök.

**2006 21 September:** Elif Safak, accused under Article 301 of the Turkish penal code, is acquitted.

**2006 27 September:** The European Parliament votes a report on "Turkey's progress towards accession". The report is approved by 429 parliamentarians, 71 vote against it and 125 abstain.

**2006 4 October:** The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe votes the report "The cultural situation of the Kurds" prepared by Lord Russell-Johnston, UK House of Lords.

**2006 5/6 October:** German Chancellor Angela Merkel visits Ankara. She declares that Turkey should recognise Cyprus as member of the European Union.

**2006 12 October:** The French Assemblée Générale approves in first lecture a "Proposition de loi tendant à réprimer la contestation de l'existence du génocide arménien".

**2006 12 October:** Turkish author Orhan Pamuk, formerly prosecuted in Turkey for having questioned openly the official Turkish position on the Armenian question, is awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

**2006 13 October:** The screening process is completed with a detailed screening meeting on the 23rd Chapter on "Judiciary and Fundamental Rights".

**2006 5 November:** Turkish former Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit dies. Under his

government, Turkey was accepted as an EU-membership candidate in 1999.

**2006 8 November:** The European Commission publishes the "Turkey 2006 Progress Report" and a paper on the "Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2006-2007" - the latter includes a special report on the Union's absorption capacity.

**2006 11 November:** The second national convention of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) re-elects Recep Tayyip Erdogan as AKP leader.

Sources: [www.euractiv.com](http://www.euractiv.com), [www.abhaber.com](http://www.abhaber.com), [www.abgs.gov.tr](http://www.abgs.gov.tr), [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk), [www.assemblee-nationale.fr](http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr).

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degree of nuances brought to this bleak picture is unlikely to be very high.

The second aspect that characterizes many European media's coverage of Turkey is Islam. Turkey is frequently presented as "different" because a large majority of its population is Muslim. If one takes into account that Islam since 11/9 has been demonised in much of the world press, this connotation is far from positive. In this regard, recent public opinion polls indicate that Islam is one of the main reasons for rejecting Turkish membership in the Union.<sup>2</sup> Although it is difficult to prove a direct link between media discussions about Islam - often spiced with allusions to a global network of Muslim terrorism - and a public opinion expressing its fear of Turkey, a connection between the two aspects of public debate is very probable.

**"It's not that they're Muslim - but look how they treat their women!"**

I opened this article referring to a violent scene involving brutal Turkish men and victimized Turkish women. This was not an innocent choice. The exceptional coverage of the event on Women's Day 2005 is part of a recently increased media focus on women's rights in Turkey. In particular German media has over the last couple of years been preoccupied with honour killings and forced marriages amongst German Turkish immigrants, which constitute the largest Turkish immigrant community in Europe.

During a period of four months from December 2004 to March 2005, six Turkish women in Berlin were reported murdered by their families for having stained their families' honour.<sup>3</sup>

In the wake of these killings, a self-reflective and heated debate regarding Germans' naive belief in happy multiculturalism and their responsibility for these women followed. A predominant question was: Why did German authorities or civil society not address this problem earlier? Serap Cileli, a Turkish immigrant journalist who already in the early 1990s wrote articles about infringements of human rights in Turkish immigrant communities, was constantly rejected by newspapers and publishers, because, she says, "They told me I was writing about a minority issue and they were afraid of appearing racist. (...)"<sup>4</sup>

However, even though many welcomed the new debate, others found that the media gluttony in search of family tragedies unjustly stigmatised all Turks. An important factor in this regard was the way German media presented the killings. The female victims were repeatedly portrayed as long-haired, fair and innocent beauties, whereas their families were portrayed as barbaric brutes slaughtering these beauties as if they were animals. Spiced with recent

years' nourishing of the fear of Islam and fundamentalist terrorists, these black - and white media discourses easily bring across a bleak picture of Turkish immigrant society as generally uncivilised.

In this respect it is interesting to note that Europe - in particularly Western Europe - seems to have come to perceive itself under the auspice of women empowerment and equality between the sexes. Professor of sociology Abraham De Swaan believes Europe's conflict with Islam is first and foremost a conflict over gender policy.<sup>5</sup> De Swaan sees Samuel Huntington's famous prediction of a clash of civilizations as "a battle of the sexes",<sup>6</sup> and claims that "In religious matters the established Europeans feel a bit uneasy, but in gender matters they are completely certain to occupy the moral high ground (...). (It's not that I have anything against Islam, or against Muslims, on the contrary, but what they do to their women is unacceptable)".<sup>7</sup> Hence, if Turkish women are persistently discussed only in the context of male dominance and aggressiveness incorporated into a community of traditional values, then

these women may become symbols of a society that is perceived as "uncivilised". The problem seen from Turkey would be that Turkish immigrant communities, which have a tendency to attach particular importance to traditions which in their country of origin may have evolved, changed, or even disappeared, are taken to represent contemporary Turkey. Now obviously, if Turkish immigrant societies are perceived by Europeans as mirroring Turkey, whereas in fact Turkey is far more liberal and "European" than these communities, then, in line with what has been pointed out above, Turkey may have reasons to worry about future referenda on accession.

This is particularly important in so far as all news from Turkey or Turkish immigrant communities naturally is linked to Turkey's accession negotiations with the EU. Indeed, when scrolling headlines in the French and British press from the last couple of years, Turkey is barely mentioned in any other context than EU negotiations. This entails that Turkey is constantly scrutinized in the European public sphere, judged

## CURRENT NEGOTIATING STATUS

No. Title of chapter

No.	Title of chapter	
1	Free movement of goods	X
2	Freedom of movement for workers	X
3	Right of establishment and freedom to provide services	X
4	Free movement of capital	X
5	Public procurement	X
6	Company law	X
7	Intellectual property law	X
8	Competition policy	X
9	Financial services	X
10	Information society and media	X
11	Agriculture and rural development	X
12	Food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary policy	X
13	Fisheries	X
14	Transport policy	X
15	Energy	X
16	Taxation	X
17	Economic and monetary policy	X
18	Statistics	X
19	Social policy and employment	X
20	Enterprise and industrial policy	X
21	Trans-European networks	X
22	Regional policy and coordination of structural instruments	X
23	Judiciary and fundamental rights	X
24	Justice, freedom and security	X
25	Science and research	X
26	Education and culture	X
27	Environment	X
28	Consumer and health protection	X
29	Customs union	X
30	External relations	X
31	Foreign, security and defence policy	X
32	Financial control	X
33	Financial and budgetary provisions	X
34	Institutions	X
35	Other issues	X

Legend: X not yet opened  
 X opened  
 X closed

Data as of November 2006

and questioned against the backdrop of a set of economic, juridical and moral "European standards" - or the Copenhagen criteria as they are labelled. Such scrutiny has not been reserved to Turkey alone. The Copenhagen criteria have become increasingly important in the assessment of applicant countries after the EU at the beginning of 1990s strengthened its conditionality policy. Yet there is no hiding that Turkey has expressed frustration over a policy they consider continuously inventing new standards to be followed. This is particular the case in human rights questions. Turkey certainly has its dark chapters to be dealt with in this domain, but so do many of the new member states, without thereby being exposed to the same degree of media scrutiny as Turkey so far has been. In particular as regards development in women's rights, there was a peculiar public silence about the fundamental problems in the former communist countries whereas women seem to have become the very proof of Turkey's lack of civilisation.<sup>9</sup>

The European media focus on the negative aspects of Turkish compliance with the Copenhagen criteria - of which there are indeed many - is not surprising. The media feeds, as it always has, on bad news. Yet in the case of Turkey, there is a need to go further than this simple golden rule in journalism and interrogate both the very *choice* of questions and the way in which they are formulated. After all, choices of words take their source in discursive systems of which we are rarely aware, but which reveal a great deal about our attitudes and perceptions.

#### Turkey: The traditional "Other"

The synthesis of the two above - mentioned aspects of European media coverage of Turkey, negativity and Islam, gives rise to what is often called the "othering" of Turkey.<sup>9</sup> It is repeatedly held that Europeans have a particular need to define

themselves in negative opposition to outsiders. This may be why one of the most frequently evoked questions in articles about Turkey is to what extent this country is European - that is, "like us". A Muslim country, Turkey is perceived as being fundamentally different, morally, culturally and politically, from other European countries. And this difference not only functions as a line of demarcation, it also provides a means to project negative characteristics on to this "other", and distance oneself from one's own shortcomings. Indeed, throughout European history Turks have persistently been associated with violence, sexual perversion and stupidity. The Ottoman man and woman, although exotic, were generally perceived of as dirty, sexually perverse and extremely violent. Many of these perceptions were nourished by British and French travelogue literature from the 19th century, by authors like Lord Byron, George de Hongrie, Lady Montagu and Victor Hugo, to mention a few.

In my view, this literature tradition should not be neglected when analysing contemporary media coverage of Turkey. After all, as Edward Said famously pointed out, literature is by no means innocent in the shaping of collective narratives.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, many European languages still have pejorative expressions referring to Turkey: In French one has "fort comme un Turc", or "tête de turc", which point to the strength, yet also stupidity, of the Turks. In German a verb for cheating/simulating is "türken", and in Norwegian one says "to do a Turk", which simply means to put on perfume when one does not have time to take a shower. The implicit message behind these expressions is that even though Turks pretend to be clean "like us", they remain dirty beneath the surface. My hypothesis is that this linguistic heritage may find resonance in wordings frequently used in connection with Turkey's application for membership in the European Union. For instance, headlines such as "Poies a plenty? Wait till the Turks arrive"<sup>11</sup>, can easily be read against a background of fear of Muslims invading Europe. For the more historically cultivated Europeans, it may evoke the image of hordes of Ottoman soldiers, for others the link to terrorism may come to mind. Another recurrent expression that occurs both in the press and in academic work on Turkey, is idea that Turkey has a "desire for Europe". A desire is an irrational sentiment, a passion, and coined to Turkey it thrives on centuries of stereotyped presentations of the sexually perverted Turk. Along these lines of thought, it is also worth noting that Turkey is frequently alluded to as untrustworthy and suspicious, like in the headline Turkey "covers up" bombings to "protect" tourist industry.<sup>12</sup>

#### A question of identity

Yet is there a link between these speculati-

ons and the current public opposition against Turkish membership? As noted above, it is always hard to prove anything when it comes to an imprecise and blurry concept like "public opinion". Yet again it should also be recalled that when asked why they are against Turkish membership, a majority of Europeans state that different religion and culture are important factors. And by constantly returning to the question of compatibility between Turkish religion and European identity, the media implicitly continues the "othering" of Turkey. In short: In a troublesome time for Europe when the quest for a common identity seems to thrive on a rigid opposition between "us" and "they", Europeans impose on Turkey the role of the convenient Other that can tell us who we are.

- 1) My main sources have been articles from BBC, the Guardian, Le Monde, Le Figaro, Die Zeit and Spiegel during 2005-2006. The German papers date back to 2004.
- 2) "Over half of EU citizens against Turkey accession", available at <http://www.euractiv.com/en/governance/eurobarometer-half-eu-citizens-turkey-accession/article-142697>.
- 3) Jody K. Biehl: "The Whore lived like a German", available at <http://service.spiegel.de/cache/international/0,1518,druck-344374,20.04.2006>.
- 4) Ibid.
- 5) Abram de Swaan. "Notes on Multiculturalism, Religion, and Gender relations", presented at the conference "Visions d'Europe" at IEP Paris 10 March 2006, copy provided by Prof. Dr. Robert Picht.
- 6) Ibid.
- 7) Ibid.
- 8) I analyse this relation in "EU as a Moral Actor: Women's rights on Turkey's road towards EU membership", Master dissertation at the College of Europe 2006.
- 9) Nilufer Göle: "Europe: an identity or a project?" in Sign and Sight, available at <http://www.signandsight.com/features/514.html>.
- 10) Edward W. Said. *Orientalism*, Penguin Books 2003 (first published 1978). London, p 27.
- 11) <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,1072-2323634,00.html>.
- 12) <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,2089-2252575,00.html>.

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# FORMING TURKISH PUBLIC OPINION ON EU-MEMBERSHIP

Canan Balkir

The media, as one of the dominant structures of Turkey's social and political system, is a powerful informing and socializing institution. It is central to forming public opinion as the main setter of the public agenda. News as a specific basic function of the media has a significant role in this powerful process. As the media exert influence and causes social change within society, it is expected to play a crucial role during the Europeanization process. It is expected to influence both elite and public perceptions and opinions concerning Turkey's relations with the Union.

The contents of the daily newspapers can be regarded as a reliable indicator of the culture and society in which they are produced. When we look at the way how the relations between the EU and Turkey are reflected in the columns of Turkish national dailies, it is important to note that with the exception of *Radikal*, a liberal daily, almost all the national dailies - in differing degrees - seem quite sceptical about Turkey's accession to the EU. Furthermore, the official statements are considered as the main source for EU related news and evaluations. In contrary to general considerations, the mainstream newspapers such as *Hürriyet* and *Sabah* evaluate both Turkey-EU relations and EU related issues in a rather superficial manner, and they usually reflect the populist political discourses. On the other hand, the way they cover the problems arising during the accession process is highly temperamental. Furthermore, they reflect almost the same concerns about Turkey's full membership process, polarizing the issues by attaching national discourses to the news coverage. The controversial issues of the negotiations are represented as problems almost with no short term solutions.

The Cyprus problem has become a highly contentious issue in Turkey's relations with the EU. For the Turkish public, the chance of achieving a just and fair settlement of the Cyprus problem looks rather dim for the foreseeable future. Along with the Cyprus problem, some of the other concerns are the issues of the so-called Armenian genocide, the Kurdish problem and the pressure from the EU for Turkey to re-open the Heybeliada Greek Orthodox Seminary. These highly politically polarized issues are finding place in the news coverage of the dailies and seen as the main obstacles of Turkey's membership, establishing a linkage between accession and losing the country's sovereignty within the demands of EU. This perception caused the drastic decline of the Turkish public support to the EU accession.

The other common issues which are repeatedly discussed are the concerns about the Fener Greek Patriarchate, the double standard applied by the EU concerning Turkey's membership process and that the Accession Partnership Document is similar to the Treaty of Sevres, the treaty which in a way abolished the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, in times of crisis with the Union, the media reflects the Union as a threat to Turkey's national identity, national values and the unitary structure of the state, thus accusing the government of sacrifices of Turkey's national interests.

The coverage of the conservative newspapers such as *Türkiye* and *Tercüman* also shows an increased interest in the issues concerning the accession process, although they do not have a separate page devoted to this top agenda item. The coverage of *Türkiye* is mostly in line with the official stance and generally supportive of the integration, with the exception of the aforementioned sensitive issues. The related news is placed in the political pages of the newspaper, neglecting the economic content of the integration. The other conservative daily *Tercüman* displays a more nationalist discourse towards the EU and is sensitive especially on the issue of Cyprus, which it carries to the headlines.

*Zaman* and *Yeni Safak* are the other widely read conservative daily newspapers having more religious flavour and somewhat more intellectual content. *Yeni Safak* is also pro-government and its contents reflect this. Surprisingly, these two newspapers contain more news items about Turkey's accession than most mainstream newspapers in the country, and furthermore these reveal a more positive approach towards the EU in their coverage. A columnist in *Zaman* has even portrayed Turkey's accession to the EU as the convergence of the civilizations between the Western and the Islamic world (H. Gülerce, 22 July 2004). The news and articles in these newspapers are not just informing about the relationship between Turkey and the EU, but also contain more general news about the Union as an international actor. *Zaman* has already appointed a correspondent in Brussels. Similar to the others, both newspapers show great sensitivity if it comes to issues like the Cyprus problem as well as the so-called Armenian genocide.

When we evaluate the media as a whole, there are also central similarities in the way the issues concerning EU-Turkey relations are covered. The Community has been introduced from a utilitarian perspective, as an economically attractive project, but in terms of political aspects it has been portrayed as a project grounding highly challenging problems in domestic politics.

Neither the politicians nor the media have informed the Turkish public that 85 percent of the work to acquire full membership involves domestic measures. The pros and cons of integration are not covered in an adequate and impartial manner and the public is not well informed about the actual integration process. Consequently, Europeanization remains an elitist project.

Regarding the problems faced by the Union such as the aging population, unemployment, failure of the ratification of the Constitutional Treaty, they are sometimes reflected in such an exaggerated manner that they can be taken as signs of the Union's disintegration. The media can also partly be blamed for the link established in the minds of the people between the constitutional crisis and further enlargement, including Turkey. The rise of negative perceptions on enlargement in some EU countries encouraged resentment towards the EU. This is echoed in the public decline of confidence in two aspects: the integration process and the possibility Turkey's accession. A recent poll (Sep. 2006) by *Milliyet* daily indicates that the percentage of respondents in Turkey "with a positive attitude towards EU membership has dropped from 60% to 32.2%, displaying the declining level of public support. Among the young people (ages 18-27) the positive attitude towards EU membership is higher, 42%. The ratio of respondents stating that it does not really matter if Turkey becomes part of EU or not is 33%.

One of the primary aims of the media should be to overcome misunderstandings and prejudices against Turkey in Europe and the similar prejudices against the Union among the Turkish people. However, if the media has the leaning to mirror the views and voices from a specific angle then we cannot talk about the media as the natural servant of a democratic order.

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Wolfram Hinz: Deutschlands EU-Ratspräsidentschaft 2007. Integrationspolitische Akzente in schwierigen Zeiten, ZEI Discussion Paper, C 164/2006.

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## SPOT ON

Thomas Gutschker

The heads of state and government and their diplomats knew what they did when they granted Turkey candidate status at noon on 11 December 1999. However, they had failed to prepare the public for doing so. Even worse, the public was deliberately ignored.

The turning down of Turkey in Luxembourg 1997 was followed - after the change of government in Germany - by diplomatic advances and secret negotiations. It was not Ankara that courted Brussels but vice versa. One of the most important and most far reaching decisions of the European Union was concluded by exclusion of the Union's public.

Today, diplomats preen themselves on how they managed to contrive the coup. But

apart from their professional ethos, do they have done a good service to their cause? Certainly, Ankara is no longer only candidate, but negotiation partner of the EU. However, support for Turkish membership has dramatically declined in many member states. According to the Eurobarometer, two thirds of German citizens are opposed. In the constitutional referenda in France and the Netherlands, Brussel's Turkey policy was decisive for more than a third of those voting "no" to reject the constitution (according to exit polls). At first, EU-leaders took refuge from the public, now the public takes refuge from its leaders.

This exemplarily illustrates what it signifies to take political decisions without public discourse, i.e. without the media. After all, it is only newspapers and broadcasting stations that can initiate such a discourse by explaining, criticising and developing alter-

native positions. Certainly, from a political point of view, this implies time consuming business that generates various efficiency and friction losses. Nonetheless, it is the sine qua non of legitimate political action in democratic societies.

It is evident that the media cannot wait for politics to step forward into public light. They always have to point out the spots on the places where others plunge into darkness. In the case of Turkey news coverage this means: They are not to be lulled by a technocratic accession process with its "screening" and numerous chapters. To the contrary, they have to repeatedly put the basic questions of accession back on the agenda: Where are Europe's borders? To which extent is the enlarged EU capable to absorb and to act. And, with reference to Turkey, are the political criteria fulfilled? How about religious liberty and the equality of women and men - not only in documents, but in reality? Does Turkey conduct a mental change or does it merely adapt to Brussels' exigencies?

Public discussions on such questions have only seen the light of day after the Copenhagen Summit in 2002. But they can no longer be contained today. Besides, the media now follow much closer what happens in Turkey, ranging from so-called honour killings to discrimination against orthodox and Catholic Christians, from social tensions in Kurdish areas, the treatment of the genocide in Armenia up to the processes against writers.

It is well possible that many eurocrats are afraid of this bright light. But in the end, it will not be up to them to decide but - at least in France - up to the citizens.

*Dr. Thomas Gutschker is foreign editor political weekly "Rheinischer Merkur".*



*The media - focussing on critical issues.*

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## THREE QUESTIONS

### to Mehmet Ali Birand

*Mehmet Ali Birand is writer, journalist and commentator.*

According to you, which aspects are the most important ones in the debates on accession negotiations?

The European Union was enlarged five times during its fifty-year life span. It conducted negotiations with 19 candidates and approved their full membership. Turkey's accession process, however, has been unlike any of the previous.

Turkey and the EU seem more to be playing at "membership talks" than engaged in

serious negotiations. Each side had its own reasons for its failure to initiate a genuine process. The ongoing debate between the two sides are so dissimilar and confrontational that it is as if they were still discussing the pros and cons of Turkey's admission instead of concentrating on technical items. Internal political issues that Europe has to deal with are shadowing its relationships with Turkey.

Looking back at the negotiation processes of all member countries, we see that the first few years were usually spent in technical debates until real negotiations took over and took place within the country in questi-

on. Turkey, however, finds itself in a very different situation. Any essential, significant chapter is still to be opened. In fact, all serious discussion on how to comply with Agricultural as well as environmental policies is postponed in favour of the spotlighted Cyprus issue. In other words, discussions are taken up with political issues rather than technical points.

A significant portion of the European public opinion is still uneasy about Turkey and has trouble in picturing Turkey in Europe. In Germany, the Christian Democrats wish to maintain their traditional attitude and are trying to confine Turkey to a speci-

al status The French are trying to slow down membership talks, because they are uneasy about the upcoming presidential elections, just like Austria and the Netherlands because they fear Turkey's size. Greece and Southern Cyprus have their own obvious reasons. The Cyprus issue currently constitutes the most popular reason for it provides such a good excuse

The EU-Turkey relations have almost been brought to a standstill by the tedious and exaggerated criticisms that the European Parliament keeps raising, as well as the foot-dragging attitude of a group of member countries that uses every pretext to slow down the negotiations.

Actually, no one really desires the end or the suspension of membership talks. They just prefer to subject Turkey to a Chinese torture while they cater to their internal politics or collect some prior debts. In fact, the whole situation may be better described as a "dialogue des sourdes."

Arguments and debates in the EU and in Turkey are still hardly linked. How could an approximation be accomplished?

The only way to link together the debates and the arguments that take place on different wavelengths between Turkey and the EU is for them to finally reach some key decisions

The European Union has to decide whether or not to hinder the negotiations with Turkey. As long as the EU keeps finding negative pretexts or transforms the opening and the closing of each chapter to a battle or constantly presents Ankara with another political "bill" to pay, it will be pointless to continue this process. It will be impossible to carry on talking, if at the beginning of each chapter, the EU requires Turkey to give in to the Greeks on the Cyprus or the Aegean issue or puts Turkey under pressure to grant rights to the Kurds that pave the way to an 'autonomy-federation' formula. This attitude only helps to weaken the Turkish government's position by convincing the public of EU's hypocrisy.

Turkey has to make a decision, too. The Turkish government has to make up its mind to stop wasting time with so-called reforms and to come up with and implement valid packages that will achieve the desired transformation.

The only way to end this current chaos is for Turkey and the EU to make these decisions and to reach a compromise among them. Therefore, the upcoming December summit is extremely important. It must be a "decision-making" summit that either opens the way for Turkey or terminates all discussion. The prevailing ambiguity weakens the Turkish government's motivation to effect reforms and also complicates its performance in other areas by inflaming public opinion.

How do you see the general function of the media in the process and discussions? As a Turkish journalist and commentator, where do you see your role in this?

The Turkish media has yet to figure out what these membership talks mean. Negotiation topics are treated solely as political items and evaluated from completely superficial points of view. There are no



Mehmet Ali Birand

Kanal D

expert journalists that are familiar with the technical side of the EU or its mechanisms and can therefore conduct correct analyses.

EU topics, dull and dry by nature, are taken up from sensational points of view to increase circulation or rating. As a result, each channel or newspaper favours a media policy that reflects its own preferences. In other words, the pro-government

media views developments from a "positive" angle, while the "opposition" media (and Nationalists included) does the opposite.

In general, media evaluations tend to emphasise the negative effects of the EU on Turkey rather than the positive developments that it can entail:

- For example, decisions on the Kurdish issue are heralded as evidence of the dividing effects of the EU on Turkey...

- Any Decision or statement that deals with civil-military relations is received as an indication of the EU's intention to weaken the armed forces in order to transform Turkey into a religious state...

- All expectations concerning the Patriarchate or the Foundations are viewed as EU's efforts to convert Turkey to Christianity...

- All criticism that favours Human Rights or Freedom of Opinion is denounced as the EU's efforts to weaken Turkey...

In short, the EU is presented as an organism that will enslave and exploit Turkey. While the members of the anti-EU front shout the loudest, the pro-EU front is reduced to silence. Of course, the negative attitude of the European Parliament and of some member countries also provide ammunition to the anti-EU front. The pro-EU media is being pushed to the sidelines.

My personal opinion is that Turkey has caught the biggest opportunity in its history. I believe that if we can manage to attach this country firmly to the western civilisation, Turkey will achieve the largest progress since Atatürk.

Therefore, I pay no heed to the outcry raised by the anti-EU front. On the contrary, I use all the media power at my disposition to reflect my own truths.

The membership talks will prove difficult. There will be forceful debates in the public opinion. Both fronts will have to fight hard. Europe will travel on some lumpy roads. However, you will sooner or later see Turkey find its place in Europe. Europe will not be able to say no to Moslem Turkey...

*The interview was conducted by Volkan Altintas, Junior Fellow at ZEI*



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Editors: Andreas Marchetti, Volkan Altintas  
The ZEI EU-Turkey-Monitor is published three times a year.

Authors are responsible for the views expressed in their contributions.