

# THE CASE OF TURKEY IN THE EU

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In 10 to 12 years Turkey will be a member of the EU. With the assistance of a whole palette of crafty and logical arguments the opponents of Turkish membership – overt and covert – console themselves that this would not happen. Here is a part of their reasoning: the European public opinion does not accept 80-million Islamic Turkey as a part of Europe. Turks, who already live in Europe isolate themselves in close communities, because they are culturally incompatible with the majority Europeans. In European terms Turkey is a relatively poor country, and Europe is already charged enough with supporting the development of the new member states from the former communist bloc. The Turkish state is authoritarian and oppressive, with respect for human rights to the lowest sanitary minimum. Turkey does not fulfill the political standards of European democracy. The country is ruled over by a doctrine and culture of uncompromising nationalism, hardly compatible with the post-national stage of development of Europe ...

There are only two arguments – though rarely publicly referred to – in favor of Turkish membership in the EU. First, without Turkey, the geopolitical construct of the West, called upon facing the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, could not be completed and consistently protected. The West needs consolidated borders moved eastward which guarantee the control on the Middle East and Central Asia. The affluence of energy resources, the resurgence of radical Islam and the transition of China into a super-power are all challenges that cannot be faced without a critical minimum of economic, political and military control of the West over these two regions of key strategic importance. Second, the necessary depth of geopolitical penetration in these regions cannot be accomplished only through military-political and technological instruments. It is needed that the social structures, representing the identity of the Western civilization – open economy, democratic political system, and pluralistic culture – ‘take roots’ in traditionally non-Western societies on the eastern periphery of Europe in order to provide for the strategic sustainability of the Euro-Atlantic hegemony. The necessary – and in many aspects sufficient - condition for this is the full-fledged membership of Turkey in the main institutions of the West, including the EU.

The advantage of the previous two arguments in the debate ‘in favor’ and ‘against’ Turkey’s membership is that they are shared by the strongest economic and political factors of the contemporary West, capable of definitely influencing each institutional decision. Note - the French and Dutch voted definitely ‘no’ at the referendum for the European Constitution in the spring of 2005. One of the main reasons for the negative vote was due to perceiving the potential membership of Turkey as a threat. After both referenda the observers were unanimous – negotiations with Turkey and Ankara’s membership in the EU will be delayed for indefinite future. Several months later, on October 3, the EU decided to start negotiations with Turkey. It happened despite

the European public opinion, despite the “enlargement fatigue”, despite the actual institutional blockade following the rejection of the constitutional project.

The opponents of Turkish membership still console themselves with the “insuperable obstacles”, which the procedures for full membership install and will consistently put up for Turkey. Lastly, the inner fortifications of the “fortress Europe” are the referenda, which Austria and France decided to hold for approving each next candidate country after the entry of Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia in the Union. Prior to them, however, there are numerous procedures of the negotiating process, which have to verify that the EU legislation - *acquis communautaire* – is adopted and effectively applied within the Turkish state system. The membership negotiations held with the former communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe were quite formal. They floated on the surface of the normative and administrative-procedural framework of verification that the candidate country has adapted its economic, political and social system to the standards of Europe. The post-communist governments themselves undertook a strategy of practical consent with all requirements of Brussels in order to finalize negotiations and get the EU membership most quickly. Only Poland (and partially the Czech Republic) organized a substantial negotiation debate from the position of its national interest regarding the membership conditions. The more the enlargement process moved to the east and south, however, the more important it is for the EU to go deeper in the negotiation process from the normative-administrative surface into inspecting the substantial application of the adopted norms and procedures in the government of the candidate country. Bulgaria and Romania were given a postponing clause in their membership agreements as an instrument of pressure till the very last moment to practically implement (how much effectively is another matter) the undertaken commitments for their EU membership.

### **The Challenges of Negotiating With Turkey**

Negotiations with Turkey will be unique in view of a “double misfit” of the candidate country with the membership criteria. **On one hand**, Turkish state system is the least conforming to the European requirements compared to any other candidate-country in the EU history. The very fact that Turkey was acknowledged as a country fulfilling the political criteria of Copenhagen (without which a country is not given the status of a candidate-country) was a tremendous and substantially wrongful political compromise that Brussels made. Turkey has long-term structural problems of its state system functioning in regard to standards of relations between the state and its citizens. The restrictions on free speech, that intellectuals like *Orhan Pamuk* and *Murat Belge*<sup>1</sup> are confronted with, are only the surface of systematic repression of basic minority, ethnic, religious and civil rights, applied with the purpose to protect the official nationalistic ideology of the secular republican regime, controlled by the military establishment. The totality of the ideological control of the dominant radical nationalism is best shown in the official treatment of topics like the Armenian genocide in 1915. The public mentioning of this topic itself was tabooed during the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the attempts for discussion today end with a lawsuit (as in the case of *Pamuk* and *Belge*). According to the logic of

the Turkish state ideology it is not disgraceful to commit genocide, it is disgraceful to confess it. Notwithstanding that contemporary Turkish statesmen and Turkish citizens do not bear responsibility for the deeds of their predecessors in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – besides, of course, the responsibility of admitting the crime and apologize for it.

Problems of evolution and adaptation of the Turkish state system to the democratic standards of Europe are complicated by the fact that, despite its authoritarian nature, the secular nationalist republic under the control of the military is the only – for now – guarantee for the pro-Western (within certain limits) orientation of Turkey as a key country on the border between Europe and the Islamic East. The moderate Islamist Party of Justice and Prosperity, ruling in Ankara in recent years, is conducting reforms, which weaken the institutional control of superior military over state power, but it is currently premature to judge its ultimate goals and outcomes of this ostensibly democratic transformation. Whether democracy is a goal or means of now moderate Islamists is yet to be seen<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, in the ideology of political Islam, democracy - as far as it exists – is not liberal. Thus, the alternatives of state-political development of Turkey are enlightened secular authoritarianism – manifested by Kemalism, or Islamic democracy, which may imitate liberal reforms, but in essence it is alien to the values of Western liberal democracy. To these two alternatives, in different proportions, the ideological and political influences of neo-Ottoman, pan-Turkic and Turkic-Eurasian political doctrines could be added<sup>3</sup>. Neither of these ideological and political trends includes the democratic values of contemporary Europe. Kemalism remains relatively most close to European cultural identity as a project for authoritarian modernization of an Islamic society on its road to secularization.

Political dilemmas of Turkish remoteness and difficult compatibility with the project of Europe could be better understood in the context of economic, social and cultural divisions of contemporary Turkish society. Similar to any other border society, Turkey is a country with two, even three, faces. The Western face of Turkey, demonstrated by modern industrial and commercial cities and regions near Istanbul and the Aegean coast have actual potential for relatively successful economic and – to a certain extent – social integration in the life of united Europe. Central Turkey is rather a well-arranged Middle East territory. East Turkey – for its poverty, ethnic conflicts, powerful demographic dynamics and total dominance of traditional Islamic society is rather comparable to poor Islamic countries eastwards than to any European standards. Huge investments are needed for the development of these regions for decades prior to whatever strategy for modernization may bring convincing results. The agenda of any substantial democratization – especially by European standards – may come only afterwards.

**On the other hand**, the negotiation process between Turkey and the EU will be characterized with a powerful, aggressive and intransigent pressure on behalf of Ankara on Brussels to recognize the current political, economic and social status quo in Turkey as satisfactory for EU membership. It is impossible for Turkey to fulfill substantially – even partially – the criteria for membership in the European Union. It would be too

painful to Ankara, however, to undergo the negotiation procedure, which Eastern Europeans chose: “it is true that we are not well prepared, but we are obedient, accurate and diligent – please, take us in.” There are too many and too important issues, on which Ankara has to “obey” Brussels, if it undergoes this procedure – the recognition of united Cyprus, community autonomous status for Turkish Kurds, complete abolition of military control over political decisions, obliteration of state control over religious communities ... It is only the beginning of the list. The Turkish state deliberately maintains a campaign of indignation at the “humiliating requirements” of Europe towards Turkey within the Turkish public opinion. The timid legislative reforms, made by the government of the demonstratively moderate Islamist *R. T. Erdogan*, are presented as “sufficient sacrifice” made by Turkey in the name of Europe. Dynamics in negotiations between Ankara and Turkey from this viewpoint are already evident. On one side, there will be soft, politically correct and kind, even scrupulous, European administrators and politicians, trying delicately to show Turkey the necessary steps for adaptation to European institutional realities. On the other side, there will be Turkish diplomats equipped with a strategy of unconditional infallibility and obstinacy. It is not only a “style of diplomacy” – each retreat from any Turkish position threatens to reveal the whole gap of discrepancy between Turkish public reality and the European criteria for membership.

Besides being psychologically imbalanced, negotiations with Turkey will be perforce motivated by the current political agenda – European and global. Europe, as part of the West, is getting more vulnerable to the waves of instability, demographic expansion and religious radicalization of the Middle East. Chaos in Iraq will be followed by a grave and prolonged crisis with Iran over its nuclear ambitions. The victory of Hamas in Palestine and the rising fundamentalist pressure on the regime in Syria bode no better times for the region as a whole. A series of small but timely political services, which Ankara may render to the West in the process of this new round of Middle East destabilization, would play a decisive role in crushing of nonetheless enervated reasoning of Brussels for bringing Ankara around implementing reforms and fulfilling criteria. Thus, negotiations on Turkish membership will be reduced to a series of political bargaining – for its strategic services in favor of the West, Turkey will receive “small gifts” of successfully closed negotiation chapters. Furthermore, in this international political context it is Brussels and not Ankara that will be the negotiating party, which is pressed, hasty, and sets the dynamics of the process, turning a blind eye to Turkish realities “from A to Z”, from the first to the thirty-first negotiation chapter.

Perhaps here we have to mention the objection that all this could not happen because the European public opinion will not allow it. Doubtlessly, the European public will have serious influence on the negotiation process, for which it will not run smoothly – it will have its dips, crises, even temporary breaks and blockades of negotiations. It is for sure, however, that the public opinion of Europe, as well as the political opponents of Turkish membership in the EU, will not be able to thwart the negotiations and accession of Turkey to the club of Europe. The truth is that neither Brussels, nor Washington is able to pay the political costs of repelling Turkey and its potential animosity and strategic redirection on the border with the turbulent Islamic world. Besides the long-term drawbacks for the Western interests in the Middle East, the European repudiation of

Turkish membership application will bring about serious consequences in other two strategic dimensions. **First**, it will strengthen and “cement” the strategic partnership between Turkey and Russia aimed at preventing or limiting the strategic Western (military, institutional, infrastructural) presence in the Black Sea, the Caucasus, the Caspian Sea and Central Asia<sup>4</sup>. **Secondly**, the most unstable and vulnerable region of Europe – the Balkans – will turn into a border of the EU with the Middle East. This border could be seriously influenced and destabilized by an alienated and regionally powerful Turkey. Besides the relatively sizeable Turkish minority in Bulgaria, on the Balkans there are many dispersed Muslim communities, traditionally influenced and dependent on the patronage and suggestions of Ankara. Certainly, the accession of Turkey to the EU will not solve this problem – on the contrary, it will aggravate it, because the whole Balkan region will fall under the powerful regional influence of the former imperial metropolis – present Turkey. But this is the Balkan point of view. To Brussels and even to Washington the problem of Turkish hegemony over the Balkans after Turkey’s accession to the EU will be internal, European, problem, which Europe will regulate by institutional mechanisms of influence. As far as it could regulate it, of course ...

Turkey itself is not a stranger to the idea of a “Balkan deal” with the EU. Although the conflicts of 1990s faded away, the Western Balkans remains a vulnerable region, for which there is a lack of evident, short-and- mid-term solutions. Engaged in its global anti-terrorist campaign, Washington has no interest in maintaining peacekeeping presence in the Balkans, and the EU vacillates between the dilemma of offering membership to a group of countries without explicit limits and resolutions, or paying high costs of a proto-colonial control over a group of mutually hostile *de facto* protectorates. It is right here that Turkey, a EU candidate country, holds out a “friendly hand” – during his visit in Pristina (Kosovo) on 11 October 2005 Turkish foreign minister *Abdullah Gül* said: “The EU journey has ended and now we’re going to the Balkans. We’re traveling by planes to regions our ancestors went on horse”. Commenting on this, the influential Turkish daily, published in English, *The New Anatolian* adds on: “After successfully starting Turkey’s EU talks, Turkey turns attention to historical backyard: the Balkans”<sup>5</sup>. What a scope, what a dynamics! Yesterday you “conquered” Europe, and today you return to the Balkans by the right of your ancestors, who have kept these areas outside Europe for six centuries. The offer to Europe is clear – “do not worry about the Balkans, your backyard. If you admit us in the club of Europe, we’ll release you, we’ll take care of the Balkans as our backyard ...” As it goes by – the end remains to you ... and to the Balkans...

### **The Major Effects of a Turkish Membership on Europe**

The issue on the agenda is what would happen to the EU if it admits for membership Turkey, more or less like it is today. Turkey would be the biggest country in the EU, with the greatest number of votes in decision-making. It is a country with enormous social, cultural and economic divisions, a country with authoritarian political system, based on a radical nationalistic project. A country with imperial past, valued with

sense of pride and revisionist ambitions, in which the historic truth about the violence against subjugated peoples is rigorously tabooed; a country, where minorities, free speech and different identity are deprived. A country with immense demographic dynamics, with tens of millions poor citizens, living in the world of patriarchal, traditional, Islamic society. The evident answer is that the EU will cease to exist in its former status of a project for economic, social, political and cultural integration of Europe and will be reduced to the status of a customs union, free trade area, upgraded with a certain amount of common commercial regulation, administration, and – perhaps – (for most members) single currency. In order to be impartial one has to acknowledge that even in its present form – after the accession of ten new members in 2004, the EU is functioning increasingly difficult as a single political and social project. There is a growing trend to establishment of internal alliances and division of interests among various groups of countries. The blockade of the European Constitution is just one of the indicators of this institutional and political stagnation. At this stage, however, there are still considerable opportunities for Europe to cope with this present blockade and find its “point of equilibrium” after the unprecedented wave of enlargement with new members (finishing with the entry of Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia). The accession of Turkey will destroy these opportunities. National political elites of European countries could be pressed to vote for Turkey’s membership. But citizens of Western and Central Europe will not accept either economic and tax sacrifice, needed for the integration of 80 million – in short-term, 100-million Turkey, or new flows of poor immigrants running from Anatolia, or the abrupt collapse of their social, cultural and civil-political standards as a result of the integration of a really very different society.

There is only one strategic choice, by which Western European political class can concurrently admit Turkey as a EU member and satisfy, at least partially, the interests of the citizens, who intermittently elect it in the institutions of power. And this is setting up “multi-speed Europe”. This concept is not a novelty. To some extent, such Europe is already a reality after 2004. This reality, however, submits to the strong homogenizing effect of operative European institutions and to the integrative role of the *acquis communautaire*. After Turkey’s accession however the “old” EU members themselves will re-nationalize their institutions and legislation under the pressure of the public opinion aimed at preventing unwanted invasion of foreign work force, foreign lifestyle, foreign institutional and civil culture. It is exactly this process, which will reduce the common European legislation and administration to a sanitary minimum of trade relations, to the status of a single customs union. In the place of the EU, degraded to a free trade area, a new flexible, informal, selective, bilateral, regional and multilateral process of “inner” integration between the countries of Western and Central Europe will begin. Britain will keep watching behind the Channel (EU reduced to a customs union is one of British old dreams), Scandinavian and Baltic countries will quickly get further closer, *Charlemagne* plus *Benelux*, Austria and Hungary ... The common high standards and rules of EU integration at present will be replaced with selective integration agreements among particular countries, filling in and transforming the vacuum of the practically abandoned European project. As a result of this process a relatively quick historic restoration of the European integration process in the internal core of Europe will

occur. Peripheral areas of Europe will remain part of its wider, external economic and strategic environment.

Turkey is interested in this inevitable devolution of the European project to a free trade area for two reasons. **First**, by this means Ankara will evade – or at least reduce – the ceaseless embarrassment of explaining in the European institutions one or another disparity between European standards and institutional practices in Turkey. **Second**, devolution of the politically integrated EU to a loose network of regions with various statuses will greatly favour the ambition of *Abdullah Gül* and his colleagues to return quickly and by modern means to the place where their ancestors have been riding horses – in Southeastern Europe. No great efforts are needed for this purpose. Powerful forces of economic, demographic and geopolitical gravity work in favor of Turkish ambition. In Istanbul – the only *mega polis* in the region – live at least twice as many people as the whole population of Bulgaria. The vigorous process of migration from East Turkey to western industrialized regions is intensified by the demographic dynamics of traditional Kurdish and Turkish society. The industrial infrastructure of western Turkey cannot manage to integrate any more these newcomers. Presently, in the region of Istanbul, Bursa, Izmir and Odrin there are already millions of people (according to some estimates – between 5 and 6 million) without systemic subsistence. Lifting the border barriers between Turkey and the EU will set these people free to seek their living in other countries – the first possible destination is Bulgaria and the other countries in the Balkans. The scope of Turkish economy, Turkish armed forces, and the potential of the Turkish state inevitably allot Turkey the role of regional hegemonic power in Southeast Europe. The intensity of this hegemony will directly depend on the willingness and potential of the rest of Europe – to what extent it will preserve itself as a single subject – to influence the economic, political and social development of the Balkan countries.

The aspirations of Bulgaria, Romania and the other Southeast European countries to be members of the European Union are motivated by the long-term interest of these societies to break away from their historical dependencies on the empires of the East – Ottoman and Russian (Soviet inclusive) – and to re-integrate in the civilization project of Europe. The irony of history however may fling them back to the hands of their former imperial masters in direct result of their realized ambitions for EU membership. If Turkey accedes to the EU and realizes without any excessive efforts its project for “return” or hegemony on the Balkans, the first direct result of this would be the triumphant geopolitical return of Russia in the region. Balkan Eastern Orthodox societies have complex identity as a result of the vicissitudes of their history. These are societies of two faces – one looking to the modern West, and the other – to Russia, which has always been the only historical hope for dispelling the oppressive Islamic empire of the Ottoman Turks from the home of Balkan peoples. A Europe, losing the charisma of its integrationist project and leaving its member states in the Balkans in the hands of the revived Turkish expansionism will be the most direct and effective invitation to Moscow for returning to the region. It would be a particularly interesting process in view of the new – and most likely long-term partnership between Russia and Turkey in the Black Sea and its adjacent regions. Thus, the Balkans will be returned to the channel of Russo-

Turkish rivalry and partnership, and Europe will be pushed out of the region due to the paradoxical logic of its own unwise expansion – the incorporation of Turkey into the EU.

### **Strategic Priorities to Influence Turkey's Membership Talks**

In the context of this most likely scenario for Turkey's membership in the EU the strategies of the main political, economic and civil factors, affecting the process of decision-making in the European countries, the US and the Balkans (however comic their inclusion alongside the first two this may seem) gain a special importance. The division between proponents and opponents of Turkish membership will remain in the future, but yet a third group of arguments and opinions will have a greater importance – giving account for the considerable probability for Turkey to be admitted and trying to influence the process aiming at its optimal development in the interest of a united Europe, of preserving the democratic European project, and in the interest of most positive democratic evolution of Turkey itself. The strategy of this “third option” between all “pros” and “cons” for Turkey's membership should include several basic components.

**First**, in terms of importance and long-term effect, cooperation is needed between democratic institutions and civil structures in Europe and Turkish democrats and Turkish civil society. Turkish intellectual and civil society elite equals to the best quality standards of Europe and the world. Yet, being a democrat and citizen in Turkey is much harder than in Europe, much harder than in the Balkans after 1990. Notwithstanding the reforms, which the current government undertook under the pressure of Europe, independent public opinion and free speech in Turkey are still mercilessly prosecuted, when empowered institutions consider that the official state ideology is offended. Therefore, Turkish democrats, civic activists and minority groups' representatives are most interested not just in Turkey's success in becoming EU member, but in a successful democratization of Turkey, motivated by the objective for European belonging. Turkish civil society should receive comprehensive and utmost support from Europe, Balkans, and the whole democratic world, in order to succeed in setting irreversibility and dynamism of democratic reforms in Turkey. Turkish civil society is the main, crucial and unique ally of Europe in the negotiation process with Ankara; an ally, capable of exercising parallel pressure over structures of authoritarian state nationalism. Each attempt for repression and restraint of civil rights and liberties on behalf of official institutions in Ankara should resonate in a powerful protest of European public opinion and pressure on European institutions for staunch negotiation process with Turkey. Turkish civil society should be regarded as an integral part of the European civil society, and any encroachment on it should be considered as encroachment on civil liberties in Europe.

**Second**, though directly related to the first point, support is needed to all pro-European factors and social movements in Turkey, even to those, which do not completely fit in the European concept of democratic identity. A considerable part of Turkish state establishment undertakes a “double strategy” in regard to EU membership. “This is Turkey, let it in – let it out of the EU, that's your will.” That's the message of

this part of the political elite. “If we do not accede to Europe, we have an alternative – we are a part of the Middle East, part of Eurasia ...” “The alternative” is an important part of Ankara’s pressure resource within the negotiation process, based on the understanding of the strategic importance of the country as an ally of the West. Reaching a distinct pro-European public and political majority against “the alternative” in Turkey is a crucial element of the Western strategy. Like any ideology, the dominant Kemalism in the Turkish state is potentially heterogeneous. On one hand, Kemalism is an authoritarian nationalistic project, on the other – it is the European, modern project for Turkey. Under certain circumstances the second may overrule the first.

**Third**, increasing the public and civil control and pressure on the EU institutions accountable for negotiations with Turkey is crucial. Precise civil monitoring on Brussels’ decisions is capable of quickly identifying the undue “gifts”, which the European Commission could be forced to make to Ankara during negotiations as a result of lobbying pressure. Sources of this pressure should be identified and publicly announced, regardless of their origin. Developing independent civil lobbying instruments is needed for influencing the governments of the US, the UK, Italy and Poland, which most determinedly and unconditionally support Turkey’s membership in the EU. The civil strategy for public control over negotiations with Turkey should avoid classic divisions between left and right political parties and social movements in Europe – utmost finality to processes of democratization and adaptation of the Turkish state and society to European social and political standards is in the interest of all Europeans, regardless of their political affiliation. This finality is necessary whatever the final result of negotiations with Turkey is – positive or negative for Turkey’s membership in the EU.

**Fourth**, maintaining the principle debate among European politicians and public opinion on “pros” and “cons” Turkish membership in the EU is counter-productive. The principle decision has been made. Europe missed the advantageous period for defending a common position in favor of a “privileged partnership status” for Turkey in 2003 – 2004. During this period Turkey’s position on the war in Iraq ultimately chilled the relations between Ankara and Washington, reducing to minimum the principle and strong American support for Turkey’s membership in the EU. Instead of taking advantage of those facts on the ground, particular European politicians (most of all, the German Chancellor *G. Schroeder* and Foreign Minister *J. Fischer*) had preference for cashing petty advantages, tempting Turkey with an unexpected proposal for membership in order to draw Ankara to the “European side” in the growing Transatlantic rift. Today it is already past, and any retreat – to abandoning the European commitment to Turkey’s membership – would have severe and unjustified consequences. Such a European stance would be unprincipled and would incite strong animosity in the Turkish public, a punch of the authoritarian state machine on the fragile process of democratization – and most likely – strategic redirection of Turkey from partnership to rivalry with Europe. A sound European strategy after 3 October 2005 requires mobilization of European institutions, public opinion and national elites in Europe for an ultimately effective pressure on Ankara for deep and principled transformation of the Turkish state and society, and adaptation to European standards of social, economic and political life. This pressure should be strong, uncompromising and based on the explicit understanding of

the complete legitimacy of the EU requirements to Turkey in negotiation process. Each misunderstood “political correctness” in this process will be at the expense of future generations of a “big Europe”.

**Fifth**, last but not least, is the necessity for reaching principled agreement between the EU and the US regarding the purport, procedures and requirements to Turkey aimed at successfully fulfilling the criteria for membership in the club of Europe. This point may cause disagreement of a kind – “Why Europe has to agree with the US on a issue of its sole concern?” Without denying the principled validity of such an argument, from a practical point of view I consider it more advantageous for European countries to engage Washington in a common position of the West towards requirements to Turkey. Otherwise Europe should be ready to experience a strong, informal and non-public political pressure from the other side of the Atlantic, which counts only at the strategic importance of Turkey for the West. A principled agreement between Europe and Washington on problems of Turkey’s membership in the EU could substantially limit the uncomfortably large perimeter of maneuvering of Ankara in favor only of Turkish strategic interests. When it is beneficial to Turkey, it is a part of the Western union, in other occasions – just a part of Europe, or – a Middle East country, or – a Eurasian country. However understandable such a “strategic pluralism” may be, provided the territorial location and geopolitical position of Turkey, it is far from beneficial for its Western partners.

The last, but in order of importance, argument in favor of a transatlantic dialogue on Turkey’s membership is that the sustainable integration of Turkey in Europe is a responsibility of the West as a whole, and not only of the EU. The process of Turkey’s integration in the EU will bring about a series of political, financial and social dilemmas, which have to be resolved jointly by the transatlantic community. Otherwise, the integration of Turkey in the EU could turn from a matter of common interest for a prospective Western strategy into a reason for additional alienation and tension between major partners in the transatlantic community.

#### NOTES:

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<sup>1</sup> The novelist *Orhan Pamuk* was charged with “denigrating the Turkish national identity” under Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code due to a pithy remark he made in an interview to the Swiss magazine *Tages Anzeiger* on 6 February 2005 in which he stated that ‘one million Armenians and 30,000 Kurds were killed in these lands [Ottoman Turkey] and nobody but me dares talk about it’. An inquiry has been started against *Murat Belge*, renowned Turkish intellectual, professor of literature and civil rights activist, for his participation in an academic conference held in Bilgi University focused on the same theme, which is forbidden for public discussions in Turkey.

<sup>2</sup> The definition of Prime Minister *Erdogan* for democracy is widely known. Yet in his capacity of mayor of Istanbul, he said: “Democracy is as a streetcar: you ride it until you arrive at your destination, then you step off...”, „*Will Turkey Make It?*” by *Stephen Kinzer*, *New York Review of Books*, Vol. 51, # 12, July 15 2004

<sup>3</sup> The original version of the ideology of *Kemalism* is a non-expansionist one – it examines the Turkish national project entirely within the framework of the state, under the slogan “Peace in Turkey – Peace in

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the world”. After the occupation of northern Cyprus in 1974, and – especially – after the 1980 military coup d’etat, the elements of imperial nostalgia and expansionist nationalism started increasing in the Turkish state doctrine. During the governance of *Turgut Özal* – Prime Minister and President in 1982 – 1993 – neo-Ottomanism and pan-Turkism turned to be a substantive part of the state ideology. The collapse of the Soviet Union opened practical space for the implementation of the pan-Turkism but the results of the Ankara’s campaign towards the ex-Soviet republics in the Caucasus and Central Asia were not quite convincing. The Balkan crises of the ‘90s related to the collapse of Yugoslavia and the success of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms in establishing control over the ethnically mixed regions in Bulgaria inspired the neo-Ottoman ambitions in Turkey. The Balkan policy of Ankara, however, is very reticent and cautious. The European ambitions of Turkey do not permit the development of an expansion beyond the ‘Chinese drop method’ – silently and unnoticeably gaining positions that serve long-term goals. The Turkish Eurasianism is a kind of “substitute ideology”, which aims at threatening Europe – i.e. Turkey has an alternative – as well as at serving the stronger and stronger mutual interest in cooperation with Russia for preventing the penetration of the West in the geo-strategic realm of the two former empires – the Russian and the Ottoman empires. In the implementation of the pan-Turkic, neo-Ottoman and Eurasian ambitions of Turkey the importance of Islam – as an instrument for manipulation and governing of the Turkish and other Muslim communities in the neighboring countries and regions - is growing.

<sup>4</sup> The strategic partnership between Moscow and Ankara for control over the Black sea and the resources of the strategic direction Black sea – Caucasus – Central Asia is already a *fait accompli*. Ankara does its best to discomfit the presence of NATO international forces in the Black sea aquatory, referring primarily to the Montreux Convention, and Russia maintains a series of “frozen conflicts” in the Caucasus for preserving the corridor to Central Asia practically impassable for the Western security infrastructure and economic development. The monopoly, established by the Russian concern Gazprom for transportation of gas from Asia to Europe could be preserved only in cooperation with Turkey with the aim to put a stop to any alternative projects for gas transportation to Europe from Iran, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan through Asia Minor.

<sup>5</sup> *The New Anatolian*, Wednesday, October 12, 2005

## **BULGARIA AND TURKEY’S MEMBERSHIP IN THE EU**

(SUPPLEMENT)

Among all European countries, Bulgaria will be the first and most affected by the consequences of Turkey’s accession to the EU. Turkey’s membership, of course, will have some positive effects, primarily on the Bulgarian economy – provided that these effects have not been already exhausted in recent years within the common tax-free market on the Balkans. Dilemmas and challenges that Bulgarian state and society face, however, will prevail in number and significance over the positive effects. The first serious challenge is related to the dramatic discrepancy between the demographic trends in Turkey and Bulgaria as well as between the ethnic groups in Bulgaria itself. Even today, long before its membership in the EU, Turkey insists on abolition of visa-regime for Turkish citizens traveling to Bulgaria. When some day – after Turkey’s accession to

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the EU – the visa-regime will inevitably be lifted, the ratio between the ethnic Bulgarians, with the lowest demographic dynamic in Europe, and the demographically expanding and migrating to the West Turks, will substantially change on Bulgarian soil within few years. If ethnic Turks make up to about 10% of Bulgarian citizens today, then after lifting the visa restrictions a pattern of demographic proportion, similar to the one in present-day Cyprus, will be established on Bulgarian territory. This process should not be necessarily viewed as a “conspiracy” of Turkey towards Bulgaria – it suffices to take into account the growing mass of an estimate of 5 to 6 million Turks and Kurds migrating from Eastern Anatolia to Turkey’s industrial West (Istanbul, Bursa, Izmir), which cannot absorb them any more. Even if only a half of this population leaves for Europe (2-3 million), with only ten percent of them staying in the first destination point – Bulgaria – this makes 200,000 – 300,000 people. And this is only the beginning...

There is already an organized potential on the territory of Bulgaria for accommodating and integrating the immigration waves coming from Turkey. Through the last 15 years the Turkish ethnic minority party in Bulgaria – the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF) – carries out a consistent two-faced policy. **The first face**, intended for the public is the face of a moderate, well-integrated in the institutions of power, reasonable ethnic party which takes care of the civic integration of Bulgarian Turks and part of other Muslims in the democratic society. Together with the other political parties in Bulgaria of the early 1990s, the MRF contributed to overcoming the legacy of the so-called “revival process” – a forceful change of names and repressions against the identity of Bulgarian Turks, organized and conducted by the communist regime in the second half of the 1980s. Names and civil rights of the Turks in Bulgaria have been restored, and their civic re-integration in Bulgarian society has been implemented with the support of MRF and the other democratic social movements in the country.

**The other face** of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms is the face of a centralized, monopolistic ethnic corporation, which conducts slow, persistent and aggressive strategy for isolating ethnically mixed regions in Bulgaria under its hegemony and control. **The first step** towards the establishment of this ethno-territorial monopoly was made through the seizure of votes of the Turkish population in favor of the MRF. Employing the mechanisms of patriarchal-kinship control, economic and administrative repression, the MRF has practically deprived Bulgarian Turks of the right to free democratic choice. You either vote for the MRF or the community isolates and ejects you. Thus, the Movement has established total administrative control over ethnically mixed regions, where the Turkish minority is dominant - initially through the institutions of local governance, and after 2001 – also through the massive concentration of power and political corruption in the hands of the leadership of the party, being part of the ruling coalition in government. The administrative pyramid in the ethnically-mixed regions has been built entirely by members and supporters of the MRF, the greater majority of them being ethnic Turks.

But it is not the ethnic composition of municipal and district institutions, but the power monopoly of the MRF as an ethno-corporatist political monopoly that is essential for understanding the process of “secession” of the mixed regions out of the control of Bulgarian state and out of the public control of Bulgarian citizenry and public opinion.

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**The second step** towards establishing a system of total ethno-corporate control over the mixed regions has been the silent, but dynamic process of concentration of economic resources in them – most of all, resources of corrupt redistribution through the power positions of the Movement, cultivating a “ring of companies” and business people, directly subordinated to the political leadership and to the leader of the MRF himself. There is also a certain activation of foreign investments from Turkey, but so far without decisive role for the economic development of these regions.<sup>1</sup>

Such an economic strategy enables the swift mobilization of the whole potential of the ethnically mixed regions. Combined with the control over a submissive administration this strategy provides for achieving certain political priorities. In contrast to the Bulgarian national state, which in the last 15 years has suffered one of its most acute institutional crises, the ethno-political corporation of the MRF and *Ahmet Dogan* enjoys excellent institutional vigor and centralized potential for effective political action. In practice, the MRF more and more transforms itself into a “state within a state”, as its actions are not subject to real control on behalf of national institutions. On the contrary, the Movement itself brilliantly makes use of the weakness of the Bulgarian state organism for penetrating and extracting the maximal corrupt resource in favor of its ethno-corporatist agenda.

**The third step**, which is yet to be undertaken in the context of Turkey’s integration in Europe, is the absorption of Turkish and other Muslim immigrants in the structures of the already stable ethno-corporate autonomy of the MRF from the Bulgarian state. This process could be organized around different schemes – swiftly and abruptly, in waves, with changing in time territorial strategies in Northeastern and Southern Bulgaria. Judging by the strategy of ethno-corporate monopoly in the ethnically mixed regions, implemented by the MRF so far, the absorption of immigrants will be slow, unnoticeable, with a focus on the pseudo-legal stay (after the expiration of the official tourist or business visa) of aliens in the closed areas and their gradual integration and legalization in the frameworks of these host communities. The monopolistic administrative control of the MRF in these regions and the “flexible” application – or law evasion – will effectively conceal the growing mass of semi-legal immigrants from Bulgarian public opinion and national institutions. This ‘Chinese drop strategy’ for slow, concealed, on a daily basis increase in Turkish immigration, will be carried out as well to avoid provoking defensive instincts of the majority of ethnic Bulgarians – who fear any – real or imaginary – Turkish expansion.

The Turkish state provides discreet, but firm and steady support to *Ahmet Dogan* and his team at every stage of the ethno-corporatist strategy of the MRF for monopolizing the mixed regions. Turkish diplomats, members of parliament and state ministers are often guests at the meetings and political events of the Movement. On all general elections held in the last 15 years, Bulgarian Turks, permanently residing in Turkey, with retained Bulgarian or dual citizenship, are being organized on large scale to vote either in polling stations opened in Turkey (in 2005 over 70 stations), or transported by buses back to Bulgaria. Bus transportation has been organized especially and widely during municipal elections in Bulgaria. These massive initiatives are carried out by emigrant organizations in Turkey with the direct support of the Turkish state.

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Moreover, in the last 15 years every attempt to establish a real, democratic alternative to the MRF – for real democratic choice for Bulgarian Turks - has been thwarted. Instead, MRF activists organize systemic schemes for control on voting – the so-called “Indian rope” method<sup>2</sup>, etc. The system for monopolist control over Bulgarian Turks – emigrants or permanently living in Bulgaria - has resulted in a 90-95% of their votes cast for the MRF in the communities, and the rest of “deviant” 5-10% usually invalid.

The combination between the process of European integration of Turkey and the ethno-corporate monopoly of the MRF over the community of Bulgarian Turks confronts the Bulgarian society and state with difficult challenges and the necessity to undertake swift measures for guaranteeing the sovereignty, democratic system and legal order as well as prospects for survival and development of Bulgarian national community in the future.

There are four imperative prerequisites in this regard. **First**, the Bulgarian state should continue to support the Turkish membership in the EU, provided that the conditions for adaptation of the Turkish society and state to the European standards are met. **Second**, the Bulgarian state should formulate and defend its specific interests and requirements in the context of Turkey’s accession to the EU. Similar models of a national position could be found in the requirements, set by Poland to Germany during the accession negotiations, related to immigration, property rights, land market, etc. **Third**, the Bulgarian state and society should make all possible efforts within the framework of democratic social and political system for breaking up the ethno-corporatist monopoly of the MRF over the community of Bulgarian Turks and guaranteeing their right to free choice. **Fourth**, the breaking of the MRF monopoly should be a public strategy supported by the EU and the democratic European civil society. The MRF leadership as well as the Turkish state institutions supporting it should decide whether they would like to see disfranchisement of Bulgarian Turks under the authoritarian control of the MRF as their front face or *façade* on the road to Europe.

This problem area and argumentation enters into a complex relationship with the traditional arguments of anti-Western and authoritarian versions of Bulgarian defensive nationalism, for which the “Turkish menace” is a priority theme for discussion and action. This creates the deceptive feeling that every problem, related to the behavior of the MRF, Turkey or the inter-ethnic relations in Bulgaria is by all means devised and manipulated by anti-democratic Bulgarian nationalists. Therefore, let’s make it clear. Bulgarian citizens, who would like to treat Bulgarian Turks in the way the Turkish state treats the Kurds are insignificant, negligible minority. The firm rejection of the practices of the so-called “revival process” on behalf of the greater majority of Bulgarian citizens, sets a solid barrier to every aspiration to resolving inter-ethnic and minority issues through anti-democratic means. After 1990 the Bulgarian society has chosen liberty as the bedrock of its national community. This excludes by presumption toleration of any discrimination, curbing the citizens’ freedom. Namely because of that, the restriction on choice and political identification, which the MRF practices as ethno-corporate political monopoly, is not permissible.

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It is not permissible, either, to exclude whole regions in Bulgaria from the range of the public mechanisms of civic control over the institutions, the administration and the interactions between the state and the citizens. It is extremely unacceptable to tolerate massive political corruption under the shield of the ethno-corporate monopoly of the MRF. There is corruption in all Bulgarian parties and state institutions, but the corruption of the leaders and the activists of the MRF is unapproachable, solidly entrenched behind the monopolistic control, far from public scrutiny on the mechanisms of governance.

The MRF monopoly creates prerequisites for the emergence and strengthening of radical populist, nationalist movements in Bulgaria, thus, running the risk of deteriorating the inter-ethnic relations and destabilizing the democratic model of civic integration of minorities in the country. Last, but not least, the ethno-corporatist model of the MRF creates even more challenges to Bulgarian national security. The transfer of the intra-party authoritarian model of the Movement on the mechanisms of functioning of state institutions, controlled by the MRF as a partner in the government coalition, sets conditions, beneficial to uncontrollable corrupt schemes of redistribution of public resources, as well as for the massive, uncontrollable penetration of foreign state agents in the structures of Bulgarian statehood.

If the Bulgarian state and civil society cannot succeed in breaking up the ethno-corporate political monopoly of the MRF, in a mid-term perspective Bulgaria will be subjected to the eroding effects of the combined influence of: a) growing territorial autonomy of ethnically mixed regions, b) expanding Turkish-Muslim immigration wave, c) increasing foreign agency's control in the institutions and d) growing weakening and paralyzing of the state from within in its efforts to resist the attempts of this slow, silent but increasingly difficult to reverse expansion. In a certain future, but not very distant moment, this expansion will openly serve the Turkish nationalist strategy for geopolitical retribution and hegemonic control over the Balkans. A supple immigration wave from our southern neighbor will rapidly transform ethnic proportions in Bulgaria, making them similar to those in Cyprus, and the ethno-political control of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms as "a state within a state" will lead to political "lebanization"/"cypriotization" of the Bulgarian state. Whether this would occur following the algorithm of ethnic crisis and conflict or through evolutionary change of the social and political *status quo* should be a subject of a special study.

Is it possible to prevent such a development? A series of measures and initiatives are necessary on behalf of the Bulgarian legislators and national administration to open up and strengthen the mechanisms for free and equal participation of Bulgarian Turks in the civic community of Bulgaria, presently and in the future. The necessary measures include: amending the election law; revising the dual citizenship status; designing an effective policy for attracting immigrants with preferable ethnic background and compensating for the demographic crisis; strengthening the transparency and the control over functioning of the democratic national institutions; reaching a broad political and civic consensus on substantial national problems – including the status of the MRF, and effective negotiating strategy of the Bulgarian government on Turkey's accession to the European Union.

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*Notes:*

<sup>1</sup> The investment of the Turkish company *Sise Cam* in a relatively big glass-manufacturing plant in Targovishte is an exception, which significantly changes the economic situation in the region.

<sup>2</sup>“Indian rope” – a method for handing out ballot-papers in advance and giving proof afterwards, including pictures taken by a built-in camera in mobile phone, that the ballot-paper, filled in in advance, has been really dropped in the ballot-box.