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Young Moslem-Populated-Turkey in Face of the Christain-European-Union

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Abstract

Turkey has been struggling for accession into the European Union for nearly half a century. The process is a slow one marked with stagnation periods. Some think that the actual reason for temporizing Turkey's proceeding on the way to Europe is sheer religion difference. Others are of the opinion that shortcomings of Turkey were responsible and her predominantly Moslem population is irrelevant.

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1. Introduction

Here introduce the paper, and put a nomenclature if necessary, in a box with the same font size as the rest of the paper. The paragraphs continue from here and are only separated by headings, subheadings, images and formulae. The section headings are arranged by numbers, bold and 10 pt. Here follows further instructions for authors. Turkey has been waiting for accession to the European Union (formerly the European community) since 1960s. Many shortcomings and discrepencies uncompliable with the european ways had been handled on the way sometimes slowly and sometimes extremely rapidly.

Nevertheless, the end-result has not come true, yet.Certain critiques claim that all other reasons are excuses for the sakeof "appearance" while in essence the real hindrance to the EU membership is merely Turkey's being a Moslem country.

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2. Turkey's Enthusiasm and Europe's Receptiveness

In the tentieth century, Turkey (as a continuation of the westward struggles ever since the Reformation) wanted to take place among the western states, whom she defines as the contemorary civilizations. Acquirement of Western laws included, all reforms and nation-making activities point to her taking the western state as a role model (Can & Özen 2005:7-8).

"Walter Hallstein (*) , president of the European commission, declared at the time [1963] that Turkey was part of Europe. Similarly, in December 1989 [Spanish politicean] Commissioner Abel Matutes confirmed Turkey's eligibility to become a member of the community. However; the idea that the European Union cannot admit a Muslim nation to its ranks may still form part of the semihidden agenda of many Western European politicians and have some effect on public opinion" (Hale & Avcı, 2002: 58-59).

3. The Bitter Feelings of Some Turks

Some Turkish people themselves are preoccupied with Europe's Christianity. Now; and all feelings and attitudes are easily revealed to and perceived by one's interlocutor and thus provoke similar feelings and attitudes on his part in accordance with the basic psychological principle of reciprocity. Approaching the issue from this angle, one might as well say that it is some Turks who are responsible for disrupting the smoothness of the relationships by implying their awareness of Europeans' Christian character.

Even though some date back the origin of the hard feelings all the way to the times of the Crusadors; still some others do not need to go that far back. Instead; they base the resentment on clashes which are much more recent and which had occurred between the late-Ottoman state and European great powers.

Fig. 1. The European Union delegates versus Turkish ones. Both parties have religious perceptions of their own
About their counterparts, which awake in their sub-conscious imaginations (illustration by the author ― S.C.)

For instance; *Mehmet Ali Birand says: "I do not think the trauma of Turkish people is represented by the crusades. They stay way behind and are brought up only as an excuse. I think in recent times the trauma of Turkish people is represented by the Treaty of Sèvres, the partition attempt of the Ottoman state* (*Deutsch-Turkishes Symposium 1998: Grenzfall Europa* 1999: 18). Some other Turkish intellectuals consider the westward way an improper one to begin with. They do this on their own rational calculation and not necessarely based on hurt or vindictive feelings For them, the home culture merely happens to be incompatible with the western one.

Late Atilla İlhan defended such values in his TV programs. He pointed out that even for the Russians, an eastern people, it was a mistake to imitate the west or to to feign being western, let alone the Turks. [Based on Gskalp's views, national-conservative ideologues claim that] *"the elite bureaucrats forgot their own culture while running after someone else's civilization. In contrast, the authentic Muslim Turk is portrayed as the epitome of resistance to alienation, loss of one's true identity and to what is called by the Islamist poet-thinker Karakoc "auto-colonization"* (Canefe and Bora 2003: 140, with reference to Kara).

4. European Reactions to Internal Politics

At the time of the Welfare Party and the True Path Party coalition; Siitonen (2010: 119) regarded Ciller's alliance with Erbakan's Welfare Party [of the Just Order] as a "deception not forgotten by the EP" and mentions that even after the breakage of that partnership "EP did not begin to trust Turkey's governments. British MEP Pauline Green memorably articulated EP's sentiments: 'Turkish governments come, promise, and go' ".As if in parallel with the above-mentioned opinion or as if an "extapolation" of the then-present-conjoncture onto our day; we encounter the following recent newspaper clipping to consider, now: Ozalp (March 10 2010: 23) notifies from Brussels that the recent report by the European Parlement, with the proposal by the British member Geoffrey van Orden , unexpectedly emphasized the need to preserve the secular wholeness of the Turkish army in light of its NATO membership.

5. The Notorious September 11 Incident and Thereafter

Since [the awful] September 11, Islam itself has become a focus of attention globally, with debates of contradictory interpretations. In this context, on one hand Turkey is greeted as a democratic Muslim country whose accession to EU would drop the thesis of a Christian club. On the other hand, many EU leaders and citizens hold the view that a Muslim Turk can never attain secularism and affiliation with that country would bring bigger threats to Europe from radical Islam (paraphrased from Evin, 2005: 40).

The author also points out to diametrically opposite views regarding religious expression of oneself in pious-America [*] and Europe; the former being in favor of women's headscarves and the latter against it. A paradox is in question regarding the september 11 incidents.: On one hand the event gave fear of everything pertaining to Islam. But on the other hand; Turkey, as a secular country with a moslem population gained tremendous importance and emerged in the eyes of Christian powers as a desired role model and an incentive example worth emulation for the whole Islamic world.

6. Europe's Prejudice is not a Myth

"Oxford historian E. A. Freeman's comments on Turkey and the Turks in 1877 (their being non-European, Muslim, alien, brutal and incorrigible) articulate attitudes which persist in some quarters even today" (Barchard, 2005: 90). Anthropologist Guvenc affirms that even though Europe is well aware of the variety in Christianitty, she

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[*] Indeed, two authors of sociolgy put it this way: *"Traditionally, the United States has a high degree of religious diversity and tolerance, and it is not uncommon to see marriages crossing religious boundaries. [*For instance, the neighboring] *Mexico is not nearly as religiously diverse as the United States. 97% Of the population is Roman Catholic"* (Hunt & Colander,1987: 135).

regards Islam as a homogenous entity whereas this religion, just like Christanity harbors sects and cofessions (Deutsch-Turkishes Symposium 1998: Grenzfall Europa 1999: 27).

The historically-rooted discrimination, in the related circles, appear to have evolved into "modernized versions" and in this new form they still linger in many European brains: Kabaalioglu (1999:131) notes that *"on March 1997, several months before the Luxembourg Summit, an 'extraordinary summit' of EPP (European's People Party) —* largest and most influential European-level political party of the centre-right— *was held in Brussels. According to some observers, the most important item of the EPP agenda was Turkey and the decision of this gathering shaped the the Luxembourg conclusions".*

"The summit meeting of the EPP, according to some commentators, opened a long time 'taboo', that is the 'Moslem State of Turkey'. *{Dutch reporter] Marc Guillet in [his Holland newspaper]* Algemeen Dagblad *was very clear in his observations: ' One argument was the 'danger' of millions of unemployed from Anatolia spreading across the continent to try their luck. The other argument was worded by Kohl and five other Christian Democratic prime ministers: Turkey, a big Moslem state in Asia is a Fremdkörper (an alien body) that does not fit in our Christian Europe. The reporter said 'after having been hidden for decades behind a smoke-curtain of other objections like democracy, human rights, economic situation, huge inflation, Cyprus issue; the big taboo has finally been placed in the spotlight' "* (Kabaalioglu, 1999: 132).

In the independant commission report on Turkey dated September 2004, under the subtitle "Le facteur musulman" (The Moslem factor) It says: The prospect of Turkey's joining the European Union causes heavy irritation for many Europeans because of the country's large and essentially Islamic population, who are perceived as the carriers of dangerously alien social as well as cultural traditions. Moreover; many circles think that political Islam, taking advantage of the democratic system and having no fear left of the military power, whose influence shall have diminished, could come to power and thus take control of an important member of the EU [**] (Ahtisaari, et al, September 2004:28)

7. Moderate versus Pronounced Understanding of a Given Religion

It is interesting to note that devout Moslems are more severely critiqued by other "moderate" Moslems than by non-Moslems, in many cases, with the fear of integration into the so-called modern world. In this respect a parallelship is accounted by the American writer in his short story titled *Eli, the Fanatic:*

In 1948 in a town named Woodenton, Eli is a Jewish American lawyer. The Jewish community is fairly integrated with the Protestant majority. Two holocaust-survivors, Hasidic and Tzuref, mean to open a *yeshiva* (a Jewish educational institution that focuses on the study of traditional religious texts) for orphans in a residential neighborhood.

Hasidic is walking about in his traditional black attire [*] (his long black overcoat and beard and "braided" hair "spilling out" beneath the charasteristic hat), collecting charities for the prospective school. Eli is hired by the community as a lawyer to discourage the two man from insisting on the residential area and keeps visiting the two on a professional basis.

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[**] The original wording in French goes as the following: *"La perspective de l'adhesion de la Turquie a l'Union Europeenne cause un lourd malaise chez de nombreux Europeens a cause de sa population vaste et majoritairement musulmane, souvent percue comme porteuse de traditions sociales et culturelles dangereusement etranges. Par ailleurs, beaucoup craignent que l'Islam politique, faisant plein usage du système democratique et n'ayant plus rien a craindre du pouvoir militaire dont l'influence aura diminue, arrive au pouvoir en Turquie et prenne ainsi le contrôle d'un important etat membre de l'UE."*

[*] [Along the course time] *"Jews, not only in Europe but also in America, became divided into three groups: The orthodox, who resist all change in beliefs and ritual; the reform group, which rejects much of Jewish traditionalism and believes that Judaism should be regarded as a changing and developing religion; and the conservatives, who cannot accept the orthodoxy but who object to an extreme break with traditions, and who therefore seek a middle way"* (Hunt & Colander, 1987: 321).

His personal embarrassment because of the "absurd" attire is overwhelming. So, he urges Tzuref to convince the 'man in the suit' to take off his black one and put on a suit. Tzuref claims his friend is too poor to buy a suit. Finally, despite his wife's disapproval, Eli puts his own expensive green suit and some other spare ones in a box and brings them to the would-be-school. The community appreciates Eli's persuasion techniques when they witness the traditional man now walking around in Eli's lawyer suit.

However; at night at his doorstep Eli finds the black suit and the hat of the orthodox Jew, as if in payment for the given clothing. (His wife Miriam is taken to the hospital for giving birth to their child) .Eli gets curious and hesitantly puts on the discarded clothing. Then he starts walking openly through the town's streets and even returns to the hospital visit in that old attire. A few friends come and with their held medical people capture him for a treatment for a "nervous breakdown". In Samuel Freedman's wording, *the main theme of Roth is "the anxiety of the American Jew: The fear that every hard-won advancement, every material and social comfort—indeed, every sign of genuine acceptance in this overwhelmingly Christian nation—can be wiped away with shocking suddenness"*.

8. The Aftermath of the Awful Cartoon Crisis

"The West traces the source of its civilisation back to the ancient Greece, Rome and Christianity. Islam, which represents the Orient, the East or the Third World, appears to lie outside the West and belong to a different civilisation. Yet civilisations are not homogeneous structures and there is no clear line separating them. Civilisations interact" (Ilgaz, January 2008).

"There are today nearly 20 million Muslims residing in the EU while the birth rate among Muslim immigrants is much higher. The [Bosphorous University] students see this as a good enough reason that Western Islam should be considered as a European" (Ilgaz, January 2008).

"The most widely shared view amoung the students is the following: The use of the concepts "Islam" and "terror" as synonymous concepts is erroneous and has resulted in the greatest damage to world peace and harmony between peoples of the two big religions." (Ilgaz, January2008).

9. Debate and Conclusion

Another paradox comes into play in the sense that secularism can harbor all religions simultaneously, on one hand; but secularism can be a hidden excuse for repudiation of all beliefs, on the other hand. In that respect an alliance of all religions, especially of the three monotheistic creeds could make up a common shield against pure materialism.

Simplifying enormously; western Europe is founded upon liberal views. Memories of religious wars [**] are istill present in Europe's collective consciousness. So, religious tolerance is the rule and norms of society are man-made insead of being divine (paraphrased from Shankland, 2005: 57).

Daniel Cohn-Bendit (former "Rote [Red] Dany" of 1968s) of the Green Party claims that the third wonder of the EU (after the Rhine River, representing the peace between Germans and the French; and the Oder River, representing the peace between the East and West Europe after the Cold War) will happen on the Bosphorus, integrating the continent peacefully with its three rreligions, namely Christtianity, Judaism and Islam (Gottschlich, 2004: 160).

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** *"The Reformation led to a considerable period of religious and political turmoil, including religious wars and repression of dissident groups in various contries. Protestants who succeeded in gaining freedom from control by Rome did not become a whole body. Instead, they got divided into sects and denominations, among which Puritans and Quakers played a role in the settlement of the English colonies in America"* (Hunt & Colander, 1987: 327).

The culture of tolerance appears to be the most important issue for internalizing real understanding for all human ways, the freedom of belief included. One should simply accept plurality and leave the others alone in their choices of life styles, rituals, values whatever they are.

Turkey is a large (seventy mullion) and young country in the face of a geriatric European population and its access to the European Union will be mutually beneficial for the involved parties.

Endnote: The preliminary version of this article was a graduate term paper submitted to Assoc. Prof. *Dr. Yonca Ozer*.

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