Forum

"Earned Europeanness":
Turkey and Diaspora Turks in Europe

Although the young and beautiful Europa was kidnapped by Zeus, the most important hero of Greek mythology, she has given a general identity to that continent which bears her name. Debates about the exact location of "Europe" and the definition of "Europeanness" have been going on for centuries.[1] Europe has borne its complex identity as a continent until recent times; however, due to its surrounding regions and especially its culturopolitical definitions, it does not have either geographically or culturally exact boundaries. In fact, the positive meaning given in general to "Europe" and "Europeanness" in modern times has increased the number of countries or population groups that wish to share this identity. But "otherness," the unavoidable face of identity, has created an even more complex situation that is now intertwined with this positive meaning.

As distinct from "Westernism," the concept of "Europeanness" has developed not only in terms of identity but also in terms of values, especially after the Second World War.[2] The performance shown in such issues as the continuity of welfare and peace, stability, and democracy, as well as the respect for human rights, cultural richness, and individual development, has had a great impact upon it. Although in the recent past Europe was a continent of horrible atrocity, intolerance, and war, it can be said that within the space of fifty years, it has largely effaced this negativity and is actively trying to be accepted as the symbol of "what is right and good."

Within the dynamic process of ambiguity of Europe's northern, southern, and especially eastern boundaries, as well as its cultural construction, a serious complication has emerged as it has modernized. It is clear that political allies and threat perceptions have played the greatest role in defining Europe during the last century. Beyond being a geographical and cultural region, European institutionalization via supranational institutions has occurred in the last century out of its strategy to maintain the cooperation,

peace, and welfare it has enjoyed after the great disaster and trauma created by the Second World War. Organizations like the European Council, European Defense Unity, the Western European Union, the European Coal and Steel Community, and the European Economic Community (EEC) were created by European nations. This process, which started with the EEC (established by the Treaty of Rome [1957]), first became the EC and then the European Union (EU). With the enlargement of the post-cold war period, it has evolved into a European composition. Hence, being European was almost defined as being an EU citizen. This feeling of self-confidence and superiority influenced the attitude of member states toward non-member states.

Although Turks have often been on the agenda of how Europe and Islam are connected, in fact Islam's presence was neglected in Europe (especially in the Iberian Peninsula) almost two centuries before the Turks embraced Islam.[3] But it is quite clear that the Turks, who have long been associated with Islam, have an importance in Europe despite their exclusion and in their identify formation process. This continuing paradigm shift, which began in the eighteenth century as a Muslim empire sought to merge with Europe instead of fight with it, is still being debated throughout Europe. Turkey's role as the "other," at least in regard to Europe, continues to be valid even today, despite the desire of the Turks.

There is no doubt, however, that identity definition is a dynamic process that includes pragmatic preferences. Examples of this can be seen in European history. For instance the Treaty of Paris, ratified on 24 February 1856, was the first European document to define the Ottoman Empire as "European" on a non-culturo-historical basis. This was considered a strategic choice for a Europe confronting the largest threat of that time: Russia. This choice was accepted with pleasure in the frame of security concerns as well as of redefining the identity of the Ottomans, who had already entered upon their course of collapse. During the cold war years, Turkey's participation in NATO was particularly appreciated, and the country has been encouraged in this respect.

The condition of "being European" in order to become an EU member, as stated in Article 237 of the union establishing the Treaty of Rome, under the sensitive conditions of that time, has been treated in a flexible way. The words of W. Hallstein, president of the European Commission, that "Turkey is a part of Europe" during signing ceremony of the Ankara Treaty (1963) meant more than just the procedural scope.[4] Nevertheless, Turkey and the Turkish people's identity definitions have played the main role in this

process. As in the last period of Ottoman Empire, the Republic of Turkey has considered itself part of European civilization and sought to realize this at both the state and the community level. Such endeavors continue even today.

Turkey's Europeanness has been accepted even by the most conservative Europeans, despite all of the conflicts and "otherness" of the past. Strikingly, at the 1997 Luxemburg Summit, during which the EU took the most negative decisions about the Turkish case, it was said and put into legal decisions that "The Council confirms Turkey's eligibility for accession to the European Union."[5] In every step of the process between Turkey and the ECC, the EC, and the EU, which has been ongoing since 1959, there clearly appears to be a need to accept Turkey as "European." The stress on Europeanness can be seen in the country's first application for membership (1959), in the Ankara Treaty, in the process of the EU Customs Union (1995), in the EU conclusions of 1997 and 1999, and at the initiation of negotiations for membership.

The desire of Europe to have Turkey on its side and the identity formation efforts of Turkey have been the key factors in this picture. And yet these same factors have failed to end the debate, as seen in the current movement led by President N. Sarkozy of France and the European Christian Democrats, which emphasizes the issue of Turkish identity as a reason to deny Turkish membership in the EU. The special case of Turkey has been a flash point of debate for those who define identity through culture and religion.[6] But it is also plausible to view Turkey's Europeanness from another prespective. Despite today's serious doubts and objections to accepting Turkey as a European country and the Turks as part of European society, Turkey continues to insist and struggle to be a part of Europe's social, political, economic, security, and cultural life. Moreover, Turkish society has already internalized this identity. Thus this Europeanness, which has been struggled for at both the state and the community levels and has been achieved to a great extent, is not a natural-born Europeanness; rather, it can be defined as an "earned Europeanness" that has been constructed by Turkish society's continuing struggle for and internalization of a European identity.

Centuries have passed since the Ottomans, who once controlled all of southeastern Europe and expanded their territory up to Vienna, retreated from Europe.[7] "Europe" and "Turkey," once "mutual enemies," then saw themselves rallying to the same side during the cold war and thus erasing the negative perceptions of the past to a large extent. At the same time, Turkey's

ideological-political orientation toward Europe was more and more institu-
tionalized and a strong human dimension was eventually added as well.
Participating as far as possible in Western European institutions had a strong
Europeanizing effect, thus making Turkey part of Europe. Turkey's Euro-
pean commitment never seemed to waver, despite the considerable chal-
lenges on the way to full participation in European institutions. Increasing
Europeanness was not only limited to the state, but also established itself as
one of the most important aspects of modern Turkish identity. Europeanness
is a deliberate political choice of the Turks, and the efforts spent to reach this
goal continue with great commitment.

Muslim Turks have changed Europeanness, or, more accurately, the
substance and identity of Europe. In the post-cold war period, some of the
Europeans experiencing a new "European Renaissance" and searching for a
new identity preferred to define "Europeanness" by referring to Greek phi-
losophy, Roman law, and Judeo-Christian culture. This framework repre-
sented a shift toward a civilizational project based upon the EU's cultural-
religious axis, which would exclude Turkey and the Turks. Defining Europe
in religious terms, without ignoring the fact that Europe is now an extremely
secular continent, and thus "othering" Turks and Islam, has been seriously
supported by specific surroundings.[8] There will never be a place for Turkey
within this kind of EU.

Yet the objections of those who prefer to see Europe not as a cultural-
religious society but as an area of democracy, human rights, multiculturalism,
and a sustainable market economy have been more influential. The cultural
approach of Valery Giscard d'Estaing, a former president of France and
head of the European Convention for the Constitution held in 2002 (which
excluded Turkey), remained open-ended as a result of objections coming
from the EU itself. Although today a considerable number of those who reject
Turkey's membership prefer to justify their position in cultural-religious
terms, they cannot exclude Turkey from European institutions because Tur-
key and the Turks have derived strength from their earned Europeanness, the
more than 5 million Turks living in Europe, as well as its geostrategic posi-
tion.[9] Despite all of the objections and misfortunes, since 5 October 2005
Turkey has continued its EU membership negotiations. Even if these nego-
tiations end, the close cooperation between Turkey and the EU will con-
tinue. The most important element here consists of the Turks now living in
Europe.

One of the today's most important factors in Turkish-European rela-
tions is the existence of Turkish migrants in Europe. The considerable

number of Turks, particularly in Germany and many other European countries (since the 1960s) and the more than 5 million Turks who live in EU countries, are important issues not only in Europe's domestic policy, but also in its foreign policy. The human factor, a dimension hardly taken into account at the beginning, became an ever more important issue with the start of substantial "workforce immigration," particularly to Germany in the early 1960s. The agreement with the Federal Republic of Germany in 1961 was soon followed by other European countries. The process and its implications, which have been characterized by Max Fritz's famous phrase of "We wanted workers, but they sent people," started almost half a century ago.[10]

Even though the conditions of the cold war no longer exist, this process continues. The immigrants and their families, identifying themselves as "European Turks," increasingly hold significant positions in the economic, cultural, and political spheres of the countries in which they live, especially after it became apparent that most of them were not living in Europe on a "temporary" basis. More than 5 million Turkish migrants, half of whom are already European citizens, are living examples of this fundamental and qualitative change in European societies. The former *Gastarbeiter* (guest workers) identity, which meant "sitting on the baggage as if to return tomorrow," no longer applies to the majority of Turks living in Europe.

Despite all of the problems, half a century of common history has demonstrated that these Turks have, in general, integrated well into the norms of Europe.[11] Despite expectations that they would have a rather hard time fitting into the European culture and lifestyle, they never became a source of massive disruption in those countries in which, initially, they were outsiders. On the contrary, they contributed to their adopted countries' development by their labor and taxes, respected the laws, and integrated into the surrounding society. More than 2 million of them can vote in local elections of the countries in which they live as well as in general and European Parliament elections.

Immigrants, considered to be both cause and a solution for the complex problems between Europe and Turkey, are important for two reasons: (1) there are the problems of integration and participation in their adopted countries because of their Turkish and Muslim identities and (2) their role in Turkish bilateral cooperation and with the EU. However, Turkish migrants are an unavoidable part of Europe and, due to their increasing numbers, now have an impact on shaping their countries' policies based on their social and

human factors. These developments are closely related to Islamophobia, which has become very evident in western societies since 9/11, and are playing an important role in Turkish-EU relations.[12]

The economic, cultural, and intellectual capacity of Turkish immigrants, who have evolved into a "European Turkish middle class" as active participants in European societies, constitutes part of Europe's reality. In fact, when analyzing those who oppose Turkey's EU membership, the discomfort caused by its participation in economic competition seems to be an important issue for most of them. In other words, what is expressed through culture and identity also has underlying pragmatic concerns. In this context, the relations between Turkey and Europe cannot be evaluated independently of the Turkish immigrants, for they are an element of identity and political issues.

After the 1990s, the significance of those Turks living in Europe shifted, in Turkey's eyes, from economic to political. In other words, European Turks were beginning to be seen more and more as members of the "Turkish Diaspora" who were expected to help Turkey attain its goals in both foreign and domestic politics. This new view went well beyond the significance formerly attached to the Turkish workers' remittance of money to their families in Turkey. Egemen Bagis, minister of state for EU affairs and chief negotiator, highlighted the important role of the Turkish "diaspora" in this context: "We are, thanks to you, already in the EU, and I see each one of you as our ambassador in our EU efforts." These words clearly illustrate Turkey's new policy toward "its European citizens."[13]

The importance of Turkish migrants, accounting for an approximate 2.5 million qualified voters, has reached an unprecedented degree of importance. Political parties will increasingly be affected by this growing potential. The conservative notion that the emotional bond between Turkish migrants and Turkey is an obstacle for integration, and therefore a reason for marginalizing them from national political life, requires reexamination. Turkey can be a part of the solution, just as it can also be a part of the problem: As long as EU membership is used – or rather misused – for cheap propaganda, Turkish migrants will continue to feel some emotional disturbance. Arguments against enlargement because of "cultural-religious" differences, used for justifying why the "homeland" of many migrants (i.e., Turkey) should not be admitted, lay the groundwork for a dangerous line of reasoning: Turkish migrants, in the eyes of many Europeans, display the characteristics of a country that should not be admitted to the EU.

This causes some migrants to wonder whether those saying "An EU without Turkey" may some day say "An EU without Turks." Accordingly, they perceive the "no to Turkey in the EU" campaign as a campaign directed against themselves, especially in the post-9/11 environment with its growing Islamophobia and discriminatory policy approaches. This is not to argue that Turkish migrants will be manipulated in favor of Turkish policy goals, since this would mean intervention in the internal affairs of the countries concerned. But nevertheless, it should be acknowledged and taken into consideration that the integration (or non-integration) of Turkish migrants into different EU societies is partly (but strongly) linked to the question of Turkey joining the EU (or not). To ignore this fact would mean ignoring the central links and connections in this complex puzzle.

From the presented point of view, it seems that Turkey has been more successful than some other EU member states when it comes to integration. For example, it is already playing a major "European" role in terms of culture (Eurovision and the European Capital of Culture), economy (the Customs Union and commerce with the EU), politics (the Council of Europe), and security (NATO and European Security and Defense Policy). The only core European institution in which Turkey does not currently participate is in the EU's decision-making mechanisms. It is, therefore, an undeniable fact that Turks are an important component of European life.

Through immigration, European countries have already tested whether it is possible to live with Turks. At this point in time, it can be concluded that Turkish migrants constitute an undeniable "socio-political capital" in Europe that should not – and must not – be wasted by erecting barriers instead of establishing a climate of mutual understanding, respect, and cooperation. Only by really accepting and understanding Turkish migrants as "capital" can the countries in which they live fully benefit from this migrant population's potential. Turkish migrants are a "soft power" who can contribute not only to Turkey's admission into the EU, but also to the general interests of European countries – particularly in times of crisis, as they are very experienced in the financial and economic spheres.

Here, it was pointed out that the Turkish people come from a country that has been inseparable from the western alliance for several decades, and one that has traditionally tried not to have religion be the determining element of its government and society. In many developed western countries,

the "integration of Muslims" issue has been considered a threat-terror phe-
nomenon that, due to the support of the terrified people in the street after
9/11, has created a favorable environment for populist politicians. There
has been clear evidence that western societies have not opposed – in fact
they have actually supported – many practices that go against their pro-
fessed respect for basic human rights and democratic principles when it
comes to dealing with immigrants. Without considering multilateralism and
multiculturalism, together with discrimination, policies have been enacted
that seek to encourage immigrants to "go back home" due to the ensuing
restrictions and even harassment.

In western societies where the Muslim immigrant population consists
of a great number of Turkish people, Turkish migrants have pointed out
that they have been singled out for alienation, otherness, and even antag-
onism only because of their ethnic and religious characteristics. This is, as
we all know, contrary to the basic principles of western societies. Actually,
individuals from the Muslim and Turkish communities who hold on to
their lifestyles while not damaging Europe's overall harmony should form
the basis for its multicultural society. When different lifestyles are viewed
as transnational social space concepts,[14] the issues will turn into enrich-
ment, not conflict. The solution does not necessarily need to happen
between parallel communities or result in isolated micro-cultural sec-
tions.[15] The confidence of the European community in Muslim immigrants
will be a key factor in the latter's integration.

The new immigration policy of the Turkish government, which is
based on integration, has started to be assertive. Its basic philosophy is con-
sidered to be the property of "the integrated, the substantive element of the
host country, respected, educated, rich, cultured individuals and Turkish
society." In this framework, the concept reflected parallel to integration and
put in front of clear frontiers has been "assimilation." "A non-assimilated
but integrated individual-society" has been requested not only by the Turk-
ish government, but has also been reflected as the basic concern of the
immigrants, who consider assimilation without borders as the most impor-
tant factor in preventing integration. Faruk Celik, the state minister dealing
with this issue in Turkey, has pointed out that "it is a necessity of humanity
and modernity to see immigrants not as strangers that need to be assimi-
lated or excluded, but as part of the [host country's] cultural and economic
wealth."

An important problem is related to the issues of citizenship and dual
nationality. In many countries where Turkish immigrants need to give up

Turkish nationality for citizenship, one can observe that their emotional reaction to such a stark choice causes most of them to decide not to become citizens of the country in which they live. Restraining dual nationality has been shown to negatively affect the integration of immigrants who have lived for decades in the countries in question who live according to the rules, work and contribute to the national economies by paying taxes, and have no criminal record. These immigrants feel very frustrated, because they view such a restraint as an indication of the host country's mistrust of them and their ancestral motherland, not to mention seeing both of them as potential threats. Such beliefs can lead to increased feelings of "otherness" and "exclusion" among them, which they then project upon the majority population.[16]

Conclusion

Actually, this can be a good chance for a Europe with a rich culture and a future full of tolerance and peace. The Turks' earned Europeanness is, in fact, more precious than the Europeanness of other ordinary European countries. The Turks will not Europeanize themselves by giving up their full personality, nor will the Europeans be overrun by Turkish Islam. Only in this way can the Turkish model turn into a success story.

The most sensitive issue here is the attention paid by an increasing number of Turkish migrants to furthering their already broad participation and integration into the European countries in which they live. One can never explain to a Turkish migrant in multicultural Europe that Turkey, to which they have emotional connections, is being rejected for religious and cultural reasons. This means that not only is Turkey being rejected, but that all Turks are being rejected as well. At a time when Europe has largely been secularized and multiculturalized and Turkey is struggling to follow its lead, as well as at a time when cultural racism is still alive, the EU's justifications for rejecting Turkey's membership must change.

That chance has been missed, however, and thus the process has slipped out of the Europeans' control. In other words, the only concern now is to accept and manage this process over time. The relations between Europe and Turkey have assumed a multidimensional shape that, when combined with intercultural dialogue, will become a model for peaceful coexistence. Clearly, a Europe that includes Turkish Muslims will be a different Europe. Turkey's membership in the EU will mean that Islam will become one of the main elements of Europe. The "earned Europeanness" that the Turks have

acquired, while simultaneously doing their best to protect their religious-cultural identity, is an important opportunity for both Turks and Europeans/Westerners.

Endnotes

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4. Heinz Kramer, *Die Europaeische Gemeinschaft und die Türkei, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik*, Ebenhausen (Baden Baden: Nomos Verlag, 1988), 24 and Klaus-Detlev Grothusen, *Aussenpolitik, Türkei* (Göttingen/Zürich, Südosteuropa Handbuch, 1985), 92.
5. Luxembourg European Council, 12-13 December 1997 Presidency Conclusions: Article 31. Online at www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/032a0008.htm.
6. Ingmar Karlsson, *Europe and the Turk: Reflections on a Complicated Relation* (Avrupa ve Türkler: Karmasik Bir Iliski Üzerine Düsünceler), trans. Turhan Kayaoglu (Istanbul: Homer Kitabevi, 2007).
7. In the later arguments, I have made use of my article "Diaspora Turks: Bridge or Barrier in the EU Process?" *ZEI EU-Turkey Monitor* 5, no. 2 (August 2009): 6-7.
8. Ludger Kühnhardt and Hans-Gert Pöttering, *Kontinent Europa,* Edition Interform (Zurich: Edition Interform - Verlag A. Fromm, 1998), 180.
9. Murat Erdogan, "Türkiye'siz Avrupa mi, Türklersiz Avrupa mi?" *Zaman*, 27 September 2009. Online at www.zaman.com.tr/haber.do?haberno=896654&title=yorum-m-murat-erdogan-turklersiz-avrupa-mi-turkiyesiz-avrupa-mi.
10. Cited in Uwe Johnson, *Stich-Worte. Ausgesucht* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1975), 189.
11. Cf. also Eleni Mavrogeorgis, "A Clash of Perceptions, Not of Civilizations: Revealing Muslim & Non-Muslim Perceptions of National Loyalty and Integrated Living," *Rutgers DGA Policy Brief*, no. 1 (2009).
12. Talip Kucukcan and Veyis Gungor, eds. *Turks in Europe: Culture, Identity, Integration* (Amsterdam: Turkey Research Centre, 2009).
13. See the official website of "Turks Abroad: The Symposium on Migration and Integration in its 50th Year." Online at www.goc50-husam.org.

14. See Thomas Faist, *The Volume and Dynamics of International Migration and Transnational Social Spaces* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

15. Turgut Gümüsoglu, Murat Batur, Hakan Kalayci, and Zeynep Baraz, *Türkisch Migranten in Österreich* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2009), 147-48.

16. See M. Murat Erdogan, "The Conscience Test in Germany: Which Innocent Will Throw the First Stone? Pope Benedict the XVIth?" *AB Akademi Brief*, no. 1 (2006). Online at www.abakademi.com/DOKUMAN/MerdoganBrifing.pdf. See also Bican Sahin and Nezahat Altuntas, "Between Enlightened Exclusion and Conscientious Inclusion: Tolerating the Muslim in Germany," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 29, no. 1 (March 2009): 27-41.

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