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THE EUROPEAN-TURKISH RELATIONS AS SEEN FROM GERMAN PERSPETIVE

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Abstract

Germany has always been one of the most important supporters of Turkish membership in the European community. When on the summit of December 17th 2004 German administration insisted on a date for accession negotiations to begin in 2005 it acted in continuity of traditional German politics since EU option for full membership was opened to Turkey in the Treaty of Ankara by German EEC President Prof. Walter Hallstein in 1963

However, today there are some voices against EU entry of Turkey mainly in the rows of the conservative German parties CDU/CSU, whose opposition is mainly motivated by Inner politics on the eve of General elections. These reservations are ideologically backed by some German historians who try to question the EU compatibility of Turkey because of geographical, historical, and cultural reasons. But a brief analysis reveals the traditional stereotypes and culturalistic prejudices of western historiography behind those arguments.

On December 17th 2004 the EU- Governments decided to give Turkey a date for negotiations for membership in the European Community. October 3rd 2005 was scheduled for the start of negotiations. This decision is of eminent historical significance, because for the first time in the process of European integration the doors are opened for a country with predominantly Muslim population.¹ This start of negotiations is an historical event, since it is a signal to the Islamic world that EU is not a "Christian Club" but a community of values and that the prediction of the "clash of

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civilizations” is wrong. In Germany October 3rd is an important day too. On this day the reunification of formerly divided Germany was performed in 1990. It seems symbolic for the old friendship of both nations that October 3rd is a day for celebration as well for the Germans as for the Turks.

Apart from some irritations during the Kohl-CDU administration Germany has always been one of the most reliable supporters of the Turkish claim for full membership in the European Community. There are many reasons for this position: historical, political and economic ones. Under the heading “Comrade and Brother in Arms” the influential German newspaper “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung” writes:

“For more than 200 Years Turkey has regarded Germany as its most important partner... Turkey knows, that it cannot reach its aim without Germany and cannot achieve anything against Germany. In spite of some grievous irritations in the past Germany mostly was the strong partner Turkey could rely on. The fundament of this special relationship had been laid by Prussia. Prussia was an esteemed state and not a hated colonial power. So the famous “Brotherhood in Arms” emerged between both nations and close economic relations were founded.”²

Continuity of relations

For two centuries Germany and Turkey have been related in a close friendship of states and people. German military advisors like Helmut von Moltke modernized the Turkish army in the 19th century. Economic cooperation between both nations have got a tradition of more than one hundred years. Invited by the Ottoman Government and financed by the Deutsche Bank German engineers built the Baghdad railway, a technical masterpiece when crossing the Taurus Mountains. Today Germany is Turkey’s most important trading partner. Big German firms like Siemens, MAN, Bosch and Mercedes-Benz are present in Turkey since many decades. German direct investments in Turkey have significantly increased in recent times. More than 1000 German subsidiary companies have settled in Turkey and German firms participate in 1200 joint ventures. The bilateral trade volume increased up to ca. 17 billions Euros in 2004. According to the proclamations of “Bund der Deutschen Industrie” (BDI), a powerful pressure group, German industry unanimously favours Turkey’s accession to EU. As the president of BDI said, German industry pleads for opening the EU-doors for Turkey as quickly as possible.³

Backing Turkish efforts towards membership in the European Community has been constant German policy since the times of Konrad Adenauer, the first chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. At that time the option of full membership in the European Community was opened to the Turkish Republic. In 1963 when signing the Association Agreement (Treaty of Ankara) former President of the European Commission, German Prof. Walter Hallstein (CDU), emphatically addressed Turkey as an integral part of Europe. This continuity of German Foreign Policy was confirmed on December 17th last year, when the German Government, led by Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, urgently pleaded for fixing a date for the start of accession negotiations.

But there is no denying the fact that there are some German voices against Turkish EU-membership. The opponents of full membership are mainly to be found within the right wing spectrum of conservative German parties, especially within the CDU/CSU which propose the model of a "privileged partnership." This concept is rightly rejected as "eye washing" baloney by the Turkish Government, because since the Association Agreement of 1963 and the Customs Union of 1996 Turkey has already got the position of a "privileged EU partner." Nothing else is left above this position except of the status of full membership.

Pretending deep concerns for the success of the "project Europe" the sceptics about Turkey's EU-accession articulate the "risks and dangers" of Turkish membership and warn against "overstretching" the community by admitting Turkey, this demographic and territorial heavy-weight country. They argue that instead of further enlarging EU, priority should be given to the integration of now 25 member-states into the EU institutions. But these reservations and scruples do not hold out a comprehensive analysis but are based on fears und irrational anxieties.

In the past CDU-led German governments always supported Turkish option for full EU membership. The actual change of CDU politics concerning EU accession are motivated by German Inner politics and must be seen as tactical manoeuvre on the eve of some election campaigns in some Bundesländer and – more important – general elections for Parliament (*Bundestag*). In *Bundestag* conservative CDU has been playing the opposition role unwillingly for many years. Therefore this change of course under Party leader Angela Merkel is mainly due to short-sighted populist fishing for votes in the right wing spectrum of conservative electorate. But keeping in mind the reliability and continuity of German Foreign policy a

CDU-led Government (having possibly come to power in next general elections) will most probably return to its traditional course and confirm Turkey's claims for EU membership leaving anti-Turkish rhetoric to its right wing partner, the Bavarian CSU.⁴ Of course all German administrations are bound to the fundamental principle "Pacta sunt servanda" and have to accept the decision of December 17th 2004.

Undoubtedly European Union needs Turkey as urgently as Turkey needs the EU. Maybe it needs Turkey even more than vice versa. The supporters of EU-accession - that is the majority of German intellectuals in science and politics⁵ - are aware of the great political and economic chances and advantages that are offered by full Turkish EU-membership: as for example in the sector of energy, where Turkey has got a geo-strategic key position in respect to the energy resources of the Caspian region and Central Asia. Turkey is of vital importance for the EU, because the cheapest and safest pipelines for the transport of petroleum and natural gas pass over Turkish territory. Moreover full membership of Turkey means a geo-political advantage and strategic gain for the EU as a Global Player. Only together with Turkey the European Union will get the political power to act as a peace keeping and stabilizing force in the crisis regions of the Near and Middle East.

For some time debate on Turkish EU-membership was rather emotional, particularly when topics like migration and costs of accession were discussed in the public. Xenophobic fears were recklessly incited and functionalised for political purposes. Although emotions have cooled down since December 17th 2004, controversial discussion has not completely disappeared from the internet and newspaper pages. As opinion polls show approval or rejection of Turkish EU accession is directly correlated with the actual economic conditions in Germany, especially with the situation on the labour market. Confronted with high unemployment rates and increasing economic difficulties many Germans are afraid of losing their jobs and therefore oppose to further EU enlargement fearing the competition of "cheap labour" immigrating from Southeast Europe. Although these anxieties and fears are unfounded they must be taken seriously because they can be instrumentalized for political purposes.

Several books on Turkey's EU accession were published last year by German authors, most of them in favour of Turkish EU-membership.⁶ As for my part I have tried to analyze the psychological motivation and

ideological backgrounds of the attempts to exclude Turkey from Europe.⁷ It was very annoying for me to see that these deplorable attempts - rooting in bias and ignorance about modern Turkey - were "scientifically" backed by a few German historians who questioned Turkey's EU compatibility because of geographic, historical and cultural reasons. Completely neglecting evident cultural and historical facts that prove Turkey's belonging to Europe and obviously suffering from a kind of amnesia, these historians totally ignore the traditional friendship of Germany and Turkey and the excellent political and economic relations of both nations for more than two centuries. I do not make a secret that I - being a fervent supporter of Turkey's accession to EU - vehemently reject all these prejudiced culturalistic attempts to exclude Turkey from Europe

It was the former French President Giscard d'Estaing who started the debate some two years ago, when he expressed doubts about Turkey's claims to EU trying to question its Europeanness. Soon his friend, Ex-Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, assisted Giscard and echoed his arguments. Some prominent German historians like Hans-Ulrich Wehler and Heinrich August Winkler - both academic representatives of "Newest-German History"- joined the debate and assisted these politicians by formulating doubts about Turkey's cultural compatibility to Europe.⁸ Those pseudo-scientific arguments are of special interest, since the political discussion about Turkish EU -membership is reflected by academic debate on European identity and EU-boundaries; and this scholarly discussion does influence politics vice versa. When writing my book it was my aim to reveal the culturalistic ideology behind these arguments.

According to the contentions of the opponents to EU accession Turkey is an "Asiatic country" which exceeds the geographic boundaries of Europe; Turkey is said to belong to the "Islamic culture" only claiming to be westernized and pretending to be European, but in reality being an "oriental society", because Turkey did not participate in certain historical epochs which are thought essential for the origin of Europe's identity like the periods of Reformation and Enlightenment. Therefore - according to these critics - Turkey does not belong to Europe and cannot join the EU. Being confronted with the global Islamic revival she will probably abandon secularism and return to its "Islamic roots." Turkey's westernization process is said to be sketchy and merely "on the surface".

However absurd and unsubstantial these arguments are, they are nevertheless presented by some historians. But if you look at these

contentions in detail, it soon becomes clear that all the attempts to separate Turkey from Europe on geographical, historical and cultural grounds, do not hold out a thorough analysis. They are all based on stereotypes, prejudice and ignorance about Turkish history. It is incontestable, that Turkey, respectively its historic predecessor, the Ottoman Empire, has been an integral part of European culture and politics for centuries; and it is a matter of fact that Southeast-Europe - e.g. the Balkan, Rumania, Bulgaria and Greece which already are or soon will be EU-members - belonged to this Empire for more than 400 years.

From Byzantine Empire to Sultan autocracy

During the debate on Turkey's EU accession the editor in chief of the "Süddeutsche Zeitung", Germany's greatest newspaper, Dr. Heribert Prantl, wrote in his leading article. "Doubtlessly the Turks have deeply influenced European history...In France, in England and in Protestant Germany many regarded the Sultan as a potential ally: 'The Turk is the Lutheran's luck', was a common saying, because 'the Turk' tied and weakened the forces of the Catholic sovereigns. Up to the beginning of the 20th century the Ottoman Empire was a central factor of European power politics; for three centuries this Empire had been a European great power. Sultan Mehmed II., who conquered Constantinople and integrated Byzantine institutions into his administration, wanted to continue the Roman Empire. He felt himself as the inheritor of the New Rome."⁹

In context of the debate about Turkey's European roots it is important to underline the Byzantine-Ottoman continuities. It was Mehmed II., conqueror of Constantinople, who presented himself both as "Sultan of Islam" and as "Caesar and emperor of Rome", this being a title that was derived from the Byzantine rulers. Following Mehmed II. the Ottoman sultans regarded themselves as the heirs of the Roman emperors. Indeed, Ottoman imperial ideology and the system of absolute government don't stem from Asia but from Europe. The absolutism of the Ottoman sultanate does not descend from "oriental despotism", as was argued by some German scholars,¹⁰ but from the autocracy of the Byzantine Empire ("Second Rome"), which was modelled on the pattern of the Roman Empire.¹¹ The Ottomans took over certain Byzantine administrative and governmental elements, which on their part were derived from the Roman model. As for the status of religion the Ottomans exercised a patronage, i.e. they practised a kind of Caesaro-papism, a system in which the state

controlled the clergy by appointing the judges who all belonged to the *ulema*. "Thus, like their imperial Byzantine predecessors, (the sultans) exercised a direct control over the members of religious establishment."¹² Moreover, the administrative system of hierarchically organized bureaucracy and the feudal land tenure system as well were also formed according to Byzantine patterns.¹³ But apart from taking over the system of government (autocracy) and centralistic administration structures the Ottomans inherited the imperial Byzantine ideology with its universal claim fostering military expansion.¹⁴

However, Ottomans did not merely copy Byzantine institutions, but adapted them to their specific needs by systematically developing and elaborating them in a process of increasing centralization. Codification of law, the creation of impersonal bureaucratic procedures and the institution of a state-controlled scholarly hierarchy are only some examples of the innovations created by the Ottomans. As Donald Quataert noted: "While the Ottomans forged their own unique synthesis and were no mere imitators of their predecessors, their debt to the Byzantines was real."¹⁵ At last the House of Osman succeeded in building a highly centralized imperial administrative apparatus, thus consolidating power in its vast territories.

Meeting the culturalistic attempts to separate Turkey from Europe and EU it is important to emphasize the historical continuities thus demonstrating that - by integrating fundamental Byzantine elements into their political and administrative system - the Ottomans stood in unbroken tradition with the Roman Empire, which forms the base of occidental European state formation. When adopting the cultural heritage of the Byzantine Empire (except religion), which had been the eastern wing of Europe in the Mediterranean region for a thousand years, the Ottomans started a process of acculturation, i.e. the process of Europeanization. This result of comparative analysis of socio-political structures is backed by facts from other cultural fields, as strikingly shown by Ottoman architecture, which used the cupola construction of Haghia Sofia as a model for the big mosques of the Empire. On the other hand dome-shaped Haghia Sofia was built according to West Roman tradition of cupola architecture, as to be seen with the famous Pantheon, the only completely conserved building of antiquity in Rome today. Thus also in the area of architecture it can be impressively demonstrated that there is an incessant cultural tradition from Roman to Ottoman times and that the assertion of a "cultural gap" between Turkey and Europe is wrong.

It is obviously wrong for other reasons too. The territory of Anatolia belongs to Europe since antique times, as numerous cultural monuments prove. Hittites, Hellenes, Romans and Byzantines left their cultural traces on Anatolian ground, monuments that are visited today by Millions of tourists from around the globe, especially from Germany. Christianity has important roots in Anatolia, where the first Christian communities originated; here ST. Paulus and ST. Nikolaus preached, here the first Christian councils met together. Moreover, here the "mental fathers" of Europe lived, e.g. the poet Homer who wrote his famous "Ilias", the first European myth to which Mehmed II. referred when justifying the conquest of Constantinople as the "retaliation for the destruction of Troja by the Greeks". In Anatolia the nestor of European historiography Herodot lived who as early as in the fifth century B.C. wondered why the Bosphorus was called the boundary between Asia and Europe. Here the famous Thales of Milet laid the foundations of modern geometry.

It is a historical fact that the Ottoman Empire played an important role in the political concert of European powers for centuries, either as feared conqueror or esteemed partner of alliance as for example in 1526 at the first siege of Vienna when the Ottomans fought as allies of France against the Habsburg Empire. In the Peace Treaty of 1856 the Ottoman Empire was formally designated as a part of the European concert. On the Congress of Berlin in 1878, led by German Reichskanzler Otto von Bismarck, the Ottoman Empire became an ally of England and Habsburg against the Russians who tried to gain access to the Mediterranean Sea by taking possession of the Bosphorus. On pictures of those times the Sultan is quite naturally shown amidst his "colleagues", the European sovereigns.

Asia versus Europe

Bosphorus – commonly seen as the boundary between Asia and Europe – was never a cultural or ethnic frontier in the past. It has never been a barrier for migration or cultural and economic exchange. It ought to be noted that the traditional borderline between Europe and Asia along Bosphorus has not got any geographical or geological foundation, but is arbitrary and grounded on convention. As geographers confirm there does not exist any natural or physical border between the Asia and Europe, because - as seen from geographical and geological perspective - Europe is nothing more than the western appendix of the Asian continent.¹⁶ The familiar term "Asia Minor" for the Anatolian territory originated in antiquity about 2.400 years ago. It

was invented by the old Greeks during their fight against the despotic imperialism of the "Asiatic" Persians. For the antique Greeks with their restricted geographical horizon, Asia seemed to begin beyond Bosphorus. Thus the misleading term "Asia Minor" – though geographically wrong – was uncritically accepted by western geographers and the topos "Europe versus Asia" was introduced into traditional western historiography.

By the way, the geographic criterion was completely ignored by EU-accession of Zyperus. Nobody takes offence at the transcontinental possessions of the English (e.g. Falkland Isles), of the French (Martinique, La Réunion) and the Spaniards (Canary Islands), who all belong geographically to other continents and yet are fully integrated EU-members. This proves that this pseudo-geographical argument is irrelevant for EU-membership and is nothing more than political rhetoric in the accession debate.

The Evocation of the "Asiatic danger"

Therefore, denouncing Turkey as an "Asiatic Country" must be regarded on another background too, a psychological one. In Germany the term *asiatic* is linked with negative associations. Expressions in German vocabulary like "asiatische Tat" ("Asiatic deed"), "asiatische Gefahr" ("Asiatic danger") and "asiatische Grausamkeit" ("Asiatic cruelty") show how negatively connoted this term appears in the German language. This has historical reasons, because the brutal invasions of the Asiatic Huns and Mongols in the fifth and thirteenth century A.C. threatened and endangered the existence of European peoples. Moreover, the conquest of Spain by the Arabs in the Middle Ages and the expansion of the Ottoman-Empire, who occupied large parts of Southeast Europe for centuries, generated additional anxieties. These historical experiences are stored in the collective memory of many Europeans. That's why we have to take it as a matter of fact that the terms *Asia* and *Asiatic* are heavily burdened with negative connotations and can be easily functionalized as synonyms for "threat" and "danger."¹⁷ That means that they can be instrumentalized for political propaganda even in modern times, as was done by the NS-Regime which conjured the spectre of "Asiatic Bolshevism" when justifying Hitler's attack on Russia, and in the times of Cold War when German politicians described the communist expansion to eastern Europe as an "Asiatic threat" endangering Europe's freedom and democracy.

On this background it becomes clear why the opponents of Turkish EU-accession try to denunciate Turkey as an "Asiatic country". When labelling Turkey as "Asiatic country" they do this not so much because of geographical but of psychological reasons, i.e. they aim at fears and anxieties deeply stored in the collective subconscious of many Europeans. By constructing a chain of association like "Asia – Asiatic danger – Asiatic Turkey - Turkish danger" they try to evoke these old fears in order to create an instinctive aversion against the Turkish EU- aspirations. We have to remember that the military expansion of the Islamic Ottomans on the Balkan in the 16th and 17th century was considered as a deadly threat to "Christian occident" and has left traumatic traces in the collective memory of many Europeans.¹⁸

The traditional topos of European historiography "Europe versus Asia", which originated first in antique times and was increased by the invasions Mongols in the Middle Ages,¹⁹ was reinforced by Ottoman conquests on the Balkan, whose military expansion led them twice as far as in front of the gates of Vienna. But whereas the hordes of Attila and Dschingis Kahn ravaged and devastated great parts of Europe the Ottomans integrated the conquered countries into their empire thus guaranteeing peace, lawful order and prosperity for centuries. In contrast to "Christian occident", where inquisition and the persecution of heterodox dissenters exterminated hundred thousands of human lives, tolerance was exercised by the Ottomans towards the Jews and the Christians, who could freely practise their religion within the millet-system. When persecuted by Spanish inquisition (after the destruction of the Moorish Empire by the Reconquista) the Jews fled to the Ottoman Empire where they were protected.

Orientalism as background for selective perception

In European history of ideas there was always a dichotomous contrasting of the "progressive, dynamic west" to the "static, backward east." This biased perspective was already refuted by Arnold Toynbee in his critical review of K.A. Wittfogel's magnum opus "Oriental Despotism" as ideologically motivated myth of propaganda.²⁰ This stereotype is a western creation based on traditional prejudice and colonial arrogance. The motif "Europe versus Asia", symbolized by the slogan "liberty versus slavery", appears in western historiography as the dichotomy of "western democracy" and "oriental despotism" which are described as antithetic contrasts. This dualistic confrontation of "occidental democracy" and "oriental despotism"

was used as common pattern in western historiography since the days of German scholars like Karl Marx, Max Weber and K.A. Wittfogel. It means selective perception that distorts the look at the East till today as western scholars like Huntington and Wehler demonstrate with their astonishing misjudgements about modern Turkey.

The present controversial dispute about Turkish EU accession has to be seen on this ideological background. That is to say, the culturalistic attempts to separate Turkey from Europe are in lines with an biased way of western perception, in which the East has traditionally been regarded as a menacing, incalculable antipode to the West, which for its part appears bright and shiny on this dark folio. This prejudiced mode of perception was profoundly analyzed by Edward Said who called it "Orientalism" thus opening a broad scholarly dispute on the subject.²¹ Orientalism as described by Said means a historical, cultural, and political perception of the East that is distorted and darkened by clichés and old stereotypes.

When considering the scruples concerning Turkey's EU-accession this context must be kept in mind. Dr. Günter Seufert, an expert on Turkish matters, writes: "The discussion is highly emotionalized, as always when anxieties and the own identity is concerned. How deep the fears are of those who refuse Turkish membership because of cultural reasons is shown by their apocalyptic scenarios where the future of Europe or its ruin is conjured. A bright Europe is contrasted with a dark orient, both separated by deep "cultural boundaries". Europe is said to be ethical-Christian but yet secular, enlightened and liberal, rational and calculable, civil and democratic. On the other hand Turkey represents the orient and that is the outright opposite. There only despotism keeps in check fanatic Islam; irrational and cruel is the Asiatic, incalculable, dangerous..."²²

As Seufert rightly notes, such simple black and white drawing "will one day be as disagreeable to us as e.g. the former German prejudices against the "culturally inferior Slavs" (ibid.).

The achievements of Enlightenment – a legacy for whole mankind

The apologists of "Christian occident" who want to restrict Europe and EU to the borders of the Carolingian Empire of the Middle Ages - thus even excluding Christian-Orthodox countries from Europe - claim the ideas of Enlightenment as typical occidental characteristics and define them as criteria of exclusion. Following Samuel Huntington's theory of antagonistic

cultural areas they construct a "catalogue of criteria" by which it could be judged if a country belongs to Europe or not. According to this catalogue Turkey does not belong to Europe since she did not participate in certain periods of European history like Renaissance, Reformation, Rationalism and Enlightenment. But this view can only be upheld by narrow-minded occidentalists who – in line with biased Orientalism - believe that only the West is capable to modern civilization, progress and democracy. However, EU-policy always ignored these culturalistic criteria when deciding on membership of candidates. The insignificance of this "catalogue of criteria" for EU accession is shown by the fact, that some nations belong to EU today who never shared in those epochs which are thought essential for Europe's identity: Spain and Italy e.g., never experienced the period of Reformation. Nor did Poland. Let alone the orthodox countries of Southeast Europe Greece, Rumania and Bulgaria who completely lack the historical experiences of Reformation, Rationalism and Enlightenment.

Though there is no denying the fact that the Ottoman Empire did not participate in these historical epochs and did not go through a long process of secularization it must be stated that from the end of the 18th century it gradually adopted some ideas of Enlightenment and French Revolution and integrated them into its socio-political system. It must be emphasized that Turkey successively reformed its system along these ideas as for example in the period of Tanzimat when progressive Sultans made crucial reforms. Thus thorough-going innovations in state and society were achieved culminating in the Constitution of 1876 when a Parliament was established according to European model.

It is characteristic for ideas and values that they are not limited to territories and borders. Human rights, liberty, equality, justice and all the other ideas of Enlightenment are of universal validity. It must be recognized as fundamental principle *that the ideas of Enlightenment like sovereignty of the people, secularism, equality of rights and division of power are a legacy for whole mankind. No nation and no state can claim these achievements of civilization as an exclusive possession.*

As for the European Union it must be stressed that EU is primarily a union based on common values and political convictions. The basic idea of EU is to be supranational and multicultural union. It originated from the firm determination of its founding fathers to secure peace, democracy and economic prosperity in Europe for the future. EU is a manifold community

of nations that join together accepting the obligation to respect essential political principles and universal values like democracy, human rights, pluralism and rule of law while renouncing certain national rights of sovereignty. As Chancellor Gerhard Schröder said in his 60 years commemorative address on the end of Second World War: "Europe understands itself and develops as a community of values. It is not history, language or religion that make Europe unique, but normative aims, political principles, also cultural attitudes like support for peace, respect for universal human rights, confidence in the force of law, tolerance in handling cultural variety, respect for the individual."²³

The EU-compatibility of Turkey is only to be judged by its ability to practice these principles of modern liberal democracy and not by the prejudices and stereotypes in the heads of some stubborn ideologists.

EU is not an exclusive "Christian club" but a supra-cultural community of nations as was demonstrated by the refusal to make any reference to the "Christian roots of Europe" in the preamble of European Constitution. Fortress mentality is strange to EU. Already today it is composed of different religious and ethnic societies and it won't be a monolithic monster in future too, but a multi-cultural union founded on ideas like rationalism, secularism and liberalism. Since the beginning of the 16th century, especially since the epochs of Renaissance, Reformation and Humanism, Europe has gradually emancipated from the religious dominance of Christianity by a process of secularisation culminating in the 18th century in the period of Enlightenment when the political ideas of liberty, equality and sovereignty of the people were achieved against the vehement resistance of Christian institutions like Vatican. Therefore, due to this thoroughgoing process of secularisation, which has completely alienated Europe from its Christian roots of the Middle Ages, it is erroneous and contra-productive to maintain Christianity as essential for European identity. As we learned from history religious *tolerance* – the central idea of Enlightenment, a *conditio sine qua non* for peaceful inter-cultural coexistence – does not belong to Christian tradition.²⁴

Samuel Huntington's misconceptions

It was Samuel Huntington with his theory of antagonistic cultures and his prediction of the "clash of civilizations" who inspired cultural ideologists e.g. the German opponents to Turkey's EU accession. Although his theory of cultural confrontation is highly debatable and paradox, it

heavily influenced some politicians and scholars like the historians H.-U. Wehler and H. A. Winkler who have internalized his contentious concept.²⁵ According to Huntington Turkey does not belong to European civilization but to the Islamic world to which Turkey will probably return in future.²⁶ Being an "Islamic country" Turkey will never be successfully integrated into European Union, he says. Biased by his rigid concept Huntington obviously is unable to perceive modern Turkey as it really exists. Neither recognizing the epochal significance of the Kemalist Revolution nor noticing the fact that Turkey's predecessor, the Ottoman Empire, was part of the European system for many centuries and that - since the defeat of Vienna 1683 - Ottoman elites looked toward European civilization as an example and model for reforms. Blocked by his culturalistic approach Huntington is unable to recognize the radical process of Europeanization that Turkey has experienced during the last centuries.

As a consequence derived from his theory Huntington identifies Europe with Western Christianity thus restricting Europe to Carolingian Europe and excluding the Orthodox Christian countries of Southeast Europe from Europe (with the exception of Greece which he calls an "anomaly") as well expelling the Muslim peoples on the Balkan and of course Turkey.²⁷ EU policy, however, completely ignoring Huntington's inconsistent theory will allow some of these countries to join the community soon. Moreover, if the integration of Turkey, a country with predominantly Muslim population, into EU succeeded, this would mean the final refutation of Huntington's "clash of civilizations." Being aware of this possibility Huntington stresses the "Islamic roots" of Turkey and predicts - as a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy - its turn-over to the Islamic states of the East. However, he overlooks the fact that Atatürk's cultural revolution, i.e. the transformation of a backward Islamic society and Sultan absolutism into a modern republic is an epoch-making change of paradigm. Huntington like other sceptics about the EU-compatibility of Turkey fail to notice that the implementation of European values like laicism and sovereignty of the people into the socio-political system of Turkey is a process that can neither be stopped nor reversed.

Being adherents of Huntington's concept the German opponents to Turkish EU accession refuse to recognize that Atatürk's cultural revolution is an irreversible process of acculturation, since it is grounded on the historical fundament of a far-reaching social evolution, i.e. a process of modernization achieved in the reform-periods, when Turkey successively

adopted western values and integrated them into its socio-political system. Go west! – *batiya doğru* and *garbcilik* - were most popular slogans of the intellectual Ottoman elite in those days. As a result of this European impact there began the steady erosion of the ideological fundamentals of Ottoman Empire: the anachronistic Sultanate and Caliphate became obsolete. At last it was the charismatic Mustafa Kemal Atatürk who succeeded in building a modern Republic out of the ruins of the Ottoman Empire.

Facing the worldwide Islamic revival that has led to a re-islamization of state and society in some countries like Pakistan and Iran removing civil rights like equality of sexes and pressing women behind the burka some doubts have arisen concerning the future course of Turkey.²⁸ Some German critics suppose that Turkey could fall back to Islamism and change her Western course in favour of an Islamic “Turkestan” orienting to Central Asia. But these are untenable speculations! It is completely wrong to compare Turkey to Pakistan or Iran which had never been a part of Europe and never experienced a far-reaching process of Europeanization. The sceptics about the future political course of Turkey entirely ignore the long history of modernization as well as the epochal significance of Atatürk’s structural transformation of state and society, a change of system that is unique in the Muslim world. The abolition of the Arab script and the introduction of the Roman alphabet symbolize the cultural revolution Turkey underwent during Atatürk’s leadership after World War I. When he founded the Turkish Republic sovereignty and legitimation of political power were transferred from autocracy to the Turkish people. Islamic Caliphate was abolished too. Thus a modern secular state was established and a 600-year epoch of Sultan absolutism and religious dominance was ended. After the collapse of Ottoman Empire Turkey emerged as decidedly Western-oriented power.²⁹

However, this “Westernization” does not mean that Turkey has lost its traditional cultural identity when modernizing and renewing state and society along European lines. On the contrary, during the war of liberation against the European colonial powers in World War I Turkey developed a strong national identity. Turkey sees itself as a bridge between occident and orient. Turkish people and state are united by a sound patriotism based on Atatürk’s legacy. Accession to European Union would not mean the loss of this identity. Neither Germany nor France lost their specific national and cultural identities through EU-membership. Turkey’s particular history and cultural identity that distinguishes it from Western and Middle Europe, makes it especially attractive for EU as a bridge between East and West.

Turkish entry to EU will mean enrichment and enhancement because the specific cultural and historic dimension introduced by Turkey into European community will provide a new dynamic force that will enable "old Europe" to extend its political and economic possibilities.

If Turkey's EU-membership is achieved (hopefully soon) and if it will be successfully integrated into EU institutions (doubtlessly it will), this would mean a strategic victory over fundamentalism and a strong, convincing signal to the Muslim world that democracy and Islam, progressive modernization and cultural tradition are compatible. Turkey is the only country in the world with Muslim population that has successfully established parliamentary democracy, rule of law, pluralism, human rights, laicism and equality of sexes. Turkey has got the function of an exemplary model for developing Islamic countries.

Observing the Kemalist principle of "revolutionism" (*Devrimcilik*) Turkey has approached EU with remarkable readiness for innovation and reforms to meet the Acquis. Therefore this principle "Devrimcilik" is of particular significance in the context of EU-accession. When conceiving his leading principles ("six arrows") Atatürk bore in mind the stagnation of Ottoman Empire so that it could be overpowered by the progressive dynamism of the West. It was clear to him that progress and modernization could only be accomplished by permanent willingness to reform. That's why he developed the concept of *Devrimcilik* ("revolutionism", respectively "reformism") thus implanting a dynamic element into his philosophy of state. This principle means the obligation to unending development through reforms and the warning that "one must not rest with the attained achievements but should strive for improvement of the democracy, economy and law. The accomplishments should be secured and developed further by a permanent process of reforming."³⁰ Looking far ahead and foreseeing the always threatening risk of dogmatic paralysis that might change a constitution into a reactionary ideology Kemal Atatürk introduced *Devrimcilik* thus banning this danger once and for all. Contrary to its critics Kemalism is not an obsolete doctrine but a pragmatic flexible system as was proved by the successful replacement of the principle of *Etatism* through a liberal market economy in the last decades. The dynamic principle of Kemalism, i.e. the readiness for innovation an reform, fosters the necessary adoptions to EU requirements. Indeed, in the last years Turkey has done a lot of reform work in order to meet the Kopenhagen criteria, i.e. the *conditio sine qua non* for EU- accession. This was

demonstrated by passing seven "parcels of reform" in Turkish Parliament within the last three years (including the abolition of capital punishment).

In the past Germany always supported EU membership of Turkey. German Günther Verheugen, former EU-enlargement commissioner, opened the doors for Turkey underlining its claim for full membership. On December 17th last year German administration led by Chancellor Dr. h. c. Gerhard Schröder successfully insisted on giving a date for accession negotiations thus being in line with traditional German policy since the Treaty of Ankara was signed where the goal of full membership in the European Union was formulated for the first time. Already for Dr. Konrad Adenauer, unforgettable first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Turkey quite naturally belonged to the circle of European nations. On September 12th 1963 the Treaty of Association was ratified between Economic Community (EEC) and Turkey, with the option of full membership in the European Community within a certain period of time when meeting all necessary political and economic requirements. This treaty was negotiated in a time when EEC and their member states were governed by pious Christians like the German President of the EEC- Commission, Prof. Dr. Walter Hallstein, and Chancellor Dr. Adenauer. For them Turkey was not an asiatic country but a European partner to whom full membership should not be refused. This is demonstrated by the speech made by President Hallstein when signing the Treaty. He said:

" Today we all are witnesses of an event of great political significance. ...Turkey belongs to Europe: This is above all the memory of Atatürk's tremendous personality, ...of the radical transformation and renewal of the Turkish state achieved by him. This event does not have anything similar in the history of impact of European culture and politics; yes, here we feel a relationship of mind with the most modern European developments... What is more natural than Europe and Turkey identify with their actions and reactions: militarily, politically and economically. – Turkey belongs to Europe. That means that Turkey establishes a constitutional relationship to the European Community. As the Community itself this relationship is ruled by the idea of evolution.... And one day the last step shall be done: Turkey shall be a fully entitled member of the Community. This wish and the fact that we agree with our Turkish friends is the strongest expression of our common grounds."³¹

Pacta sunt servanda

This promise was made by Walter Hallstein - in charge of EEC and in mission of the German Government - in front of the Turkish Grand National Assembly in Ankara where Hallstein had travelled for signing the Treaty. "Thus concerning Turkey, this important and reliable NATO-partner, there exists a legally and politically obligating option for membership that has always been confirmed since 1963."³²

Since its foundation in 1949 Turkey has been a member of Council of Europe and - bearing in mind the traditional friendship between both nations - Turkey pleaded for the Federal Republic of Germany being admitted to the Council as early as 1949, when Germany was regarded as an "outlaw" among western countries after the defeat of World War II. Turkey has been associated member of EU, member of OECD and reliable NATO partner for many decades and it is present in all important European organizations below EU level. Turkey is firmly integrated in the European market by the Customs Union with all negative and positive consequences. The taking over of the *acquis communautaire*, i.e. the EU regulations for law and trade, is far advanced. As a candidate state Turkey has shown remarkable efforts to prepare for EU negotiations by making numerous amendments to its legal, economical and social system. For sure the most important of these efforts is the revision of the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey by adding 40 amendments to its articles.³³ Within only three years Turkish Parliament has passed seven "baskets" of reforms in order to harmonize national law with EU *acquis* thus demonstrating its firm determination to meet the Copenhagen criteria. Turkey has always proved its political trustworthiness and unrestricted loyalty to the western alliance. Though threatened by Soviet atomic rockets in the times of Cold War Turkey firmly clung to the West as a reliable NATO partner, so defending freedom and independence of Germany too.

EU needs Turkey

Turkey belongs to Europe. Due to the century long cultural and political orientation to the West, Turkey has passed through a process of Europeanization that is irreversible since Atatürk's revolution. It has got a historical claim for full membership in EU. On the other hand, EU must be deeply interested in Turkish membership for many reasons. The unique geo-strategic position of Turkey on the frontier between East and West makes it

very important for EU foreign politics. Only together with Turkey as a fully entitled member EU will be able to cope with the conflicts in the crisis region of the Near and Middle East in order to stabilize peace in future. In global respect we face the confrontation between Islamic fundamentalism and the West. Because of its geographic position and Muslim tradition Turkey will play a political key role in meeting this confrontation. The fight against fundamentalism cannot be won by military or police methods alone, but above all by mental and political means. Turkey as integrated member of EU will provide a bridge between East and West opening new chances for dialogue with the Muslim world. Prospering EU member Turkey would be a striking example and convincing model for the peaceful co-existence of Islam and democracy, of Muslim tradition and western values.

EU membership of Turkey will mean an enrichment for the European Union, economically, politically, and culturally. On the other hand, Turkey needs EU in order to fulfil Atatürk's legacy of modernization. Accession to EU would mean a win-win situation for both. Turkey's geopolitical position offers her a tremendous significance for EU foreign policy. Being a reliable NATO member Turkey has been an important producer of security for many decades, a bastion of freedom against all potential attacks directed against Europe. After integration into EU institutions this essential role will be confirmed and extended. Undoubtedly EU will benefit from Turkish membership. And last but not least: membership of Turkey in European Union would demonstrate to all the world that Islam and western democracy are compatible and that the prediction of the "Clash of civilizations" is wrong.³⁴

Endnotes

¹ It should be noted, that Turkey – as completely distinguished to its Muslim neighbours in the Near and Middle East - is neither an Islamic state nor an Islamic society. Secularism is the predominant principle of both state and society. Turkish Constitution is based on laicism. Important groups of Turkish society, e.g. the functional elites of administration, education, military and economy are of secular alignment. These facts are often ignored by the opponents to Turkish EU entry.

² Rainer Hermann, "Weggefährte und Waffenbruder" in F.A.Z. of 14. 02. 2004

³ BDI-Präsident Rogowski according to F.A.Z. of 30. 04. 2004

⁴ It should be mentioned that the CDU Party is divided on the question of Turkey's accession to EU. Prominent CDU politicians like former State President Richard von Weizsäcker and Ex-Minister of Defence Volker Rühle resist to party leader Angela Merkel's course of "privileged partnership" and favour full Turkish EU-membership. So do the former General-Secretaries of CDU Party Dr. Heiner Geißler and Ruprecht Polenz.

⁵ It must be stated that nearly all German academic experts on Turkey e.g. the orientalist Prof. Udo Steinbach, Prof. Kurt Kieser, Prof. Klaus Kreiser are in favour of full Turkish EU membership. Prominent journalists like Dr. Heribert Prantl (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 17. September 2004) [http://www.bpb.de/themen/2Z3YMU,,0,Der Mond unter den F%FC%DFen.html](http://www.bpb.de/themen/2Z3YMU,,0,Der_Mond_unter_den_F%FC%DFen.html) and Michael Thumann (DIE ZEIT) repeatedly pleaded for Turkey's EU accession in their newspapers: Michael Thumann, *Pack den Tiger in die EU. Allen Ängsten und Warnungen zum Trotz - vier gute Gründe, warum die Türkei zu Europa gehört* (DIE ZEIT, 16.12.2004, Nr.52) [http://www.zeit.de/2004/52/01 leit 2 52 2f04](http://www.zeit.de/2004/52/01_leit_2_52_2f04)

⁶ E.g. Rudolf Schmidt, *Die Türken, die Deutschen und Europa* (Wiesbaden 2004); Günter Seufert/Christopher Kubasek, *Die Türkei. Politik, Geschichte, Kultur* (München 2004); Jürgen Gottschlich, *Die Türkei auf dem Weg nach Europa* (Berlin 2004)

⁷ Udo Witzens, *Aufnahme oder Ausgrenzung? Gehört die Türkei zu Europa?* (Köln 2004)

⁸ Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Das Türkenproblem* (DIE ZEIT, 38/2002); Wehler, *Die türkische Frage*, (F.A.Z. v. 19. 12. 2003, Nr. 295) Heinrich August Winkler, *Grenzen der Erweiterung* in: „Internationale Politik“, 2/2003

⁹ Heribert Prantl, *Der Mond unter den Füßen, Warum die Aufnahme der Türkei eine Chance für die EU darstellt* (Süddeutsche Zeitung vom 18. 11. 2002; tranl. U.W.)

¹⁰ E.g. Karl August Wittfogel, *Die Orientalische Despotie*, (Köln/Berlin 1962), p. 224f

¹¹ s. Udo Witzens, *Aufnahme oder Ausgrenzung*, (Köln 2004), p. 103f

¹² Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire 1700-1922* (Cambridge 2003, 3rd ed.), p.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ The issue of Byzantine influence on the Ottomans is controversially discussed in literature, mainly because it was often described on ideological background. As Cemal Kafadar put it: "Most of the scholars seem to have been keen on figuring out whether the Ottoman state was 'essentially a creation of European' or 'of an Asiatic people'...." (Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds. The Construction of the Ottoman State*, Berkeley, Los Angeles/London 1996, p. 43)

¹⁵ D. Quataert, p. 4

¹⁶ As German geographer Prof. Dr. Ernst Struck states:

„This geographical argument, Turkey not being a part of Europe, is wrong and has always been wrong: When you transgress Bosphorus the European does not leave the Continent at all, because the fringe of the European tectonic plate lies much farther in the south, respectively southeast, and divides the country quite invisibly. The fact that Greece does not lie on the European (tectonic) plate did not cause any problems in the EU-accession debate, however in the Turkey-discussion this absurd but pretendedly scientific geographical argument – a geopolitical construction for influencing the public - is used for exclusion and propagated by the media." (F. A. Z. 11. 02. 2004)

¹⁷ „Asia” –a term that is a European creation – was negatively connoted in European history of ideas again and again: as a region of “eternal stagnation” (Hegel), as a “sleeping giant” (Napoleon), as a centre of despotism (Karl Marx: “Asiatic way of production” and K.A. Wittfogel: “oriental despotism”) or as a potential danger region (“yellow danger”) (Thomas Heberer in: „Asien“, April 1997, S. 6)

¹⁸ “Not for nothing did Islam come to symbolize terror devastation, the demonic, hordes of hatred barbarians. For Europe Islam was a lasting trauma. Until the end of the seventeenth century the “Ottoman peril” lurked alongside Europe to represent for the whole of Christian civilization a constant danger...” (Edward W. Said , *Orientalism* (New York 1979, Vintage Books) S. 59

¹⁹ It should be noted that the predecessors of the Ottomans, the Seldshuks, were victims of the Mongols too when subjugated by them after the defeat in 1243 at Kösedag.

²⁰ In: *The American Political Science Review* (March, 1958, 52:1), p. 195-198.

²¹ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York 1979, Vintage Books) S. 56f, S. 149f

²² Günter Seufert/Christopher Kubaseck, *Die Türkei* (München 2004), S. 174

²³ „Süddeutsche Zeitung“ No. 104, Mai 7th/8th, 2005, p. 7

„Membership in the European Union is decided on the basis of clear principles and verifiable political criteria. Those who match to the European values of democracy and rule of law, who match to the protection of human and minority rights, who have prepared for membership politically and economically, those must principally not be prevented from accession to the European Union. As exclusive closed shop European Union would lose its legitimacy and purpose of existence: peace, stability, security and economic prosperity by integration.” (Dr. h.c. Gerhard Schröder, in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung* No. 104, Mai 7th/8th 2005, p. 7)

²⁴ In order to cope with Islamic fundamentalism from a position of strength, it was proposed (Angelo Santagostino, *A Magna Europe* in: MJES, No: 1-2 2004, Vol. 12, p. 240/24), that Europe should emphasize its Christian roots and define its identity as essentially a Christian one. As shown above this would neither be historically correct nor politically advisable because it would most probably foster the confrontation of civilizations. Instead of referring to anachronistic “Christian roots” today’s European identity is constituted by universal secular values as developed in the European process of emancipation from religious dominance thus opening EU doors for Muslim countries and for peaceful dialogue between civilizations.

²⁵ Prof. Dr. Dieter Oberndörfer, chairman of the Bergstraesser-Institute of the University of Freiburg, fervently criticized those historians:

“Looking for respectability the Germans and their historians tried to find contact to the West. They referred to “European” cultural values. With their striking confession to Europe they tried to entrench themselves behind an alleged “Leitkultur” and separated against outside. When doing this these protagonists of “Leitkultur” combined their blindness of the dark sides of European history with stupid arrogance towards the cultural abilities of non-western states. The new nationalism referring to Europe ignored, that human rights, Enlightenment and the values of Christianity demand universal validity.” (Dieter Oberndörfer, *Falsche Romantik. Ein Plädoyer für die Aufnahme der Türkei in die EU*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 04. 12. 2002)

²⁶ Samuel P. Huntington, *Kampf der Kulturen - Clash of Civilizations* (München/Wien, 6. Aufl. 1997), S. 232f

²⁷ op. cit. S. 258

²⁸ E.g. Bassam Tibi speculates about an Islamic Neo-Panturanism that Turkey could fall prey to by orienting to Central Asia. This speculation is motivated by

overestimation of the political significance of Neo-Ottomans, a tiny minority in Turkey, and a complete misapprehension of Atatürk's historic change of paradigm. (B. Tibi, *Aufbruch am Bosphorus*, München Zürich 1998, S. 193f)

²⁹ In his conclusion about the Turkish Revolution Bernard Lewis, the renowned scholar of Princeton University, emphasizes the irreversibility of this transformation:

“The essential change attempted by the Turks in their revolution was one of Westernization – another step in the westward march of the Turkish people that began 1.000 years ago...Now, renouncing a large part though not the whole of their Islamic heritage, they have turned to Europe, and made a sustained and determined effort to adopt and apply the European way of life in government, society, and culture. Opinions differ as to the measure of success achieved in this attempt; there can, however, be no doubt that in large and important areas of the public life of Turkey the Westernizing revolution is accomplished and irreversible.” (Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, New York/Oxford 2002, p. 486)

³⁰ Prof. Gerhard Doerfer, *Die Persönlichkeit Atatürks und sein Leistungen*, in: *Mustafa Kemal Atatürk 1881-1981, Vorträge und Aufsätze zu seinem 100. Geburtstag*, Heidelberg 1982, S. 122

³¹ Walter Hallstein, in journal: „Internationale Politik“, Nr. 3/2003, S. 50

³² Dietrich von Kyaw, *Grenzen der Erweiterung* („Internationale Politik“, Nr. 3/2003, S. 53) As Dietrich von Kyaw, who was EU-representative of Germany in Brussels till 1999, comments: „This means a committing and quite consciously made obligation of an EEC that was directed to the aim of progressing integration from the beginning.“ (ibid.)

³³ Murat T. YÖRÜNG a. o., *From Candidacy to Negotiations: Amendments in the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey*, In: *Marmara Journal of European Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1-2, 2004, S. 99f

³⁴ All translations from German into English by Dr. Udo WITZENS