

CRITICISING "THE WORST POSSIBLE SCENARIO FOR TURKEY"*

by *Hasan Engin Şener***



HASAN ENGIN SENER - A research assistant at the Middle East Technical University argues that full Turkish membership is a legal and political right for Turkey. (Photo: EUobserver.com)

Although Mr Biancheri¹ evaluates Giscard d'Estaing's Turco-sceptic declaration as courageous, in my opinion his arguments are not only more courageous (because he asserts that the EU is lying) but also hard to be defeated (because he asserts good-willed, rational and plausible options) than that of Mr Giscard. However, what I would like to do here is to supply my arguments in order to show that Mr Biancheri may be wrong in some of his assessments.

Remembering Huntington: Bridge metaphor

The Turkey part of the Clash of Civilizations thesis supported by Huntington may be summarised as follows: Turkey is a bridge, but it is hard to be a bridge; because, the bridges do unite two territories but do not belong to any territories, that is Turkey is neither Western nor Eastern which does not belong to them. So, the West and the East can not accept Turkey in this current situation.

Although Turkey is the only "Muslim" country who has a functioning democracy, in order to reach a more peaceful world, Turkey must turn its face to (and for) the East and

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¹ Franck Biancheri, "The Worst Possible Scenario for Turkey," **EUobserver**, 18.11.2002.

become the leader of the Muslim World due to the fact that Turkey will not be accepted by the West (to the EU for example). Consequently, he claims that Turkey, as a democratic but Islamic state, must be a bridge between civilisations as a leader of Muslim world.

Mr Biancheri also uses the "bridge" metaphor, but there is a clear departure from that of Huntington. Although he agrees with Huntington that Turkey is a "bridge does not belong to any shore"; unlike Huntington, he contends that Turkey should not loose its ties with both parts in order not to become "a bridge with no other side anymore." As a logical conclusion of his argument, Mr Biancheri promotes the "privileged neighbour status" for Turkey in the context of European Union.

First of all, regarding Turkish position vis-à-vis the East and the West, I assert positively that Turkey belongs to each side of the bridge which we may call it "Eurasia." Secondly, becoming a member of one side does not necessarily mean that other side is simultaneously removed, on the contrary, it may strengthen the bridge. Let us be more concrete: Full Turkish membership of the EU would not cut all ties with the East including Central Asia and Muslim World, on the contrary, Turkey's relations with them would increase due to its strong economic and political stability.

Privileged neighbour status currently does exist

In the second part of his argument, Mr Biancheri supports the "privileged neighbour status," (from now on, PNS) however, it should be noted that such a status has already been granted to Turkey (or Turkey has already granted it to the EU) via Customs Union. What can be more privileged than full-economic co-operation? Moreover, at the Copenhagen Summit, the problems regarding European Security and Defence Policy has been dissolved and Turkey accepted to contribute to the construction of European army not only with its consent in NATO, but also with concrete military support .

Keep not telling us lies, but keep your promises

In this context, PNS can also be evaluated on the opposite way to Mr Biancheri. If such a status is accepted by the European Council in the future, it would again be the

affirmation of an argument that the EU has been deceiving Turkey, not only politically but also legally. It would be politically wrong because the promises of politicians (that Turkey would gain full-membership) should be kept by them, it would legally wrong because Turkish membership has already provisioned in 1963 Ankara Agreement.

It should be noted that PNS is a violation of the principle of *pacta sunt servanda* (the binding character of a contractual agreement that is signed), because Turkey *de facto* and *de jure* deserves the full membership status.² Therefore what I argue here is that, if PNS comes true in the future, lies would not be ended, but concretised. I would like to add a sentence to Mr Biancheri's motto "keep not telling lies" as follows: "but keep your promises."

Fostering Turkish democracy: Alone or together?

He is right when he says "Turkey's internal problems with democracy and Turkish identity cannot be solved by anybody but the Turkish citizens themselves," however, "without the EU's Copenhagen Criteria, Turkey could not have adopted such democratic reform packages including the amendments and modifications in the constitution and the laws within the last two years. Therefore, truly functioning democracy cannot be reached in Turkey by neglecting the Copenhagen criteria."³ So I argue that anyone, who really wants it, should try to foster and accelerate it, that is to say, Turkey should not go-it-alone. Of course Biancheri's and my approaches are not mutually exclusive, but complementary.

The Kemalist project of modernisation contends this complementary character, because it supports that the democratic institutions (i.e. democratic constitution including the rule of law, secularism etc.) should be established and sprouted in order to foster democracy in Turkey. However, apart from the legal framework, Atatürk did not neglect the economic infrastructure and wanted to change it with industrialisation of Turkey.

² Hasan Engin Şener, "Christmas is a good time for Turkey," **EUobserver**, 18.12.2002.

³ Hasan Engin Şener, "EU/Turkey: Is there more than just a lack of good will?" **The Sprout**, No. 3, November, 2002, pp.6-8.

Today, "truly functioning democracy" is a demand and necessity stemming from the "bottom." As Mr Biancheri puts it Atatürk did not support being the "tail" of the Europe, but that does not necessarily mean that Atatürk is not for the European way of development, on the contrary he wanted to make his emergent nation state Western in order not to become a tail, but the equivalent Western power: "Atatürk come to conclusion that Turkey, as an independent nation, could only survive in a world dominated by Western nations by becoming a Western nation itself."⁴

Conclusion

In conclusion, full Turkish membership is a legal and political right for Turkey and every project preventing it from full membership would be arguable for Turkey. Above all, I agree with Mr Biancheri that "I never thought that partnership, friendship and trust can be based on anything other than frank debate, even, and maybe especially, when they are difficult."

⁴ R. R. Koopmans, **The Limits of Modernization: Turkey**, Amsterdam: Instituut voor Toegepaste Sociologie, 1978, pp.124.