

PRESS REVIEW

Turkey and the European Union

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Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan

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Why Europe must say yes to Turkey

The EU faces a momentous decision



SHOULD the European Union open membership talks with Turkey? The question sounds bland, even technical—and yet the answer will be both controversial and momentous. Turkey is already in all the other big European organisations, from the Council of Europe to NATO. So long as it fulfils the Union's usual membership criteria, there might seem little reason not to take it. After all, this club has just let in a motley crew of mostly ex-communist countries from central Europe.

Yet Turkey is different from these, in four key respects. It is very large; it is very poor; not all of it is in Europe; and it is Muslim. In the past, it has suffered from plenty of failings, ranging from political and economic instability, to the interfering role of its army, to a record of human-rights abuses. These made it easy for the Europeans to fob off previous Turkish bids to join. But over the past two years, the government of Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Justice and Development party has enacted a swathe of reforms, in the hope of meeting the "Copenhagen criteria" that govern eligibility to join the EU.

In two weeks' time the European Commission will publish its assessment of whether Turkey has done enough. Barring a last-minute hiccup—such as almost happened this week, until a plan to criminalise adultery was shelved at the last minute—it is expected to recommend that entry talks should start soon, meaning early next year. In December, EU leaders must decide at a summit meeting if they agree.

Risk and reward

Plainly a decision to negotiate Turkey's entry entails risks for the EU. Start with its size. Turkey already has 71m people. If it joins the EU, within 15 years it will overtake Germany as the biggest member, with the heaviest voting weight in Brussels and the largest national block in the European Parliament. Yet even then it will have only 15% of the total EU population, and it will be just one of 28 or 30 countries—hardly a position from which to dominate decision-making. There is no logic to barring a country because it is big: indeed, it could be argued that the EU suffers from the smallness of many present members.

Poverty is harder. Turkey's GDP per head is only 29% of the EU25 average, way below all existing members. Over a third of its people work on the land. The prospect of having to make huge transfers to Turkey already makes Europe's finance ministers blanch. The risk that waves of poor Turks might migrate westwards does the same to interior ministers. Yet even if entry talks start next year, Turkey is unlikely to join for at least ten years. There will be a long transition period before labour moves freely. For their part, the Turks say they are not looking for copious hand-outs: they want foreign investment.

Next is the question of whether Turkey is even in Europe. The EU's treaties are vague on the Union's physical boundaries. But nobody disputes that a chunk of Turkey, including its biggest city, Istanbul, lies on the European continent. Most of Cyprus, which has just joined the EU, is east of Ankara, Turkey's capital. In any case, Brussels

conceded as far back as 1963 that Turkey was sufficiently European to be a candidate one day. It cannot now go back on grounds of geography.

Which leaves the fourth and biggest worry of all: Islam. The European Union is not a Christian club. Already as many as 12m EU citizens are Muslim, and the Union's founding articles include respect for religious freedom. The religious argument against admitting Turkey rests on two other propositions. One is that Islam is, by its very nature, incompatible with a secular, liberal democracy. The other is that Islamic fundamentalism is on the rise in the Muslim world, including Turkey. This is not a case of equating Islam with support for Osama bin Laden. But the two propositions still make many Europeans hostile to Turkey's plan to join their Union.

Yet ever since Ataturk, successive Turkish governments have been fiercely secular. The only other European country that is as rigorous over enforcing a separation of church and state is France; not coincidentally, these are the only two countries that ban the Islamic headscarf in public schools. As for Turkey's democratic credentials, although they may have been tarnished in the past, they now look stronger than those of some countries that have just joined the EU. The media are free and lively; parliament has noisy and open debates; Mr Erdogan's party was elected by a thumping majority in 2002, and is expected to be re-elected in two years' time.

There is no denying that the party has Islamist roots, however. Mr Erdogan himself was once imprisoned for reciting an Islamist poem in public, an act deemed to incite religious hatred. His government has also promoted some Islamist measures, including its failed attempt to relax restrictions on religious schools, and now its abortive plan to criminalise adultery. The EU is right to fret about these. But such measures themselves are mild compared, say, with the condition of Ireland when it joined in the 1970s. The Catholic Church then held sway over most of Irish public life, keeping such things as contraception, abortion and divorce all illegal.

Islamophobia

It is impossible to demonstrate *a priori* that Islam is compatible with liberal democracy. But Turkey is as good a test-case as any with which to prove the point. Indeed, it is precisely in order to encourage Turks (and other Muslims) to buy into liberal democracy that Turkey must be given the benefit of the doubt, and offered EU membership talks. If the Turks move backwards, whether on human rights or on religious fundamentalism, they can always be shown the door again.

The ramifications stretch far beyond Turkey. America and its allies are seeking to foster liberal democracy in the Middle East. In the post-September 11th world, a no to Turkey could have catastrophic consequences. If the EU were to turn its back on Turkey now, not only might Turkey's own reforms be under threat, but it would be widely interpreted in the Muslim world as a blow against all Islam. Conversely, if Turkey becomes part of the European club, it would serve as a beacon to other Muslim countries that are treading, ever so warily, down the path to freedom and democracy.

As far as foreign policy is concerned, Turkey is one of the burning issues of the day. While animated debates take place in the realms of politics and of the media, *The Economist* takes a stand in favour of Turkey with a headline reading “Why Europe must say yes to Turkey” on the front-page of its print edition of September 18th, from which this article is taken. The journalist clearly supports the view that Turkey should be granted the opening of membership talks, which was actually decided by the European Commission two weeks after the article was published.

It starts by reminding that although Turkey encountered lots of difficulties in the past (either economic, political, military or about human rights), it has been experiencing for two years a set of reforms aimed at fulfilling the Union’s membership criteria.

The journalist swiftly moves on to the analysis of what are for him the four points which are seen as risky for the European Union, and shows that these points are irrelevant thanks to a clear argument.

Firstly, Turkey is a very large country. Yet the journalist objects to the fact that it will be the biggest member within 15 years that it will only have 15% of the total European population, which wouldn’t enable it to make the decisions on its own.

Secondly, it is very poor. However, according to the article, Turkey won’t join the EU until at least ten years.

Thirdly comes the question of European boundaries. On the one hand, Brussels already declared in 1963 that geography wasn’t a problem. On the other hand, Cyprus is east of Ankara and yet a member of the EU.

Eventually, Islam seems to be the greatest issue, even if religious freedom isn’t questioned. One point is that Islam and secular and liberal democracy couldn’t exist at the same time. As regards to secularism, the journalist lays the emphasis on the separation of church and state, which is as marked as in France. Moreover there are many signs of democracy in Turkey. The second point is Islamic fundamentalism. Nevertheless, the text enlightens the fact that Irish laws were worse than Turkish ones when it entered the EU.

The journalist doesn’t see Turkey as the perfect applicant. However he or she contends that it should be given a chance both because Turkish reforms could be jeopardized if not and because a democratic Turkey could be an example for all Muslim countries.

In this article, the journalist takes sides with Turkey, and this in a categorical way. I don’t find however that the text is really biased insofar as the different points it deals with seem to me to be quite representative of all those which have been raised since the beginning of the debate about Turkey’s entry into Europe. So what I find very interesting in the text is rather the way problems are analysed and how they all lead the journalist to consider Turkey’s entry as necessary. But if I let myself be convinced by its

conclusion, I nevertheless think that the analysis gets to easily rid of the whole complexity of some points.

Let's start with the arguments I found relevant. First of all it should be noticed that the article brings up the question of EU credibility. Indeed if Ankara meets the necessary criteria, it seems suitable to expect a positive answer from the EU. In my estimation, the European Union is more exacting about what Turkey must do before entry to the EU than it used to be in the past, with Ireland for instance. Turkey seems to be allowed no exception at all. Does it mean that the EU doesn't need Turkey imperatively? Or does Turkey frighten the EU members so much?

Another interesting point is that Turkey's geographical location, culture and religion make it a bridge to wider Muslim world. Hence if Turkey succeeds in building a strong democracy, the journalist shows that it might serve all democratic aims of Western countries in other Muslim states.

Eventually, what struck me most in this article is the stress put on the role of EU decisions: giving a positive answer to Turkey might be the only way to encourage democracy and the respect of human rights. Therefore the EU may have no alternative choice in making its decision if it wants to help Turkey on the way to democracy. And as is said in the text, one can always say goodbye to Turkey if it makes no more progress or even goes back on reforms.

This now brings me to the points which appeared to me to be seen in a unilateral way. It is the case of Turkey's size and poverty. Although Turkey won't be in the EU in any case until at least ten years, it is my contention that the journalist should study more closely the issue. I mean that what he or she says isn't wrong, but he or she completely puts aside how difficult the Turkish economic situation is and how delicate it will be to improve it. I will deal with this point again with the next article.

Besides, in my opinion the journalist should lay particular stress on the long way Turkey still has to go: despite impressive progress on paper, Turkey continues to be criticized for human rights abuses...

Turkey may remain a controversial issue in the coming months or years. However the European Union may be the correct answer to its difficulties.

It's the economy, stupid

The real problem about Turkey joining the European Union isn't religion, but the potentially devastating impact on Turkish jobs and output.

The debate over Turkey's membership of the European Union has so far focused on how the EU will cope with allowing in a largely Muslim country. But much of that analysis has missed the point: one of the biggest barriers to Turkey's entry to the EU is not that it is Muslim, but that it is poor.

Given that the EU is an economic union before anything else, the economic arguments for and against Turkish entry may be much more relevant than its adherence to Islam. For all the talk of a "clash of civilisations", what is being overlooked is a clash of economic interests, between a lower-middle income economy, with a substantial rural economy, and the wealthy industrialised nations of Western Europe.

The extent of Turkey's poverty is illustrated in the figures (below). It shows Turkey's national income per head compared with that of recent entrants to the EU, such as Poland and the Czech Republic, with the Turkish figure of \$2,790 almost half that of Poland's \$5,270, and only a tenth of UK national income.

While those figures show how far Turkey's economy lags behind other members of the European club, the central problem is more than that: not only is Turkey poor, compared with the rest of the EU, but it is large. With nearly 71 million people, Turkey would be the second largest EU member state after Germany. The union can easily afford to encompass relatively low-income states such as Latvia, with its population of a little more than 2 million out of an EU of 450 million. But the entry of a country of 71 million is on another scale entirely.

To put Turkey's size into context, the 71 million inhabitants of the country have a combined national income of \$176bn. Tiny Denmark, which has a population of just 5.4 million, manages to produce a national income of \$182bn a year.

Much of the same argument applies to two of the other countries seeking EU membership, Romania and Bulgaria. Both have lower national income per head than Turkey - \$2,130 for Romania and \$2,310 for Bulgaria. But the pair have a combined population of fewer than 30 million.

Turkey's sheer size means that its economic weaknesses cannot be airily dismissed. Nor can those in favour of Turkish entry simply assume that the possibility of EU entry will magically transform the Turkish economy into a modern industrial state sometime in the next decade. There is as much chance that the strenuous changes Turkey will have to go through in order to be ready may have the opposite effect, of recession, unemployment and instability. And there is a danger that an ill-timed and underprepared Turkish EU entry could be disastrous for the country itself.

None of this means that Turkey's entry into the EU should be counted out on economic grounds alone. What it does mean is that the EU will have to monitor Turkey's economic performance carefully before making a final decision on entry, and it should take a more active role in offering economic assistance over the 10 to 20 years it may need to prepare.

The need for sensitive handling is highlighted by Turkey's recent economic history. Between 2000 and 2001 Turkey suffered a financial convulsion and severe currency depreciation after removing capital controls, with its economy contracting by nearly 10%. The International Monetary Fund moved in with a multibillion-dollar bail-out, and for most of the past three years has guided Turkish economic policies.

The good news is that Turkey's economy has so far made a remarkable recovery. Its economy grew by nearly 8% in 2002 and 6% in 2003, with the IMF forecasting another bumper year of growth in 2004. While that bodes well for Turkey's prospects, it cannot be said that Turkey necessarily has pent-up growth waiting to be unleashed. The country already has a robust record for growth, at an average of 4.2% a year since 1990 - not one of the highest growth rates in the developing world, but not bad. Britain over the same period grew at 2.1% a year.

Yet Turkey still has a long way to go, even if it can sustain relatively high rates of growth. According to World Bank figures, a surprising proportion of Turkey's population lives in relative poverty: 10% are said to live on just \$2 a day. The percentage of its population over the age of 15 able to read and write is 87% - below the world average for its income level, and far below countries such as Bulgaria, which has 99% literacy (the legacy of the old Soviet bloc's emphasis on investing in infrastructure and education).

Similarly, Turkey's record in terms of infant mortality is also disappointing: 41 deaths per 1,000 births, a rate twice as bad as either Bulgaria or Romania, and far higher than recent EU entrants such as Poland (nine per 1,000) and Slovenia (five per 1,000).

Turkey's economy also remains heavily devoted to agriculture. While agriculture is responsible for just 3% of Poland's economic output, in Turkey agriculture makes up 13%. Elsewhere, foreign investment remains low and concentrated in the wealthier western regions.

As we have seen from the case of Poland, EU entry does not mean a wave of migrant workers to the wealthier EU countries. Given its size and relative poverty, the bigger danger of EU entry is that the Turkish economy is vulnerable to being washed away by exposure to the full force of the single market. If not properly prepared, Turkey's entry could do it more harm than good. Rather than fear Islam, we should worry at the impact on Turkey's poor.

Europe's wealth gap

Gross national income, per head, \$

Turkey	2,790
Latvia	4,040
Estonia	4,960
Poland	5,270
Czech Republic	6,740
Slovenia	11,830
Greece	13,720
France	24,770
Germany	25,250

UK

28,530

• Source: World Bank, 2004

As is said in the first article, it seems that the question of Turkey joining the European Union raises different kinds of problems. According to Richard Adams, the main problem is in fact economy and not religion, which he says the debate has up to now focused on. This is what he deals with in this next article entitled “It’s the economy, stupid”, published in *The Guardian* the day before the European Commission made its decision, namely on October 5th 2004.

The text can be divided in two parts: on the one hand, the journalist points out the characteristics of the Turkish economy; on the other hand, he endeavours to show how tricky the role of the European Union has to be unless Turkish EU entry would prove “disastrous” for the country.

Richard Adams explains that the gap between “wealthy industrialized nations of Western Europe” and Turkish economy is very wide. As a matter of fact, not only it is rural but also the national income per head, as well as the global national income, is far too low. Still too bad literacy and infant mortality also show Turkish poverty. What is more Turkey is such a large country that poverty has to be closely taken into account. To support his talk, he compares Turkish figures with some other states’ ones. Turkey’s national income per head is half that of Poland, and a tenth of the British one. Even if Latvia’s national income per head is only one third higher than Turkey’s, even if Romania’s is lower, the journalist contends that the number of inhabitants makes the whole difference. As for the national income, Turkey produces almost the same one as Denmark... the population of which is barely 8% that of Turkey.

This analysis leads the journalist to worry that Turkey, in the hope of entering the EU, could make unsuitable and potentially damaging changes. Therefore the decision on Turkey’s entry should be made on looking at its economic development. However, according to Richard Adams, the European Union should itself help Turkey to prepare for its entry, in the same way the International Monetary Fund has guided Turkish economic policies over the past three years and which has proved conclusive, even though a lot of work still has to be done. Hence the article closes on the following sentence: “Rather than fear Islam, we should worry at the impact on Turkey's poor.”

As I am obviously not a specialist in economics, I may be unable to understand all subtleties of Turkish economic difficulties and by extension of European economy. Nevertheless I find this article most interesting as regards the precise and rather objective analysis of the situation and at the same time the worry that is expresses towards Turkey—and not really towards the Union—if it has to face “the full force of the single market”. I was much impressed to see how concerned the journalist felt about the candidate, which is well shown by: “If not properly prepared, Turkey’s entry could do it more harm than good.” So he doesn’t really say whether for him Turkey should enter the EU or not but warns against an ill-prepared Turkey if it is to enter in reality. This is why I think he is unbiased as far as the economic problems are concerned.

What reinforces the impression of a relevant analysis is the comparison with other countries in Europe. From this angle he can explain not only how Turkey's economy lags behind other members of the EU but also why the size of Turkey is decisive.

It seems to me that this topic doesn't need further investigation from me, in consideration of my lacking of knowledge of economy.

I'd like to go a bit further into the question of the monopoly of economic grounds, which is the view of the journalist here and which is illustrated by: "one of the biggest barriers to Turkey's entry to the EU is not that it is Muslim, but that it is poor."

On the one hand, one could see in that sentence—which seems to be natural—that the journalist chiefly explains the so far exclusion of Turkey from the EU by economy. For me it is obvious that other reasons must be taken into account, as was mentioned for the first article. If not, why would politicians have so raw debates about Turkey? Unless everybody misses the point or I have been completely deceived by appearances.

I wondered on the other hand if the journalist implied in fact that if Turkey had so long a time to wait before entry the EU, it was due to a will of the European Union mainly based on economic reasons. That would mean that democracy and human rights were far less important than economic stability. Such a hypothesis appears to be frightening. But it would hardly surprise me if it was the case.

I prefer staying optimistic. I don't agree that the EU is an economic union before anything else. On the contrary, I think that the European Community from the beginning implicitly aimed at gathering states around common values (like democracy and human rights) and not only on economic grounds. In addition to that I believe that the EU is always evolving towards a union which is much more than economic.

Europe Gives Turkey a First, Tentative Welcome

BRUSSELS, Oct. 6 — Four decades after Turkey came knocking on Europe's door, the European Union took a crucial step today toward admitting Ankara into its exclusive club.

The executive body of the 25-country European Union ruled that Turkey, a poor, overwhelmingly Muslim country of 71 million people, had made enough progress in reforming its economy and judiciary and improving its human rights record to merit negotiations toward membership.

The decision will have to be approved unanimously by the 25 heads of member states when they meet in December, although none of them is expected to challenge today's recommendation.

That does not mean that Turkey's membership into Europe's largest trading bloc is inevitable. Negotiations will take up to 15 years, and the report today recommending the talks warned that they will be halted if Turkey falters at any point on its road to democratic reform. Even then, Turkey might never become a full member.

"This is an open-ended process whose outcome cannot be guaranteed beforehand," the report said. In presenting the report to the European Parliament, Romano Prodi, the outgoing president of the European Union's executive arm, called it "a qualified yes," adding, "The path to tread is still a long one."

Still, the decision was heralded in Turkey as a breakthrough in redrawing the map of Europe and narrowing the divide between the largely Christian European Union and the Islamic world.

In Ankara, Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul praised the ruling as "a historic decision for Turkey and for Europe." Mehmet Dulger, head of the parliamentary foreign affairs commission, said: "Justice has been done. We hope the rest will come."

In Strasbourg, Turkey's prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, praised the report as "balanced" and called on the European Union to apply "the same criteria and methods" to Turkey's membership bid as the Union has done to other applicants. There is a strong conviction that the hope of eventual membership in the European Union has been the driving force in pushing the country to sweeping, historic reforms in the past two years.

"It would be totally wrong to say, 'Turkey, you are not good enough and you have to wait,'" Günter Verheugen of Germany, the commissioner who is responsible for enlarging the European Union, said at a news conference here.

He added that the risk of saying no to Turkey would be that political reform would "come to an end and would finally fail."

Turkey's government has also said that the opening of talks will raise the confidence of foreign investors and help reduce unemployment and the cost of financing the country's \$208 billion debt.

With the exception of the war in Iraq, Turkey is the pre-eminent foreign policy issue seizing Europe today, dominating the front pages of the continent's newspapers and sparking a shrill, even ugly, debate among politicians and the public alike on whether Turkey belongs.

Polls throughout Europe are running largely against Turkey's membership, and a number of countries, most notably France, have declared that such a momentous decision could only be decided by popular referendum. Such a move could doom Turkey's bid for membership.

To calm fears that Turkish membership will bring waves of unskilled, uneducated, unemployed Turks westward, the report today recommended that the European Union consider strict, permanent limits on Turkish migration.

To counter arguments that Turkey will impoverish the European Union, it also called for special safeguards before Ankara benefits fully from generous European Union farm subsidies and regional aid.

The rawness of the debate was underscored today in the European Parliament session.

"The future of the European Union as a peaceful community is at stake," said Hans-Gert Pötering of Germany, a conservative affiliated with the European People's Party, who opposes Turkish membership. He criticized Turkey for continued human rights abuses and said that the claim in the report that systematic torture in Turkey had ended was "the biggest nonsense we heard in 2004."

A number of deputies criticized those who argue that a Muslim country like Turkey has no place in the European Union. "Where in that argument are the 20 million Muslims who are already Europeans?" asked Graham Watson, a Liberal Democrat from Britain.

Francis Wurtz, a Frenchman and leftist deputy, put it more starkly, saying that the continent "is no longer a Europe of white Christians." He called those who would exclude Turkey on the basis of religion "irresponsible and loathsome." Daniel Cohn-Bendit, a former student radical who represents the German Green Party, said that religion should not be an issue at all. "Europe also consists of people of no faith, and we all need to be able to live together," he said, adding that Turkey should join the European Union because, "It could increase the strategic importance in an increasingly dangerous world." A number of speakers stressed that both Turkey and the European Union will be very different by the time Turkey is ready to join. "It is not today's Turkey that will join the European Union," Mr. Watson said.

Turkey itself shares some responsibility in its failure to achieve membership.

In a step toward membership four decades ago, Turkey signed an association agreement with what was then called the European Economic Community. Turkey was already a member of the NATO military alliance, and entry into Europe's fledgling economic club was supposed to be the logical next step.

A decade later, Turkey and Greece, the archrivals of Europe, were poised to begin membership talks, Greece moved forward aggressively and became a member.

But Turkey halted its appeal. The country had a rigidly protectionist economic system and was unwilling to embrace a common market system that could hurt domestic industries. Some nationalistic politicians considered the European Union a Christian club that was not worth joining.

It was a monumental decision that Turkish leaders came to rue.

Turkey applied for full membership in 1987. But then Communism fell, so Turkey suddenly found itself at the end of a long line of new candidates from the former Soviet bloc. Underscoring that, the executive body confirmed today that Romania and Bulgaria are on track to join in 2007.

Today's ruling notes the progress Turkey has made in reforming its institutions and curbing undemocratic practices. But it also laid bare the problems that remain.

Despite the adoption of new civil and penal codes, it describes the implementation of political reforms as "uneven." The report notes that despite improvements in Turkey's human rights record, 388 individuals filed complaints of human rights violations from January to June 2004. Although torture is no longer "systematic," the report says, "numerous cases of ill treatment including torture still continue to occur." The government has increasingly asserted control over the military to conform to European Union rules, but "the armed forces in Turkey continue to exercise influence through a series of informal mechanisms," the report says.

Corruption is described as "a serious problem in almost all areas of the economy and public affairs."

The report also criticizes Turkey for continuing to prosecute and punish peaceful expression, arbitrarily punish journalists, writers and publishers and restrict freedom of expression for non-Muslim religious communities. For example, the training of non-Muslim clergy is still banned.

As for gender equality, the report criticizes the situation of women as "unsatisfactory," and describes as a major problem discrimination and violence against women, including "honor killings" of women who are judged to have shamed the family. The report also pledged that the European Union would monitor Turkey's human rights progress throughout the negotiating process.

The executive branch "will recommend the suspension of the negotiations in the case of a serious and persistent breach of the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms on which the Union is based," it said.

October 6th 2004: the European Commission gave what its president called a “qualified yes” to the EU membership talks with Turkey. The recommendation, based on Turkey’s progress on economic, political, judiciary and human rights reforms, will have to be approved in December by all 25 EU heads of government. Elaine Sciolino reports the decision and its reception among the Turkish key political figures and the European deputies, coming back then upon historical facts, and eventually expanding on the remaining problems of the candidate. This was for *The New York Times* on October 6th.

To what is said in the previous paragraph, Elaine Sciolino adds that despite the recommendation, the commission has warned it would suspend or even halt negotiations over any failure to respect democracy and human rights. Moreover, it also recommends that the European Union impose limits on Turkish migration and safeguards before Turkey benefits from all financial aids.

Turkish politicians welcomed the news as a historic step for Turkey. Turkey’s prime minister even found the report “balanced”. Not only does this decision make the EU and the Islamic world nearer but also it will help the country in the fields of foreign investment or unemployment for instance.

As for foreign politicians, the debate about Turkey was even more sharpened on that day. The journalist quotes some of them. Whereas opponents disapprove of Turkey continuing human rights abuses, some deputies underscore the fact that the European Union has become a community of various religions and skin-colours. The strategic importance is also brought up.

Then Elaine Sciolino recalls that Turkey is partly responsible for not being a EU member yet. Indeed Turkey refused it forty years ago in order to preserve its protectionist economic system.

At the end of the article, she stresses the fact that in spite of the recent reforms, the commission is clearly aware of the numerous problems that must still be solved, such as human rights violations, the interfering role of the army, corruption, breaches of freedom of expression, discrimination and violence against women...

At first sight, the journalist appears to be unbiased, merely reporting facts in a rather disorganized pattern. A further study leads us to notice some subjective adjectives like “poor” and “overwhelmingly Muslim” which describe Turkey, or particular verbs such as “merit” which shows that she gives an opinion about the reasons why Turkey is now allowed to negotiate with the EU. But except those words from time to time, we can say that the text is quite unbiased, since she doesn’t really take a stand on the issue. Therefore we can’t challenge her opinion!

The three articles in this review agree on at least one point: the issue is controversial.

My opinion is that the fears expressed among the politicians or the public seem to be justified: we cannot deny that if they had the possibility to do so, Turks from poorer parts of the country would be willing to flock west to find jobs; that the poverty combined with the size of Turkey would strain the EU budget since huge transfers would be needed to bring infrastructure, agriculture and administration up to EU levels; that Turkey would have the largest number of European deputies in European parliament; that it would be harder to halt flow of illegal immigrants from Iraq, Iran or Syria through Turkey; that indeed human right abuses are still too numerous...

Yet I am convinced that it is worth giving Turkey a chance to improve first, to benefit from the EU afterwards if it fulfils the needed criteria. First because “principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms”, as the European Commission states, have to be built and applied. Then because of all other Muslim countries. Eventually because Turks are dynamic, young and willing to make efforts and join the European Union.