

From the Desk of the Editor

Turkey seemed to find direction at the turn of the century with the rejuvenated enthusiasm to "be European". Being European meant empowerment to those who felt excluded, meritocracy instead of cronyism, compromise rather than patronization, planned mobilization of potential rather than inefficiency caused by disjointed institutions and ideological divisions. But where are we today? Europeans continue to question whether Turkey belongs in the Union; consequently, Turks, perhaps out of pride, question whether they really want to be a part of Europe. Alternatives are cultivated: perhaps Turkey should be leading the greater Middle East into a global powerhouse. Or perhaps the Turkic geography is where Turkey's potential for greatness lies. On the other hand some disillusioned strategists recommend Turkey foster relationships devoid of consideration of values or common world views -nurturing issue based alliances with countries like Russia or Iran. But even these positions are often argued on the basis of cultural or philosophical underpinnings.

Plagued by the fear that the world is out to restrict Turk's power, Turkey appears to be scrambling. 2007 is a year of both presidential and parliamentary elections in Turkey. Yet it is unlikely that differing political visions or competing solutions to problems will be competing. More likely is that emotionally charged debate will dominate. Once again, aggravating social divisions with patriarchal and patronizing political rhetoric seems to carry the day with the political crowd. Though significant transformation has taken place in Turkey, the way politics is conducted has not changed much: leaders of feudal groups and religious orders are appeased, women are often merely placated, threats to pride and territory are emphasized and favors are distributed to supportive businesses and favored outlets of media and civil society.

The current government was perceived by a wide spectrum of thinkers in Turkey and abroad as an opportunity to redefine the parameters of politics in Turkey with far reaching implications for the region. Hopes that it would be able to forge peaceful dialogue between the traditional elites and the growing conservative middle classes in Anatolia prevailed. Why has this not been achieved? The answer seems to boil down to three strong and competing facets of "Turkishness" that make up the subject matter of this very issue of TPQ: Emotions, Identity, and Values. The Republic of Turkey was founded on the basic premise of forging unity of purpose and identity within its borders. It has so far only been partially successful.

On religious and ethnic grounds, across classes, between gender and age, Turkey is clashing. Shallow debates reduced to varying notions of pride, respect and honor dominate the agenda. The climate in the country is erratic and emotionally charged. Pope Benedict XVI was criticized relentlessly for remarks he had made that were perceived to be derogatory towards Islam, yet the mood changed immediately when he expressed support for Turkey's EU membership while visiting the country. On the other hand, support in Turkey for EU membership has dropped from close to 80 percent a few years ago to lower than 40 percent today. Orhan Pamuk's winning of the Nobel Prize in literature, instead of being celebrated, was perceived by many circles in Turkey as an insult. (All due to Pamuk's critical stance against Turkey's management of the Kurdish and Armenian 'questions').

The disarray of emotions after the tragic murder of Armenian Turkish journalist Hrant Dink is just another example of just how emotionally tangled Turkey is. A strong public demonstration of outrage of the murder and solidarity at the funeral was followed by ugly counterreactions, conspiracy theories covering the front pages of the press, and political calculations of the most expedient position to take. Absent from the scene were principles and informed analysis.

Reactionism in Turkey is not only fuelled by dynamics within Turkey. The global context also negatively effects the disposition of Turkish society. Perceived xenophobia in Europe, arrogance and failed U. S. policies towards many hot spots in the Middle East, security threats in the neighborhood, and efforts to discredit Turkey in the world, have left the Turks susceptible to all sorts of conspiracy theories. However, with strong leadership negative emotions could have been dissuaded and perhaps the downward spiral of tolerance could have been contained. The previous issue of TPQ (Fall 2006), which included different perspectives on whether Turkey's westward orientation was still on track, demonstrated the wide range of questions left unanswered and the general state of "drifting" that can be observed. This state may be due partly to communication deficiencies on behalf of authorities, and partly to rapid changes in the region.

However disconcerting global trends are, they must be addressed directly, and new clear positions must be articulated. The initiative of the German Interior Minister, outlined in this issue, is a good case in point of a conscious and systematic effort at bridging different agendas and coming to terms with new realities. The establishment of a "long-term process of negotiation and communication between the German State and the representatives of the Muslim population in Germany" to diagnose the challenges of living together and to find solutions together for the future is meant to serve the vision for living together and taking the country forward.

In his article making the case for Kosovo's independence, Agim Çeku provokes thought on the strengthening of international justice in the past decade and the changing relationship between state sovereignty and individual rights. In an interdependent world, struggling against global political trends is futile. According to Cengiz Günay reactionism in Turkish society and politics seems to stem somewhat from global change, though both he and David Arnett trace the roots of many of the emotions widespread in Turkey today to unresolved issues of the past, repressed and never taken up on the basis of objective information. Arnett zooms into the emotions of honor and pride and resentment as he analyzes the loss of mutual trust and understanding between Turkey and the U. S. in recent years. For the potential of international action to be realized, he notes, this emotional disposition needs to be managed more effectively. Rising 'isolationist Turkish nationalism' emanates from distinct insecurity and perceived injury to the country's pride. The fear of Turkey's partition by foreign powers, the conviction that minorities will play a role in such a plot, the resentment of perceived rejection from the EU and disrespect from the U. S. are so strong that rational debates on how to move forward on concrete issues are increasingly difficult to find.

Günay focuses on how the liberalization of public discourse in Turkey and the EU integration process has unleashed sentiments associated with being under threat. Günes Becerik clearly articulates the particular bumps stemming from identity and culture on the road towards Turkey's accession to Europe. Though what it means to be European and what it means to be Turkish are more indistinct than ever, stereotypes and vague notions of belonging - or not belonging- are more decisive with public opinion's rising power. No doubt one of the most important factors in the feeling among Europeans that Turkey doesn't belong in the EU is religious differences and perceived cultural clashes. Biases run deep. However neither fatalism nor retaliation is required. Just how irreconcilable Islam is with European values and lifestyles is being taken up in a number of European countries in order to diagnose the seeming incompatibilities rationally rather than with prejudice and emotion.

Hans-Christian Jasch provides a detailed overview of state initiatives in both Italy and Germany to establish dialogue with Muslim communities and address integration problems which lead to discrimination, alienation and extremism. The root of radical dispositions in Turkey

need to be assessed likewise with courage and operational action plans. Anne Duncker analyzes the level of internalization of tolerance among Turkish civil society from an interesting angle. As she questions the universality of human rights concepts, she bases her analysis on two rights that spur controversy in Turkey: those regarding homosexuals and those of women who want to wear the headscarf in public office and universities. Though the variations within Turkish civil society are clearly demonstrated by this research based article, the limits of tolerance in society are also contemplated.

Based on interviews with university students, Jinnyn Jacob identifies the issues highest on the agenda of university age youth and the ideological currents that drive them. Close to half the interviewed stated that the Kurdish issue was the most important on Turkey's agenda. For those of Kurdish origin the issue was one of recognition of identity, and for the others, the relevant point was security. The divides were equally distinct over the role of religion in society- with some claiming freedom of religion was being repressed while others were concerned that an Islamist threat was looming over the secular order of the country. The same issues being viewed from totally opposite perspectives by the youth reflects the deep polarization in the society. Though women's issues surfaced as being relatively unimportant for Turkish youth in this study, we, as TPQ, will be taking this topic up with our next issue, in Spring, with the hope of increasing understanding about just how central to social, political and economic development the meaningful participation of women in public life is.

Irem Askar Karakir argues that the rise of political Islam in the Middle East is largely due to the failure of existing regimes to address the growing problems of their societies, leading them to fall behind globally and live under difficult economic and political conditions. Religion in this context is assuring and politically expedient; however religion can very well play less of a role in the political arena if the movements based on religion fail to deliver services or if alternative players that do deliver services emerge. The article stimulates thought as to the role of religion in the political dynamics of Turkey as well. Though no doubt controversial in Turkic and Western countries alike, Odil Ruzaliev takes up the ideal of a united Turkic world. It is clear to see that the concepts of what counts in identity politics is in fact very blurry. The very variety of those elements which might unite Turkic nations -Ethnicity? Legends? Strategic interests? Culture? Territory? Feelings of exclusion by the rest? Religion?-demonstrates that there is little common ground concerning identity across nations and time.

Mevlana Celaleddin-i Rumi, a sufi poet and theologian of the 13th century said "Ya oldugun gibi görün, ya göründüğün gibi ol" (Either appear as you are, or be as you appear), Taking a critical look, it is difficult to argue that Turkey follows this maxim. Turks claim to be tolerant-but how can one then explain the numerous public opinion polls and incidents that point to the opposite? The claim is that Turkey is European - but when the context and audience changes, the rhetoric changes and Turkey is Middle Eastern overnight. "Know thyself," is another ancient saying.

Does Turkey know itself and where it wants to go? Instead of playing all hands at once, Turkish leaders and elites need to stand up for what they believe and express it openly. If it is Europe Turkey wants, then the spreading conviction that European integration is a lost cause needs to be challenged with intellectual reasoning and political will. If American democratization efforts in the Black Sea region are deemed a threat, it should be expressed openly as such. Otherwise, other countries and domestic observers are left speculating and attributing political positions to emotional or ideological dispositions rather than to a comprehensive vision and logical strategy. It is not betrayal, but patriotism to confront your country's flaws and weaknesses.

The fact that many of these flaws are shared by the very countries that judge Turkey does not reduce the value found in critical self-analysis. Turkey has come a long way in this century. From crisis and national emergencies to European candidate and economic growth, the country has seen its fair share of improvement on the national and international level. It should not be complacent now with its achievements, but attempt to address these new hurdles as they come, always seeking to build on, rather than re-build, its steady progress towards modernity.

Since its launching five years ago, Turkish Policy Quarterly (TPQ) has grown in readership and impact. At the end of this year we intend to restructure our journal, revise our layout, and introduce new organizational structures. One such structure to change will be our advisory members who have reached the 5th year mark. From now on we will rotate one third of these members as they reach this milestone in order to be able to integrate fresh perspectives. We would like to express our gratitude to those who have kindly served on the board for the past five years: Ishak Alaton, Ali Çarkoğlu, Beril Dedeoğlu, Kemal Kirişçi, Hasan Köni, Daniel Pipes, and David Steinmann. We welcome on board distinguished new members, Hikmet Çetin, Üstün Ergüder, and Ian Lesser and reiterate our appreciation to Carl Bildt and Anthony Giddens for joining us last year.

After five years in the making, TPQ has reached a level of international exposure that demands an improvement in our visual design. Our next issue will feature the re-launch of TPQ in a more attractive format. We are also delighted to announce our recent launch of a multi-dimensional partnership with Turkish Daily News, and our continuing content-based collaboration with the European Stability Initiative. We are grateful to the institutional sponsor of this issue, TEB (Türk Ekonomi Bankası), as well as our other supporters, Finansbank, Yapı Kredi Koray Insaat, Fortis Bank, Borusan, Koç Grubu, and Unit Group. We hope this issue succeeds in provoking analytical thought and fostering a more well-rounded understanding of the complexities of Turkey and its region. As always, we look forward to receiving your comments and suggestions on TPQ and the issues which we address.

Diba Nigar Göksel