

TURKISH IMAGE AND ANTI-TURKISH LOBBIES IN EUROPE*

Kaan SAHİLYOL

Abstract:

Although means of ethnic lobbying and propaganda have been available for few centuries in the form of books and tales, the emergence of global media and mass communication provided contemporary lobbyists with tools which were unimaginable even few decades ago. Turkish lobbyists, unlike their Armenian and Greek counterparts have rather been latecomers to the lobbying arena, and therefore tend to lack certain skills and experiences to defend Turkish causes. Ethnic lobbies with a proven anti-Turkish agenda, such as Armenian and Greek organizations in Europe, however, reached a high level of know-how regarding the use of mass media in promoting their ethnic agendas which often corresponds to undermining Turkish causes. As Turkey faces a critical decade regarding its permanent position in the European Union, the advantage and better know-how of anti-Turkish lobbies emerges as the biggest stumbling block on Turkey's EU bid. The prejudices and opposition to Turkish EU membership in many European countries can only be overcome by bridging this know-how gap between Turkish- and rival ethnic lobbies.

Keywords: *Ethnic lobbying, anti-Turkish propaganda, EU-Turkey relations, Turkish image in Europe*

Özet:

Etnik lobcılık ve propaganda kitaplar ve halk hikayeleri biçiminde yüzyıllardır var olmasına rağmen global medya ve kitlesel iletişim araçları günümüz lobcilerine kısa zaman öncesinde hayal bile edilemeyecek imkanlar sunmaktadır. Türk lobcileri ise lobcılık mücadelesine Yunan ve Ermeni meslektaşlarına nazaran daha geç başladıkları için Türkiye'nin davalarını savunmak için gerekli bazı deneyim ve bilgiye sahip değildir. Türkiye ise, öncelikle Avrupa Birliği içindeki nihai konumunun

* This article is a reformulation and summary of the author's Ph.D thesis submitted to the European Union Institute of Marmara University.

belirlenmesine sadece birkaç yıl kaldığı için, Türk karşıtı lobilerin etkinliklerine yanıt vermek için gecikme lüksüne sahip değildir. Avrupa içindeki Türk karşıtı önyargılar ve birçok Avrupa ülkesindeki Türkiye'nin AB üyeliğine muhalefet ise ancak Türk karşıtı lobilerle Türk lobileri arasındaki bilgi, tecrübe, ve etki farkının kapatılması ile mümkündür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Etnik lobicilik, Türk karşıtı propaganda, AB-Türkiye ilişkileri, Avrupa'da Türk imajı

Introduction

Only few decades ago, the term ethnic lobbying was arguably confined to the promotion of one ethnic group's interests and positive qualities, and did not include the denigration and defamation of rival ethnic groups. This phenomenon had most probably to do with the fact that almost all host countries were dominated by only one of historically rival ethnic groups. To cite few examples, the lobbying scene in the United States was dominated by Jewish Americans while the influence of rival Arab Americans was minimal. In France, the Armenian community enjoyed significant political influence, while the Turkish community, let alone a Turkish lobby, was nonexistent until early 1970s.

Even though the Jewish lobby in the United States continued to have the upper hand vis-à-vis the Arab lobby, and the French-Armenian community upheld its superiority over French-Turkish community, both dominant lobbies had to acknowledge the existence and challenge of rival ethnic groups. Due to the realization that the positions and arguments of the dominant lobbies were going to be challenged by rival ethnic groups, it became no longer sufficient to promote an ethnic group's causes only. It became also necessary to disprove, challenge, and discredit rival ethnic groups' positions, which turned ethnic lobbying into a relatively less ethical activity than it was few decades ago.

Due to this growing rivalry between ethnic lobbies, it can safely be argued that almost all ethnic lobbies in Europe, as well as in North America, follow two different forms of propaganda activities simultaneously. These activities are, in its simplest form, promotion of the lobbies' causes and defamation of rival groups' causes. In its more traditional and harmless version, ethnic lobbies promote the homelands of their ethnic kinsmen in cultural, historical, political, and financial arenas. Since this type of lobbying activity by itself does not harm or denigrate rival ethnicities directly, it can also be called 'constructive', as well as 'promotional'

lobbying. The second type of lobbying, on the hand, primarily focuses on damaging rival lobbies' image and causes, and can therefore be called 'destructive' lobbying.¹

The activities of the Greek Americans in the United States, for example, can be mostly considered as promotional lobbying. Greek Americans spend great efforts to present Greece as the sole representative of the antic Hellenic civilization, and try to prove that the entire Western civilization is based upon Hellenic values. Even though there is a certain amount of indisputable validity in these claims, Greek American lobbies professionally exaggerate the Hellenic influence in Western societies. Consequently, the Greek lobbies render the American public opinion more sympathetic towards the Greece of today, since it arguably represents everything which was once Hellenic.

The more clandestine and lesser known version of lobbying is propaganda activities directed against a rival ethnic group, with the aim of denigrating and defaming the image and causes of the rival lobbies. These types of activities, which can also be called 'destructive' lobbying, are usually performed by experienced and professional lobbyists. As public opinions in the Western world became relatively more sensitive toward open acts of racism and ethnic chauvinism especially after the end of the Second World War, professional lobbyists usually engage in well-disguised forms of defamation and anti-propaganda. Although this destructive form of lobbying has been existent in the Western world for centuries in the form of anti-Semitism, anti-Islam, and anti-Turkism, it was effectively refined recently in order to gain acceptance among more educated masses. Thus, 'destructive' lobbying mostly aims at the subconscious of public opinions, and thus remains the most refined and dangerous form of ethnic lobbying.

The emergence of the negative Turkish image in Europe

The primitive form of Turcophobic propaganda, which had started centuries ago in Europe, however, was not refined or concealed for a long time since it was mostly directed at an uneducated, and mostly illiterate European public opinion. Anti-Turkish propaganda in Europe, which was initially started with the aim of gathering volunteers for the Crusades, reached varying forms and intensities over the centuries. Especially during

¹ The terms 'constructive / promotional lobbying' and 'destructive lobbying' were coined by the author of this paper. It is therefore highly unlikely to find identical expressions that define the types of lobbying which have been explained by the author.

the 15th and 16th centuries, when the Ottoman state was at the peak of its power, the success of the Turks was presented as a punishment of God. Mostly relying on the ignorance and bigotry of the masses, the Catholic Church propagated the view that the Turkish menace would stop if the people would follow the orders of the clergy properly. Having spread over a period of several centuries, especially Catholic Church's anti-Turkish propaganda penetrated even children's books and prayers, thus becoming a permanent part of the European folklore (Kühlmann & Coşan, 2006).

Anti-Turkish propaganda continued way into the 18th century, when the Ottoman Empire stopped being a menace for Europe. Johann Gottfried Herder, who had lived between 1744 and 1803, and was known to be the most influential and intellectual philosopher of his time, proposed the idea of 'Republic of Europe' for the first time in history. Even though the major part of Ottoman territories was in Europe by the time of Herder's proposal, the German philosopher did not want to see the Ottoman Turkey in his imaginary Republic of Europe. Since Herder was a big admirer of ancient Greeks, and he had never forgiven Ottomans for having ended the Byzantine Empire, it is probable that his judgment about Ottoman Turkey's 'European ness' was influenced by his personal feelings. Despite his alleged dedication to rationalism and objectivity, Herder's antagonism towards Ottoman Turkey became more bizarre in the light of the fact that he had never been to Ottoman lands in his lifetime (Kuran-Burçoglu, 2005: 42-44).

It is arguably surprising that even Johann Gottfried Herder, whose intelligence, knowledge, and insight was admitted by his critics, allowed his judgment to be influenced by his anti-Turkish prejudices. Although the modern sense of 'political correctness' was not a pressure factor by the 18th century, the newly emerging enlightenment required a certain amount of objectivity from personalities of Herder's caliber. Thus, Herder's inability, or unwillingness, to provide solid evidence of Ottoman Turkey's lack of European ness is arguably astonishing even in the less objective circumstances of 18th century. The lack of opposition or criticism from Herder's European contemporaries can be thus considered as a further demonstration of the prevalence of anti-Turkish attitudes among European peoples.

The arguably appalling habit of basing anti-Turkish attitudes on historical myths rather than on facts continued also in the 19th and early 20th centuries, when Europe literally entered the modern ages. While it became unacceptable to present any serious political argument without supporting evidence, unabashed criticism and insult directed at Ottoman Turkey was

largely tolerated. While the alleged atrocities and barbarisms of other nations were received with a great benefit of doubt, allegation about Ottoman misdeeds were almost always acknowledged as established facts.

Regarding the bilateral relations between Ottoman Turkey and neighboring countries in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it was arguably Greece which had gained most of the negative Turkish image prevalent in Western Europe. The Greek manipulation and promotion of negative Turkish image, in turn, was predominantly kept alive by the British politician William Gladstone, who had served four times as Prime Minister between 1868 and 1894.² Gladstone described the Ottoman Turks as 'a tremendous incarnation of military power, an advancing curse that menaced the whole of Europe, leaving a broad line of blood marking the track behind the'. He was also straightforward in his view that he saw the Turks as a relic from 'the black day when they first entered Europe, one great anti-human specimen of humanity' (Pettifer, 1993: 192).

Ottoman-Greek relations in the light of anti-Turkish bias in Europe

Given the biased and harsh attitudes of Western European statesmen, which were most clearly epitomized in the opinions of William Gladstone, Greek statesmen and politicians frequently resorted to the sympathies and assistance of Western powers whenever the opportunity rose. This was especially the case in the period between 1821 and 1913, in which the Greek kingdom had expanded its territory at the expense of Ottoman Turkey for the five times. Arguably in all of these Ottoman-Greek conflicts between 1829 and 1913, Greek statesmen and political activists managed to present the Ottomans as aggressors, and to enlist the support of European major powers which did not need to be asked twice. It was hardly surprising then, that the young Greek kingdom, which has always been the aggressor state in the Ottoman-Greek wars, managed to obtain territory from the Ottomans five times in 92 years, despite having lost all military battles with the exception of the First Balkan War.

Another noteworthy consequence of the Greek territorial expansion in the 19th century was that hundreds of thousands of Ottoman Turks were left at the mercy of the occupying or advancing Greek forces. While many Ottoman Turks preferred to escape from the advancing Greek armies and

² A comprehensive summary of William Gladstone's political career and British Foreign Policy during his four terms as Prime Minister is available at the BBC official website

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/gladstone_william_ewart.shtml

settled in unoccupied parts of the Ottoman states, many more were unable, or unwilling to leave their hometowns and villages. As a result, those Ottoman Turks who remained in Greek-occupied territories became subjects, and also often victims, of the Greek kingdom. Nevertheless, the European powers, and especially the British politicians, routinely downplayed the atrocities committed against Turks while they categorically exaggerated the Turkish misdeeds. In the words of Greek-Canadian historian and researcher Andre Gerolymatos, who combined his own observations with those of 19th century prominent British historians:

"The siege of Tripolis in 1821 and the subsequent slaughter of the Muslim population was the result of a combination of fear and the [Greek] army's sense that it had been cheated. For six months, the Greeks had laid siege to the city, and the troops had been promised booty to make up for their not being paid..... The Greek insurgents stumbled onto brutality because they lacked the professionalism needed to conduct disciplined warfare. For the Ottomans, on the other hand, savagery was the mechanism of imperial control." (Gerolymatos, 2001: 174-175)

It goes without saying, in the light of Andre Gerolymatos' biased evaluation of Turkish and Greek atrocities towards each other, that the downplaying of Turkish sufferings, in addition to the exaggeration of Turkish misdeeds, constitutes an important component of anti-Turkish propaganda. As it would be impossible for a reasonable historian to deny or neglect the plights of Ottoman Turks at the hands of the Greeks, the only possible way to maintain a predominantly anti-Turkish attitude would be to downplay or belittle Turkish sufferings. It can therefore be argued that Gerolymatos tried to do exactly this by presenting Greek brutality as an exception while portraying the Turkish transgressions as a rule. By presenting the wrongdoings of other nations towards Turks as reactions against Turkish brutality or as exceptionally rare incidents, historians and academicians like Gerolymatos arguably urged their readers to think that the usual villains were, as it had always been, the Turks.

If it was William Gladstone who was most eager to be manipulated by anti-Turkish propaganda, it was Eleutheros Venizelos who, after having intensively studied and contemplated the anti-Turkish attitude in Europe, had made most use of these prejudices for the sake of his own country. Intensifying his anti-Turkish propaganda after the defeat of Germany in 1918, Venizelos started an intensive campaign in order to convince especially British- and French public opinions that ethnic Greeks were being massacred in Anatolia. The majority of French- and British statesmen,

having been exposed to the same anti-Turkish propaganda as their public, did not have to be asked twice. In the words of academician İbrahim Erdal, who has done extensive research about Turkish-Greek relations in the early 20th century, "*Venizelos has step by step succeeded in accomplishing the 'Megali Idea' from 1919 until 1922. His propaganda was so successful that the Allied Powers officially declared that the reason for the Greek occupation of Izmir was 'preventing the massacres of Greeks.* (Erdal, 2006: 25).

The observations and conclusions of Turkish academician İbrahim Erdal were further corroborated by the findings of British academician, journalist and researcher James Pettifer who has done extensive research on Turkish-Greek relations in the 19th century. Although certain positions of Pettifer could arguably be tarnished with anti-Turkish bias as well, his general conclusions about the Western European perception of Turkish-Greek conflicts have arguably been commendable. In an arguably rare example of self-criticism, Pettifer thus managed to summarize the pro-Greek and anti-Turkish bias in Western Europe, from which he was admittedly influenced as well. In the words of Pettifer, "*behind all Greek-Turkish disputes, there is a ball and chain of old symbolism and iconography in which Greece is seen to represent law, decency, rationalism, Christianity and European civilization, while Turkey represents anti-democratic principles, Islam, totalitarianism, and so on*" (Pettifer, 1993: 192). Though Pettifer acknowledged a relative decline in the Western European anti-Turkish bias after the foundation of the Turkish Republic, he nevertheless insisted on the enduring validity of his claim until present.

The Greek occupation of Western Turkey from 1919 until 1922, which had detrimental effects both on ethnic Turks and ethnic Greeks, eventually led to an increased understanding of Turkish causes in Europe. The notion that other European nations, especially Greeks, were also capable of dreadful atrocities started to gain acceptance in Western Europe. Even though it was too late to reverse the tragic fate of ethnic Turks and Greeks in Aegean Turkey, it became relatively more difficult in Europe to make Turks scapegoats for all bloodsheds. For the first time in recent history, it was acknowledged, even by some Greek authors, that the eruption of a major war was not the result of Turkish barbarism, but of pure Greek aggression. (Sotiriou, 2005: 300-301) Thus, it became a necessity for anti-Turkish propagandists to develop new and more subtle methods of lobbying after the 1920s.

The relative improvement of new Turkey's image in Europe made it impossible for anti-Turkish lobbyists to propagate their agendas in traditional and relatively direct ways. Since it became clear that especially British and French statesmen were hoodwinked by Greeks into a major war in Anatolia in 1919, anti-Turkish propaganda in its rudest form became highly suspected and disliked in Europe. Even though there has not been an official apology or assumption of responsibility regarding the occupation of Anatolia between 1919 and 1922, certain groups and circles in Europe publicly admired Turkey's successful war against this occupation which derived its alleged legitimatization from Greek propaganda. Nevertheless, this admiration did not prevent anti-Turkish propaganda from searching and finding more subtle and alternative channels, such as literature and media.

The transformation of anti-Turkish propaganda after the proclamation of the Turkish Republic

Following the collapse of traditional defamation activities against Turkey after the Turkish military victories in 1922, new categories of destructive propaganda started to emerge in the 1930s and 1940s in Europe as well as in North America. Even though the emerging forms of anti-Turkish propaganda did not claim to be based on scientific facts, they managed to keep centuries-old anti Turkish notions alive until this day. These new forms of propaganda can be grouped into films, novels, television sequels, and caricatures in the daily press. While novels had been the first and most prevalent form of this new form of anti-Turkish propaganda until the 1950s, they had mostly been replaced by films, TV sequels, and newspaper caricatures since then.

Franz Werfel's 'Forty Days in Musa Dagh', and Karl May's 'Durch das wilde Kurdistan' can be considered as significant examples of anti-Turkish propaganda in forms of novels. Having the equivalent effect of today's television series, these and similar novels in the 1930s and 1940s reached a high level of popularity in German-speaking countries in Europe. Even though these novels did not provide readers with historical documents or scientific proofs, they conditioned readers' minds about Turks' allegedly unpredictable and violent nature. Since these novels were not of diplomatic or official nature, there was no way that they could be repudiated, disputed, or countered by Turks or by those who thought that the novels did not reflect the reality.

In his novel, 'Forty Days in Musa Dagh', Franz Werfel described the struggles of some Armenian villagers who were resisting deportation orders of Ottoman authorities. During the course of the book, the struggles of the

Armenians were praised while the efforts of Ottoman soldiers to evacuate the villagers were strongly criticized. In Karl May's 'Durch das wilde Kurdistan', Turks were depicted as the sole responsible nation for Kurds' plights and lack of a homeland. Both novels concur in their conclusion that Turks are somewhat occupiers in a land which has never belonged to Kurds or Armenians. Nevertheless, as only a small part of the readers would be familiar with these facts, the historical reality would not help Turkey much in saving its stained image.

As means of mass communications have drastically improved after the Second World War, movies and eventually TV series replaced novels as subtle propaganda tools. As even television was not as widespread as movie theaters until the late 1970s, it can be asserted that the preferred means of propaganda from the early 1950s until early 1980s have been movies. Movies like *Midnight Express*, for example, which had depicted Turkey as a backward, authoritarian, and totally corrupt country, achieved great successes in terms of attendance and sales. The movie, which had greatly exaggerated the shortcomings of the Turkish penal and judicial system, arguably defamed Turkey more effectively than any anti-Turkish lobby could do in any other form of propaganda.

Even the apology of Alan Parker, the director of the movie, was arguably too late in order to reverse or repair the damage done to the image of Turkey. Given that even the author of this research paper was mocked with reference to *Midnight Express* several times during his stay in the United States, suggests that the movie successfully penetrated into the American pop culture. In other words, the 'realness' of the happenings in '*Midnight Express*' has stopped mattering long time ago, as the images and messages of the movie had been carved deeply into the memories of the American public.

Another form of propaganda which requires little proof and factual information is the use of caricatures as means of defamation. Although a known means of journalistic art since the late 19th centuries, the use of caricatures became popular in the 1980s. Mainly appearing on the political satires or newspaper columns, this means of propaganda was also discovered by anti-Turkish lobbies. As it is extremely difficult to protest or disprove a message conveyed by a caricature, Turks living abroad were usually helpless against these defamation attempts. Having discovered an effective and subtle way to provoke the anti-Turkish feelings among European readers, anti-Turkish lobbyists started to resort to caricatures with increasing frequency.

The image of corrupt Turk, fundamentalist Turk, uncivilized Turk, and oriental/un-European Turk is widely used in the caricatures which frequently appear in American and European newspapers. (Adanalı & Erensü, 2005: 6-24) Especially when the caricatures accompany a column or article which criticizes Turkey, the caricature serves also the purpose of strengthening the message of the columnists or journalists. While there is always a possibility of writing a counter-argument against a newspaper article however, it is highly unrealistic to take the same action against a biased caricature. Especially when the reader possesses already a subconscious anti-Turkish bias due to his or her prior education, the caricatures contribute to the affirmation of these prejudices.

Long term effects of anti-Turkish propaganda

It would certainly be an exaggeration to claim that watching of an anti-Turkish movie or reading of an anti-Turkish caricature would turn people instantly into haters of Turks and of Turkey. It would undeniably take more than one piece of anti-Turkish propaganda in order to manipulate an individual's opinion about Turks and Turkey. Nevertheless, given that the European, and increasingly also the American public opinion has been inundated with anti-Turkish propaganda, even small amounts of media prejudice would serve as complements of the defamation efforts. Consequently, even admirable and praiseworthy actions of Turkish public may be presented as deplorable actions, mostly without being detected by the targeted public.

As a result of carefully directed propaganda, even the most education sections of the European public were eventually indoctrinated by the anti-Turkish lobbies. By the amalgamation of anti-Turkish novels, movies, TV series, and caricatures, the Europeans who consider themselves as intellectuals also received their share of indoctrinations and biases. Academic researchers, journalists, and lawmakers who are supposed to constitute the most educated subsections of European public opinion consequently lost part of their objectivity when they were dealing with Turkish matters. As the opinions expressed by these highly intellectual group of Europeans is highly respected, however, their own anti-Turkey biases usually harm Turkish image more than any other form of anti-Turkish propaganda.

Especially when a well-known European journalist reports about Cyprus, the status of the army in Turkey, PKK terrorism, or Armenian allegations, most Europeans are arguable ready to read a piece of article which will be almost certainly anti-Turkish in its attitude. Due to the combined efforts of

anti-Turkish lobbies and their extensions in the media, Cyprus would most likely be associated with Turkish aggression, PKK terrorism would be coupled with human rights issues, Armenian allegations would be presented as genocide, and the Turkish Army would be accused of being anti-democratic in most articles. According to the observations of Sedat Laçiner, whose specific focus is the Armenian lobby:

"The combined efforts of Armenian groups, combined with the activities of Greek, Greek-Cypriot, Kurdish separatist, and other radical anti-Turkish groups greatly hinders the lives of Turkish immigrants, as well as of Turkish individuals who are in business contacts with European countries. The persistent anti-Turkish propaganda activities of these well-organized groups sooner or later lead to a communication breakdown between Turkey and Western public opinion. Eventually, Turkey meets a strong public resistance in matters such as Cyprus, EU accession, free trade, free movement of workers, and Kurdish issue which initially seem not interrelated. This public resistance, in turn, often forces the leaders in European capitals to assume anti-Turkish attitudes as well". (Laçiner, 2004: 158)

According to Laçiner, especially the Armenian lobby has engaged all of its resources and allies in order to damage Turkey's image in Europe, and thus managed to become a part in Turkish-EU relations especially in the areas of thorny issues. Due to successful Armenian propaganda and manipulation, problems stemming from Kurdish separatist activities or Greek intransigence in Cyprus may have repercussions in Armenian genocide allegations, or vice versa. Consequently, an image of a very dangerous and opportunistic Turk is created, who should not be compromised or tolerated even in issues where the other side is undeniably mistaken. Accordingly, the Turkish side should always be treated with utmost intolerance and intransigence, so that the arguably interrelated interests of Armenians, Greek-Cypriots, Kurdish separatists, and the EU in general can be protected.

Turkey's EU bid and EU's growing anti-Turkish bias

Though the ultimate message conveyed by the anti-Turkish lobbies is highly biased and bigoted, it is abundantly manifest that this message is being received with increasing eagerness in Europe. It arguably serves the agendas of most European politicians to postpone Turkey's EU accession based on the accusations of anti-Turkish lobbies. As it is extremely likely that careful journalistic or academic research would disclose the unfairness of these accusations, the anti-Turkish European organizations would most

likely intervene in order to prevent such a research from being conducted. Therefore, preference and financial support would be granted to those researchers and journalists with a known anti-Turkish bias, so that their coverage of Turkish issues would reflect the same biases and prejudices. Other journalists and researchers, on the other hand, who are known to conduct independent research regardless of financial incentives or intimidations, will most probably be left out in the first place.

As Western Europe is arguably the most educated and democratic public opinion, however, it would be inevitable that certain politicians, academicians, journalists, and researchers become aware of the injustices committed against Turkey. As it is impossible to silence or oppress these individuals overtly in a democratic society, anti-Turkish lobbies and their political auxiliaries would try to marginalize and discredit these individuals as best as they can. By doing so, the anti-Turkish lobbies, in collaboration with their political connections, would not only prevent these individuals from creating a pro-Turkish attitude among their respective communities, but they would also try to hurt their own respectability as a means of punishment.

One alarming example regarding the current increase of anti-Turkish within the EU is the increased amount of opposition to Turkish membership in Austria. According to the report of ESI, a Berlin-based research and policy group, there was little distinction between Austrian attitudes towards Turkey and other EU candidate states. According to the ESI report, the Democratic Party, which was in opposition in 2004, accused the ruling Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) of 'going soft' on Turkey and forced the ÖVP to block EU's accession talks with Turkey. The ÖVP government, which has generally been steadfast in resisting to opposition parties' demands and pressures, made an exception in the case of Turkey. In accordance with the demands of the opposition party, the ÖVP did all it could do in order to stall the start of EU-Turkish accession negotiations during the Brussels Summit in December 2004. (ESI Report: Austrian opposition to Turkey stems from ignorance, 04/02/2008: TDN Online edition)

The ESI report further stressed the fact that while the EU enlargement have normally included intense debates across business associations, media, trade unions, and academic institutions, the Austrian politicians have avoided 'any serious debate on the merits of Turkish accession. *"Instead, politicians have played on popular fears and prejudices, absolving themselves of responsibility for the decision by pushing off the issue off to a*

referendum. Public opinion has therefore hardened against Turkish accession.” As a result of this ‘hardened public opinion’ in Austria, the ESI report furthermore predicts that any referendum on Turkish accession between 2014 and 2020 would have a strongly hostile outcome against Turkey. (Ibid)

What the ESI report arguably omits, however, is that there has been a subtle and latent anti-Turkish bias in most Austrians’ minds for several centuries. Even though such a bias may have remained in a dormant or suppressed form for a few decades following the foundation of the Turkish Republic, events after the 1960s arguably contributed to the reactivation of the anti-Turkish bias in Austria. The arrival of conservative, undereducated, and isolated Turkish guest workers in early 1970s and the arrival of genuine as well as phony political refugees in the 1980s led to an intensification of the latently existing anti-Turkish attitude in Austria. Not surprisingly, many PKK activists as well as terrorists were hidden among the pseudo-refugees which arrived in Austria in great numbers. In roughly a decade following their arrival in Austria, these terrorists and their sympathizers organized themselves as an efficient anti-Turkish lobby and propaganda group.

While Turkish authorities were quite busy and successful to contain the PKK propaganda in Germany, this was regrettably not the case in Austria. Thus, when the Austrian Democratic Party, which was in opposition in 2004, tried to corner the ruling Austrian People’s Party, it enthusiastically wagered Turkey’s European aspirations, and the ruling ÖVP defended itself by sacrificing the proposed wager. Although the Austrian public opinion would have arguably revolted against such a demagogic act if it had involved any other EU candidate country, there was no significant criticism or protest against the sacrifice of Turkey. It was hardly surprising then, that the right wing Freedom Party found the courage to plaster Vienna with posters declaring ‘*Turkey in the EU? Not with me!*’ during the 2004 European Parliamentary election campaign. (Morris: 2005, 24)

Another striking and regrettable incidence regarding the growing anti-Turkish sentiment in Europe took place in France, which, like Austria, stood out in the first decade of the new millennium as a fervent opponent of Turkish membership in the EU. The zealous aggression of French anti-Turkish organizations became most evident by the Armenian actions against reputable American historian Bernard Lewis. Because Bernard Lewis frequently stated that the genocide allegations were Armenian attempts to bend history in their own interests, he has been persistently harassed by Armenian lobbyists in France since the early 1990s. Although initial

Armenian attempts to bring Lewis' statements into trial were unsuccessful, a Paris court eventually decided to hear the Armenian case against Lewis. Mainly due to extensive Armenian lobbying at French political and judicial levels, a French court ultimately condemned Bernard Lewis for 'denying the Armenian genocide' in 1997. (Gresh: 2005)

It should furthermore be noticed that the decision of the French court was reached prior to 2001, when French legislators officially recognized the Armenian 'genocide'. The fact that Armenian lobbies simply managed to have Bernard Lewis' freedom of speech condemned even prior to the French genocide law clearly demonstrates the power of the anti-Turkish forces in France. By condemning a respectable and prominent author like Bernard Lewis, French legislators furthermore demonstrated that they take the allegations of French-Armenians more seriously than the well-researched findings of a distinguished academician. It should hardly be surprising then, by the same token, that no other writer or academician took the courage to criticize Armenian allegations on French soil ever since the decision on Bernard Lewis.

Conclusion

Given that most independent-minded scholars, statesmen, and media members in Europe are increasingly being intimidated by anti-Turkish organizations, a new field of activity for Turkish lobbies is becoming inevitable. In addition to their activities for the promotion of Turkish causes, Turkish interest groups abroad have to support and defend individuals who independently resist the anti-Turkish bias present in their respective countries. Since several prominent intellectuals, scholars, and academicians, as in the previously mentioned case of Bernard Lewis, are vehemently lambasted by European anti-Turkish organizations, defending the personal and professional integrities of these individuals has arguably become a Turkish strategic task as well. As these individuals are often portrayed by anti-Turkish lobbies as Turkish agents or propagandists on Turkish payroll, Turkish lobbies face a multifaceted task while defending these supporters of Turkish causes.

On the one hand, Turkish lobbies can proactively challenge the efforts of those who try to present all pro-Turkish journalists, politicians, and academicians as Turkish agents by effectively demonstrating that the majority of these individuals are in no way connected or affiliated with Turkish interest groups. As the burden of proof lies with the accusers and defamation activists, Turkish lobbies should preferably take legal action against the organizations which try to defame pro-Turkish individuals

without any tangible proof. Once these groups become aware of the prospect of legal action and probable conviction, most anti-Turkish organizations would most likely hesitate to defame pro-Turkish individuals. In other words, by challenging the defamation attempts legally, anti-Turkish organizations can be discouraged from attacking and insulting Turcophile academicians and journalists indiscriminately.

On the other hand, Turkish lobbies should assist these voluntary supporters of Turkish causes by providing them with legal, moral, and academic support in their efforts to counter the defamation attempts of anti-Turkish organizations. It is therefore extremely important for the Turkish lobbies to screen and analyze the opinions of all prominent European journalists, academicians and researchers who focus on Turkey. Since the majority of these individuals did not conduct their research with the expectation of any financial compensation from Turkish lobbies, defending them when they are in need is morally and ethically justifiable. Without such a promised support from Turkish lobbies, any European who has means to publish her findings with a probably pro-Turkish conclusion is increasingly vulnerable to the harassment and defamation of anti-Turkish lobbies. As winning the support of the educated European public opinion is arguably the most essential task of Turkish lobbies, failure to support and defend pro-Turkish Europeans will eventually lead to the failure of this essential mission as well.

References:

- Erdal, İbrahim (2006). *Mübadele. (Uluslaşma Sürecinde Türkiye ve Yunanistan 1923-1925)*. İstanbul: IQ Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık
- ESI Report: Austrian opposition to Turkish membership stems from ignorance. (2008, February 4). *Turkish Daily News Online Edition*: <http://arama.hurriyet.com.tr/arsivnews.aspx?id=-623448>
- Gerolymatos, Andre (2002). *The Balkan Wars. Conquest, Revolution and Retribution from the Ottoman Era to the Twentieth Century and Beyond*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gresh, Alain (2005). Malevolent Fantasy of Islam. *Le Monde Diplomatique* Retrieved: September 18, 2007, from <http://mondediplo.com/2005/08/16lewis>
- Kuran-Burçoğlu, Nedret (2005). *Die Wandlungen des Türkenbildes in Europa. Vom 11. Jahrhundert bis zur heutigen Zeit. Eine kritische Perspektive*. Zürich: Spur Verlag
- Laçiner, Sedat (2004). *Türkler ve Ermeniler (Türk Ermeni İlişkileri)*. İstanbul: Kaknüs Yayınları
- Morris, Chris (2005). *The New Turkey. The Quiet Revolution on the Edge of Europe*. London: Granta
- Pettifer, James (1993). *The Greeks. The Land and the People since the War*. London: Penguin
- Sotiriou, Dido (2005). *Farewell Anatolia*. (First published in 1962 in Greek) Athens: Kedros Publishers.