peans vis-à-vis Turkey! Interestingly, Nano’s questions ignore the worries many Europeans express about Albania’s EU membership.

Lately, Piro Misha has raised concerns about the »Neo-Ottomanism« strategy of Turkish foreign policy, which he interprets as a move to counterbalance EU influence in the Balkans. He calls upon Albanian politicians to firmly refute any Turkish influence and to choose the West and the EU. At this point, one might begin to wonder whether it is possible to imagine the European integration of Albania without its »threatening« Turkish counterpart. What if – as in the famous poem of Constantine Cavafy – the barbarians do not come?

**The National Self and Europe in Turkey’s Textbooks**

Kenan Çayır

Contemporary Turkey has been undergoing a major transformation regarding its political, social and educational structure. Turkey’s official candidacy for the European Union (EU) in 1999 has been a catalyst for the introduction of many reforms to further democratization. The EU process has provided an opportunity for non-Turkish and non-Muslim groups to raise their claims for equal inclusion into public life. Kurdish groups, whose existence has been denied until recently, demand education in their mother tongue as an aspect of politics of recognition. The Alevi population (a non-Orthodox Islamic group) objects to compulsory »Religious Culture and Ethics« courses on the basis that the latter disregard their faith and violate their right to freedom of religion. Muslim girls, on the other hand, claim to attend university with their headscarves. Moreover, liberal Turkish intellectuals challenge the official version of the past with their public campaigns to recognize the Armenian and Kurdish massacres before and during the republican era.

These developments involve two opposing tendencies: a risk of social conflicts between different groups and a potential for democratization. The increasing visibility of Kurdish groups is considered a threat to Turkish national unity in many circles. This is sometimes manifested as racist attacks to lynch Kurds and scare them away from their neighbor-
hoods in various Anatolian towns. The upward mobility of Islamic religious groups and the demand of headscarved girls, on the other hand, are accompanied by secularist circles’ fear of an Islamic regime. Public debate on the so-called Armenian problem triggers nationalistic sentiments. These developments, however, might also be read as a possibility for furthering democratization, since Turkey has begun to openly discuss its ethnic, religious and gender-related differences for the first time. The current Justice and Development Party government’s recent »Kurdish opening«, for instance, has generated hope towards solving this problem. The government also convenes various workshops with the participation of Alevi and Roma people in order to set a reform agenda towards recognizing the rights of these minorities.

All these developments indicate that Turkey today is facing up to its past and questioning the borders of its democracy, citizenship and national identity. It is clearly no longer a matter of maintaining a supposedly monolithic national culture in the face of the European Union and globalization processes. Turkey needs to develop a new social and political framework in order to include equally different groups and interests. Education can play a crucial role in developing a new imaginary that would allow for the peaceful coexistence of different identities and interests.

It is in this context that the Ministry of National Education launched new reforms including a redesign of the whole curriculum and developing new textbooks with a constructivist and student-centered approach. By the academic year 2008-2009 new textbooks had been introduced for grades 1-8. The reform was rationalized on the basis of Turkey’s inadequate pedagogical approaches as compared to those of the EU countries. The official papers note that the new curriculum adopts »the norms, aims and educational stance of the European Union.«

The new textbooks seem to be less didactic than the old ones since they often narrate subjects from a children’s perspective, inviting them to reflect on different topics. Textbooks also include some progressive pictures regarding gender equality, such as a male figure pictured while ironing or serving his wife. Nevertheless, the new textbooks are still far from providing the basis for developing a pluralist imaginary in children.

There is still no mention in the textbooks of ethnic, religious or language-related differences. The histories of Kurds and non-Muslim minorities are thus still excluded from the »official knowledge«. The importance of Turkish as the only legitimate language is underlined in almost every book. In some textbooks, cultural plurality or the concept of a multilingual society are presented not as enrichments but as political problems.

It should be noted that incorporating difference is not an easy process in the face of Turkey’s historical background and constitutional structure. The Turkish population itself is a legacy of the multiethnic and multireligious Ottoman Empire. Despite this diversity, the Turkish Republic has been characterized by a strong-state tradition, a policy of national developmentalism and the State’s organic vision of society. Following the population exchanges between neighboring countries, the Turkish nation has been constructed on the basis of a single religion (state-controlled Sunni Islam) and a single language (Turkish). Turkish citizenship has privileged a republican model over a liberal one. And this model puts an emphasis on the unity and indivisibility of the nation along with the non-recognition of language and ethnic differences. Accordingly, the current constitutional structure and educational laws have been shaped on the basis of such a monolithic conception of national culture.

All constitutions so far in Turkey have been introduced after military coups. Nowadays there is a lively debate in Turkey around developing a civil constitution. A new constitution including the representation of ethnic differences would definitely facilitate the incorporation of the latter into textbooks. The problem is not limited to the field of law, of course. Including ethnic differences requires questioning the borders of Turkishness. In the case of Turkey, this involves a deconstruction of the notion of Turkishness and rearticulating it in anti-essentialist terms. This is, of course, more difficult than making constitutional changes.
Another difficulty in expanding the notion of Turkishness concerns the manner in which Turkey associates itself with Europe. Although the new curriculum is presented as a means to prepare Turkey for the European Union, the Union receives little mention, and in a 8th grade book only. Social Studies books select »international friends«, mostly from Central Asian Turkic or Muslim states and borders between »them« and »us« are usually drawn along ethno-religious lines.

Europe (or more generally, the West) emerges in the textbooks as a homogenous cultural entity that is both desired and feared. It is desired because the republican elite has aspired to modernize Turkey through westernizing reforms. At the same time, Europe signifies an entity that needs to be taken a stance since modernizers aimed to create a distinct Turkish identity. Throughout Turkey’s modernization history, therefore, Europe has simultaneously been coded as »a model« to be followed and »a threat« to »indigenous« national values and interests. The new textbooks include many quotations that mirror this ambivalent attitude.

The vision presented by the EU membership process might provide Turkey with a chance to accommodate a sense of national self with social equality and cultural diversity. Nevertheless, some voices against Turkey’s EU membership and debates surrounding the burka, minaret or veil show that fear of losing »authentic« national identities is not limited to Turkey, but a global phenomenon including most (Western) European states.

The rejection of Turkey’s accession on the basis of difference indicates a denial of the universality of European values. European values, then, are conceived in particularistic terms, unable to accommodate religious and ethnic differences. Our textbooks, in this sense, should revitalize a universalistic vision that would allow the imagining of Turkey in Europe and Europe in Turkey.

Individuelle Chancen und Grenzen feministischer Bildungsarbeit zu Gewalt gegen Frauen in der Osteuropäischen Union

Felicitas Klingler

Im Februar 2010 berichtet die Süddeutsche Zeitung von folgendem Fall:


Zwei oppositionelle Abgeordnete in Ankara haben nun parlamentarische Anfragen zu dem Fall eingebracht, und wenn ihre Quellen stimmen, dann war alles ganz anders. Dann musste Medine sterben, weil sie sich gegen die Gewalt in der Familie zu wehren versucht hatte. Regelmäßig sei sie von Vater und Großvater geprügelt und misshandelt worden. Und dann tat Medine etwas, was man nicht tut in einer solchen Familie: Sie ging zur Polizei. Insgesamt viermal machte sie sich offenbar auf