

# **Eurasia versus 'Eureuropa'**

Thursday 29 May 2008, by [Sylvia Tiriyaki](#)

**It is very likely that French President Nicolas Sarkozy's vision of the future of Europe is much closer to that of Napoleon than that of Jean Monnet. This assumption would explain much of his cholericly obsessive behavior including the one regarding Turkey's accession to the European Union.**

In this instance, seeing Sarkozy acting out of trepidation rather than of true chauvinism would be more explicable. However, and understandably, such a revelation would hardly appeal to the French public.

Therefore, he has resorted to the semi-continental division by saying that he doesn't believe that "Turkey belongs in Europe, and for a simple reason, which is that it is in Asia Minor." Depending on the level of individual multidisciplinary knowledge, some would deem this statement funny or pathetic while others might find it even logical.

Yet, whatever that means, it starts looking as if Turkey has been assigned to a brand new geopolitical category on its own continent. Although officially negotiating for accession to the EU, as a result of Sarkozy's current Euro-policy and the "Eureuropean" geographical understanding of the EU, the word "accession" has been once more omitted in the common position paper on Turkey.

## **The Russian alternative**

It is needless to say that such a schizophrenically written document is annoying for Turkey and that it creates substantial tension. Or, that it simply "doesn't feel good." But while on one side the EU seems to be auto-seeking a greater confinement and geographical purification, the Russian Federation has stepped in to suggest alternatives to the "Eureuropa" and tries to revitalize a Eurasian Union notion instead. It would probably be too naïve to think that Russia would ever yearn for joining the EU. As one State Duma's deputy responsible for European cooperation said, "[T]he EU is a very difficult partner not only for Russia or China or the United States but also for its own member states... [And] it is not sure that it would be necessary for Russia to become part of the EU even in the 25<sup>th</sup> century." Russia is also known for wishing the same for the countries of the former communist block that haven't become members of the EU yet. And only recently the last leader of the USSR, Mikhail Gorbachev said, "putting all European countries under the umbrella of the EU would be a grave mistake." Interestingly enough, this time the target countries don't seem to be necessarily the Ukraine or Georgia. The Russian Federation that has been invited as an observer to the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) started being increasingly interested in cooperation with Turkey. Putting emphasis on close relations between the Soviet Union and Turkey during the Turkish War of Independence rather than on enmities pertained throughout the Cold War era, messages of mutual similarities and interests as well as necessity to improve cultural ties have been sent more and more often.

## **Where does Turkey belong?**

Of course, this is only added value to the existing trade volume between the two countries that is, according to official numbers, expected to rise from \$22.5 billion to \$28 this year. Each year about two million Russian tourists visit Turkey and the Turkish companies have \$4.5 billion of direct investment in Russia, while the Russian companies' direct investment in Turkey has reached \$3 billion. These are quite impressive numbers and today no one can dare to argue that there has been no improvement in

Turkish-Russian economic relations. Moreover, it seems that for the Russian Federation - itself containing at least 17 million Muslims - a homogeneous religious identity, so much emphasized by the EU, is still of no interest. On the contrary, parallels between the two former empires have been drawn by Russian officials, prospect of rivalries has been dubbed as unimportant and calls for cultural and educational exchanges and enhanced cooperation between the civil societies have considerably increased. Having said all this, one might wonder what will happen if the EU finally succeeds in convincing Turkey that it doesn't belong to Europe.

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## **Sources**

Source : Monday, May 26, 2008 TDN