

From the Bosphorus:
Straight

Çiğdem Atakuman should be back at work

As current debate in Turkey and elsewhere over evolution and the work of Charles Darwin grows increasingly absurd, we offer our own explanation of the fight's origins: "The Theory of De-evolution."

Our theory (not to be confused with the 1970s rock band Devo) holds that the various shades of the challenge to Darwinism descend from a common ancestor. Creationism, intelligent design, theistic biology and other pseudo-scientific disciplines may seem different in appearance. Proponents will argue their distinctness. In fact, they are rooted in the same ignorance, the same impulse that seeks to censor scientific reason that conflicts with inherited beliefs. As such, when presented as science, they take us backwards. In place of ideas that enable us to evolve and progress toward improved understanding, these are ideas that take society in reverse. Within them are the seeds of de-evolution.

Such "de-evolutionary" precepts and arguments have no place in scientific journals or in public school science or biology curriculum.

This is not to say we call for a ban on any discussion of creationism or intelligent design. We welcome such debate in our editorial pages. If an intriguing argument comes along that says Galileo was wrong, that the sun orbits around the earth after all, we will print it as commentary. But it will not be presented as science.

Some weeks ago, we published a report by reporter Sevim Songün on the success of Turkish cult leader Adnan Oktar in making Turkey a world center for creationist research. His foundation has published books in some 43 languages, sent the six kilogram "Atlas of Creation" free to academics around the world and organized more than 3,000 anti-evolution conferences, from the University of Oxford, in Cambridge, to Tokyo to Tel Aviv. We defend his right to engage his such de-evolutionary practices.

But it is also the view and editorial policy of the Daily News that as science, this is just claptrap. Darwin's theory of evolution, as the central organizing principle of biology, is only "theory" in terms of the scientific method. It's based on observable facts of genetic mutation and the periodic emergence of species. And there is no reasonable challenge to the worldwide scientific consensus that supports this explanation to the origins of life on earth.

Given this, the government's censorship of an article on Darwin and the theory in the nation's preeminent scientific journal, and the efforts to fire the editor-in-chief Dr. Çiğdem Atakuman, are reprehensible. So is the insidious introduction by state education officials of creationism and intelligent design into public school science curriculum.

Dr. Atakuman should be back at her desk. And the desks of Turkish classrooms should be cleared of de-evolutionary pseudo science.

The views expressed in Straight represent the consensus opinion of the Hürriyet Daily News and its editorial board members

Obama's Turkey trip upsets Greek political circles



Athens Olympics.

The visit of Barack Obama, a few days after the critical municipal elections in Turkey, has been a hotly debated issue. Especially after the "short and sharp" visit of Secretary Hillary Clinton to Ankara, the discussion on the probable changes that the new American administration bring upon its relations with Turkey, has divided Turkish analysts. Is Obama going to abandon the approach of his predecessor President Bush in viewing Turkey as a "moderate Islamic" country? Are the Americans going to focus their policies on the secularist democratic character of Turkey as a unique example in the Middle East and use it accordingly? Is Turkey going to be used just to help out the mess of the Americans in the region or is Ankara rightfully winning the war of becoming an important power in the region through its clever and skillful policies?

In Greece, the visit of Barack Obama to Turkey caused a lot of stir as it is not to be followed or preceded by a presidential visit to Greece. In spite of the statement of Hillary Clinton that she talked with her Turkish counterpart the issues concerning the "Ecumenical Patriarchate", the "Chalki Seminary" and the progress of the Cyprus talks-the impression of the Greek side was that the age-old American foreign policy principle of treating Turkey and Greece on the basis of a fine political balance was broken.

Visits by American officials to Turkey were customarily followed by parallel visits to Greece. Take the last visit by an American president to Greece: Bill Clinton came to Athens on Nov. 19, 1999 directly after visiting Ankara. In Ankara Clinton had talked to the leaders about the prospects of Turkey entering the European Union and had consoled earthquake victims, a memory which Secretary Clinton recalled during her recent visit. But the visit to the Greek capital did not have the pleasantries of Turkey. He was received by a barrage of anti-American public protests which were accentuated by the relatively recent impact of the American attacks in Yugoslavia. Still, he steered through well by saying that he understood the anti-American sentiment in Greece and apologized publicly for Washington's support of the 1967 military coup in Greece.

Five years later, in June 2004 President George Bush was received with equal hostility in Turkey in the midst of Iraq war. One month earlier President Bush in Washington had asked Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis to be excused because he would not be able to come to Greece to watch the opening of Olympics of 2004 due to "the election period in the U.S". In order to save the tradition, his father, former president George Bush Sr., came at the head of a delegation to attend the opening ceremony of

Ten years after President Clinton's visit, the geostrategic changes in the Middle East, the expansion of NATO and EU, the change in energy policies, and unresolved regional issues of the American policy, like Iraq or Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan plus the nightmare of a global economic crisis have apparently pushed Turkey more to the centre stage leaving Greece behind. In that sense, much to the displeasure of Athens, Obama's visit next month will break new diplomatic ground, and redefine a historical diplomatic tradition keeping the triangle of Washington, Athens and Ankara intact. Upgrading the status of Turkey in the region cannot but worry the Greek side who fear that they may not be able to count on the neutrality of their American allies towards bilateral issues like the Aegean, the status of the Patriarchate and the protection of the Istanbul Greek Orthodox minority or even the issue of Cyprus.

However, Greek analysts -like their Turkish colleagues- have not yet deciphered the finer characteristics of this new American policy. "Barack Obama is going to Turkey to avert the tendency of the country to slide "towards the East" and to incorpo-



rate it in the new foreign policy he is launching in the Middle East, from the Israel-Palestine conflict to the Syria-Iran relations. At the same time, on a practical level, he needs the cooperation of Turkey for the smooth withdrawal of the American forces from Iraq in the next 18 months," writes a commentator of Kathimerini newspaper who puts forward an interesting point that the US will want to put pressure on the EU to accept Turkey in order to keep Turkey inside the Western camp thus controlling its "Neo-Ottomanist" tendencies. If that is correct then Hillary Clinton's remark that the US defines a country not on the basis of religion but on the basis of democratic principles" may be a reflection of that new political thesis.

In Greece, with a government and an opposition embroiled in a blatant fight, in an atmosphere of disappointment, rising public protests, steep increase of criminality and a serious economic crisis still ahead, Obama's visit to Turkey became yet another platform for a domestic confrontation. "The problem that our country faces is not the enlargement of its diplomatic presence in the region, because this is simply unattainable," writes a commentator in Imerisia newspaper. "Foreign policy is the reflection of the internal power of governments. Only then they can exert their influence on their environment. It does not come from the fantasies of politicians, academics and professional analysts," continues the same commentator while the anti-government Ethnos accuses the Karamanlis government for leading the country to a "bizarre isolation, a diplomatic agoraphobia, with only one exception; the energy cooperation between Greece and Russia and the veto that Greece put against the admission of FYROM to NATO."

The barrage of domestic attacks about the inability of Greek diplomacy to sustain its importance against Turkey in the eyes of the American administration, reached the Greek-American lobby.

Critics in Greece even a suggested that the visit of Obama to Turkey bypassing Greece constitutes a defeat for the Greek-American lobby's prominent members, some of whom are now members of the new Obama staff. They are quite adamant that this is not a defeat for the Greek side. On the contrary, they say, we should see it as an opportunity. Obama's trip to Turkey is related at the moment with specific issues like Iraq, Iran, Palestine, perhaps the Armenian issue, they say. Not with Greece or Cyprus.

"Obama most probably will visit Greece (later) but with different agenda which will include Cyprus, Aegean and FYROM," they say.

But does that not confirm indeed that the tradition of keeping a balance between Athens and Ankara has been revised?



Two films

I spent most of the weekend at the cinema halls, watching several films, from the Oscar-winning "Slumdog Millionaire" and "Reader," to some good latest examples of Turkish cinema, such as "Güneşi Gördüm" (I saw the sun) and "İssız Adam" (The Lonesome Man) and the horrible "Recep İvedik II". Definitely, I would strongly advise all our readers not to miss either "Slumdog Millionaire" or the "Reader" but, "Güneşi Gördüm" and "Recep İvedik II" are musts for those who really would like to understand the desperate situation Turkey is in at the moment as well as the need to overcome such problems underlined in both of those two movies for a prosperous future for this land and people.

With a superficial look, there was nothing common in these two films. However, with a careful look not only we may find a strong correlation between the churl Recep İvedik character and the country turned into a "wasteland", small and sincere aspirations for a simple life condemned to "wasted hopes" and the "brotherhood" being replaced by "antagonism" in the "Güneşi Gördüm." İvedik is just a by-product of lost hopes, wasted lives, cultural shallowness produced by cities being turned to big villages because of a wild migration not necessarily purely a result of the separatist terrorism holding the country hostage but also due to the "transformation" we have lived at the expense of the rural and agrarian Turkey.

"Güneşi Gördüm" was not just the sad story of a family from a southeastern mountain village. A father suffering the pain of sending one of his sons to the military and losing another son on the mountains in the fight against terrorism has become the common story of this land for the past 30 years. The "If you die, you will become a martyr, if I die I will become a dead terrorist," reply of the son on the mountains to the one serving in the military was indeed manifestation of the bitter reality that those who cannot understand why many people in this country keep on stressing there is no difference in the pain of a mother whether his son died as a terrorist or became a martyr. Irrespective where and how they lose their lives, they are all our sons. Can anyone dispute the "Is there anything more valuable than a life?" of the uncle in Oslo or can anyone resist not to feel the joy deep in his/her heart of the mother seeing his youngest son who lost one of his legs to a mine walking once again after he was fixed with a prosthesis leg?

Is Kırmızıgül new Yılmaz Güney?

Though it might be an exaggeration for now to say script-writer, director and producer Mahsun Kırmızıgül is becoming the new Yılmaz Güney of Turkish cinema, but he is definitely different and promising. He used many allegories in the film. The death of the baby "Serhat" or "border" in a washing machine, that is to a tool of "modern luxury life" brought the family's struggle to survive in the big city to the last limit and served as a trigger to convince them return to their deserted mountain village. Similarly, only in Oslo (which represents in the film a place with freedoms) a father managed to hang side by side on a wall photos of his "soldier" and "terrorist" sons. Message was obvious. For the sake of individual freedoms Katos (the transsexual character abhorred by his family and the society) undoubtedly will continue trying to see the sun, or expose themselves, even if they know like "Berfin" or the Anatolian Snowdrop that struggle because of their love for the sun to make their way up the snow that they know will lose their life moments after reaching sunlight.

In the "Recep İvedik 2", on the other hand, the churl İvedik character was indeed nothing less than the "lost soul" of the rural Turk who grew up in the suburbs of the big city without developing a sense of belonging and thus developing a "rebellious" and "rejectionist" character incompatible with the urban society. Don't we see İvediks in all walks of life in modern Turkey; particularly in politics. Is it not that İvedik has started to domşate our society? Otherwise, why was it that "Recep İvedik 2" became the most watched film of recent times?

In thinking the "Turkey of 2019" we have to accept that we are doomed to suffer more unless this fight is brought to an end and terrorists stop going up the mountains claiming they aim "to save the people" and the administrators on the low ground provide a political resolution to the problems rather than solely concentrating on the easier, though costlier, "military option" for the protection of the national and territorial integrity of this country.

On the wrong side of the global water divide

PETER BOSSHARD

Istanbul is currently hosting thousands of international water bureaucrats, which are convening for the 5th World Water Forum. Their official motto, "Bridging the Divides for Water", poses a daunting challenge. Almost one billion people still lack access to adequate and safe water supply. Yet financial flows to the developing world are rapidly drying up, even for the water sector.

In their final declaration, the world's water ministers will call for "a significant increase" in investment flows for water infrastructure. Yet their favored model of development, which emphasizes large dams and irrigation canals, does not address the needs of people who have no access to water, sanitation, and irrigation.

Large dams are a risky business for people and the planet. They have displaced an estimated 40-80 million people, including hundreds of thousands in East Anatolia. They have turned fresh water into the most endangered ecosystem on the planet. Reservoirs are not climate-friendly, particularly if located in the tropics. Brazilian researchers estimate that methane from dams is responsible for around 4% of human-caused global warming. Dams can also induce earthquakes, especially if built in seismically active regions such as the Himalayas, Southwest China and Turkey.

On average, large dams cost at least 50 percent more than projected and take longer to build. And for all this social, environmen-

tal and economic cost, they are not good at bridging the water divide. Most of the world's poorest people don't live in fertile river valleys, but on marginal lands and in slums - far away from centralized water supply, irrigation systems, and electric grids.

The proposed Gibe 3 Dam in Ethiopia illustrates what is wrong with the current approach to water development. Construction for the \$1.7 billion project began in 2006 - two years before its environmental impact assessment was approved. Contracts were awarded without competitive bidding, which is an invitation to bribery. The project will put the ecosystem of Lake Turkana, the world's largest desert lake, at risk. It will also cut off the annual floods on which hundred thousands of poor farmers depend for their livelihoods.

In spite of its social and environmental cost, the Gibe 3 Dam will not benefit the local population. It does not include a water supply component, and most of its electricity will be exported. The African Development Bank, the European Investment Bank and other funders will consider support for Gibe 3 in the coming months. Supporting this behemoth would widen, not bridge the global water divide.

Dams are failing the poorest people today, and will not address their needs tomorrow. A water sector strategy which effectively reduces poverty will not rely on outdated, risky and expensive ways of dumping concrete into rivers. Smarter, softer, more ingenious solutions which invest in the skills and resources of the poor are available - at low cost.

For centuries, Indian farmers have built small dams to store water and recharge groundwater aquifers locally. The U.N.'s Human Development Report estimated in 2006 that with an investment of \$7 billion, extending such structures all across India's rain-fed farming areas could quintuple the value of the country's monsoon crop to \$180 billion a year, and would empower small farmers in the process. International Development Enterprises, a research and development group based in Colorado, is developing low-risk water technologies such as drip irrigation for \$3 per plot, and muscle-powered treadle pumps for \$25 per unit. Using such technologies, 100 million poor farming families could overcome extreme poverty with an investment of just \$20 billion. This is the same amount that is spent on large dams in one year.

UN General Secretary Ban Ki-moon and Nobel Prize Winner Al Gore recently appealed to world leaders to adopt economic policies that not only stimulate growth, but address the needs of the poor and green the global economy at the same time. Energy efficiency, renewables, water conservation and improving land use were some examples of their new economic mantra. The world's water ministers should take a leaf from their book and chart a smart new course in water development when they meet in Istanbul later this week.

(Peter Bosshard is Policy Director at the International Rivers, Berkeley, California, U.S)

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