

# Deceleration of Turkey's EU Accession on Media Agenda: A Case Study on the Guardian Coverage Between 2003 and 2010\*

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## Abstract

*Although news items concerning Turkey-EU relations reached at utmost level in 2004 and 2005, the interest of media on Turkish membership ironically decreased gradually after starting membership negotiations on the 3rd October 2005 as it did so in Europe's policy agenda. The research seeks to ascertain the extent to which the frequency of news items has changed in recent years, and how Turkey-EU relations were covered during the deceleration. The Guardian, one of the leading newspapers of the UK and Europe, is the research sample of the study. News items from this newspaper which were published in the busy period (01/06/2003-31/12/2006) and the silent period (01/01/2007-31/07/2010) were analysed by using quantitative content analysis method. Research results indicate that without a new development in the Cyprus issue, and taking new initiatives in improving democracy and human rights in Turkey, it is unlikely to end the silent period in Turkey-EU relations.*

**keywords:** agenda-setting, the British media, Turkey-EU relations, quantitative content analysis

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## Résumé

### **La question de l'adhésion de la Turquie à l'Union européenne occupe une place décroissante dans l'agenda médiatique: Cas d'étude sur la couverture médiatique dans le Guardian effectué entre 2003 et 2010**

*Bien que le nombre d'articles concernant les relations entre la Turquie et l'Union européenne ait atteint un niveau maximal entre 2004 et 2005, l'intérêt porté par les médias à la question de l'adhésion de la Turquie a ironiquement diminué depuis le début des négociations, en date du 3 Octobre 2005. Ce manque d'intérêt des médias coïncide avec la faible place donnée à la Turquie dans l'agenda politique de l'Europe. Cette étude a pour but de montrer comment et avec quelle fréquence les relations entre la Turquie et l'Union européenne ont fait l'objet de discussions dans les médias alors que l'intérêt de ces derniers sur cette question semblait diminuer. Le Guardian, l'un des principaux journaux du Royaume-Uni et d'Europe, constitue l'échantillon de recherche de l'étude. Les articles liés à la Turquie publiés dans la période « chargée » (01/06/2003 - 31/12/2006) et la période « silencieuse » (01/01/2007 - 31/07/2010) ont ainsi été analysés en utilisant une méthode quantitative d'analyse de contenu. Les résultats de l'étude indiquent que, sans la résolution du problème chypriote et sans nouvelles initiatives permettant d'améliorer la démocratie et les droits de l'homme en Turquie, il est peu probable que se termine la période « silencieuse » des relations entre la Turquie et l'Union européenne.*

**mots-clés:** agenda-setting, médias britanniques, relations entre la Turquie et l'Union européenne, méthode quantitative d'analyse de contenu

## Özet

### **Türkiye'nin Avrupa Birliği'ne Üyeliği Tartışmalarının Medya Gündeminden Düşmesi: Guardian Gazetesi Üzerinde 2003-2010 Yılları Arasını Kapsayan Bir Örnek Olay İncelemesi**

*Türkiye'nin Avrupa Birliği'ne üyeliğiyle ilgili haberler 2004 ve 2005 yıllarında gündemde sıkça yer bulmaktaydı. 3 Ekim 2005'te başlayan müzakere sürecinin hemen ardından, Avrupa siyasi gündeminde de konunun popülerliğini yitirmesiyle, Türkiye-AB ilişkileri Avrupa medyasında önemini kaybetmeye başladı. Bu çalışma son yıllarda konunun medya gündeminde önemini ne kadar yitirdiğini ve bu süreçte hangi çerçevede tartışıldığını ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Avrupa'nın ve Birleşik Krallık'ın önemli gazetelerinden biri olan Guardian Gazetesi çalışmanın örneklemini oluşturmaktadır. Yoğun dönem (01/06/2003 – 31/12/2006) ve sessiz dönem (01/01/2007 – 31/07/2010) olarak adlandırılan iki dönemde yayınlanan haber metinleri nicel içerik analizi yöntemiyle çözümlenmiştir. Araştırma sonuçları Kıbrıs Sorunu, insan hakları ve demokrasi konularında yeni gelişmeler yaşanmadığı sürece Türkiye-Avrupa Birliği ilişkilerinde sessiz dönemin sonlanmasını zayıf bir ihtimal olarak göstermektedir.*

**anahtar kelimeler:** gündem belirleme, Birleşik Krallık medyası, Türkiye-Avrupa Birliği ilişkileri, nicel içerik analizi

## I. Introduction

Turkey has been waiting to be a part of the European Union since 1959. It has been an official candidate country since 1999 and it started the membership negotiations in 2005. However, the negotiation process is going remarkably slowly and the discussions about Turkish membership are becoming unpopular on Europe's policy, public and media agendas. This study looks at *the Guardian*, one of the prominent broadsheet papers in the UK in order to explore if there is a change in narrating Turkey-EU relations. News items about Turkey's EU bid will be analysed by comparing how the events of two different periods were reported in *the Guardian* newspaper in the UK. The main goal of this study is to ascertain the extent to which the frequency of news items has changed in recent years, and how Turkey-EU relations were covered while the issue was losing its significance. As most people receive most information about recent political affairs –especially international relations or elite discussions– from the media, the decrease in news items about Turkey's EU bid in the media means that the European citizens are likely going to know less about Turkish membership. And this may have an impact on how Turkey sees itself in the context of the EU.

In summary, this study seeks to answer the question of to what extent a change has happened in *the Guardian's* agenda regarding Turkey's bid to join the EU. The study also asks 'what are the quantitative figures and aspects of the change?'. Thus, this article covers the change in the frequency of news items about this bid in recent years and the change in what the news items covered.

### **The Necessity of Staying on the Agenda**

This study does not conduct agenda-setting research but it does benefit from the theory of agenda-setting. Thus, the theory of this paper is based on Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw's agenda-setting model. The model says "matters given most attention in the media will be perceived as the most important" (McQuail and Windahl, 1989:63). By using this model, this paper argues that Turkey needs to be on the European agenda if it wants to join the EU. If Turkey-EU relations disappear on the agenda, the importance of Turkey's EU bid could be seen as less serious than before. The news items about Turkish membership are not only about agreements, diplomatic affairs, or discussions between politicians. The media agenda also covers the changes in Turkey in terms of legislation, better human rights record or broadly speaking, 'Europeanization'. If the number of news items about Turkey's Europeanization decreases, this would mean that the European readers would read less news items which emphasise the words "Turkey" and "the EU" in the same sentence or paragraph. As Turkey's position between the East and the West is a matter of discussion, the European readers, possible voters in a possible

referendum about Turkish membership in the future, may not become accustomed the idea of Turkey as a European country without long term media cultivation. Although the news items about Turkey's EU bid do not always support it, any type of news item could contribute to the association of Turkey with the EU if their discourse is not overtly based on a 'clash of civilisations' or an 'economic burden'.

### **Methodology**

In order to compare two different periods, a middle point which can represent the start of the second period and the end of the first one was selected. The middle point is January 2007 which is the a week after the port issue with between Turkey and Cyprus appeared in the media agenda, and a drastic decline in the number of news items about Turkey's EU bid started. Two different periods were separately analysed in terms of quantitative figures and aspects. Content analysis method was used by preparing categories under these titles: number of news items, length, type, page number, main topics, emphasised issues, EU countries' approach to Turkish membership, adjectives and other definitions about Turkey, and the highlighted conditions for Turkey in order to be a member of the EU.

The research sample is built on *the Guardian* which is one of the most prominent newspapers of the UK and Europe. The reason for selecting *the Guardian* for this study is related to *the Guardian's* power among elites, its popularity in being quoted by the European press, and its relatively high circulation which is almost half a million per day (Negrine, 2008:631). Also, it is one of the British papers which are very interested in covering the EU. There is an insufficient coverage about EU affairs in most British newspapers, especially in the tabloid press. However, Trenz's study (cited in Negrine, 2008:627) shows that *the Guardian* and *the Times'* coverage about the EU is quantitatively near the European average.

The time sample of this study consists of two periods which in total cover 7 years and 2 months.

### **The 1<sup>st</sup> Period (The Busy period)**

Turkey-EU relations reached a peak during the Brussels European Council meeting in December 2004 and especially in October 2005 when the membership negotiation process started. In contrast, Turkey-EU relations have been in a silent period since the port crisis between Turkey and Cyprus occurred in December 2006. So, the first period of this study covers the 3 years and 7 months between 1<sup>st</sup> June 2003 and 31<sup>st</sup> December 2006.

## **The 2<sup>nd</sup> Period (The Silent period)**

The silent period started in January 2007 when the discussions about the port crisis calmed down and Turkey-EU relations have entered an imperturbable but also an apprehensive period. The British Prime Minister David Cameron's visit to Turkey in July 2010 could be evaluated as the most important event of this period. Cameron emphasised his strong support for Turkey and reminded the EU countries about the Turkish membership issue after a long silent period. The period covers 3 years and 7 months between 1<sup>st</sup> January 2007 and 31<sup>st</sup> July 2010.

### **II. Agenda-Setting**

The term 'agenda' includes issues and conflicts between two different proponents so as to attract attention from journalists, the public and politicians. In a nutshell, "an agenda is a set of issues that are communicated in a hierarchy of importance at a point in time". The agenda-setting process is a result of an interaction between 'media agenda', 'public agenda', and 'policy agenda' (Dearing & Rogers, 1996:2-5). Because of the large size complexity of the process, this article is limited to *the Guardian's* agenda-setting process.

Agenda-setting concept was developed by Maxwell E. McCombs and Daniel L. Shaw (1972), and since then the theory has been a popular one among media scholars. Media and communication studies on agenda-setting aim to reveal why some issues are communicated to the public while some others are not (Dearing & Rogers, 1996:2). Thus, apart from the correlation examinations between the public, policy and media agendas; the media scholars also deal with what kinds of dynamics that embody the agenda-setting process.

While agenda-setting is a process, news media are affected by several pressures such as those exerted by 'elites', 'real-world events', and 'public opinion' (McQuail, 2005:515). These three pressure mechanisms are crucial in analysing how Turkey's EU membership is positioned in the media agenda. It is known that the elites are powerful in EU affairs as the bloc was an elite project without any interest in public opinion at the beginning of European integration. Even in recent years, this indifference could be seen in the decisions on common currency and acceptance of new members from the Middle and Eastern Europe (Hakura, 2006:110). When we look at the Turkish membership case in order to understand the power of three pressure mechanisms, it could be argued that the European elites are in favour of Turkish membership (e.g. some initiatives like 'Independent Commission on Turkey' Ahtisaari et al. (2009). Real-world events could be accepted as both positive and negative as they usually consist of meetings in Brussels, politicians' comments about Turkish entry to the bloc, and other routine news items when there is something new

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about Turkey's EU bid. However, public opinion in Europe is not very positive to Turkish membership in most of the European countries.

### **How does the Media Agenda Occur?**

If it is accepted that the public agenda is shaped by the media, then it should also be asked who decides on the setting of the media agenda. Dearing and Rogers (1996:39) argue that the White House is one of the main institutions in the US in the media agenda-setting process. The same could be claimed for the position of Westminster. As it is hard to talk about the direct influence of the public in Turkey's EU bid discussions, the Turkish issue is mainly narrated by British, Turkish or other European politicians. However, the influence on the agenda-setting cannot be restricted by the acts of politicians. Apart from the influence of political and public agendas, the complex structure of agenda-setting has several variables: rules and traditions in journalism, the daily interactions between journalists and news producer companies, the effect of newspapers on other news media (especially the effect of elite and high circulation newspapers), and successive communication between newspapers and sources and their agendas (McCombs, 2005:658-549). Regarding mass media's crucial impact on other media in media-agenda setting process, Dearing and Rogers (1996:32) argue that the New York Times has powerful effect on other media's agenda. They indicate that American or international TV and radio channels, newspaper and magazines' editors look at the New York Times and are inspired by it while writing news items and deciding on what is going to be the main issue of the agenda. More or less, in the UK, along with *the Times* and *the Daily Telegraph*, *the Guardian* could be in the same position as the *New York Times*.

### **Power of Agenda Setting and the Role of Politicians**

News reports do not only direct the readers in what to think about. The readers are also influenced in how to think about and perceive the event. As the agenda-setting theory asserts, this crucial influence occurs by the news media's selection and framing of objects on the agenda (McCombs, 1992 cited in McCombs, 1993:62). For instance, the framing ability of news media can be easily seen when we look at what was emphasised and what was skipped in news items about Turkey's EU bid. Likewise, the selection power of the news media shows itself by writing about Turkey even though the politicians did not say anything about it (e.g. the commentary "End the hypocrisy and talk to Turkey" on the Financial Times which was published when Turkey was not on the agenda at all on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2010).

The outcomes of agenda-setting is important because "the media are the major primary sources of national political information; for most, mass media provide the best -and only- easily available approximation of ever-changing

political realities" (McCombs, M. & Shaw, D., 1972:185). However, it is not a one dimensional influence and politicians are also members of audience mass. As politicians influence the agenda-setting process, most of the studies about agenda-setting assert that media affects politicians in their decisions as well (Stefan Walgrave and Peter Van Aelst, 2004: 14 cited in McCombs, 2005:548). Thus, it is known that occasionally news media attempt to evoke a response from the politicians and put forward some neglected issues. However, in the case of Turkey's EU membership, the effect of the media on politicians is disputable because of the diplomatic issues or relatively elite topics like Turkey's EU bid cannot become an important topic of the agenda if the politicians do not act (e.g. real-world events). The discussions regarding Turkish membership are generally an issue among elites than the public masses. Thus, it is not like an epidemic disease discussion which may affect the daily life of the British people, or like the close down of a social service building which can be easily carried to the national media agenda level by the pressure of the public or only media itself.

Notwithstanding, in some cases, the media could only report what is going on in politics and this could happen without any influence on public or policy agenda. In addition, it should be considered that the influence of agenda-setting is restricted. Research cannot deny the effect of people's own ability to think and make their own comments on the popular events of the agenda (McCombs, M. E., 2002:8). For these reasons, some issues in the media agenda could be rejected by the public and the readers might follow their own approach about the Turkish issue.

Before presenting the findings about the change in *the Guardian's* portrayal of Turkey's EU bid, it would be useful to summarise Turkey-EU relations within the period of the research sample.

### **III. Turkey-EU Relations Since 2004**

Starting from the Helsinki Summit in 1999, the last decade should be examined in order to achieve a more comprehensive understanding in Turkey-EU relations. As the two periods of the research's time sample includes the news items between 2003 and 2010, the section below was written so as to explain the periods' important events, concepts and other discussions.

#### **The 1<sup>st</sup> Period (The Busy Period)**

The European Commission's report of October 2004 announced that Turkey fulfilled the Copenhagen criteria and decided to recommend start of negotiations with Turkey (Littoz-Monnet and Villanueva Penas, 2006:10). After a late night discussion, the European Council accepted the start of membership negotiations with Turkey and the negotiations were launched in Luxembourg on



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the 3rd October 2005. According to the Negotiation Framework, the aim of the negotiations was full membership for Turkey however it was emphasised that the negotiation process could not guarantee the membership because it was 'open-ended'. At the end of the final report, 'privileged partnership' was stressed even though the term was not used. Turkey insisted that it did not want to see a term like 'privileged partnership' in the Negotiation Framework (Faucompret and Konings, 2008:46). Although it was not written in the framework, the term 'privileged partnership' was spoken by European politicians who were against Turkey's full membership. Also, during the 3rd October 2005 meeting of EU leaders and in the early period of negotiations, the term 'absorption (digestion) capacity' became popular among European politicians and accordingly in news items. The term was used in the Negotiation Framework and confused Turkey:

"While having full regard to all Copenhagen criteria, including the absorption capacity of the Union, if Turkey is not in a position to assume in full all the obligations of membership it must be ensured that Turkey is fully anchored in the European structures through the strongest possible bond" (European Commission Website, 2005).

Karlsson (2007:9) argues that some EU leaders never believed a serious change might happen in Turkey. He thinks that when Turkey reached the main criteria of membership, opponents have started to invent new criteria like geographical, geo-strategical, cultural, historical and finally the 'absorption capacity'. In this point, Karlsson asks if any other member has been absorbed so far. Olli Rehn (cited in Faucompret and Konings, 2008:180), the then European Commissioner for Enlargement, explains absorption capacity by two factors: transformation of the applicants into member states, and development of the EU's functional capacity. He also says: "The EU's integration capacity is primarily about the EU's institutions, budget and policies".

Although there has been no country which could not finish the negotiation process successfully so far, the negotiation process for Turkey is defined as 'open-ended' and a membership date has not been revealed yet. The accession process gives veto rights for each member state. In order to open or close any chapter in negotiations, all of the EU members must agree unanimously on the case. After finishing the chapters of membership negotiations, the draft accession treaty will be sent to each country's parliaments. For some countries like France and Austria, ratification can be done by referendum instead of parliament decision (Hakura, 2008:106). As Turkey has been promised EU accession since 1963 and if the EU is governed by promise keeping and accordance, the veto power of some countries in the EU may not be a big danger for Turkey's EU bid. This was seen on the 3rd October 2005 when France and Austria changed their decisions in the last minute and did not block the start of negotiations with Turkey (Hakura, 2008:109). However, the

negotiation process was deteriorated just in the first year because of a problem between Turkey and Cyprus in 2006.

### **The Port Crisis with Cyprus and the End of the Busy Period**

Cyprus was one of the countries which were strictly against the start of membership negotiations with Turkey but in the last minute they decided not to use their veto right on the 3rd October 2005 Council Meeting. However, the Cyprus issue weakened Turkey's progress in negotiations after only one year. At the end of 2006, Turkey had to acknowledge Cyprus according to the former agreement about the annex of the Custom Union. "Accession negotiation process has not only made Turkey more open to the EU pressure, but also provided a soft-law type of framework for EU intervention in the political developments of Turkey" (Arikan, 2008:227) but Turkey declared that she would continue not to acknowledge Cyprus which is a new EU member. Although EU pressure caused many changes in Turkish politics, the soft power of the EU has not been fully enough to alter some crucial discussions like in the case of the Cyprus issue which has been a serious obstacle for Turkey's EU membership for a long time. As a result, 8 chapters of negotiations were frozen on the 29th November 2006. This situation was called as 'a train crash' by Ollie Rehn, the then EU Commissioner of Enlargement. The reaction from the Turkish side indicated the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots. Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan said '700.000 Greek Cypriots' interests stand against those of seventy million Turks' (Dismorr, 2008:154). After these discussions, Turkey-EU relations became silent and the number of news items about Turkey's EU bid started decreasing.

### **The 2nd Period (The Silent Period)**

There is insufficient literature written about this period to date. Newspapers had published discussions about the new members Bulgaria and Romania (both joined the EU on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2007), and the enlargement issues of potential candidates from the Balkans. While Europe was discussing the Lisbon Treaty, referendums, constitution, enlargement in the Western Balkans, and the global financial crisis; the Turkish issue became remarkably unpopular on the EU's political agenda. Meanwhile Turkey was empowering the relations with the Middle Eastern countries and dealing with its domestic problems such as the election of the President in 2007, the clashes between the Army forces and the Government. Similarly to the European media, the Turkish media was also becoming apathetic about Turkey's EU bid.

Two remarkable events in this period were the German Chancellor Angela Merkel's visit to Turkey in March 2010 and British Prime Minister David Cameron's visit to Turkey in July 2010. Both leaders discussed Turkish membership during their speech in their visit.

#### IV. Quantitative Content Analysis Results

News items published by *the Guardian* between 1<sup>st</sup> June 2003 and 31<sup>st</sup> July 2010 were downloaded from the LexisNexis online newspaper database. Among 72 news items, 40 items which are 'directly' related to Turkey-EU relations were selected in total for the research. There were four times as many news items in the busy period than in the silent period. Chart 1 below shows the drastic decline in the number of news items covering Turkey's EU bid on *the Guardian*.

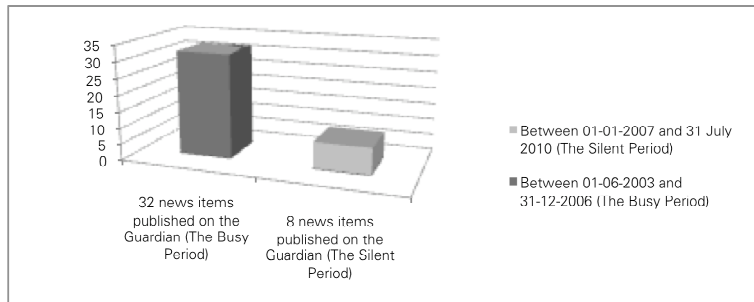


Chart 1: Comparison of two periods in terms of the number of news items (n=40)

#### Number of Words, Length, Page Numbers, and Types of News Items

The majority of the news items which were published in the busy period are longer than 601 words. However, in the silent period, it was found that only half of the news items are longer than 601 words. As shown in Table 1, the number of the news items which are shorter than 601 words are equal to the news items which are longer than 601 words.

	Number of news items in Busy Period (n=32) 01/06/2003 – 31/12/2006	Number of news items in Silent Period (n=8) 01/01/2007 – 31/07/2010
0-300 words	3	0
301-600 words	11	4
601 & over words	18	4

Table 1: Comparison of two periods in terms of the length of the news items

In terms of the page number of news items, both periods have a similar average (The busy period's news items: 19,73, and the silent period's news items: 19). No news item about Turkey's EU bid appeared on the front page except one news report which was published one day after Turkey started the membership negotiations on the 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2005.

An examination of the types of the news items indicates that the busy period includes a greater variety of articles like reports (22 items), commentaries (4 items), leaders (5 items) and a review. Being covered in leaders indicates how much Turkey's EU bid was a focal interest to *the Guardian*. Leaders could not be found in the silent period although the period includes David Cameron's visit to Turkey. The silent period narrates Turkey's EU bid by 6 reports, and 2 commentaries.

	Number of news items in Busy Period (n=32) 01/06/2003 – 31/12/2006	Number of news items in Silent Period (n=8) 01/01/2007 – 31/07/2010
Report	22	6
Commentary	4	2
Leader	5	0
Review	1	0

Table 2: Comparison of two periods in terms of the type of news items

### Main Topics of News Items

As the silent period did not include any important event, the frequencies of each item are not more than twice while this period includes remarkably various topics. Due to the importance of the 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2005 (the day when membership negotiations started with Turkey), the busy period's main topic is Austria's efforts to block start of negotiation process. As seen on Table 3, the main topics of two periods are very different from one another.

The main topics of news items in the Busy Period. (n=32) 01/06/2003 – 31/12/2006	The main topics of news items in the Silent Period. (n=8) 01/01/2007 – 31/07/2010
Austria's efforts to block Turkey (in 9 news times)	Negotiations stalled/slowed down (in 2 news items)
UK's efforts for Turkey's EU membership (in 7 news items)	Non-Europeanness of Turkey (in 2 news items)
The start of negotiation process for Turkey's EU membership (in 5 news items)	–

Table 3: Comparison of two periods in terms of the frequency of main topics in the news items

### The Main Issues in Turkish Membership

One of the most important parts of this study is 'issues' that are highlighted in news items. This section reveals the degree of importance given by *the Guardian* to the issues in Turkey's EU bid. Most discussions about

Turkish membership were shaped by these issues in the last decade. The majority of them are very critical to Turkey and to some extent they may reveal the politician's, countries', and even newspapers' approach to Turkish membership. For instance, Austria's negative approach to Turkish membership is very associated with the issue 'absorption capacity' and 'privileged partnership' (along with Germany). Another remarkable association of issues and countries is the correlation between the UK and 'the invalidity of the clash of civilisations'.

As seen on Table 4, "long term wait of Turkey since 1960s" at the front door of the EU is the main issue on Turkish membership in the busy period on *the Guardian*. It was emphasised in more than half of the 32 news items. Surprisingly, the same issue appeared very weakly in the silent period and highlighted only once among 8 news items in a period of 3 years and 7 months.

'Invalidity of clash of civilisations' is the main issue by appearing in 62.5 per cent of all news items in the silent period. However, 'clash of civilisations' appears almost as much as its antithesis within the same period. When the two periods are compared in percentages, the interesting point is the drastic increase in highlighting the invalidity of the clash of civilisations issue. However, during the total 7 years, the clash of civilisations issue remains almost the same in percentages. The discussions regarding a referenda in the EU countries in order to ask to the public if Turkey should join the bloc or not did not appear in any news item in the silent period.

	The Busy Period (n=32) 01/06/2003 – 31/12/2006		The Silent Period (n=8) 01/01/2007 – 31/07/2010	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Privileged partnership	16	50	3	38
Absorption capacity	4	13	0	0
The Cyprus issue / Turkish-Greek relations	14	44	6	75
Long term wait of Turkey since 1960s	17	53	1	13
Democracy and human rights issues	14	44	2	25
The Armenian issue	10	31	1	13
Clash of civilisations	14	44	4	50
Proposed adultery law	2	6	0	0
Kurdish issue	12	38	3	38
Suspicious on Turkey's secular democracy	4	13	0	0
Islamic fundamentalism	1	3	1	13
Referendum in European countries for Turkey's EU membership	5	16	0	0
Invalidity of 'clash of civilisations'	3	9	5	63

Table 4: Comparison of two periods in terms of the frequency and percentage of 'issues' in the news items

## Approach of the EU Countries to Turkish Membership

This section reveals what the EU countries think about Turkish membership. Comments of each country's politicians and the stance of the European public were taken into analysis in order to reach the numerical results on Table 5. Austria is the leading opponent country in the busy period and it is in line with the political agenda of the period when the negotiations started with Turkey on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2005. Since Nicholas Sarkozy was elected as the French President in 2007, the figures had changed drastically in terms of opposition to Turkish membership. In the busy period, only the quarter of news items covered the French opposition. However, all news items of the silent period emphasise the French block on Turkish membership.

Among top five countries which were the most quoted by *the Guardian* in both periods, only the UK's support is unconditional and continuous. Interestingly, France and Germany's temporary support completely disappears in the silent period.

	The Busy Period (n=32) 01/06/2003 – 31/12/2006				The Silent Period (n=8) 01/01/2007 – 31/07/2010			
	In favour Frequency - Percentage		Against Frequency - Percentage		In favour Frequency - Percentage		Against Frequency - Percentage	
Austria	0	0	15	47	0	0	1	13
Cyprus	0	0	6	19	0	0	1	13
France	4	13	8	25	0	0	8	100
Germany	2	6	7	22	0	0	6	75
The UK	13	41	0	0	4	50	0	0

Table 5: Comparison of two periods in terms of the approach of the EU countries to Turkish membership

## Adjectives, Words or Phrases about Turkey

This section is important to understand the language of the news items and how Turkey is defined by a foreign view. Koenig et al. (2006:150) argues that the old fashioned ostracism is still alive in the mass media of Europe when it comes to discussions about Turkey's accession to the EU. According to this view, Turks can only be seen as people who exist 'in Europe'. However, because of their religious identity, they are not perceived as the people 'of Europe'. The more important thing is that approach is accepted even by some liberal-minded Europeans. When news items are analysed, even the *Guardian*, a left-leaning liberal British paper, has a tendency to emphasise the cultural differences (Schneeberger, 2009:97). Thus, it could be said that Turkey is evaluated through a prism of cultural differences and/or religion. As it is seen on Table 6, Turkey is by far associated with its religion.

	The Busy Period (n=32) 01/06/2003 – 31/12/2006 Frequency - Percentage		The Silent Period (n=8) 01/01/2007 – 31/07/2010 Frequency - Percentage	
Muslim	20	63	2	25
Secular	6	19	3	38
Democracy / Democratic	5	16	0	0
A full partner for Europe	3	9	1	13
Modern	3	9	0	0
Large and populous	3	9	2	25
Not European	0	0	2	25

*Table 6: Comparison of two periods in terms of the adjectives, words or phrases used about Turkey*

There is a remarkable change in the silent period in terms of defining Turkey as 'Muslim' or 'secular'. It should be explained that in most cases 'secular' was used to identify the Turkish state not the public. However, 'Muslim' was not only used for public and was associated with the country which makes the differentiation hazy. The analysed news items of this study by no means can represent the change in Turkish society but it is interesting that the second period defines Turkey less Muslim and more secular when it is compared with the previous period. The reason of this interesting result could be related to the level of discussions. In the busy period, Turkish membership was being taken more seriously and the discussions were based on various issues such as religion, culture, economy, history. However, in the silent period, the limited discussions were mainly on political obstacles like the Cyprus issue. Also, it should be emphasised that the number of news items in this period is relatively low and it could be overambitious to imply serious inferences about the Turkish secularism or the change in the role of Islam in Turkish society by looking at 8 news items.

### **Conditions for Turkey's Membership**

The conditions which were directed to Turkey in order to become a member of the EU were analysed for this part of the research. Most conditions are directed by the EU countries or Brussels. It could be argued that the conditions could be a sign about the possibility of Turkish membership. If a country is against Turkish membership and if it does not mention any condition, this may mean that Turkey does not have so much to do to persuade the country. However, in most of the EU countries mention some conditions for Turkish membership. In the busy period, 75 per cent of all news items mention at least one condition. In the silent period this figure decreased to 62 per cent. The most common condition in order to be a part of the EU is finding a solution for the problem in the divided island, an EU member, Cyprus.

	The Busy Period (n=32) 01/06/2003 – 31/12/2006 Frequency - Percentage		The Silent Period (n=8) 01/01/2007 – 31/07/2010 Frequency - Percentage	
	Cannot tell / N.A.	8	25	3
Need for time for Turkish membership	11	34	1	13
European governments' efforts to convince their publics / European countries must agree on Turkish membership	8	25	2	25
Finding a solution for the Cyprus issue	9	28	3	38
Changing the law according to EU standards	9	28	1	13

*Table 7: Comparison of two periods in terms of conditions for Turkey's entry into the EU*

## V. Conclusion

This study looked at the news items which are about Turkey's EU bid and had been published in *the Guardian* between 1<sup>st</sup> June 2003 and 31<sup>st</sup> July 2010. It was found that the number of news items about Turkey-EU relations in the period when the Turkish issue was popular in the European political agenda was four times more than the number of news items about Turkey-EU relations in the period when the Turkish issue became unpopular and silent.

The silent process which terminates at the end of July 2010 in this study's time sample is still ongoing in real politics. TUSIAD, The Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association, started a big media campaign in European countries in order to obtain support for Turkey's EU bid before the Copenhagen Summit in 2002. Full-page advertisements were published in British newspapers and depicted the photo of Tony Blair and the title: 'The only way to have a friend is to be one' (Dismorr, 2008:86). However, these PR events need some political events beforehand. As mentioned in the theory section, the European agenda occurs by an interaction between 'media agenda', 'public agenda' and 'policy agenda'. This study also found that most news items are products of politicians' and elites' comments. Thus, in order to be salient on the European agenda through media agenda, it is necessary for Turkey to be discussed by politicians.

What can bring Turkey back to the European agenda? As this study's findings in the 'conditions for Turkish membership' section shows, finding a solution to the Cyprus issue is a crucial expectation from the EU. A new development in this issue could receive a remarkable attention in the European media. Furthermore, an initiative to improve human rights and democracy or



making a new Turkish Constitution which should be in line with the European values may also end this silent period. However, there is a deep silence and tiredness in Turkish society and state. As Finkel (2009:121) argues "now it is not time to risk humiliation by being seen wanting to want EU admission, but to wait in the wilderness until a new generation of more sympathetic European leadership comes to power". Because, Turkey could be popular again if socialist and social democratic parties in France and Germany win the next elections. This change can bring back the political circumstances of 'the happy days' of Turkey-EU relations between 1999 and 2005. Furthermore, 'privileged partnership', Germany's proposal to Turkey instead of full membership, should be discussed intensely by politicians and elites.

In the 1970s, the EU was indicating Turkey's economic problems while rejecting Turkey. In the 1980s, Turkey suffered from internal political problems, whereas in the 1990s the agenda was based on the problems with Greece and Cyprus, and human rights issues. Turkey has never come closer to EU membership as much as in the first decade of the 2000s due to having the official candidate status and being in the membership negotiation process. The negotiations are about adoption of the EU acquis. Throughout the negotiation process Turkish national law will import almost 80.000 pages of EU rules (Grabbe, 2005:71). After completing these amendments, even if Turkey is not accepted, it will be a non-EU country which is legally run by EU standards.

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