



MONTEUS Public Lecture

Narrative der EU-Türkei Beziehungen: Kooperationen und Konflikte

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On 12 July 2019, Prof Dr Wolfgang Wessels gave a public lecture on the narratives on EU-Turkey relations as part of the Jean Monnet Chair for Turkey and EU Studies (MONTEUS). In the beginning, Wolfgang Wessels talked about the term “*narrative*” in the field of political science. As to him, the central point is the reduction to the essentials and the answer to the question: “*Where do we come from, where do we go to?*”. Besides, Wolfgang Wessels described the term European narratives and referred to four important points: First, Turkey's potential EU membership is not realistic at the moment, although a breakdown of the accession negotiations will have serious consequences. In this context, the three Copenhagen Criteria (political criterion, economic criterion and “*acquis*” criterion) are important. If Turkey wants to join the EU, it must fulfil all three Copenhagen Criteria. In particular, the “*acquis*” criterion is an obstacle and a problem for sovereignty, as Turkey must respect obligations and has to recognise the EU's common set of rules. Secondly, Turkey is a special case because of its history and size. If Turkey were an EU Member State, it would hold as many seats in the European Parliament as Germany and therefore would have a great influence. He emphasised further that Turkey is wrongly not seen as part of Europe, because of its history. In detail, it would be the only country in the EU that does not belong to the Christian faith. Thirdly, Turkey is a strategic partner of the EU and we can speak of intensive cooperation. Among other things, Turkey is a member of the Customs Union and an important partner in the refugee agreements. Fourthly, Turkey is seen as a long-distance neighbour facing a number of conflicts. The current situation is difficult with regard to NATO and international security policy. For instance, Turkish arms companies are involved in the production of the US bomber F-35 and the Turkish government wants to buy a lot of those. However, Turkey has bought the Russian missile defence system S-400. For this reason, the current situation is militarily



problematic, as the S-400 system was developed to launch F-35 bombers. The USA is considering to impose sanctions against Turkey and will not deliver F-35 bombers to Turkey as the American government fears that Russia could spy on the technology of the F-35 through the radar system of the S-400. Another conflict relates to Cyprus, in which the behaviour of the Turkish government is problematic for the EU. These examples illustrate that Turkey is moving further and further away from Europe because of its political decisions.

Furthermore, Wessels referred to Turkish narratives. A central point is the modernization by joining the West (Europe). In this context, various narratives are important: "Europeanisation", meaning Turkey as a normal European state, "Eurasianisation", meaning Turkey as a bridge to the Middle East and Central Asia, Turkey as "the heir" to the Ottoman Empire, and Turkey as a "regional power". Finally, Wolfgang Wessels draws attention to the current issues of EU-Turkey relations. According to him, there must be mutual reinforcement, although there are difficulties with a common strategy. It is crucial that the bridges must be maintained and extended.