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Europeanization of Identity: The Case of the Rebuffed Candidate¹

Identity is one of the main concepts that define our existence in the world. Our identity as a 'human being', 'man / woman', 'black / white', 'social democrat / conservative' etc. help us to situate ourselves in the world and organize our existence and regulate our relations with the outside world. It also defines the nature, character and extent of our values, norms, attitudes, and behavior. According to Tajfel, social identity is defined as "that part of the individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1981, 255) Similarly, collective identities define the overall vocation of a group in the social plane by bringing out commonalities and accentuating differences from other groups. These identities are shared with the other members of the group and produce a sense of well-being and loyalty which stems from being a member of a collectivity. The chapter concerns the case of Turkish identity as a form of collective identity in a world of states. For the purposes of the chapter, Turkish identity is a political concept that is related but not confined to cultural identity. It includes all citizens of the State of Turkey and their relation to and understanding of their collective state identity. The chapter traces the Europeanization process with regard to Turkish identity on the basis of adoption of norms and values propagated by the EU under the following headings: adherence to democracy as an overriding political norm embodying a system of checks and balances and moderation of power, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, non-discrimination for disadvantaged groups such as women, respect for minorities.

European Identity and Europeanization

Despite the above assertion about Turkish identity in a world of states, the concept of European identity reflects a source of collective identity on a regional scale above or existing side by side with national identities. While different notions of Europe existed throughout the ages, the initiation of European integration at an institutional level dates back to the end of the Second World War and is related with the attempt not to ever experience the horrors of the world wars. The EU is thus based on a liberal and peaceful understanding and a desire and determination of the founding and participating nations to tie their fates together. Europe was defined in this era as an antithesis of and an antidote to fascism, wars, and crimes against humanity. Faced with the spectre of the Second World War, other conceptions of Europe i.e. Europe as an area of the superior race and civilization, were subdued. The rise of extreme right wing groups and parties in the 1990s and 2000s however challenge this notion of Europe as an open and liberal area of freedom and democracy. An alternative and essentialist notion of Europe excluding non-white immigrants and based on a racist understanding of Europeanness is now even contesting the EU project itself.

Discussing the Europeanization of identities however, we refer to a change of national identities under the influence and interaction with the processes, exchanges, institutions, values and norms engendered by European integration. The values of European integration translated into the Copenhagen criteria would be the guiding post in this respect.

According to Risse, "it is wrong to conceptualize European identity in zero-sum terms, as if an increase in European identity necessarily decreases one's loyalty to national or other communities" (Risse, 2010, 40). Rather than discussing whether national or European identity

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prevails as the primary source of allegiance, Risse proposes to focus on “the Europeanization of national identities” (Risse, 2010, 45):

Europeanization means that Europe and the EU are integrated into core understandings of one’s national (or other) sense of belonging. It means that core understandings of what it means to be German, French or Polish change and that Europe and the EU become part and parcel of these understandings. We do not cease to be Germans, French, or Polish, but become European Germans, French Europeans, or Polish in the EU.

This should be a rather natural result of a country’s membership to the EU since EU is not any international organization but entails a significant degree of supranational / transnational integration which cannot be limited to the political or economic spheres. As pinpointed by Risse, mutual trust levels among EU Member states have shown a considerable increase among the original member states over time (Risse, 2010, 44). Membership creates a process of shift in allegiance which does not amount to one replacing the other but changes in the definition and inner substance of identity among citizens of the EU. According to Mayer and Palmowski, European identity makes the differences between national identities less significant, highlighting similarities rather than differences: “A European identity does not resolve the exclusivity of nationalism, but it moderates it....National identities still matter, but within the EU the barriers between them have become permeable” (Mayer, Palmowski, 2004, 591).

The situation may be quite different when one studies processes of Europeanization in identity in a candidate state, and especially in one which is constantly being questioned regarding its ‘Europeanness’. For the purposes of this chapter, I would argue the following: With the politicization of the EU in the 1990s, all enlargements after this date entails a considerable degree of convergence to European norms and values even before membership takes place and necessitates a considerable degree of identification with ‘Europe’². This convergence is not only about adoption of legislation or harmonization of administrative structures, but needs an extensive social learning and internalization process. Without a concomitant ‘Europeanization of identity’ it would be very difficult if not impossible for this process towards membership to be achieved successfully. In the case of the Central and East European states, this process concerned the argument of “return to Europe”. Without this basic understanding and attachment to Europe, justifying Eastern enlargement in the EU, and acquiring support and managing the process of preparation for EU membership in the candidate states would have been very difficult.

Turkey’s case is different than Central and Eastern European countries, Malta or Cyprus or the Western Balkan states that are in a process of integration to the EU. Turkey’s candidacy and accession to the EU is not justified but contested on the ground of Europeanness. It is rather justified on the basis of benefits and rational cost-benefit calculations. Those supporters of Turkey’s EU membership put forth arguments stemming from how much Europe needs Turkey and what kind of benefits Turkey’s membership would bring outweighing the costs. While all these are true, my argument is that despite the rejections of Turkey’s EU membership credentials, the most outspoken of which is the President of France, Turkey has been undergoing a significant change for a time now owing to the EU process. This started early on with Turkey’s preparations for the transition to the last stage of the association, the customs union. It later intensified after the Helsinki decision proclaiming Turkey as a

² This does not mean to suggest that all enlargements before this date did not embody a similar identification process. A typical case in point is the case of Britain which was rejected by Charles de Gaulle on the grounds that it was different in nature from the six founding members.

candidate state “destined to join the EU on the basis of the same criteria as applied to the other candidate states”. The struggle to fulfill the Copenhagen criteria for membership necessitates a process of identification with Europe and a change in identity definition which would entail a degree of Europeanization of identity even in the case of Turkey. I would suggest that this process is continuing despite some developments which may be seen on the contrary. The chapter will trace this process on the basis of the effects of the fulfillment of the Copenhagen criteria on identity definition in Turkey by helping the consolidation of a democratic system respectful of human and minority rights.

Sites and processes of Europeanization of identity: Where and how?

The process of European integration no doubt intensified homogenization among the Member States by bringing about a common system of legal rules, policies and joint action in many areas. At the same time, the existence and gradual strengthening of EU institutions and policy-making competences with a concomitant insufficient development of democratic channels at the EU level fed resentment to supranationalization in many Member States, both in the left and right of the political spectrum. Thus while a European identity is contested both as a shallow market-oriented source of identity and as an intrusion into national spheres, a Europeanization process regarding identifications of the Member States of the EU may be observed.

This Europeanization is much different than an Europeanization of policy-making, administrative structures or legal systems however. Public spheres, education systems, and media are still dominated by national priorities. Symbols and references that may have an effect on the construction of identity are also shaped by national figures, such as national days of commemoration, memories of war, great losses or victories, statues and other visual symbols, national heroes, popular national icons, and the like. While European symbols such as the Euro, EU citizenship, passport, Europe day, EU anthem are relatively less effective in forging emotive bonds of allegiance. When we speak of Europeanization of identities, it would be more appropriate to refer to a process whereby national identities are being reconstructed on the basis of a Europeanized understanding of what they are composed of and a reinterpretation of the relation between national and European identity rather than a replacement of national identities with an overarching European identity. According to Risse “Europeanized identities come in national colors in so far as they resonate with and are connected to respective national symbols and historical and cultural memories in different ways” (Risse, 2010, 85). Thus while the understanding of and relation to Europe may differ to a great extent in the French and German contexts, a mutually-shared process of Europeanization would bring the two national identity constructions closer to each other on the basis of a Europeanization of each identity space. The boundaries between different national identities would become less conflictual, and more ‘fuzzy’ due to the common source of identity construction that European integration would present. According to Mayer and Palmowski (2004),

A European identity does not resolve the exclusivity of nationalism, but it moderates it. Rights such as consular protection in third countries by any MS consulate or embassy to any EU citizen do not level national distinctiveness but create a sense in which EU nationalities are less exclusive in relation to each other than they are to outside nationalities. ... National identities still matter but within the EU the barriers between them have become permeable.

Though the relation and perception of Europe would differ in various national contexts, a convergence and orientation towards Europe as an area of common values, “shared beliefs

and norms”, and “ways of doing things” (Radaelli, 2004, 3) would bring national identities closer to each other.

Rather than the French and German identities othering each other and accentuating their differences while constructing and re-constructing their national identities, the incorporation of Europe in each identity group would diminish the importance of differences and conflicts that may depend on earlier periods of rivalry or confrontation and bring about a convergence towards an Europeanization of identities. While the French would consider Europe in terms of an area where the French influence is preponderant, for the Germans, Europe may be associated with a rebirth and a rupture with the notoriety of the Nazi era. It should also be emphasized that this relationship and how Europe is incorporated into national identities may also change in the course of the integration process. The French or the German positions within the EU are no longer the same as during the Cold War era or before the big-bang enlargement of 2004 and 2007, while the same may be said for the case of the newly-acceding countries pre and post-accession. Thus as collective identities are quite resistant to change and show a resilience throughout time periods, they are also constantly being constructed and reconstructed each day. As the EU is a dynamic process without a fixed target, how it impacts on national identities and how Member States relate to Europe may show change over time.

Europeanization of national identities would imply a shifting of loyalties to a new center which would accompany or maybe eventually override national capitals. While national differences diminish in importance and similarities are more accentuated, common elements already existing or that are more easily incorporated in national identities become markers of national identity that form the basis of a European identity. According to Mayer and Palmowski (2004)

European identity is closely linked to national identity but it can and does move beyond it in two ways. First European identity is obviously common to all Europeans, it complements national and regional identities. As a composite identity made up of a large number of national identities it is both the same as and more than each national identity.

Throughout European integration, collective identities are reconstructed and are adapted to being part of this process by reinterpreting their relation to Europe and redefining the role of Europe within national identity. Thus Europeanization alters how national identities are constructed and how they are related to Europe. The demands and expectations related with the European integration process lead to adaptational pressures that may or may not be accommodated by national identity. For example, the demands associated with being a member to the EC/EU could not be reconciled with Norwegian identity as may be concluded from the results of the referenda held in that country. However despite the apparent discordance with national identity, British identity was reappraised in the 1960s culminating in the country's membership in 1973. The extent of Europeanization is influenced by the degree of fit/misfit between factors shaping national identity and the demands from and perception of Europe. High levels of adaptational pressure may lead to incompatibility and rather than highlighting similarities may accentuate differences. Visions, ideas, norms, values, meanings involved in European order and identity construction interact with collective nation state identities producing change, inertia, backlash or similar reactions.

Here, the answer to Thomas Risse's question “how much space there is for Europe in nation-state identities” may hold the key to understanding the different relations between the EU and European countries (Risse, 2002). According to Risse,

Such political visions and identity constructions are the more likely to impact upon and to be incorporated in collective nation state identities the more they resonate with the ideas about the nation and political order embedded in these collective understandings. The degree of resonance resembles the goodness of fit...the resonance of ideas and visions about Europe with given collective nation state identities explain which ideas and identity constructions are considered legitimate and appropriate in a given political setting.

While some national identities may more easily incorporate Europeanness without much tension since being part of Europe already has an association in the national self-concept, for others, the degree of incongruence may be so high that it may lead to resistance or backlash against being part of Europe. For yet other national identities, incorporation of Europe into national identity may be quite problematic since it necessitates a shift in the older association with Europe which is already existent in national self-definition. This latter case may be the closest to the case of Turkey.

While Europe does not hold an entirely negative connotation in the national self-definition, it is beyond doubt that a quite problematic relation with Europe complicates this process of what may be called an Europeanization of Turkish identity. The demands of the EU and necessities associated with the accession process created important challenges regarding adaptation for Turkish nation state identity. In addition to the Copenhagen criteria, that had an important role in defining role of the state and state-society relations, other requirements such as resolving the Cyprus issue and resolution of border disputes with especially Greece had important repercussions in terms of identity. Resolution of the Cyprus issue would also mean that the Turkish state would have to make concessions and accommodate with the other related parties and would need to significantly alter its official position which was based on an unfaltering resolve about holding onto the status quo. Such demands created adaptational pressure not only for Turkish foreign or internal policies but also regarding the understanding of Turkish identity which included codes about acceptable behavior. Although one of the official conditions for EU membership did not involve Turkey's recognition of the "genocide" of Armenians, the inclusion of this statement as a condition in the EP's resolutions starting from 1987 upset many Turks and rebuffed by all political leaders. If this were an official condition for membership demanded by the EU as a whole, most probably it would not be acceptable for Turkey.

Turkey attributed great importance to being justly treated by the EU throughout the process of candidacy. The Turkish government's reaction to the 1997 Luxembourg European Council conclusions which did not recognize Turkey's candidacy status was mostly based on the EU's unfair treatment and perception of being discriminated against compared to the other candidate countries. This significance attached to fair treatment may also be explained by how Europe resonated in national identity and may be traced back to the retreat of the Ottomans vis-a-vis major European powers after the 17th century. The association with Europe in Turkish national identity had a lot to do with recognition, equality and acceptance. While being a member of the EU and progressing on the road to membership would place a high level of adaptational pressure on Turkish identity, it would also be rewarding and reinforcing in the sense that incorporation into Europe would heal some deep-lying uncertainties and confidence problems associated with Turkey's relation to Europe.

Turkish identity is a construct which involves multiple relations. This relates to Turkey's status between different regional constellations and its historical legacy of an empire which had its borders in three different continents. The shrinking of borders and being confined to the current borders after the Balkan wars and the First World War led to a sense of insecurity in the newly founded Republic. Moreover, countries such as Greece and Bulgaria on Turkey's

borders had the fight against the Ottomans as a prominent part of their national identity-construction. Together with the deterioration of the relations with the Arabic peoples of the Ottoman Empire after their collaboration with the British during the First World War, fed a sense of being encircled by 'enemies'. The early years of the Republic that coincided with the inter-war years led to turning inwards, and further exacerbated a sense of insecurity.

Until recently Turkish identity oscillated between disengagement from external affairs to a wide extent except for issues judged to be of concern to the sense of national unity and integrity such as the Cyprus issue and a sense of engagement and commitment as a regional actor to regional affairs after the ending of the Cold War. Thus Turkish identity was squeezed between two alternatives: being the lonely wolf and rekindling the spirit of the Ottoman Empire by redefining historical, cultural and political ties with neighboring countries. The first state of Turkish identity more or less continued in to the Cold War era despite the fact that Turkey was part of the Western camp. It may be said that Turkey's inclusion into the Western camp was mostly based on security considerations and interest-based calculations. It lacked an effective link and communication with the West in terms of values or living standards. Even though Turkey became a member of NATO in 1952, it could only become an associated country of the EEC. The second alternative could be implemented only after the creation of the necessary geopolitical conditions with the ending of the Cold War. Former prime minister and president Turgut Ozal talked of the "Turkish century" while many-times prime minister and former president Suleyman Demirel portrayed the Turkic world from the Adriatic to the Great Wall of China. One of the former ministers of foreign affairs, the late Ismail Cem, of social democratic background, mentioned the new understanding of geopolitics even before AKP came to power in the following words (Cem, 2000):

Turkey's specific historical development – its cosmopolitan characteristics, its civilization melding Western and Eastern values, a multitude of beliefs and ethnicities – bestowed on Turkey a unique identity. We consider ourselves both European (which we have been for seven centuries) and Asian and view this plurality as an asset. Our history was moulded as much in Istanbul, Edirne, Tetova, Kosovo and Sarajevo as it was in Bursa, Kayseri, Diyarbakir and Damascus.

Turkey while redefining its role in the new global order also intensified its relation to Europe through EU candidacy in this era. Incorporation of Europeanness in its identity was a necessary and indispensable component of a reconstruction process involving an adaptation to the changing international conjuncture and internal structure of the country. A Europeanized Turkey would have a real opportunity to redefine its role in its neighborhood and the world by incorporating values and norms that would contribute to Turkey's soft power both in a material and immaterial sense.

I. Turkey and Europe: Shadow of the Past, Promises of the Future

Turkish identity cannot be understood without recourse to its relation to Europe. With the gradual demise of the Ottoman Empire, Europe came to mean an adversary that was ahead of the country in its rapid advancements in science, technology and economy, what we may collectively term as modernity. While European powers established global preponderance, the Ottoman era in the Near East and Eastern Europe was coming to an end. Europe was no longer an adversary that could be defeated but now a model of global civilization that had to be taken as a model of advancement and lifestyle. Westernization at the end of the Ottoman era and the Republican era aimed to adopt the European lifestyle and worldview. In terms of institutions, the rupture with the Sultanate and Caliphate with the formation of the Republic

meant a quite fundamental transformation to Western political institutions and an underlying continuity with the old era in terms of political behavior and understandings of state-society relations. While the source of legitimacy and site of sovereignty changed during this period, this was in the direction from the monarchy to a republican oligarchy than to the people as a whole.

Social construction of Turkishness embodies an interpretation of historical memories, the mythical journey of Turkic tribes from Central Asia to Anatolia, the conversion to Islam, the controversial Ottoman heritage, the experiences of the wars of independence, nation-state building during the Republican era and Atatürk's legacy as well as the perception of how Turks are viewed by the outside mainly by the West and Europe. Like other identities, it is a relational concept and is embedded in societal structures, state-society relations, mode of citizenship and public institutions. Turkey's relation to and status regarding Europe is both a factor influencing and influenced by identity construction. While Turkey's early interest in the European Economic Community founded in 1957 was based on considerations of economic benefit and political necessity, it was also related with the ages-long historical and cultural relations with European countries and peoples. While the triggering factor was interest-based, it was possible to observe the influence of psychological factors throughout the process that were closely related to the association with Europe in Turkish identity.

The Turkish government at the time of the formation of the EEC showed an early interest in this process. The reshaping of the world in the aftermath of the Second World War situated Turkey in the Western camp next to the EEC member states. Thus it may be quite understandable that Adnan Menderes raised the matter during the proceedings of the Turkish Parliament and referred to the importance of the formation of the 'common market' which may have political aims in the future (ref.). Security concerns as well as economic considerations of development were related to Turkey's search for closer ties with the EC in its application for association. The prime minister of Turkey during the signature of the Ankara Agreement, İsmet İnönü mentioned Turkey's ties with the EC in the government program and talked of a "union of fate with the Western world" and Turkey that was also related to Turkey's economic reality³. Raproachment was mutual however. Commission President Walter Hallstein also welcomed this association with Turkey by expressing that "Turkey is part of Europe"(extracted from speech by Olli Rehn, 2008)⁴.

The relation to Europe in Turkish identity gained a more political character after the 1980's. While Europe mostly connoted a cultural sphere with distinct 'civilized' life patterns previously, after the 1980s and 1990s, the idea of freedom and democracy that Europe implied gained an increasing appeal in Turkey. Leftist and Kurdish intellectuals that had to flee to Europe after the military coup of 1980, the recognition of the right of appeal to the European Court of Human rights in 1987 for Turkish citizens, the breakdown of the Berlin wall, the intensification of political integration in Europe with the Maastricht Treaty, and the 1993 declaration of the criteria for membership to the EU at the Copenhagen European Council may be evaluated as milestones that reinforced the significance of Europe and the EU

³ <http://www.turkiyeavrupavakfi.org/index.php/avrupa-birligi/tarihce/1601-1963.html>

⁴ Olli Rehn, "45 Years from the Signing of the Ankara Agreement: EU-Turkey –cooperation continues", SPEECH/08/581, Conference on EC Turkey Association Agreement, 4 November 2008, <http://www.eulib.com/-45-years-from-3021>

as an area of freedom and democracy. Closer relations with Europe would bring about an expansion of politics and extend the scope of rights and freedoms. This also implied a distancing from Europe in the eyes of the Kemalist establishment since association with Europe would inadvertently support anti-establishment groups who were in search of greater access to state structures and leeway to voice their own ideas. (reference to Thomas Diez). Thus the relation to Europe in Turkish identity, being also politically determined, embodied political values of democracy and human rights.

The acceptance of candidacy status, while bringing obvious advantages for Turkey, also brought about substantial pressure for change in the country's foreign policy domain, most notably reflected in the need to convert the Cyprus policy towards a more conciliatory stance and an urgency to start a process of resolution of bilateral disputes with Greece. At the same time, the Helsinki conclusions 'Europeanized' those issues by integrating them into the EU process. The acceptance of candidacy status by the then Turkish government ruled by Bülent Ecevit spurred a process of reforms starting with important steps such as the reduction of pre-trial detention period, reformulation of the consultative role and composition of the National Security Council, abolishment of the death penalty, and extension of remit of cultural rights. The following period witnessed the adoption of two major constitutional amendments in 2001 and 2004 coupled with eight harmonization packages between 2002 and 2004 (ABGS 2007).

In the meantime, Turkish identity was also being opened to question with the increasing freedom of expression in the public space. While Islamists focused on the role of Islam in defining Turkish identity and questioned the secular nature of the republic, liberals questioned the ethnic background to Turkish identity and put forward that the republican idea of Turkish identity was based on illusions, it was based on a Sunni, Turkic homogenizing ethos. Liberals further criticized this understanding of Turkish identity for being assimilationist for minority groups, illiberal and repressive. While Atatürk's reform and revolutions in the 1920s took Europe as a model, it was thought that this model of the nation-state emulated the fascist regimes of the interwar era in Europe and did not embody the ideal of Europe as freedom and democracy. Europe provided a common point of reference for those groups that felt alienated from the establishment and wanted change. This included Islamists in the form of the globalist AKP, liberal intellectuals, Kurdish nationalists and supporters of the Kurdish cause.

Thus Europeanization of Turkish identity cannot be thought separately from these parallel processes of liberalization and demystification of the republican version of Turkish identity. It is also a still ongoing process under the rule of the AKP part since 2002. While for some, the redefinition of Turkish identity, and its Europeanization would mean the end of the Turkish nation and state (see interview with Ismet Ozel, radikal, 15.8.2011, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalYazar&Date=&ArticleID=1059976>) for others it would mean welfare and freedom for all groups living in Turkey and who feel that they are not part of this Turkish identity.

During the last decade, while state identity in Turkey evolved by way of Europeanization, the change in Turkey's Cyprus policy after 2003, the start of exploratory talks with Greece with a view to settling the border-related dispute over the Aegean, the adoption of "zero problems with neighbors" approach the lifting of visas with several countries enabling freedom of movement, the attempt to reach a settlement with Armenia and the attempts to establish a free trade area with the southern neighbors may be noted as manifestations of a Europeanization effect whereby the civilian power understanding of Europe that emerged with the EU came to dominate Turkish foreign policy. The worsening of relations with Israel especially after the

Davos and flotilla incidents was mostly interpreted as a divergence between Turkey and the West. However, in that case also the arguments against Israeli policy were mostly centered on the rights of the Palestinians. Turkey successfully applied values and norms of Europeanization with respect to interstate relations to its neighborhood. Its joint attempt with Brasil to reach a compromise on the Iranian nuclear question was also interpreted as an unwelcome and unrealistic intrusion into western policy towards Iran. However, the attempt to prevent the use of force or other compelling measures and strive to reach a compromise may be again seen as a sign of civilian diplomacy. This may be evaluated as Turkey's internalization of European norms and the result of a socialization process.

It should also be noted that candidacy to the EU and Turkey's quest to fulfill the political aspects of the Copenhagen criteria had a direct bearing on internal political developments in Turkey. The EU membership perspective acted as a powerful stimulus for the government and opposition to work together in the parliament to pass the necessary reforms. It also altered the political landscape by influencing the sources of legitimacy and power configurations determining what would be considered as appropriate behavior according to European norms and standards. In this way, the candidacy process supported those groups in Turkey that criticized the system and desired change. What would determine their chances of success would be their adaptability to the EU conditions, such as advocacy of democracy and support for human rights added to the strength of their local constituencies.

It is also possible to discern an Europeanization effect in terms of how Turkish identity was shaped and defined by politicians and opinion leaders. While the highly security-conscious idea of Turkey and the Turks, surrounded by enemies and with deep-running problems of internal divisions and faced with the threat of dissolution began to show signs of change, the Europeanization effect that went hand in hand with a desucritization process became more discernable in the last decade. This was related both to the global shifts that contributed to the redefinition of Turkey's geopolitical positions and its relations vis-à-vis the outside world as well as its EU process. The change instigated by the EU process and the demands and expectations of the EU laid emphasis on democratization, respect for human rights and minority rights and rule of law. One of the priority areas to take action according to the EU was the area of civil-military relations which envisaged civilian control of the military, and a curb on the intervention of the military into politics. What may be summarized as the confinement of the army into strictly the military sphere with civilian oversight was a process that involved the redefinition of the role of the National Security Council, and the establishment of a new *modus vivendi* between the government and the military staff. Another critical turning point had been realized with the September 2010 constitutional referendum which made it possible for the 12 September generals to be tried for the military coup. This process continued in parallel with the series of trials such as the Ergenekon and Balyoz cases where several retired and currently serving members of the staff were detained and tried for their alleged attempts to bring down the democratic order and the AKP government. The relegation of the role of the military bureaucracy in Turkish politics and the criticism of the military for its past takeovers, current coup attempts and more recently some military mistakes in the fight against the PKK led to a realignment in the understanding of Turkish identity towards a more democratic and civilian approach. The oftly referred understanding of Turkey as the military nation (Altınay, 2005) encountered a rapid change and evolved towards a new understanding as may be interpreted as the trading nation akin to the words of Kirişçi (2009). This was related to an upsurge in the volume of trade in goods and services since the 1980s, where the EU emerged as a major trading partner especially since the entry into force of the customs union in 1996.

The EU process also influenced the vitalization of civil society in Turkey by way of promoting and encouraging the activities of non-governmental organizations. Liberalization of the constitution with consecutive amendments, and the relevant harmonization packages extended the scope of individual rights thus empowering the individual citizen vis-à-vis the state and expanding the opportunities of getting organized within NGOs. This redefinition of state-society relations again had major effects on the idea of Turkish identity as primarily molded by the state presided over by a hegemonic state ethos.

Other areas figuring prominently in analyzing the Europeanization effect are the areas of gender relations, minority rights and cultural rights. Change in these areas is also related to the Europeanization process whereby, EU norms and values were adopted as a standard of conduct and model despite national variations. Whenever a political solution to the Kurdish issue is being pondered, examples from Ireland or Spain come to the fore. Similarly, issues with regard to gender and the problems of women in society are usually compared with the European standards such as the discussion about whether or not to apply quotas for women in the parliament. More concretely, the progress reports prepared by the European Commission regularly note problems in these areas and call for improvements in line with the Copenhagen criteria and the *acquis communautaire*. Major improvements in the area of minority and cultural rights can be summarized as the right to broadcast in and learn “languages traditionally used by Turkish citizens in their daily lives” and the new law on foundations which extended the liberties enjoyed by minority foundations. Such legislative reform was paralleled with a more conciliatory approach on the part of the government that recognized the existence of minority groups and cooperated with minority groups or ethnic groups in resolving their grievances. Although significant pitfalls continue to exist in this area, a new understanding seems to permeate the public bodies as well as the general public opinion.

Europeanization of Turkish Identity within a regionalization process?

While the above-mentioned developments may attest to an Europeanization process in terms of the defining characteristics of Turkish identity, the political rhetoric with regard to where Turkey stands in the world tended to take a different turn since mid-2000s. The era following the Helsinki European Council witnessed a reform period in Turkey where legislative reform followed the trajectory of candidacy to the EU. Turkey participated in the activities of the convention for the future of Europe and the prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan signed the ‘Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe’ in 2004. Turkey was actively participating in the debates about the future of Europe as a potential Member State. The constitutional amendments and harmonization packages went through the parliament based on a consensus between the major political parties, AKP and CHP.

The JDP’s quest for EU membership seemed contradictory at the outset looking at the party’s Islamic roots. However, the EU card was a precious leverage for the party especially against criticisms and doubts that it was a religiously-oriented party that aimed at Islamizing Turkey and severing the country’s relations with the West. It was also a political strategy used by the party to gain leverage in the political system, outweigh and weaken its opponents above all the military. The government program made references to the EU as a source of legitimacy and emphasized the “acceleration and conclusion of the process of membership to the EU as a priority of the government” (Program of the 52th Government 2002).

The EU dimension tilted the balance in favor of the democratically elected to the detriment of the civil and military bureaucracy. What could be characterized as a tutelary regime in Turkey slowly declined with the limitation of the political role of the military. The government expanded its legitimacy together with its electoral base and made use of its support for EU

membership to reach out to liberal groups and intellectuals. Secondly the EU criteria also had an effect on the traditional understanding of the state as a force over and above the government and the relations between the citizen and the state by expanding the scope of rights and civil liberties. Although demands for greater rights and democracy were made by different groups since the return to civilian politics after the 1980 coup, the EU factor had a triggering effect and exerted leverage in favor of reformists. It should be emphasized at this point that the process of democratization still continues and the question of a viable democratic system is not yet resolved. The country is struggling with the evolution of a democratic system based on an unfaltering respect for rights and freedoms, checks and balances between different organs of the state, independence of the judiciary and effective democratic scrutiny of the executive.

While President Sarkozy and several other prominent figures in Europe such as Valéry Giscard d'Estaing employed Turkey as the other in defining their understanding of European identity, this othering mechanism created a backlash against the European target among Turkish political elites and society. Prime Minister Erdoğan and Chief EU negotiator Egemen Bağış displayed a critical approach and an incriminating discourse against the EU and EU leaders. For example, while Erdoğan mainly criticized the EU and its leaders for failing to apply a just and non-discriminatory policy towards Turkey, he also dwelled on bonds and identifications that could not replace the European dimension but at least could compensate for the rejection by the EU and help Turkey in its quest for regional and ultimately global influence. In his recent speeches, he emphasized the common bonds, mutual sympathy and brotherhood in bilateral relations especially in his addresses to Muslim Middle Eastern, and Balkan countries, aiming to gain sympathy and extend the scope of Turkey's soft power by highlighting commonalities between those countries. (T24 2011) This contrasting attitude may be evaluated as a policy preference to give the message to the EU that Turkey may have other choices and need not indefinitely wait at the EU's door, while at the same time the EU is also operating such 'other'ing mechanisms on Turkey.

Judged on the basis of the dominant discourse of governmental figures in Turkey, Turkey's international identity is being constructed along the Eastern dimension rather than the Western dimension. While cultural affinities, religious bonds, solidarity and brotherhood are being highlighted in Turkey's relations with especially Middle Eastern countries, accusations, and differences are mostly heard with regard to Europe. While this is partly a reflection of the EU's exclusionary Turkey policy, it is also a sign of a reorientation of Turkey's international status. The growing resentment felt towards the EU is also reflected in a new understanding and vision which is critical of the idea of Europe itself. This proceeds concomitantly with a new identity orientation based on Turkey's culture, and Ottoman heritage and portrayed in terms of a country as a role model in its region particularly with regard to the Islamic world, heir to a multicultural Empire, while the EU is increasingly being perceived as an inward-looking continent on decline, which is becoming xenophobic and defensive.

The growing rift between Turkey and the EU is best illustrated by the words of the Minister of State and Chief Negotiator for the EU, Egemen Bağış. During a ceremony to commemorate the Holocaust at Auschwitz, he said that "the EU... is today under the risk of being overtaken by a racist mentality that cannot internalize its own values and emulates the fascist methods of 1930s". (Agence Europe 2011) While criticizing this "racist mentality", he also added that the best remedy would be Turkey's EU membership. Put differently, Bağış's words reflect the negative atmosphere towards the EU among the policy makers in Turkey who have been continuously bringing up the idea both in domestic politics and in its relations especially with Middle Eastern neighbors that the European Union has been excluding Turkey not because of

rational reasons but due to Turkey's belonging to a different culture and religion and therefore following 'racist' policies.⁵

While relations with the EU have entered a cooling phase since 2005 and especially 2006, Turkish foreign policy has been displaying signs of a major transformation in the meantime. Turkish foreign policy has been under increasing scrutiny in recent years due to a rising activism in terms of foreign policy initiatives, an expansion of the scope of foreign policy, an assertiveness in the discourse employed, a noticeable autonomy especially from Western foreign policy stances, an opening to non-European regions such as the Middle East, emphasis on trade, economy and culture as instruments of soft power rather than hard power instruments or use of coercive diplomacy.

This overall change is sometimes linked with the identity and worldview of policy-makers and is denoted with the term, neo-Ottomanism. Although an increasing appreciation of Turkey's Ottoman heritage and a growing interest towards regions that formerly formed parts of the Ottoman Empire may be discerned in Turkey especially since the 1990's, the use of the term neo-Ottoman may be flawed. It may be more apt to argue that Turkish foreign policy is adapting itself to the changing global and regional circumstances in a world where USA leadership became more controversial in the aftermath of the Iraqi invasion and where the EU excludes Turkey from its plans for the near future.

In this context, the minister of foreign affairs, Prof. Ahmet Davutoğlu's foreign policy vision which places Turkey at the center of a region including many adjacent basins of historical and strategic significance is of vital importance with respect to understanding his realistic vision towards the EU and Europe (Davutoğlu 2009). According to him, Turkey has to develop alternative land basin policies with the aim of preventing Turkey's isolation vis-à-vis an EU which is completely integrated with Eastern Europe strategies without disregarding the special importance of the EU and Europe for Turkey. Moreover, Davutoğlu certainly did not base his foreign policy on the assumption that EU membership would be possible in the near to medium term and adopted a strategy based on a more balanced approach to foreign relations with a broader focus while aiming to give due consideration to the EU process (2009, 550)⁶.

This realistic vision contemplates the future of Turkey not defined only by its links with the EU but connected with regions surrounding it. Davutoğlu's warning to heed and neutralize the influence of "historical/psychological mental parameters" (Davutoğlu 2009, 550) could be a defining factor for Turkey's future status vis-à-vis the EU. Since integration to the EU is not

⁵ Such an exchange of words is reminiscent of an earlier controversy between former prime minister Mesut Yılmaz and former German chancellor Helmut Kohl about the EU's double standards, and Germany still implementing a policy of 'lebensraum' after the 1997 Luxembourg European Council excluding Turkey from the enlargement process.

⁶ "In the twenty-year period in front of us, the necessity to establish an area of maneuver that is prone to any kind of alternatives by developing alternative land basin policies with the aim of preventing Turkey's isolation vis-à-vis an EU which is completely integrated with Eastern Europe will be one of the most fundamental strategic parameters for Turkey in the near future. Turkey cannot break away from Europe geographically or historically. However, the start of a new era in relations with Europe depends on the condition that historical/psychological mental parameters should not influence rational diplomatic processes. The primary condition to come out of this vicious cycle ... is to re-evaluate Turkey's foreign relations strategy that encompasses the EU but does not in any way reduce it to only the EU factor". Translated by the author, *ibid.*, p.550.

solely a foreign policy act but involves deeper understandings about identity and perceptions of Europe, divorcing this process from such psychological or affective dimensions would curb the driving force behind Turkey's search for membership. In the meantime the affective element would be introduced in Turkey's relations with other regions especially the Middle East and Arab world as well as parts of the Balkans. As argued by Onis and Yılmaz, change in JDP government's policies from "commitment to deep Europeanization", to "loose Europeanization and a parallel shift to ... soft Euro-Asianism" (2009, 7) should not be evaluated as a shift of foreign policy orientation in a direction focusing more on the former Soviet space and the Middle East. Rather, it should be seen as a foreign policy activism which is "pursued with respect to all neighboring regions, but with no firm EU axis as was previously the case" (Onis and Yılmaz 2009, 12). The insertion of such a firm EU dimension to Turkey's foreign policy would be dependent on the revitalization of Turkey's negotiations with the EU with a view to accession.

It should be borne in mind that Ankara tried to justify its amicable relations with Syria, Hamas and Iran which were cited as proving Turkey's slide away from the West and the EU with the argument that it is in fact acting in line with EU norms by forming relations with the democratically-elected Hamas, and engaging to bring peace to the region with its efforts at international mediation. In a way, Ankara utilized its EU links as a facilitator in pursuing relations with the actors isolated from the international society and enhancing its prestige and soft power in the region.

While Turkey's membership negotiations to the EU lost its pace after 2006, Turkey's identity began to show increasing signs of its Eastern dimension displayed by an increasing importance of religion and cultural and historical bonds to the region encompassing the Balkans, Caucasus and the Middle East. This development is concomitant with the growing importance of especially the Middle East in global politics, Turkey's need to adapt to fast-moving changes in the region and the ideological predisposition of decision-makers in Turkey. Together with the internal crises of the EU, i.e. the economic crisis related with the debt problem and the rising xenophobia, cultural essentialism and racism displayed by some events like the expulsion of the Roma from France, the burqa ban, and the massacre in Norway, severely impacted on the image and perception of Europe in Turkey. The process of Europeanization that started earlier with the reforms during the late Ottoman and early Republican era, and continued with the relations with the EC took a new turn with the EU membership process. However, the stalling of the negotiations after 2006 and the above-mentioned deterioration in the perception of the EU and Europe led a questioning of Turkey's increasing integration to Europe.

It would, however, be misleading to argue that Turkey's changing foreign policy orientation towards non-European regions and closer relations with Muslim countries mean that Turkey is turning away from Europe. It does not also attest to a 'de-Europeanization of identity'. While Turkey's identity has acquired a more regional quality and aimed to encompass the cultural diversity, historical richness and geopolitical potential of Turkey's identity sources, it continued to adhere to the target of EU membership. Turkey's policies in the international arena, which may be seen as reflections of identity construction, also embodied the values, norms and patterns of Europeanization by adopting a policy of reconciliation with neighbors, opening of borders with a liberal visa policy and basing political relations on economic cooperation and integration. The increasing soft power and model-country image that Turkey has accumulated in recent years especially in its vicinity, is also very much tied to the Europeanization of its identity embodying democratic ideals, peaceful international relations, economic potential with an emphasis on culture and history. It is possible to discern an

Europeanization of identity while at the same time the regional component in identity construction is taking a new turn under the AKP.

The words of Egemen Bağış may be helpful in understanding this seeming dichotomy between an Europeanization of identity which is at the same time becoming regional⁷:

[referring to the 17 December 2004 European Council] Then Turkey had many problems in its democracy, many flaws that it had to overcome. People were afraid of talking in their own language; they could not freely express their opinions. Turkey began to observe the positive effects of the EU in every area of life...While people are being packed into wagons and deported in Europe [referring to the deportation of the Roma in France] Turkey is instigating new openings, coming to a point whereby it is a source of inspiration for others. We made several reforms in education but the EU does not open the the related chapter in negotiations. Why, because the Greek Administration of Cyprus is blocking. That is their concern. The EU is a dietician but its health is not in good shape these days. It cannot follow its own recipe. We are going to implement the recipe and finally full membership will be realized.

This kind of seemingly contradictory development may be peculiar to the case of Turkey. Turkey may be one of few countries⁸ that started an accession process to the EU but was rebuffed by two leading EU States on the basis that it is not European. This denial of Europeanness which may be concomitant to the EU's own identity construction has spurred Turkey to be more active elsewhere. Still, while Turkey may be increasingly critical of the EU, and looking to establish a more active role in regional and global affairs this cannot be interpreted as an end to Europeanization of identity. The recent evolution of identity in the case of Turkey displays signs of Europeanization in the sense of adoption and successful incorporation of values, norms and ways of doing things. At the same time, Turkey may be turning away from Europe as a center of allegiance which could be explained by the exclusionary approach displayed by the EU and the problems that emanated during the accession process. In terms of socio-economic development and modernization Europe continues to pose as the main reference point and the EU membership aim is still on the table as evidenced by the recent establishment of a ministry for EU Affairs.

⁷ Euractiv EU news portal, "Bağış: AB diyetisyen ama sağlığı bozuk", 24.02.2011, <http://www.euractiv.com.tr/3/article/ba-ab-diyetisyen-ama-sal-bozuk-015967>

⁸ The other similar case was that of Britain.