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Strategies of Turkish Political Elites during the Accession Negotiations: Conformity or Deviance?

Abstract:

Adapting Robert K. Merton's typology of deviance to the Europeanization literature in general and in particular to the case of Turkey, I categorize elite behaviour towards Europeanization into four groups: conformist, ritualist, innovator, and retreatist/rebel. In this paper, I primarily focus on the innovator type. Drawing on Merton's idea, I argue that political elites as innovators accept European norms and values, or rather Europeanization, yet they dislike the means, i.e. political conditionality, and in the case of Turkish politicians take issue with the burdensome "open-ended" process of accession negotiations. For this reason, politicians, who are neither Europeanist nor Anti-Europeanist, pursue several strategies during the accession negotiations. Their strategies are: i) placing more emphasis on bilateral relationships with influential member states; ii) developing personal relationships with the leaders of some member states; iii) seeking third party intervention or external pressure on member states; iv) capitalizing on overlapping memberships in third party institutions; v) enhancing the strategic importance of their country in the eyes of Europeans; vi) re-narrating the past and developing different representations of geography in order to change their international image. In this paper, I mainly discuss the last two strategies of innovators. The main unit

of analysis is the speeches given by state elites which include top statesmen such as prime ministers, presidents and foreign ministers.

I.Introduction:

This paper is concerned about the interplay between a candidate state's, namely Turkey's accession process into the EU and Europeanization of its policies in general and its foreign policy in particular. Prior to investigating the strategies of Turkey during the EU accession process we need to ask some logically preceding questions: What makes accession process complicated and puzzling not only for Europeans but also for Turks? How long can negotiations be sustained if Turkish accession to the EU is considered as a cultural, political and economic challenge by many Europeans? Why does Turkey need to pursue different strategies during the accession process? Answers to such questions starts with the conviction that for Europeans, Turkey seems culturally unfit, politically and economically premature and geographically proximate to and/or involved in the conflicts of the Middle East and the Caucasus, all of which render Turkey as an unsuitable candidate for the membership. On the other hand, for Turks, EU membership represents the ultimate destination for their country to arrive at in their journey of modernization since the 19th century reformation. However, Turkey's historical journey to the West abounds with dilemmas of its own such as while Turkey aims at developing institutional, political and material solidarity with the West she also looks for ways to maintain her cultural, religious and ethnic unity with the East and revive her strategic role in the regional politics.

For many Turks, unlike other candidate states, the accession process is of rather a political than a technical matter (Muftuler-Bac 2008). Turkish politicians believe that the accession negotiations are advertently locked in a stalemate by some member states for the purpose of political gains in domestic politics. This very political and asymmetric nature of the accession negotiations consequently renders Turkey's responses to Europeanization more pragmatic and her policies more instrumental. As the political will of both parties is wearing out thinner during the accession process a strategic approach has been taken up by Turkish elites vis-à-vis the EU (Oguzlu and Kibaroglu 2009). Thus, Europeanization of Turkey, particularly in the realm of foreign policy, seems to be

superficial and rhetorical (Ruacan 2008). In this paper, contrary to that argument, I argue that Turkey's adoption of EU norms and values is more than rhetorical, yet being aware of the fact that negotiations are "open-ended" and asymmetrical by nature, Turkish politicians use different strategies to alleviate concerns about the non-technical aspects of the accession process and change the asymmetry in Turkey-EU relations in favour of their interests. Of those strategies, in this paper, I will primarily focus on discursive practices as "narrative reconstruction of Turkey-EU relations".

This paper has two parts. In the first part, drawing on Robert K. Merton's typology of social attitudes in the society I will give a brief outline of different responses to Europeanization by political elites. In the remainder of the paper, I will elaborate on the candidate strategies during the accession process and the responses of Turkish politicians to Europeanization. That part of the paper is mainly devoted to the narratives told by Turkish politicians with regards to the relationship with the West in general and the geopolitical importance of Turkey for the EU in particular.

II. Responses to Europeanization: Typology of Elites

The accession process is not solely a technical-legislative operation described as the adoption of the EU acquis and the harmonization with EU policies and procedures. There is more to Europeanization than top-down legalization and harmonization at the national level. Adoption of the EU acquis, compliance with EU declarations and statements with regards to the common security and defence policy, constitutional changes with regards to civil-military relations can be considered as an instrumental change in legislations and procedures that happens overnight (Wong 2008:324). In addition to this compliance-oriented Europeanization, some scholars put more emphasis on the convergence of norms, beliefs, values about security and defence through mechanisms of learning and norm internalization, which brings about a deeper normative transformation of political elites (Tonra 2000; Checkel 2001; Major 2005:186; Wong 2008:333; Brommenson 2010:228). Normative Europeanization is a much more arduous task than the compliance with the EU policies and legislations.

From a rationalist perspective the main motive behind Europeanization is the political conditionality which is tied to the prospect of membership. Without the sheer

existence of the possibility of full membership, the EU would have almost no influence on candidate states and Europeanization could never be observed thereof. Whereas the main mechanisms of the rationalist approach are political conditionality and cost-benefit calculations of candidate states, according to the social constructivist approach Europeanization may also be the outcome of EU's social influence and its ability to transform candidate states through persuasion and social learning (Schimmelfennig et al. 2003; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005; Diez et al. 2006). Social Constructivists argue that the main motive behind Europeanization is the concerns about identity and the social value of being accepted into a group of which one wants to be a member. Thus, even if the EU membership became less and less attractive for Turkey in terms of her economic gains and security concerns, the recognition of Turkey's Western identity could be the main reason behind the Europeanization of Turkish politics, policy and polity.

As is widely discussed in the literature, Europeanization can cause defensive tendencies at the national level. Claudio Radaelli (2000), for instance, puts forth that inertia and retrenchment are the two likely repercussions of a top-down Europeanization. What distinguishes my viewpoint from Radaelli's argument is that defensive strategies against the EU's influence can be as much proactive as they are reactive. Tanja Börzel (2002) identifies three types of responses of the member states to Europeanization. Börzel in her article addresses the question of how the member states cope with the misfit between domestic structures and EU policies and reduce the costs of European integration. Like the member states candidate states do also face the same predicament of misfit and adaptation costs (Cowles et al. 2001). However, unlike the member states, candidates do not have any accession to the policy-making at the EU level, which puts them in a disadvantageous position vis-à-vis the member states. Thus candidate states lack possible channels of shaping EU policies through uploading their preferences to the EU level decision-making. Having said that even candidate states are not passive complying actors whom the EU can exert an unconditional influence. In fact candidate states, too, resort to several ways of influencing EU policies and decisions so as to smoothen the bumpy road to full membership and taking precautionary measures against the possibility of rejection. Foot-dragging and fence-sitting are named by Tanja Börzel (2002) as the mechanisms used by the member states with reactive attitudes. According

to Börzel (2002:194), member states' opposition to the accession process and further Europeanization is compounded by their lack of capability and economic resources to contribute to the EU policy-making process. Same problems and tendencies can be observed with candidate states, yet their resolutions to the problems emanating from the pressure of the EU vary since the accession negotiations are intrinsically asymmetric. Proactive policies, on the other hand, are more innovative in their nature and encompass extra-procedural tactics and strategies during the accession process. These strategies are extra-procedural in the sense that they exist outside of the realm of EU policy making but they can wield some influence on the EU institutions as well as the member states. It should be noted at this point that these strategies are not inherently informal, unconventional or unofficial. Such strategies can be conducted through official channels in a formal way by applying conventional methods. For a candidate state like Turkey such proactive strategies not only create the context in which negotiations are taking place, but also shape the nature of negotiation process by adding a strategic dimension to the technical aspect of negotiations. These innovative strategies are of importance for Turkish politicians because they need to alleviate the concerns about the possibility of Turkish membership and reduce the political losses in case of non-accession.

Candidate states aim to achieve three things during the accession process. In addition to the efforts to reduce the costs of adopting EU policies and norms, which have been already underlined by Börzel (2002) regarding member state strategies, candidate states like Turkey also aim to transform the domestic concerns about the possibility of non-accession as well as European concerns about the accession of Turkey. Thus, reducing the political costs of alignment with the EU is not the sole objective that candidate states need to fulfil, because the negotiations despite their highly institutionalized and technical aspects are considered as a political process by many Turkish politicians. At the end of the day, the decision to grant full membership to a candidate state rests on the political will of all member states. For this reason, politicians in candidate states employ different strategies to hedge the risk of non-accession and to enhance the possibility of their country's accession by:

- i. Placing more emphasis on bilateral relationships with influential member states (Internal balancing);
- ii. Developing personal relationships with the leaders of member states (Internal Balancing);
- iii. Seeking third party intervention or external pressure on the EU (External balancing);
- iv. Capitalizing on (non-)overlapping memberships in networks of international institutions;
 - a. Destructive (such as NATO-ESDP),
 - b. Constructive (such as the Balkans and Caucasus);
- v. Enhancing the strategic importance of their country in the eyes of Europeans
 - a. Forum/Venue shopping;
 - b. Policy diversification
- vi. Developing new narratives about Turkey's past, her geopolitical location and Turkey's relations with the EU (Narrative reconstruction).

Borrowing from the sociologist Robert K. Merton, I classify elites in accordance with their conformity with the accession process on the one hand and their adoption of EU norms and values. In his typology Merton aims to explain the deviant behaviours of some individuals in the society. He asks two basic questions to classify deviant behaviour: First, does an individual accept the cultural goals set by the society of which s/he is a member? Second, does an individual accept the institutionalized norms and ways to fulfil the goals? I also ask these two questions to identify different responses of elites towards the accession process and Europeanization. Even though Merton associates innovation with deviant behaviour and perceive innovators as criminal minded individuals, in this paper I argue that elites as innovators employ several methods, no matter they are formal or informal, conventional or unconventional, during the accession process. Table 1 illustrates the political differences between elites on the basis of their approach to the EU accession process.

Table 1 Typology of Elite Responses to Europeanization:

Acceptance of means to achieve the goals (EU membership conditionality)	Acceptance of cultural goals (Europeanization/Adoption of EU norms and values)	
	Accept	Reject
	Accept	Conformist (Europeanist)
Reject	Innovator (Multi-dimensionalists)	Retreatist (Nationalist, Eurasianist and Islamic groups)

Source: Adapted from Robert Merton’s typology of modes of individual adaptation (1968:194)

The typology illustrates four types of state elites classified along two criteria. On the one hand, political elites are grouped in accordance with their conformity with cultural goals, i.e. European norms and values. On the other hand, the acceptance of the ways, i.e. European membership conditionality to achieve those cultural goals provides a more comprehensive typology of state elites and their responses to Europeanization. On the one end of the spectrum there is conformists who accept both goals and means whereas on the opposite side, retreats and rebels, as Merton called them, raised objections to both goals and means (Merton 1968:194, 207-210). As much as the former group is Europeanist, the latter is anti-Europeanist. The third group is consisted of ritualists who basically take advantage of EU accession process because the political conditionality provides them a political leverage against other domestic actors in the domain of politics. This group favour the EU accession process as long as they need the EU pressure on other actors. The last group is called innovators by Merton. This group of elites seem to accept cultural goals and EU values but they have an issue with the means to achieve them. Their aim is to work around the EU political conditionality, because they see

political conditionality as a subjective and ambiguous phenomenon and the negotiation process is asymmetric and cumbersome. Therefore, they try to diversify Turkey's foreign policy and build new relations with other countries outside the EU. By this way, they aim to turn their disadvantage in the game of EU accession negotiations into a more favourable position. Their acceptance of EU norms renders them more Europeanized than ritualists, however, their objections to the means lead their quest for new policy outlets that will give them leverage vis-à-vis the EU. In addition to enhancing regional relations with third countries and hedging the risks inherent in the accession process, innovators also reconstruct state identity by challenging the old perceptions about the past and their neighbours. This is why, this group of elites come up with innovative ideas that break through the well-established policies and perceptions on both sides. Those innovative ideas help them navigate through the EU accession negotiations as well as in the domestic political game. This paper stresses the role of innovators and their strategies in the process of Europeanization. The rest of the paper will expound on these two strategies used by innovators.

III. New Narratives about Turkey, the West, and the Rest: The Return to the East or Sailing Eastward to Reach the West?

In this part, I will only elaborate on the sixth strategy mentioned above by analysing the change in discourses of Turkish politicians. I will look into three main narratives to understand the re-conceptualization of Turkey-EU relations by Turkish political elites during the accession process. The first narrative deals with the grave concerns about the West plotting against Turkey. The manifestation of such concerns can be found in the Treaty of Sevres, which, according to some circles of Turkish political elites, is the ultimate perpetual objective of Europeans to achieve after Turkey is weakened by the demands of Europeans. The second narrative is about the Turkish modernization and westernization projects and Turkey's obsession with becoming a modern European state and being accepted as one by Europeans. Lastly, the narrative about how menacing Turkey's neighbourhood is how a problematic geography Turkey finds herself. Prior to

explaining those narratives, I will give a brief theoretical background about the concept of narrative and its role in discursive re-conceptualization of Turkey-EU relations.

It is widely accepted that foreign policy is not about selecting the best policy option from a list of ranked preferences; rather it is more about communicating and interacting with others in order to convey your ideas and persuade other states not to work against your interests and policies. Narratives are one way of conveying your views and selling your policies to others. Narratives¹ are frames used to understand history and tell a story about the past (Bevir 2006:285; Barnett 1999:8). Narratives are a way of telling a story in its very broader literary meaning and a narrator is somebody who tells the story. It is important to analyze how politicians frame the past to gain support for their policies and justify them. Narratives are not necessarily representatives of the truth about the past. They do not correspond to the real experiences of individuals. What narratives actually do is establishing a reasonable link between the past and the present of a collective identity through writing a different plot or life-story (Car 1986:74) so as to “provide an account of where they [nations] have been and where they [nations] should be going” (Barnett 1999:8). In this sense, narratives are full of beliefs, values about the past as well as expectations from the future. Narratives can establish discursive parameters that mould the content of foreign policies into a historically consistent form and eventually render them discursively coherent and politically acceptable at the present. From a constructivist standpoint, there is no one history but there are several histories (Reus-Smit 2008) and hence narratives are the discursive practices to talk about the past. Thereby, interpretations of history, or rather narratives about the past are the primary element of constructivist application of history in IR.

The role of narrative is to put the self in a “temporal background” (Carr 1986:32-33) by re-aligning the past to the present and the future so that the experiences of the self can make sense while defining its present identity (Ricoeur 1984 cited in Browning 2008:48). Identities are not atemporal, in fact they retain a large baggage of past

¹ At this point, it should be noted that any scientific analysis of an historical event is a narrative on its own. Those kinds of narratives can be descriptive as well as explanatory (see Suganami 2008). Explanatory narratives are widely used in process-tracing method to unveil causal mechanisms between effects and causes (see Bates et al.1998 and Büthe 2002). However, in this paper narratives are first and foremost considered as the stories of a past event told by politicians in order to justify their policies by linking them to the past (see Carr 1986 and Bruner 1991).

experiences. However, experiences are not only comprised of what really happened. Rather than actual experiences, remembered experiences do play a crucial role in constructing and re-constructing the self. Therefore, narratives give us the sense of where we stand in the present vis-à-vis the past. This is why, a narrator aims to produce a coherent narrative by emphasizing some historical events while ignoring or dismissing some others (Carr 1986:59). This tendency to produce a coherent narrative does not mean that narrator makes up stories and creates a fictional story. On the contrary, narratives are not necessarily fictional, there can be non-fictional narratives since individuals need narratives about their “life-story,” i.e. things they have done and places they have been so far (Carr 1986:74), in order to create a cognitively ordered temporal background against which her own identity can be constructed (Carr 1986:65). For this reason, forgetting, concealing or renouncing some certain events are an essential element of narratives as much as remembering, disclosing or emphasizing some other events. Such ways of narrating are used frequently by politicians to tell different stories about the past so that they can reconstruct the identity of their state and eventually they will be able to envisage a different future, or rather a different strategy for their country in international politics. Carr asserts that narratives help individuals not to “lose track” of what and why they are doing while they are doing it (1986:87). In similar vein, Turkish politicians, losing track and sight of Turkey’s centuries-old European objective, seek for new narratives that can help them to redefine the original purpose in such a way that what Turkey is doing during the accession process makes sense to them and to the public. Making sense of where Turkey stands in the process and why Turkey is going through such a challenging yet open-ended process is the key for comprehending the reactions and responses of political elites towards Europeanization.

III.I. From Paranoia to Lessons:

History is of great importance in Turkish foreign policymaking, albeit not necessarily in a good way. Robins (2003:93) points out the ideological significance of history for Turkish state, since “history in Turkey is so much more than simply the disparate, collected views of the past. History helps to legitimise the creation and existence of the state; it helps

ideologically to orientate the state; it tells a story which embodies the myths, ideas and values which give meaning to political life within the state.”

The historical legacy of the end of the Ottoman Empire is embodied in the term, *the Sevres-phobia* or *Sevres Syndrome*, which evokes “the conviction that the external world is conspiring to weaken and divide up Turkey” (Kirişçi 1998 quoted in Mufti 1998:42). The fears emanated from Sevr Syndrome have been shaping Turkey’s relations with her neighbours as well as with the Western powers since its foundation. The concept of *Sevres-phobia* has connotations of

fear of Russian expansionism southwards, and frustration at the disappointing consequences of the Turkish expansionism northwards; concern about Armenian territorial ambitions in eastern Anatolia, and Greek territorial ambitions in western Anatolia; dismay at the Arabs for joining the anti-Turkish coalition during World War I; and for Syria’s unsuccessful claim to the province of Hatay as well as Iraq’s successful claim to Mosul; and suspicion that the western powers might at any point be ready to sacrifice Turkish interests in pursuit of their own strategic objectives (Mufti 1998:41).

Those fears have been haunting Turkish politicians and casting doubt about the intentions of the Western states on Turkish land for quite a long time.

Davutoğlu defines the Sevres treaty as the “bottleneck” which the founders of Turkish Republic had to go through. According to Davutoğlu, this bottleneck had happened at one point and had already been overcome and there is no need to live with the paranoia of Sevres, yet no falling into lethargy of defeating the West and forgetting the severe lessons learnt under either (Davutoğlu 2001:61). He continues:

Remembering the Sevres and *knowing* what happened at the time is meaningful, if it enables us to assess with a common sense our weaknesses and mistakes throughout the course of events that culminated in the signature of the Treaty of Sevres; otherwise, if it pacifies us and engenders a sense of mental submissiveness at the psychological level that causes a defensive attitude, it certainly hinders our power and paves the way for new Sevres-like treaties (Davutoğlu 2001:61, my translation and my emphases).

Abdullah Gül, former foreign minister between 2003 and 2007, also stressed the difference between remembering and living with the lessons from the Treaty of Sevres in one of his addresses to the TBMM:

Surely, we have to be poised to act against the secret schemes on the destiny of our country. I’m not implying that we should ignore such schemes; but I would like to

underline that it is unfair for Turkey as a great country to be forced to live with a syndrome like that (Gül TBMM Tutanak Dergisi Vol.105 Session.38 2005:37).

The Treaty of Sevres has long been viewed by many Turks as the ultimate epitome of the Western countries true intentions about Turkey. One of my interviewees objected to the conceptualization of Sevres as paranoia or syndrome for that Sevres was a reality rather than paranoia permeated into Turkish strategic mentality.² He also noted that when someone reads the minutes of the Treaty of Lausanne the traces of the Sevres mentality can virtually be found in every remarks and interventions made by the Western delegates. One can conclude that Sevres is seen by Turkish elite as a historical fact not because it was actually signed between the Ottoman Empire and the Allied powers rather because it is generally considered as the utmost codified text of Western plans on Turkey that resonates with the Eastern Question of the 19th century. The diplomats I interviewed have a common conviction that Sevres and Lausanne are two sides of the coin; however, they added that one should draw lessons from Sevres but never let the past determine today's foreign policy.³ All of the diplomats I had an interview with underlined that the influence of Sevres in today's foreign policy is minimum, if not nil.

Nonetheless, the Sevres Syndrome is still alive even though its influence is lingering. One CHP deputy highlighted that Turkey has to be vigilant about any initiatives that is against the letter and spirit of the Treaty of Lausanne since Lausanne is the only treaty that remains valid despite the fact that other war ending treaties such as the Treaty of Versailles had never been entirely implemented and had to be abolished by the Second World War.⁴ On the other hand, a few interviewees stressed that the Sevres Syndrome is either an emotional reaction that hinders the development of a Turkish foreign policy that is cognizant of today's realities rather than being obsessed with the past;⁵ or it is a political concept commonly used and continuously reproduced in domestic politics by elites to accuse each other of either pursuing allegedly submissive and naïve policies towards the West or securitizing and de-politicizing foreign policy issues in order

² Interview with Ercan Çitlioğlu, İstanbul, 14.03.2011.

³ Interviews with a senior official at Secretariat General for EU Affairs, Ankara, 11.05.2010, and a senior official at the Turkish Embassy in Belgium, Brussels, 13.09.2010.

⁴ Interview with CHP deputy Oğuz Oyan, Ankara, 20.04.2010.

⁵ Interview with independent deputy Hüseyin Pazarcı, Ankara, 16.04.2010.

to silence the opposition.⁶ For some others, Turkey is more self-confident than ever enough to overcome such fears and do not let unpleasant memories to distort Turkey's renewed international image.⁷

All in all, the Sevres syndrome is a reification of not only the fears, suspicion and dislike about the Western great powers but also the sense of inferiority, defeat, and submissiveness vis-à-vis Western superiority and success. As put by one of the interviewees, Turkish political culture has long been oscillating between two extreme types of Occidentalism: Euro-scepticism and pro-Europeanism.⁸ The roots of Turkish Occidentalism can be found in the dichotomy of admiration and loathing of everything about the West since the initiation of the Tanzimat reforms as well as within the trauma occurred in elites' psyche due to the protracted collapse of the Ottoman Empire that lasted more than a century. The more lengthy the collapse the deeper and wider those fears ingrained into the strategic thinking.⁹

III.II. From National Ambivalence and Obsession to National Ambition and Opportunities:

İsmail Cem, as a political thinker, in his book about Turkey and relations with the EU dismisses the mistrust for the West and criticizes the prevalent paranoia among Turkish politicians about great powers' true intentions. He, then, asserts that the main problem is the conflict of interests between Turkey and the West rather than the past experiences, and thus the relations with the West must rely on mutual interests rather than paranoia about or obsession with the West (Cem 2009:76-77). Cem underscores the importance of the concept of the West for Turkey but dismisses the obsession with the West and criticizes submissive mentality exists in some circles of Turkish elites.

Cem points out the lack of emphasis on history in Turkey's traditional foreign policy. He was concerned about pursuing a foreign policy "that was alienated from its own roots, cut off from its own assets, indeed divorced from the very elements that could

⁶ Interviews with retired ambassador Yalım Eralp, İstanbul, 15.03.2011, and an AKP deputy Suat Kınıklioğlu, Ankara, 06.05.2010.

⁷ Interviews with AKP deputies Ruhi Açıkgöz, Ankara, 15.04.2010, Mehmet Sayım Tekelioğlu, Ankara, 16.04.2010, Nursuna Memecan, Ankara, 04.05.2010.

⁸ Interview with Çiğdem Tunç, an expert at The Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB), Ankara, 07.05.2010.

⁹ Interview with a senior official at the Secretariat General for EU affairs, Ankara, 11.05.2010.

nourish and sustain it. In this foreign policy's perception of the world and of itself, history was non-existent. It was as if the historical experiences of centuries, as well as, their civilizational assets and relationships, had never existed" (Cem 2001:3). He believes that history has a significant impact on Turkish foreign policy (Cem 2001:5). For Cem, Turkey being in denial of its history is not able to adapt to the new circumstances in the post-Cold War. He raised this issue of being in denial of the Ottoman legacy on several occasions. In his address to the TBMM, Cem stated that: "We, as Turkey, are about to witness a new era of progress in Turkish foreign policy as long as we are able to embrace ourselves, our history, our personality, and our identity" (TBMM Tutanak Dergisi Vol.40, Session.32, 1997:90).

In an interview given in 1997, İsmail Cem, the then foreign minister of Turkey, underlined the undeniable link between the history of Turkey and the history of its vicinity. When answering a question as to how Turkey could develop cooperation with her neighbours Cem stressed the role of historical and geographical ties:

Turkey will, of course, pay special attention to her relations with the peoples with whom she lived through history together. [...] What shouldn't be done is to regard our historical and geostrategic environment with disdain, even if we are having troubles with some of the countries in our historical and geostrategic environment. Historical and strategic context, nonetheless, provides chances and opportunities for us too. What must be done is to pave the way for better relations with the countries in our vicinity by capitalizing on those opportunities presented to us by history and geostrategy (Cem 2009:20).

According to Cem, throughout the Cold War, Turkey's traditional foreign policy decried its history and squeezed itself into a-historical container made of Cold War concerns at the international and regional levels (Cem 2001:3). By defining Turkey's traditional foreign policy with references to its Cold War experiences Cem not only defied traditional state elite's negligence of Turkey's historical geography, but also constructed his own narrative about Turkey's historical geography. By this way, narrators like Cem, draws a line between his narrative and the traditional narrative to achieve first and foremost a coherent narrative of their own and ultimately a narrative that is meaningful with other narratives and also compatible with the present and appropriate for the future expectations and purposes. In this sense, by emphasizing the Ottoman legacy and the common history between Turkey and her neighbours Cem condemned the cynical

view about the Arabs and Islamic world and renounces negative policies of traditional state elite towards Turkey's Arab neighbours. Cem harshly criticizes the dichotomous understandings persistent in traditional foreign policy which as a result juxtapose Islam against secularism, and the East against West. These dichotomies are so wrong and misleading that they not only create fault-lines in Turkey's domestic politics but also hinder her foreign policy initiatives at the regional level since for Cem foreign policy-making must be done in grey zones (Cem 2001:15).

For far too long, Turkey's own views and understandings of herself have misled the West in its assessments. We've become a country that deifies the West and thus becomes neurotic about it. Here, the psychological dimension is particularly relevant: 'The West is superior to us,' 'The West is better than we are,' 'We're no good,' etc. Turkey conditioned herself to believe this nonsense. At the same time, and again for far too long, Turkey has segregated her present from the past (Cem 2001: 27).

In Cem words, a foreign policy trapped into an 'either-or' issue could not cope with contemporary realities of the world politics; therefore, the 'either-or' fallacy should be replaced by a 'both-and' perspective (Cem 2001:19-20).

Ismail Cem put forth three principles should Turkey-EU relations rest on: First of all, for Cem the EU integration is a process; therefore, consistent steps should be taken within the continuity of the process. Secondly, the real issue for both the EU and Turkey is to be able to demonstrate good/true intentions. Lastly, at every stage of the relationship, both the EU and Turkey should appear determined and resolved to do whatever necessary to make Turkey a full member (Cem 2009:285). Cem underlined that Turkey-EU relations should be based on healthy mutual trust rather than a love and hate relationship. In his words, "Without turning it into an obsession, Turkey will continue to do all the work necessary for accession to EU membership, while projecting its political and economic dynamism to other regions of the world"(Cem 1997:3). According to Cem, this is the only way Turkey can pave the way for the accession to the EU.

İsmail Cem is not alone in criticizing the traditional political elite and their love and hate relationship with the West. Ahmet Davutoğlu, the incumbent foreign minister since 2009, condemns the traditional policies which have halted back Turkey from developing her relations with her environs. Davutoğlu describes those elites as risk-

averse, short-sighted individuals suffering an identity crisis, for whom the history is full of bad lessons rather positive memories, and the geography is a valuable resource/asset as long as one can benefit it in the game of great powers (Davutoğlu 2001:34). In his well-known book called “Strategic Depth”, he gives details of his own perception of Turkey-EU relations. The following quotes from his book shed light on his attempts to re-conceptualize the relations:

Turkey needs to craft a new strategic position for herself in her relations with the EU, which is not devoid of an Asian vision. Otherwise, Turkey neither can be a respectable country with her historical and geographical depth in the eyes of Europeans nor can Turkey be a country in Asia, whose words are taken seriously by Asian countries (Davutoğlu 2001:522-523).

Davutoğlu continues

Unless Turkey redefines her place within the continental Europe on a rational basis that embraces her historical and geographical features, she cannot maintain neither her relations with the EU nor her general foreign policy principles on a sound basis (Davutoğlu 2001:539).

Turkey should not only get rid of her [mis-]perception of Europe as the centre of civilization to which she can anchor herself by all means even at the expense of her very own geo-cultural depth in order to survive domestic controversies and challenges, but also she should overcome the recurring defensive reflex about the image of Europe who intends to partition Turkey” (Davutoğlu 2001:547).

By criticizing the Kemalist ideology for being inefficient and failed to seize the opportunities due to its paranoid cautiousness, Davutoğlu envisages active engagement with all regions, establishment of good neighbourly relations, pursuit of multi-dimensional foreign policy based on commercial, political and cultural relations with the states all around the world. In Davutoğlu’s doctrine the historical legacy of the Ottoman Empire is a “strategic fortune” and Turkey’s geography is her “strategic richness”. Even though Davutoğlu puts emphasis on the historical and geographical richness of a country, history and geography are taken by him as constant variables which have to be used wisely and strategically in the making of foreign policy and defence strategy (Davutoğlu 2001: 38). Thereby, Davutoğlu thinks that Turkey, in the new century, should embrace its centuries old history and its extended environment where Turks and other nations and communities lived side by side. According to Davutoğlu (2001:47), ideological

preferences and geopolitical concerns of the Cold war era ruled out the strategic and dynamic use of Turkey's historical legacy and geographical richness vis-à-vis the EU accession process. For Turkish politicians, Turkey's EU membership is the first step on the road to East-West reconciliation in the 21st century. The following quotes from the four ministers of foreign affairs served between 1997 and 2009 EU-Turkey relations are elevated to a higher civilizational level. In this sense, EU-Turkey relations is no longer about Turkey aspiring to become part of the European civilization; now it has connotations of a historical responsibility and a missionary mentality whose ultimate purpose is to reconcile the West and the East.

[I]f Turkey is to be part of the European Union and be respected in her relations with Europe, it won't be because Turkey, for example, 'resembles the Belgians' or has 'become Italian'. Quite the contrary, Turkey's membership should be desirable for the EU precisely because she has identity and historical/cultural dimensions that are different from those Western Europe, and, because these differences can bring additional dynamism to Europe and make it easier for Europe to further broaden its horizons and range of experiences (Cem 2001:31).

EU-Turkey relations is a significant test not only for the future of interactions between different civilizations, but also for the EU's renowned pluralistic character, and for Turkey's ability to utilize and capitalize on her immense civilizational experience (Davutoğlu 2001:543-544).

Turkey's EU membership is not only a technical step, neither for EU, nor for Turkey. In fact, Turkey's mission is greater than itself. My Government is eager to prove that a Muslim society can be democratic, open, transparent, pluralistic and modern, while preserving its identity. In turn, Europe will have to prove that it is ready to admit a democratic Muslim society and that it will not fall to cultural introversion. And together we will prove that a clash of civilizations is not inevitable (Gul 2003:2).

The EU is probably the most important peace project of the 20th century after the Second World War. It started out with 6 members cooperating in steel and coal and has enlarged to 27 members. And now Turkish membership is going to be a very big event, probably one of the most important events of the 21th century. Turkey's membership will be a new peace project in a way (Babacan 2008).

The river of history may fail to find its course. Europe may make an incorrect decision and, instead of facilitating a fruitful intercourse with the rising powers of Asia, the end result may be detrimental. I think the role Turkey will play is decisive at this stage. Turkey is in a central position to guarantee that the river of

history finds its correct course. I always say Turkey is the litmus test of globalization. Our success by means of the east-west, north-south relationship and by means of socio-cultural and economic crises will provide for the success of globalization. Our failure will drag globalization into a fault zone that may trigger a deep clash (Davutoğlu 2010).

Nonetheless, any strategic use of history and geography is in itself a different kind of discursive practice that includes new narratives and new interpretations of geography and its role in foreign policy. It is noteworthy that regardless of being strategic and dynamic first and foremost every reference to the history and geography in foreign policy is on its own a discursive practice and unveils political orientation of the narrators.

III.III. From geopolitical liabilities to geo-historical/cultural assets:

The traditional conceptualization of geopolitics attributes a determining role to the environment and the geostrategic location of a country while explaining its foreign policy. In other words, geopolitics is considered as the key conceptual tool for designing defence and security strategy since geography is apparently one of the most acknowledged, visible, stable and easy-to-grasped factor that needs to be incorporated into the strategic calculations of state elites. The theories of geopolitics has enjoyed a reputation for being scientific, objective and a-political owing to its emphasis on the enduring advantages and disadvantages of the natural world that are bestowed upon a country by its geography. Of these advantages and disadvantages the natural resources and human resources (population) that belong to the state, the geographical features and complexities of the country that is under the jurisprudence of the state, such as being surrounded by many neighbours, being located in a naturally unfortified and difficult to defend land are believed to be the most important factors that guide foreign policy. Geopolitics has been described as “the domain of hard truths, material realities and irrepressible natural facts” (O’Tuathail and Agnew 1992:192). For geopolitical thinkers, these are vital possessions of a country which can be blessing or curse depending on the strategic ability of state elites to protect them against external threats and use them for their country’s advantage in the international arena.

O'Tuathail and Agnew criticize such apolitical and static notion of geopolitics and hence they posit that geopolitics is "a discursive practice by which intellectuals of statecraft 'spatialize' international politics in such a way as to represent it as a 'world' characterized by particular types of places, peoples and dramas" (1992:192). O'Tuathail and Agnew (1992:191) argue that traditional understanding of geography is anti-geographical because it is one dimensional as it disregards the cultural and historical dynamics that render geography a fluid, flexible and an organic phenomenon.

The oft-cited belief that Turkey is surrounded by enemies and threats and Turkey is neighbouring with several countries that overtly or covertly display hostility towards Turkey has long been the very simple but formidable story told by Turkish politicians about Turkey's neighbourhood. Yet, these convictions can be traced back to the rise of geopolitics and geopolitical thinking during the Cold War (Bilgin 2007:742). The menacing Soviet demands on Turkish soil and Turkish straits at the very early years of the Cold War urged the Turks to re-design their defence strategy in accordance with the realities of the bipolar world. In addition to the Soviet threat, Turkish policy-makers were highly concerned not only about the number of their neighbours but also about their political regime such as Bulgaria, Greece and Syria. Policymakers used to justify their defence spending on the basis that Turkey resembles an inland country surrounded by several unfriendly countries.

Ottoman geography has long been disregarded as an alien territory and was generally described by the traditional elites as a swamp where only bad can come to Turkey. Hence, Turkey should never be part of that geography, let alone show any interest in the region. İsmail Cem objected this traditional view about the Middle East in particular and Islamic societies in general.

It was a foreign policy that turned its back on centuries of experience, a foreign policy that stubbornly persisted in regarding itself as an alien in its own historical context. This mindset manifested itself in many ways. For example, the attitude of 'Oh let's do keep out of Arab affairs,' every time someone uttered the phrase Middle East; together with fond hopes that the more Turkey distanced herself from Islamic societies or alienated herself from her own past, the more the West will 'like' her (Cem 2001:4).

The indifference of Turkey to its environs during the Cold War and its heavy-handed security-first policies in the 1990s does not mean that Turkey never got involved in the regional politics. It did involve but without making any effort to empathize and sympathize with the region. Turkish politicians were aware of the fact that they had Middle Eastern neighbours but they were not locating Turkey in the Middle East. Politically as well as mentally, Turkey was distant from its environs. This is why, Turkey had been seen as a Western satellite in the Middle East or a “frontier outpost” of the West throughout the Cold War (Cem 2001:32), whereas in the post-Cold war era Turkey adopted a bridge metaphor that corresponds to her role as connecting to three continents and several countries not only geographically but also in terms of economic transactions and political interactions (see Yanık 2009).

Davutoğlu goes beyond renouncing traditional (mis)-perceptions about Turkey’s environs and formulates a new geostrategy through the re-conceptualization of geopolitical thinking. For Davutoğlu (2001:117), the old conceptualization of geopolitics is ill-suited for comprehending new circumstances Turkey is facing at regional and international level. At the regional level there are geopolitical vacuums produced in the aftermath of the Cold War, while at the international level there is the quest for a new political order as well as the economic competition among various states. Insofar as Turkey’s geopolitical location had become a crucial asset for Turkey’s international role in the post-Cold War, Turkish politicians aimed to design their very own policies and strategies clustering around the new perception of its geostrategic importance. AKP deputy Mehmet Dülger mentioned this point in his address to the TBMM: “Turkey, within the new world order, will hardly seize its place on the basis of its geopolitical location but on its own capabilities to design new policies” (TBMM Tutanak Dergisi Vol.10 Session. 56. 2003:15). Thus, the importance of Turkey rests on what she does rather than where she is located.

In Davutoğlu’s conceptualization, Turkey’s geopolitical location is conceived as an asset that Turkey needs to benefit from in order to enhance its activism at the regional level and consolidate its place at the international level. In other words, Turkey’s geopolitical location must be turned into a dynamic factor that guides Turkish international role rather than a means at great powers’ disposal. Davutoğlu’s geopolitical thinking stresses the fact that artificial differences between boundaries of contemporary states and their centuries old geopolitical frontiers is the main dynamic within regional

geopolitics (Davutoğlu 2001:19). Davutoğlu, looking from the lenses of theories of geopolitics, draws the blueprints of new foreign policy. Insofar as Davutoğlu is a theoretician of geopolitics the main pillars of his geopolitics rests on the boundary-frontier (*sinir-hat*) contradiction (Davutoğlu 2001:19).

The long-established idea of defending Turkey within its own territory along its borders apparently dates back to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire which was retreating from its imperial geography spanning the Balkans, North Africa, the Caucasus, and the Middle East into Anatolian peninsula where it was born. According to Davutoğlu, the repercussions of this retreat can be found in Turkish strategic culture as the adoption of a static defensive attitude which rests on a flawed strategy oscillating between two extreme ideas: ‘absolute sovereignty’ or ‘total withdrawal’ (Davutoğlu 2001: 52-53). Davutoğlu further explains what should have been done instead of opting for one of these choices:

The territories over which [Ottoman] sovereignty was forfeited were also abandoned immediately in a hurry to defend the rest within new borders. This [total withdrawal] hindered the development of auxiliary tactical formulas such as creating spheres of influence within the territories that were in-between absolute sovereignty and total withdrawal, defending the borders through trans-boundary diplomatic initiatives, forming coalitions around its own strategy, leaving behind collaborators in the lost territories, and exploiting the conflict of interests among great powers in order to gain more room for tactical manoeuvres (Davutoğlu 2001:53, my translation).

Thereby, Davutoğlu (2001:41) asserts that Turkey, who was founded on the historical and geopolitical terrain of the Ottoman Empire and inherited the Ottoman legacy, should not adopt a defence strategy that is confined to the defence of her national boundaries. The defence of national boundaries should begin at their geopolitical and geocultural frontiers not at national borders. In his own words, “The defence of Eastern Thrace and Istanbul begins at the Adriatic Sea and Sarajevo, the defence of Eastern Anatolia and Erzurum begins at North Caucasus and Grozny” (Davutoğlu 2001:56).

At the end of the 20th century Turkey had to face with the implications geopolitical and geocultural legacy of the Ottoman Empire. As Davutoğlu makes it clear, the main problem is the missing overlap between political boundaries and historical, cultural and economic frontiers. He suggests that Turkey should transcend her boundaries

and establish spheres of influence along its historical, cultural and economic frontiers. The implications of this re-discovery of the past and renewed understanding of geography are twofold. Firstly, the concepts of friend and foe are re-defined in accordance with the new historical representations and geographical imaginaries. For instance, in his one of the addresses to the TBMM, Davutoğlu coined a new concept and defined communities in Turkey's vicinity as Turkey's *tarihdaş*, with whom Turks lived through the history together and shared common experiences. The paragraph where Davutoğlu mentions the term reads as follows:

All these lands, all these regions are our *tarihdaş*. As the state of Turkish republic we are obliged to protect the rights of our citizens, as a nation preserving the past ties with our *tarihdaş* is our historical mission. In this context, regardless of their ethnic and sectarian origins, we are determined to embrace all of our *tarihdaş* and eliminate all the existing barriers between us and our *tarihdaş*; this is why, we are pursuing region-wide policies; this is why, we are establishing trilateral and multilateral mechanisms; and this is why, we are in pursuit of new initiatives within our bilateral relations (TBMM Tutanak Dergisi Vol.87, Session.37, 2011:58, my emphasis).

This quote, in my opinion, captures the essence of Davutoğlu's purpose to substantiate geography with the history. *Tarih* means history in Turkish and the suffix –*daş* is similar to the prefix *co-* in English implying partnership, togetherness and association. Thus, *tarihdaş* refers to the idea of living together throughout the history. Furthermore, the concept implies a historical friendship between Turkey and its environs or at least being associated in one way or another at one point in the past. Davutoğlu not only digs up history deep to discover old friendships but also re-interprets the history by emphasizing commonalities rather divergences between Turkey and her neighbours. Coining new concepts, albeit ambiguous, helps him to challenge the old concepts of traditional strategic culture and ultimately consolidate his discourse as these new concepts become wide-spread in elites discourse. Such concepts give elites a discursive leverage in their struggle to gain the upper-hand vis-à-vis other contending discourses. Hence, looking at the neighbourhood through a historical prism Davutoğlu aims to adapt Turkish strategic culture to the new circumstances in the regional and international level.

Given these quotes, one can argue that geopolitics as an offshoot of hard power politics, that is geographical realities determine whether state's behaviour should be defensive or offensive, has been replaced by a non-aggressive and amalgamating notion of new geopolitical thinking. In this geopolitical thinking Turkey aims to solve prolonged problems with its neighbours. This new thinking is formulated by Davutoğlu as a "zero problem policy with neighbours." In line with this policy, Davutoğlu searches for new connections between Turkey and her environs in order to denounce the misperceptions originated from Turkey's traditional strategic culture and consolidate the emerging strategic culture. The denunciation of previous conceptions of neighbours as threats and foes is one of the ways to transform the friend/foe dilemma. In order for geographical realities to coalesce with the cultural and historical legacies, transforming friend/foe dilemma is perceived as the only way to go beyond the national boundaries.

Nevertheless, Davutoğlu's zero problem policy has been subjected to serious academic and political criticisms. For instance, CHP deputy Onur Öymen and MHP deputy Ahmet Deniz Bölükbaşı criticized AKP's policies for being submissive to the American interests and giving unnecessary one-sided concessions to solve problems. Öymen argues that one should not expect to solve problems by giving one-sided concessions (TBMM Tutanak Dergisi Vol. 70 Session.34 2004:21); while Bölükbaşı describes AKP's zero problem policy as naïve and against the interests of Turkey (TBMM Tutanak Dergisi Vol.36 Session.35 2008:82). On the other hand, AKP's defence for zero problem policy is constructed along the line that it is not about choosing one policy over another; it is about choosing AKP's zero problem policy over conflict-driven and isolationist policy of traditional state elites. This is a case in point as to how discursive practices such as narratives are not only contested but also are tempted to be hegemonic in order to usurp other narratives.

Conclusion:

Turkey aims to harness her cultural and historical ties to her benefit in her relations with the EU, whereas her relations with the EU give her a comparative advantage and a justification for her active multi-dimensional foreign policy. Turkish politicians claims that in order to deepen Turkey's relations with the EU, by which they mean being

accepted as a full member, Turkey has to widen her relations with third countries. Nonetheless, the dilemma between deepening and widening is that diversifying her relations might distance Turkey from the EU contrary to the conviction that it will ease the problems between Turkey and the EU. Turkish politicians champion the idea that Europe engaging with the East does not necessarily lead to Europe becoming less European, yet in order to engage with the East, Europe has to get rid of its anti-eastern rhetoric and its overlooking attitude towards the East. And Turkey-EU relations can set a good example if the relationship is developed and culminated in the inclusion of Turkey to the EU. This way, Turkey would be a model of how a Muslim country should interact with Europeans and how the EU should treat a Muslim country on equal basis. In this regard, Turkey's accession process is perceived as laden with a historical responsibility that rests on the shoulders of both parties. However, the problem is that those strategic responses to the EU and the conceptualizations of relations along the civilizational lines are of secondary value vis-à-vis the adoption of fundamental values of the EU (see Schimmelfennig 2009).

My concern in this paper was to explore and categorize the responses of Turkish political elite to Europeanization process along two lines, i.e. their attitude towards the nature of accession process and their attitude towards the European values, norms and ideas, and then listed various strategies of political elites. In the second part of the paper, I have explored the discursive practices/strategies employed in details so as to understand the re-conceptualization of Turkey-EU relations with regards to changing narratives about the West, East and Turkey's past. My aim was not to judge the success or failure of those strategies during the accession process or give an answer to whether the choices in international politics were strategically wise.

In conclusion, this paper has shed light on some of the discursive practices and contradictions in Turkey-EU relations. It is reasonable to argue that there is a change in narrative about the West, the narrative about the Treaty of Sevres, and the narrative about Turkey's problematic geography and her geopolitical exceptionalism. As Ibrahim Kalin (2009), one of the advisors to the Prime Minister, puts it "As a state, we[Turks] feel that we have a story, something to offer the region at a time when the West is confused about Iraq, Afghanistan, the Middle East, the Caucasus." Of course, Turkish politicians have

also a story about the West to tell their Eastern counterparts. One thing is for sure that in moments of flux in world politics, there certainly exists some opportunities to narrate new stories about international politics. In my opinion, what makes Turkey important and influential in the region and for the EU is not her model of democracy, politics, and economy. Rather, under the circumstances of necessity for new narratives about international politics, it is her mastery to tell her story to the West and the East in such a way that both will relate themselves with it and act upon it accordingly.

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