

## **Identity Construction of Europe by Othering: A Case Study of Turkey and the EU Relations from a Cultural Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

This paper aims to emphasize the “othering” concept as the constructing element of the identity and to show the transformability of the identity and othering concepts on the basis of European identity. The other is created by the self to help and strengthen the construction and acceptance of the new identity of the self. Therefore, both the self and the other are abstract concepts of construct, and are open to change. The paper will focus on the EU-Turkey relations as a case study to show that the European identity and its definition of its other have changed throughout time depending on the historical framework of the world. Most of the time, ideology, power structures and religion are influential on these changes. The constructed European identity will either create a multicultural and open society to be all-encompassing, or a culturally homogeneous society trying to assimilate its minorities and exclude Turkey.

### **Introduction**

This paper aims to find an answer to the question of whether “the other” is a constant, invariable concept or could be constructed and changed according to conjunctures and contexts. While exploring the answer to this question, a case study is preferred to make the theoretical discussion more comprehensible. Thus, the European Union (EU) and Turkey are chosen for analysis. The reasons for choosing the cases are upon the historical claim of the otherness of the Turk to Europe and currently the long duration of candidature of Turkey to the Union, in which the discussion starts to turn towards the cultural compatibility of Turkey to Europe. Turkey has had a Western orientation from the start of the Republic in 1923, and has also had the longest candidature time, but the membership does not realize although countries in similar economic and political situations have achieved membership in a much shorter time, like Bulgaria and Romania. This situation raises the question of the reasons for the unreachable membership for Turkey, and the reasons are sought mainly in the cultural area.

The cultural approach claims that it is not only *raison d'état* that determines the relations of states, but also the logic of the culture is influential. In Turkey and the EU relations, the logic of culture is to be determinate on Turkey's membership. Within this cultural approach, exploring the European identity and the meaning of Turkey and Turk with regards to the European identity are important for exploring the meaning and function of othering. Therefore, this paper will try to explore the European identity, and Turkey and the EU relations in light of cultural approach, trying to give the insights into the views that support multicultural or culturally open and culturally secluded European identity.

The argument of this paper is that, identity is a changing concept. The European identity is not a fixed one, rather it has been subjected to changes through history and is still being discussed and re-shaped, and will be done so within time. As well as the identity, "the other" is open to transformation as the two concepts are interrelated. "The other" is created by the self to help and strengthen the construction and acceptance of the new identity of the self. Therefore, both the self and "the other" are abstract concepts of construct, and are open to change. Islam was "the other" of Europe in medieval times, but after the Reformation it has changed, and today religion is again the debate in Europe, whether it determines the identity and "the other" or not. In this sense, Turkey's otherness to European identity can only be solved after the designation of European identity itself, and it is not a fact to be discovered but an unclear concept to be constructed. This research hopes to contribute to the academia by figuring out the changing positioning of the Turk in relation to Europe, and also seeks the attention of non-academic readers who are interested in a deeper understanding of the discussions of Turkey's Europeanness.

To explain this argument, the paper first gives a theoretical discussion on the concepts of European identity and othering with conceptualizing and operationalizing of these concepts. Afterwards, a brief historical background of Turkey-EU relations from a cultural perspective will be presented. Then in the last section, Turkey's Europeanness will be explored from the arguments of both sides as a case study. In this section, the paper will mention the changing meaning of 'Turk' for Europe and the changing identity of Europe itself. In the end, the paper will aim to show the malleable character of both identity and otherness, and the necessity of a multicultural Europe to sustain the real ideals of

the European integration project. While doing these, identity and otherness will be examined in a constructivist manner, with the methods of process tracing, context analysis and discourse analysis, and the help of political history from Medieval to postmodern times. Exploring the meaning of Europe and its other throughout history, clearly illustrates the transformation of these concepts depending on contexts, which will be explored in detail in the second section of the article.

### **European Identity and Othering**

In this section, first the Europeanness concept will be operationalized through a cultural approach; then “other” and othering will be conceptualized and operationalized and the historical evolution of the European identity will be examined in relation with its “others” along with the theoretical framework of the paper. Besides explaining the transformability and relativity of the “other” concept, the dangers of othering are also touched upon. Moreover, while operationalizing Europeanness, the role of religion is also to be discussed- something which would reach either multiculturalism or homogeneity through assimilation.

According to the supporters of Turkey’s otherness to Europe in terms of cultural theory, such as Welsh and Neumann, relations of the European states do not work solely on the basis of reason d’état, but they also work with the reason for culture. They form an international society<sup>37</sup> that has cultural relations and collective identity, which contains a group consciousness of “us” and building this concept on the “othering” of another group. However, othering is a reductionist approach; it downplays multiculturalism<sup>38</sup>, and multiple-identity of the counterpart, reducing it to a single identity. Moreover, this approach also ignores the multiculturalism within itself, treating “us” as a homogeneous concept and turning a blind eye to different identities in the community. In turn, it brings assimilation and stereotyping with it, which are very dangerous processes as they have no tolerance against differences. As a result, it will create conflicts and hatred towards different groups. Ethnic conflicts, which are the main problem of today’s world, arise because of

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<sup>37</sup> According to Hedley Bull (2000, 36), state behavior is influenced by common rules and institutions, common interests, norms and values, and sense of belonging to a society.

<sup>38</sup> According to Tim Dean, multiculturalism is the belief that one can carry more than one identity (Dean 1997, 915).

the inability to build a multicultural society but instead trying to pursue policies with the assumption of stereotypic and homogenous societies.

“The other” is an artificial concept, constructed by the self, and both the self and “the other” are subject to change through time (Hall 2001, 175). Othering in the name of identity construction is a very dangerous concept either externally or internally done. It is the easiest process of constructing identity; however it is exclusionary and carries huge negative potentials within it. The Nazi policies were the most evident form of othering, and they caused the most tragic event of 20<sup>th</sup> century against Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals and all groups that were left out of the stereotypic community (Hall 2001, 105).

Moreover, othering contains a hierarchical view; the self is perceived as superior to “the other”, which is contradictory of the equality norm of ethics, international relations and the European Union. These hierarchical comparisons are based not upon facts but on cultural perceptions which are constructed by othering. An example of the European point of view can be that ‘Europe is more supreme than Turkey in cultural or civilizational terms’. For Turkey, this supremacy was relevant against Middle Eastern and Balkan countries during its past (Aydin 2004, 12).

Another point is that, “the other” concept has relativity and transformability through time and historical frameworks. “The other” is defined according to the identity definition of the era. For example, “the other” was the Communist world and totalitarian regimes during the Cold War, where the self represented democratic and capitalist states (Haldrup, Koefoed, and Simonsen, 2006, 174). However, Eastern Europe, “the other” of Cold War era, became Europe itself after the change of political systems. “The other” is a concept to be abused in order to create a collectivity and solidarity in the self, regardless of how real and deep the differences are, because the differences are indeed abstract things of construct. The best example for the possibility of change in the logic of culture is European integration itself. “The other” is used in creating the new European identities (Hall 2001, 104). The two World Wars started in Europe, and the hostility between Germany and France was so intense that no one could imagine in the beginning of twentieth century that the two powers would build the European Union half a century later. The changing of cultural identifications, cultural codes and identities is possible, through the change of cultural policies and practices (Sjursen

2002, 508). The EU creates a new collective culture and identity, and shapes it. It decides what will be included in the European identity. The concept is shaped and can be changed through the acts of institutions, regimes and daily practices (Hall 2001, 175).

The operationalization of the term Europeanness can be done through structural or behavioral approaches (Redmond 2007, 313). With the structural approach, the term shall represent geographical belonging where any country having some parts of its territory in the European continent is European. However, Redmond challenges the concept as mentioning that the borders are human invented and represents controversial abstract lines, therefore the argument is not reliable. Laciner similarly argues that the European continent as we call it today is indeed not a separate continent, but a peninsula of Asia, just like India or the Arabian peninsulas (Laciner, Ozcan, and Bal, 2004, 9). Therefore a geographical distinction is difficult to make in defining European identity. The other approach, behavioralism, brings 'the way of life' concept forward. The behaviorist concept rests on the cultural dimension of European identity and is more problematic.

There are some common elements that can be talked about as European identity, mainly through the European project. The emergence of the European Union is in order to stop the inter-European conflicts and to bring Europe peace. It aims to create a peaceful coexistence and a common identity that is all encompassing, rather than exclusionary. The ideas that European integration was built on was composed of a European identity that consists of a common culture, common values, common tradition and a common understanding in world polity. The European integration project was a political engineering project to build a non-nationalistic society, which does not mean to erase the national solidarity, but was against the nationalism of the World War 2 era. It also included a democratic, liberal and open society, beyond all types of totalitarianism. Economically, a new justice which is a combination of free market and social welfare is a common feature of Europe, although the social welfare systems differ among European states. Last but not least, religious freedom which comes out from the Reformation period is one of the most important markers of European identity. All these tenets are what European identity is built on, effected from the long conflicts in centuries, and were subjected to transformation.

On the other hand, focusing on the similarities of the European nations and taking them as a united, single actor throughout history, as if they have always been in harmony, is not correct. This is a very narrow approach as it stands blind to the great conflicts within Europe throughout history, such as the Thirty Years War, colonization wars, Seven Years War, Napoleonic Wars and then the World Wars of the twentieth century. Europe has experienced the bloodiest wars in its territories against each other. There were and are different cultures, languages and religions in Europe, therefore it is not easy to talk about a common European identity that has always been and will be; Europe and European is subject to change through time. As we see in history, both the European identity and "the other" had been differentiated according to the conjunctures of time. During Middle Ages the European identity was heavily around religion that is Christianity, so "the other" was Islam, until Europe achieved the freedom of religion with the Reformation period. During the Cold War, European identity was around the ideas of liberal democracy and free market, ideological identity was dominant, and "the other" was the communist pact. Thus, East European countries were the closest others, as a part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

The EU is representing itself as free from religion as possible, more as a multicultural entity. However, mainly the conservative and right-wing political parties of the Member States stress the role of religion in the identity. If the EU desires to be a world actor, the identity construction should not be based on Christian heritage as German Chancellor Angela Merkel supposes (Nugent 1999, 489) as that would be an externalizing identity. Rather, it should be a multicultural and all-encompassing one, where a European identity should be over all other states of belongings. Additionally, the European identity should not contain any religiosity. Nevertheless, the influence of the Church is still observed as it puts pressure on the politics of states; though not as strong as previous centuries. While the first steps of the EU were taken in the post-World War period, Church led an emphasis to be made on Christian civilization side of Europe (Casanova 2006, 239). In the Constitutional Treaty, (despite demands for the inclusion of Christian history being rejected,) the term 'religious values' was later included in the Preamble of the Constitution. This resulted in a reaction from many parts of the society, mainly the Greens and socialists.

Shortly, Europe will either try to be a homogeneous entity through assimilating its immigrants, different and discriminated components, or try to be a multicultural entity respecting all religions, ethnicities, or any differences (Kosebalaban 2007, 101). In this respect, the role shall also be on the side of minorities, religions or all groups of society that are discriminated. They should raise their voices within these debates through representing the minority religions as a single view, and say that they exist and compose Europe too. As the biggest minority religion in Europe is Islam, the Muslim component of Europe, which is a population of some 20 million (Laciner et al. 2004, 23), should take active part in these debates, and explain the multicultural character of Europe. However, as the Muslims do not gather under a single representation to realize this, their voice is nearly unheard.

### **Turkey and the European Union Relations from a Cultural Perspective**

Turkey and EU relations started in 1959 but the debate about Turkey's Europeanness and whether it should be accepted or not accepted to the EU is still going on. As Turkey is successful in satisfying the economic and political conditions, the biggest obstacle against its membership as it stands is the identity problem. To reach this conclusion, the relations of Turkey and the EU should be viewed in a historical context. Starting from the emergence of the Turkish Republic, Turkey has had a foreign policy direction towards the Western civilizations; therefore, it gave priority to its relations with the Western states more than its relations with the rest of the world. Turkey has always felt its primary belonging to Europe rather than anywhere else (Laciner et al. 2004, 23). With this aim, Turkey applied for membership to NATO (1952), OECD (1948) and the Council of Europe (1949) after the Second World War. This positioning was more than just for military or economic considerations; it was Turkey's positioning itself towards the west as a "European power" (Muftuler 1997a, 53). Thus, it can be said that confirming its Europeanness was one of the main motivations of Turkey and by being accepted to those institutions, this identity was indirectly approved.

In 1959, Turkey applied for association membership to the European Community (EC). In 1963 the Ankara Agreement was signed to establish a Customs Union within 22 years. As the most important outcome with regards to identity, it can be said that Turkey was accepted as a European state with this agreement because Turkey was accepted in conformity with Article 49 of the Treaty of Rome, which states that: "Any European State which respects the principles set out in Article 6(1)

may apply to become a member of the Union. ...” (Consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union and of the Treaty Establishing the European Community December 29, 2006, C 321).

1970s was a period of deterioration of Turkey-EC relations as there were various conflicting areas. Some reasons for the deterioration of Turkey-EC relations are the military intervention that took place in Turkey in 1971, the EC's failure to realize its promise on the free movement of Turkish workers, the economic problems in world due to 1973 oil crisis, the EC's enlargement of 1972, Turkey's exclusion from European Political Co-operation, the 1974 Cyprus crisis, controversies on Turkey's inclusion in Common Agricultural Policy and the Mediterranean Policy of the EC which deprived Turkey in comparison to Mediterranean countries in relations with the EC. Regarding the 1970 period, an uncertainty regarding Turkey's belonging to Europe on the EC side could be talked upon. The uncertainty was about whether Turkey belongs to Europe or not. It was clear that “the importance of Turkey was political and military rather than economic and that Turkey did not belong to Arab and Middle Eastern culture; but it was also the case that Turkey did not belong to the Christian European culture” either (Muftuler 1997b, 62). Due to this ambiguity on cultural differences, the EC was reluctant on the classification of Turkey; either as an associate member or a part of the Mediterranean policy (Muftuler 1997b, 62).

The 1980s started with another military intervention in Turkey which caused a suspension of relations from the EC due to the poor human rights situation in Turkey under the military regime. Turkey tried to re-establish relations in 1986, and made an application for full membership in 1987. However, despite the revival of the Association agreement, the membership application was rejected in 1989 with the official reasons as ‘the deepening process of the EC, Turkey's problems with its neighbors (namely Greece and Cyprus,) and the human rights and democracy problems of Turkey’. Turkey did not recognize the conceptual change in the Turkey-EC relations in the 1980s which affected the rest of the relations up to now (Eralp 1998, 42). Until the 1980s, the relations were more on the economic line. But as the EC started its transformation, its focus shifted from economics to politics. It started to include issues such as democracy, political freedoms and human rights. Another factor is the historical change that happened at the end of 1980s; the dissolution of the Soviet Union and independence of Central and Eastern European states (CEE) (Balkır 1998, 52). With the end of the Cold War, the newly

independent CEE states became of a higher importance than Turkey for the EC.

Regarding the Customs Union with Turkey, the 1992 Lisbon Declaration set the establishment of the Customs Union by 1995, which became active by 1996, and it also stated that “the Turkish role in the present European political situation is of the greatest importance” (Muftuler 1997c, 95), where it declares political cooperation rather than economic, which can be interpreted as accordance of Turkey to the EU political system, therefore Europeanness. Although the economic face of the European integration was more important until 1990s and Turkey having achieved getting almost integrated to it, the political face of the integration becoming more important during these years and onwards. Therefore, Turkey’s Europeanness became the hot topic in the relations starting from 1990s and onwards (Keyman and Onis 2007, 86). At the 1997 Luxemburg Summit, Turkey was not involved in pre-accession process contrary to CEE countries which were in similar or worse economic situations and worse political situations as they had been newly liberalized from long lasting authoritarian regimes (Eralp 2004, 72). The major turning point in Turkey-EU relations was the Helsinki Summit of 1999. Turkey was officially recognized as a candidate for full membership with this summit. After Luxemburg, criticisms rose within the EU for excluding Turkey, as this would create an EU restricted in specific geographical and religious-cultural values (Eralp 2004, 78). Finally, 2004 Brussels Summit opened accession talks with Turkey by 2005. By accepting Turkey as a candidate, the EU took a step forward to overcome cultural distinctions and once more confirmed Turkey’s Europeanness. However, Turkish membership is still under discussion in Europe as the current governance in member states are mostly composed of Christian-Democrats who are on the side of it being a Christian club.

The 9/11 terrorist attacks on the USA and the war in Iraq changed the security perceptions in world and the geo-strategic position of Turkey gained importance once again after the Cold War. Turkey’s inclusion in the EU would be beneficial for the security of the EU, considering the size of the Turkish military and will decrease the tension between Islam and Christianity. Besides these, Turkey’s membership in the EU will contribute in the security and peace environment in both the Middle East and the Balkans, which are conflict-rich regions of high instability. The setbacks on Turkey’s side are its problems with political criterion;

democracy, rule of law, human rights and protection of minorities. Turkey has serious problems in all of these areas. Demographic and economic problems are secondary to the political problems. However, the biggest problem on the membership still constitutes the identity problem of Europe; is Turkey European or “the other”?

### **Turkey as “The Other” of European**

Although the EU has undergone many enlargements, the enlargement to Turkey is the most long-lasting and delayed one. It is true that Turkey still has human rights and implementation of reform problems, however, the real motive behind the heated debate seems to be a deeper concern: Turkey’s Europeanness. A historical analysis of identity construction in Europe through othering and Turkey’s position in this process is to be presented in this section of the article for a better understanding of the questions regarding Turkey’s otherness.

Digging back through history, the roots of the European civilization, the Hellenic and Roman Empires were based in areas covering Asia Minor, rather than having territories in the Western Europe of today, and were not calling themselves ‘European’. Therefore, where Europe starts and where it ends and who belongs to it are constructed concepts which are subject to change within time. The othering of the Turks by Europe took place mainly in medieval period. Before that, the ‘invaders’ or ‘barbarians’ were the main other for Europeans and then Islam emerged as a threat to Europe (Laciner 1999, 6). Meanwhile, the Turks were not the only other of Europe. In the medieval period, not only the Ottomans, but also Russia was an “other” of Europe (Hall 2001, 103). “The other” had been differentiated according to the conjectures of the time.

In the medieval era, the Ottoman Empire was the biggest threat against the European powers, with its military strength and geographical closeness. This threat united Europeans against the threat of conquest by the Ottomans. Moreover, the religion factor played a significant role as the Ottomans had Islam and Europe had Christianity as major religions. With the pressure of Islam from both the south and east of Europe, which had been the primary other before the Ottomans (Laciner 1999, 4), in addition to the strong presence of the Roman Catholic Church, the common gathering identity became Christianity for the European.

The rivalry of these religions was stimulated by their universalistic characteristic as both of these religions claim to be the most valid and

universal religion (Neumann and Welsh 1991, 334). With the belief in exclusivity, the Church promoted that it is the Christian right and duty to convert or Christianize the non-Christians or to invade their lands; from which the holy war concept emerged, whose outcome was of a two-faced relationship between the religion and culture; while Christianity gave more power to crusades, crusades promoted the solidarity among Christians (Neumann and Welsh 1991, 334).

An important point about the medieval evaluation of identity is the political and institutional power of the Roman Catholic Church. The Church was more important than state authorities therefore it was running the politics and its role in society was crucial, affecting the European identity construction. After secularization, its influence was diminished, and in turn the polarization between the Ottomans and Europe decreased.

The otherness of the Turk was diminished by the 1856 Paris Agreement, which was the acceptance of the Ottoman Empire in the European inter-states system (Muftuler 1997a, 29; Neumann and Welsh 1991, 331). The agreement provided the Ottoman Empire to be involved in balance of power structure of Europe, in which its territorial integrity was guaranteed by powerful European states. During Renaissance and Reformation periods, Europe distanced itself from religious values with humanism. A transformation of the European identity took place; the concepts and values that constitute European identity started to change after the medieval era (Laciner et al. 2004, 23), which also affected the view of the Europeans on other states and peoples.

The supporters of Turkey's non-Europeanness mainly base their arguments on medieval conceptions. However, Europe has undergone very difficult and effective processes that changed its cultural conceptions. The French Revolution, Renaissance, Reformation, Industrial Revolution, World Wars, Cold War, modernization etc were all effective forces to change the European identity and its relations with the Turks. Instead of religion and cultural conflict, the new European values include democracy, liberalization, human rights, pluralism etc. The old Europe has transformed into the new Europe, through painful processes, therefore the old Europe should not be idealized even for the othering concept. Time and change are progressive towards the better, and European integration is a project towards a better Europe, where peace and harmony persists. Therefore, medieval ideas, concepts and

identities should not be revived today. As Keyman and Onis mentions, transformation is possible through the powerful mechanism of the Copenhagen criteria, which imposes the conditionality power of the EU (2007, 86). The Copenhagen criteria caused deep transformations in Turkey, especially in democracy and human rights, and still push Turkey on the road of these principles. As the Copenhagen criteria caused transformations in Turkey, the EU can overcome the othering of Turkey by transforming its conceptions, as it did to make EU-15 people to accept the enlargement of ten new members, mostly ex-Communist. As Turkey realized the political and economic criterion and got closer to membership, the cultural question rose as an obstacle that can never be overcome by any effort, as it is a given concept for constructing the identity. Turkey has a controversial position in the sense of behavioral approach to the European identity; it takes part in the Euro-football championships and Eurovision song contests since 1975, however, these do not overcome the doubts, especially in conservative elements of politics about Turkey's Europeanness.

Othering Turkey from Europe in terms of its cultural differences and religion is dangerous, as Europe already has a considerable Turkish population, and more than that, there are already large numbers of Muslim populations living in Europe. It will mean ignoring them too. Indeed, one side of the problem is caused by this population in Europe. Their problem is that they cannot express themselves well enough to the politics and people of Europe, which causes alienation of them from the rest of the society. The reason behind it is the Islamic religion's difference from Christianity; that they cannot get united under a common institution like church (Laciner et al. 2004, 23). In Islam, the mosque is not a unifying place like the church, as it did not play a political role like the church did in the Middle Ages. Each mosque is a direct link for the communication with the God and there is no other roof that connects all the mosques together, unlike the Roman Catholic Church which has many churches that are under its influence. Moreover, there are many different versions of Islam; Pakistani Islam and Iranian Islam are very different, moreover Turkish Islam is very different too. It is very difficult to unite them under the same roof.

Turning the scope of the othering inside out, it is evident that it has dangers not only against the external but also the internal other. Internally, it shows itself in the discrimination against minority groups. Most importantly, this is against the very basis of the European

integration ideal, which is supposed to reach a peaceful and united Europe, through a European community, based on the commonality of some values and norms such as liberal democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. After the 9/11 attacks and then the other terrorist attacks such as to Madrid, Islamophobia started to be seen in Europe, which included othering of Islam as an umbrella term covering the “immigrants, religious, racial, and disprivileged” segments of society (Casanova 2006, 242). It is very dangerous, as it inspires discriminative ideas like the Clash of Civilizations. This phobia couples with medieval view against Turks. As a result, the othering of Islam is effective on the attitudes against the membership application of Turkey (Diez 2004, 328). More than preventing Turkey’s membership to the EU, othering of Turkey in particular and Islam in general, will destruct the peace in Europe. Discrimination against the non-Christian populations will harm the unity and harmony of Europe. The choice will be either a culturally open society, including all minorities within a multicultural Europe, or a culturally homogeneous society trying to assimilate its minorities and not letting Turkey in (Kosebalaban 2007, 101). Othering as a concept is against the core values of the EU, and arguing for the otherness of Turkey contradicts with believing in the European project.

According to Sjursen, the EU approach to Eastern European countries is rather on a kinship (Muftuler-Bac and McLaren 2003, 22) basis, identity based, while towards Turkey it follows a more strategic approach based on security terms defined by utility. As mentioned earlier, there have been different others of Europe such as Russia, or Eastern European countries before the conceptual change of the Eastern bloc in 1991. However, after their independence these countries were not treated as “the other” of Europe or their Europeanness was not questioned. For example, treatment of Turkey and Poland were different although they are relatively similar in the sense of size, population and economics. Their main difference is in terms of religion. Poland is treated as an old brother where Turkey is treated as a *guestworker* or strategic partner. The EU speech regarding the CEE countries was as these countries are the other half of the same apple, belonging to Europe as a natural fact, and while talking about the accession of these countries, the “rejoining or returning to Europe” term was used, which was never used for Turkey’s accession (Sjursen 2002, 508; Keyman and Onis 2007, 92). The positive sides of Turkish inclusion in Europe is put forward as its military power in the war against terror, its dynamism, being a democratic country, and most importantly its contribution to the diversity of Europe, especially

by proving that the EU is not a Christian club (Livianos 2006, 301). Its identity is not included in the positive sides, on the other hand, and is questioned in European's minds- as can be seen in conservative parties' position against Turkey.

Nevertheless, the Big Bang enlargement to ex-Communist countries was also questioned on similar grounds as Turkey. Their Europeaness was not the hot debate, but their compatibility with the European values and life style was questioned. France was the forerunner in that campaign too, similarly as her position against Turkey. Right wing French politician Philippe de Villiers made a campaign against enlargement, by using the 'Polish plumbers' (Asthana 2005, 1; Wesolowsky 2006, 1) invasion of France metaphor, trying to frighten people with the unemployment threat. According to his campaign, Polish people would come to work in France with very low wages and cause the French workers to loose their jobs. This campaign was used against the ratification of the Constitutional Treaty, and was so successful that the referendum rejected the Treaty. However, the EU overcame the prejudices against the newcomers and enlargement by fostering a wide campaign telling the advantages of enlargement and the characteristics of the new members. By such widespread campaigns, the public opinion is informed and constructed in line with the EU policies. There will be Euro-skeptics, especially from the right wing, but overcoming cultural prejudices are not impossible if desired.

As Keyman and Onis clearly presents, one of the division lines of Europe over Turkey's membership is about the political views; left or right wing positions (2007, 74). According to this division, the right wing parties tend to see Turkey as an 'outsider' while the leftist parties are more open to Turkish membership with their 'multicultural' view (Nugent 2007, 495). This division can also be operationalized in the identity construction of Europeaness; while the rightist politics tend to identify Europe with regards to Christian common values, the leftist politics are more secularist and do not let religion into politics. Therefore, when the governments of member states are from social democrats, the position of Europe towards Turkey is more welcoming. On the other hand, when the governments are from Christian democrats, the attitude is more negative and the emphasis is to include Turkey to the European project by privileged association. Turkey and EU relations have been relatively worse since the governments of France and Germany -as two leading powers of the EU- were in conservative

parties, namely Christian Democrats. The reason is that, the identity conception of the conservative side usually refers to religion as a collective identity marker in a culturally close society. Within this view, the membership of Turkey to the EU is not possible, as Turkey is not accepted as a European country because of having a predominantly Muslim population. The conservatives advocate the 'collective identity' rhetoric, which is supposed to contain the Judeo-Christian common culture. Especially German and French conservatives direct their acts as the protector of the 'Christian Western civilization', and reject Turkey's membership in the name of defending this civilization and collective identity (Leicht 2004, 1). Even the Commission President Jacques Santer mentioned this view as openly saying that Turkey cannot be a member to the EU (Laciner 1999, 1). German Chancellor Merkel also mentioned that their view of democracy is directly linked with Christianity and she also maintained that multiculturalism is not possible or desirable (Kosebalaban 2007, 102).

The position of current French President Nicholas Sarkozy starting from his term as minister can be an example illustrating the negative and culturalist position of right wing politicians in Europe. He is against the membership of Turkey on cultural grounds which are highlighted mainly by religious terms. France is the country within the EU that Turkey resembles the most in terms of nationality and secularity, but France is also the country which rejects Turkey's membership the most. This is incomprehensible considering the approach to identity and culture of both countries. Like Turkey, in France the main identity is the national identity: 'French', and ethnic backgrounds are rejected to reach an all encompassing French identity. The French position to the ethnic groups can be perceived as assimilationist rather than multicultural. France has a considerable Muslim population and the approach to these populations is not in terms religious differentiations but in terms of citizenship. All citizens of France are considered as French, they are not classified according to their religions or ethnic backgrounds. This is similar to Turkey's approach, as the state position is to accept all Turkish citizens as Turk, regardless of their ethnic origin or religion. As both countries perceive the religion as a private sphere issue, out of citizenship position, they both neglect any tendencies which would visualize the differences within their populations. In the case of membership of Turkey to the EU, for the first time a Muslim dominant population will be in the EU and this causes a fear that it would empower the religious identity of the Muslim people in other European

countries. As described earlier in the article, to reach homogenization, the process is assimilation of minorities to create a unique society. Multiculturalism is not relevant for France as it is a culturally close society. In a speech Sarkozy states that his main motive to reject Turkey's membership is that if Turkey joins, there will be a problem integrating Muslims living in Europe to their societies (Sarkozy Warns Europe, 2006). The reading of this statement can be that, if Turkey joins, assimilation of religious minorities will be difficult and multicultural society should be evolved, which is against French policies. In another speech, Sarkozy states that "Israel and Lebanon have more European values than Turkey" (Sarkozy Warns Europe, 2006); where values represent religion. These speeches present a culturally close view, reducing European culture to Christian religion and ignoring multiculturalism. As Sarkozy is a right-wing conservative politician, his position as centered on religion and culture and anti-multiculturalism is not a surprising one. Although Turkey and France resemble each other in terms of the citizenship concept and their approach to minorities, France neglects Turkey's membership with a fear that it would foster the religious identity of the Muslim French, while Turkey desires to be a member of the EU where the majority of the population is Christian - where the same fear of France could be relevant for Turkey with its non-Muslim population and minority issues.

Within the global world, the conditions to survive are becoming tougher for the poor and as transportation has become easier, migration takes place much more frequently than before due to economic reasons, political reasons or other reasons. This caused many immigrants to come to Europe, as well as other parts of the world. Homogeneous nations cannot be talked upon in Europe any more as every nation contains at least some people with different characteristics so all nations have minority groups of some kind. Among these groups, Muslims are the biggest. Under these circumstances, trying to homogenize the societies will only bring unrest, as happened in the suburbs of Paris, where the North African French youth set fire to cars to protest the unequal treatment against them. Instead, multicultural society should be established in order to maintain a peaceful coexistence of different identities.

### **Conclusion**

The religious conception of European identity has emerged during the medieval era and changed with the developments of the European

civilization through time, mainly through the Reformation movement. Still, some segments of European politics and academics make references to that history, which poses a big threat to the peace of Europe today. The article tried to show that “the other” is an artificial concept and is subject to change, therefore, it should not be taken as a given, fixed concept but instead understood from the reciprocal relation of self-construction through othering.

In the beginning of European integration, the aim of the founding fathers was to end the conflict between the European states, which caused two World Wars that destroyed the continent deeply, and to sustain a peace for all the peoples of Europe. With culturally-closed societies, this dream cannot be realized; rather, conflict will remain both within Europe and between Europe and the Muslim societies. Therefore, inclusion of Turkey in the EU is very important for the EU to provide a reconciliation of religions and civilizations. In this respect, European identity should not be defined in terms of religion which is a problematic legacy, but should be defined by the progressive values such as democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. Instead of being exclusionary, European identity should be all-encompassing to create a peaceful society. European integration is supposed to have a European identity which is non-nationalistic, democratic, liberal and open. If it carries a religion, then it would not be possible to talk about a progressive union of the new age, but it would be the Europeanness of Middle Ages.

The major point of the article is that, both the self and “the other” are constructed concepts; other is imagined to maintain the self. While redefining identity, othering should be approached with caution, as it contains constructing of the self against “the other” which is a conflict-creating procedure. There are many examples of this process in history, whether Medieval or in the Cold War. “The other” is a concept that is built to be abused, in order to empower the collectivity and solidarity of the self. However, it carries a huge potential for danger, as it creates negative relations between the self and “the other”, rather than being peaceful. As both the European identity and its others are things of construction, medieval ideas whose harm was proved should not be revived. Instead, European integration should be carried to a better stage with the creation of an inclusive and peaceful European identity which covers all Europeans living in Europe, without discriminating against any. As the Copenhagen criteria placed Turkey into a better

position than before, or as the EU-15 made the minds of European people to accept new EU-10, the EU can construct its conceptions to overcome the othering of Turkey and structure a multicultural identity. The choice is on the EU side; either to be a multicultural and open society to include all the minorities within it or to choose a culturally homogeneous society trying to assimilate its minorities and exclude Turkey. The second scenario may only bring unrest, both inside and outside. Rather than externalizing "the other", learning how to live together under a multicultural society will promise a better and more peaceful world. These scenarios are areas for further research both for now and for the future.

Another major point of the article is that the political division of right and left is different in the cultural perceptions of the society as the right wing prefers a culturally close society, while the left is open to a multicultural society. Regarding European identity, the right wing mentions Christian common values more, while the left wing is more secular. Therefore, Turkey-EU relations are sensitive to the governance of the Member States, as the party of the government determines the position of the country towards Turkey; if a left party is in government the relations are positive, if a right party is in power, anti-Turkey attitudes are revived.

While studying the self-construction of the Europeanness in relation to Turkey or any other country, there are some limits as to the subject of the study; whether to take the EU and its bodies as points of reference, or the heads or governments of the Member States. According to the supposition of this article, the position of the EU and politicians of the member states should not be combined while evaluating Turkey-EU relations, as political tendencies in Member States are time-bound and thus temporary, but the relations between the EU and Turkey are of more than half a century old. As otherness is an artificial concept, which is open to change with time, it would be wrong to say that the Turk will always be "the other" for Europe; on the contrary, the meaning of Turk for Europeans is open to change as a constructed concept. It is the EU who will include Turkey into Europe or not, they will decide on what constitutes the European identity and on Turkey's Europeanness. While doing that, being objective is crucial; medieval ideas should not be included in the evaluation. As Redmond states "the EU must cease to be constrained by its history" (Redmond 2007, 313).

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