

Identity Problems of Turkey during the European Union Integration Process

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Abstract. Turkish identity has been transformed within the extent of modernization, generally understood as Westernization, in three levels. The first level is the Ottoman modernization, the second one is Kemalist modernization during the earlier period of the newly established Turkish state and the latest one is the Westernization within the framework of EU integration process. This study attempts to analyze the polarization and categorization of so-called Turkish identity by comparing the aforementioned three levels and its transformation within the different trajectories depending upon the socio-political conjunctures. This article argues that the EU integration process as a civilization project is the inevitable and ultimate ring of the two centuries Westernization endeavours. Lastly, it presents a model to remove the problems of modern and contemporary Turkish identity facing many difficulties in creating the new challenges and stance against the cultural shocks and gaps resulting from the integration process within the EU.

JEL Classification Codes: F020.

Keywords: Westernization, Kemalist modernization project, Turkish identity, cultural fragmentation, EU integration process.

1. Introduction

The European Union integration process of Turkey can very well be understood through a comparative analysis of her two-hundred year Westernization process. It can be said that the Westernization process of

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Turkey was based on the struggle to survive against West as a threat, during the 19th century. The ultimate aim of the main three political and cultural identities that emerged due to the attitudes towards West as Ottomanists, Islamists and Turkists was to secure the survival of the state. The survival of the state was directly related to the question that emerged by the Western policy against the Eastern Question or the dismemberment issue of the Ottoman Empire in this period of time. As a result, even though the clear distinction between the “west as the political and military enemy” and the “west as the civilization” have been made by the Ottoman intellectuals, almost all political programmes and projects had the consciousness that the West was threatening the existence and the unity of the Turkish state as the military power. Thus, the West turned into an object bearing fear, doubt and anxiety.

Moreover, the Westernist state elites were influenced from these phenomena and the West was perceived by these elites as an external threat of the State. At the same time it was taken as the insurance by the existing Turkish regime against internal threats which could prevent the insurrection of the Turkish people. At the period of the newly established Turkish Republic, the Turkish people envisaged the West and the Western civilization as the architect of the Sevres Treaty which aimed to divide the Turkish territory. In this context, the Westernization process was an attempt of defence against the ambitions of the West and in spite of the West. It may also be argued that there existed among the Turkish secular elite a feeling of admiration for the Western world for its achievements although there is equally a feeling of resentment towards its superiority. According to Alpay (1993: 70), an aspiration to Westernize and to become part of the West is mixed with a certain ambiguity towards the West. Rightists and Leftists, Islamists and Secularists, Liberals and Conservatives all share a certain feeling of mistrust and suspicion towards the West, which may be partly explained by Turkey’s historical experiences about the Western powers.

2. The Different Identities at the Westernization-European Union Context

The different political and cultural identities assume different attitudes against the European Union integration process of Turkey. In this study, identity categories have been taken accompanying with the existing political parties entitling and specialising themselves with the given socio-cultural identity units which are being oriented their attitudes based on their

sociological roots and supporters. For instance, the concept “leftists” is correspondent solely with the members and the supporters of the Republican People Party (CHP), who identify themselves as social democrat, Marxist and Socialist, while the “Nationalist Left” means the Democratic Left Party (DSP). Similarly, the concept “nationalists” is used instead of Nationalist Action party (MHP) and the “Islamists” consist of the people who come from the tradition of National Order Party (MNP) to the Welfare and Virtue Parties (RP-FP). The members and supporters of the dissolved Liberal Democracy Party (LDP), and intellectual circle and associations attempt to theorise the liberal thinking cover the “liberals” in general meaning. The “conservatives” fall into the category members who defy the change, especially resulting from the attempts of integrating into the European Union (EU), while the “modernists” and “reformers” include the people who welcome the radical change and wave in identity parameters depending upon the Westernization and EU integration as its inseparable process. In this context, EU integration process has been taken as the long and coherent process continuing from the early Westernization attempts of Ottoman Empire, Kemalist modernization process as the premise of the EU integration process. Therefore, all previous and existing institutions pertaining with the European Union has been used for the sake of giving their distinctive features and periodic differentiations such as “Community of Europe”, “European Economic Community” and “Europe” alone in this article.

The sense of belonging or not belonging to Europe is likely to determine the Turkish identity in the context of civilization preference. Thus, it is true that Europe becomes a reference point for most segments of society in Turkey. Not only Republican elites, but also the new generation of counter-elites acquire a sense of belonging to the Community of Europe, as Göle asserts (1997: 48). These reactions can be categorised depending on the perceptions of the modernization and Westernization of Turkey and the correlation which was established between the Westernization and the European Union integration by the various identities.

It can be said that the European Union integration process was generally perceived as the concrete and inevitable result of two hundred years of Westernization process of Turkey. This perception led to some negative outcomes due to many reasons. According to Ertuğrul (2001:155), the Westernization and modernization processes were interrupted because of the negative attitudes and speculations of the European Union officials and the problems of integration. Actually, some European Union officials called

“Eurocrats” such as Verhaugen, the member of European Union Commission responsible from the enlargement and Pat Cox, the president of European Parliament have been discouraging the positive reformist steps of the Turkish governments and leading Turkey to turn towards the “multiple modernities” excluding the European one as a reaction. In my view, the consideration that the modernization process of Turkey is a process that is directly related to and dependent on the European Union which transforms the matter of modernization to a sole pragmatic way of providing some concrete economic and political expectations. Thus, the necessary reformations and innovations to reach the contemporary civilizations are perceived far from being the mentality problems but simple formalities.

Some authors claim that the European Union integration process may be considered as the inclusion of the Turkish civilization to the Western civilization that was perceived as a threat which is necessary to be secured from her dangers and fears (Aktan, 1999: 65). However, It has been argued that the recent history of Turkey was shaped by the response to the question of West in a considerable extent. Nevertheless, the two-hundred year modernization adventure of Turkey was normalized by rebuilding on the social and economic dynamics instead of being shaped on the external factors as the first time in the history of the Turkish modernization (Dağı, 2000: 155-156). Truly, I argue that the Westernization in 21st century Turkey gained a civil content which gave an opportunity to control and inspect the people for the state by means of the European Union integration process. Whereas, the Ottoman and early Republican Westernization processes were imposed by the political elites to the people in order to civilize them. However, social actors in Turkey grasped that the civilization of the state can only be possible by internalizing the western political cultures and western social values. In this context, the Turkish people generally considered the European Union integration process as an ultimate aim of the Westernization process.

Many authors attempted to categorize the various socio-cultural and political identities in Turkey according to their attitudes against the European Union integration process. For instance, Bora claims that it is possible to mention about three main categories who perceive the European Union process of Turkey in different perspectives. First category sees this process as a necessary, useful and “teleological” stage for the globalization of Turkish economy and the inevitable means of the regional security of Turkey. Second category develops a design of Europe by depending on the economic and geo-political considerations. Third category takes the

European Union as a framework of the political and civilizational reference (Bora, 2002: 16). There are huge differences and ideological cleavages among these categories. I will explain all these categories and their approaches towards the European Union integration by arranging them in the context of political and cultural identities with detailed analysis.

Nevertheless at this point, it is necessary to emphasize that there also exists an inclination among the Turkish political identities to make generalizations about the West and Westerners. Many of them fail to see that Western societies are pluralistic entities composed of groups with widely different interests and ideologies. Furthermore, for the apolitical lower and middle classes in Turkey, the European Union symbolizes the more modern, more comfortable and better life expectations. Especially for the lower classes, it means to recover the life conditions and rescue from the poverty while it is perceived as the more democratic and more liberated political environment for middle classes in addition to more qualified consumption facilities. Nevertheless, I believe that it is very tragic reality that the Turkish people establish a direct connection about their better life conditions with external factors such as European Union. Despite the fact that all these expectations constitute the socio-political legitimization standpoints for the European Union membership, the externalization of the sources of salvation, progress, improvement and the elimination of the wills of the national actors interpreted as an humiliation of the Turkish identity. In my view, the main reason of this inferiority complex is the acceptance and the confession of the case that the internal dynamics of Turkey are not sufficient for the desire of change and reformation because of the historical reasons.

According to Aktar (2002: 22), there are three different categorical approaches about the change, modernizm and the European Union integration process. The first category criticizes the intellectual and political elites who see the European Union as a pushing power and functioning mechanism by regarding the insufficiency of internal dynamics in Turkey for change. These people claim that the Turkish people would claim and deserve a life at the European Union standards by means of “spontaneous consciousness” and they accuse of the supporters of the European Union with being “White Turks” or “Euro-Turks” who commit to a kind of social engineering by underestimating the people by attributing them adjectives like “uncivilized” and “ignorant” (Bora, 2002: 18). I argue that almost all social movements and changes need leaders and in this case the Turkish people needs the leaders who will demonstrate the reality that the socio-political change is directly related with the dynamics of the European Union.

At the same time, this critical view would insult approximately 70 per cent of the Turkish people who support the European Union integration and wish to be European (TESEV, Area Study in Turkish Political Affairs, 2004).

The second category assumes that the nationalization process could not be completed in Turkey and the external dynamics may digress this nationalization process and, thus, prevent the ultimate aim of “entire independence and sovereignty progress” (Aktar, *Ibid.*: 22). I think that these people are not willing to share the political and economic power which they hold with the supra-national organizations and individuals. Third category accepts that the principles, the implementations and the philosophy of the European Union are very suitable instruments to provide freedom, welfare and security of the Turkish society and the individuals (*Ibid.*: 23). Nevertheless, they claim that the European Union is not a necessary changing instrument as an external factor even though the Turkish people tend to share the same aspiration with the demands of the European Union. All these attitudes displayed by many different cultural and political identities in Turkey are defective and imperfect because of their discrepancies and weaknesses in their analysis of state. That is, the Turkish modernization and Westernization is a process which is dependent on the dominant character of the state and, thus, Turkish society and the individual are excluded from being determinant and contributor in this vitally important turning point of reformation. I argue that the exclusion of the society and individual from the Westernization process is the main reason of the identity problems of Turkey during the European Union integration process. At this point, Dağı asserts that as the first time in the history of Turkish modernization, the Westernization entered into the normalization process and it developed and built on the social and economical trajectories by the civil character of the European Union (Dağı, 2000: 162). Thus, the European Union integration process went away from being a mechanism of the state to control the people and to be an insurance of the internal regime, it gained a civil coverage which gives the opportunity to inspect the state for the people by means of the understanding of the democratizing Westernization.

Actually the Turkish people see the European identity as a monolithic entity in integration process, as a simple example, by referring merely to the remarks of the European Union officials; they can speculate that European Union wants or rejects us. Whereas, the Europe has been constituted by many different identities which consist of different priorities, understandings, and biases. However, the identities have dynamic characters that wave, change and transform in accordance with the ongoing time, space

and conjuncture. Also the identities, do not evolve and are not isolated from the different ones. Therefore, I claim that the Turkish and European identities are 'constitutive others' of each other. However, the Ottoman Empire that reigned for six centuries in the European lands and European civilization owes its Enlightenment, Renaissance and Reformation dynamics and orientations to the aspired and adopted legacy of East and Islam heritage. The Turks, being a strong threat, lead to the emergence of the European unity as the spirit of the Crusades. On the one hand, in these crusading expeditions the Europeans recognized and were influenced by the Eastern civilization and translated the huge and splendid books of the Eastern accumulation to their scientific literatures. On the other hand, the Ottoman Empire built the alliance with the European states until the sixteenth century and in the turning point of the eighteenth century she noticed her backwardness in economical, political and cultural parameters and Westernization process was initiated for sake of modernization orientations.

Even the Empire was included in the Concert of Europe and the European state system in 1856, and following this date, it implemented strong and coherent policies towards a permanent, insistent and ultimate aim of being European. Nevertheless, the Ottoman Empire tended to keep the tradition alive beside the modern in dualist understanding and the old and new caused the dilemma, dichotomy, discrepancy in the preferences pertaining to the social and individual life and, more vehemently, the formation of schizophrenic identities wavered between the traditional and modern. Moreover, the reformations were committed by the top-level authoritarian state in spite of the disapproval of the public opinion prevented the internalization of the Westernization by the society. In fact, the Westernization could not be reflected in the level of ordinary individual and daily social life. The ignorance about the western civilization and the lack of communication supported the negative images and apprehensions of the folk towards the Europeans by accompanying with the rough impositions and compulsory applications for sake of Westernization, denying the present values and standards without expressing the necessities of so-called reformations. Lastly, this Westernization was taken as an instrument to make longer the life of the Empire as an applied compulsory precaution without penetrating the spirit of the process. Furthermore, newly established Turkish Republic (1923) perceived the Westernization as the radical turning point in mentality of working mechanism of the society which is influential over the every level of the social life. By disregarding the pragmatist approaches, it was considered as an inevitable requirement to create a new Turkish identity

which is loyal to the newly emerged nation-state and national identity progressively developing by the settlement of the state ideology to the fellow-citizens.

After the long process until coming to the recent days, throughout the Turkish Republic, the discussions of the Westernization as the unique way and sine qua non of modernization apart from some temporal divergences are going on. Today all experiences of the Westernization challenge a real encounter with the European Union integration process of Turkey. In other words, according to Ertuğrul (2000: 325), encounters with the cultural unconscious of the political, institutional, intellectual and the bureaucratic perpetrators of the process of European integration are an aspect of the encounters with the “real” of Turkish experience of Westernization and modernization. Nevertheless, the European Union as a project of the identities and civilizations reflected different and distinct repercussions in the various levels of the Turkish society by depending on the world views, expectations, preferences, briefly, identities. For instance, when provided the good relations with European Union, the modernization assumed identical with the Westernization, otherwise, searched alternative choices as patterns of modernizations or “multiple modernities” apart from the European one. At the same time, some results of summits, especially those of the Helsinki Summit of 2001 in which Turkey had been announced as the official candidate of the European Union were seen as the trajectories of Westernization in the road of European Union integration. The Turkish society was separated into two main categories as ‘conservatives’ and ‘reformists’ by disregarding the indecisive groups in challenging the hostile polarities in my point of view.

In this transitional period, as a general outlook, the first group, conservatives consist of the members of the established order, some bureaucrats and politicians who are contrary to the changing demands of the society. They are jacobinist, populist, anti-imperialist, isolationist, third-worldist and in favour of self-help state concept equipped with the feelings of national unity and struggling with the world, enemy of all Turks. They are rejecting the integration and its possible results. They have phobia arising from the ignorance about the trend of the world and globalization and they are not familiar with the different cultures and not ready to make competition with outside world counterparts. Because they still perceive the world arena in the paradox or dualism of self and other and the European identity is seen as the distant entity which is impossible to communicate and collaborate. Even, they think that the Westernization in the past experience

merely means the improvement of the minorities' status within the Empire by accompanying this idea with the conspiracy theories. I argue that the Leftists, Rightist and the Islamists may be included into this category even though they radically changed their ideas and attitudes towards the European Union integration as a result of some political and conjunctural reasons.

3. The Leftist Identity Perception of European Union in Turkey

The "Nationalist Left" in Turkey takes a strong stance in favour of national and economic "independence", and étatism in economic affairs (Alpay, 1993: 7). According to some Leftist politicians and authors the European Union integration should be rejected because of her imperialistic and supra-national character. In this context, Keyder argues that those advocating modernization without Westernization, and rejection of the western economic model determine the discourse on the Left (Keyder, 1993: 25-26). Many Leftist thinkers strongly react to the idea that Turkey may sacrifice her national sovereignty for the sake of some economic interests. At this point, Soysal (2001: 27-28) argues that Turkey would be forced to leave decisions regarding her economic development and other important issues to the discretion of a superior authority. The European Union membership should be rejected not only on the grounds of nationalism and national sovereignty, but also because Turkey's needs can best be conceived by the Turks themselves. There is a real danger of Turkey's national interests being undermined by the European Union.

Moreover, there is a prevalent argument that economic integration with the Western countries is impossible because the social and political structures and the past experiences of Turkey and the West are extremely different from each other. For this reason, as Nas argues, most Marxist writers were sceptical of Turkey's integration into the European Union. They mostly saw it as an endeavour that is doomed to fail due to among others the differences in development paths, and the lack of a bourgeoisie in Turkey (Nas, 2001: 184). Kazgan, as a Marxist economist, argues that the attempts of Turkey to integrate with European Union may distort the social harmony and unity of Turkish society because of the structural reasons which were based on the past philosophy and the previous mentality of Ottoman Empire: "The communitarian worldview of Islam and the statist principles of the Ottoman Empire do not constitute the necessary historical and cultural sources for the Turkish society to become a Western country. Turkey's attempt at changing civilizations may prepare the end of the Ottoman-

Turkish civilization, but can not transform the Turkish society into a Western society (Kazgan, 1970: 294). However Aybar shares the same idea with Kazgan in mentality respect and he stresses by using the Marxist terminology that Turkey's integration with the European Union consists of the transfer of superstructure from the West. This transfer means nothing without internalizing the infrastructure. The superstructure of the West means the political systems, laws, arts, and philosophies of the Europe which was shaped by the Industrial Revolution and Greco-Latin culture. Its infrastructure is constituted of the factories, heavy industries and the production means (Aybar, 1989: 72-73). In my view, the Leftist authors agree that national sovereignty and economic independence are very important values which are not possible to be transferred to the superior authorities and the transformation of Turkish society to the Western culture is not possible because of the structural discrepancies in the mentality, philosophy, past experiences, and the origins of two different civilizations at the first analysis.

One of the most important problems of the Left is the criticism of the fundamentalism of the Europeanness (Bora, 2002: 18). This criticism depends on the perception that the western culture is identical with the capitalism, modernism and globalist philosophy which makes the Europeans arrogant and hegemonic over the rest of the West. In this context, Bora asserts that the Left sees the European Union as a focal point within the global capitalism, marginalizing power within the welfare chauvinism who excludes the other such as the immigrants, a kind of regime which implements the unequal treatments by creating the exceptions for the minimum human rights and democracy standards by building a European Fortress (Ibid.: 19). Depending on this understanding, the main orientation of the Western realm is to threaten and challenge the welfare state which is established on equality, social justice, and communitarian values, according to the Left. However, with the remarks of Bora, the adoption of the *acquis communiter* is a stage for the removal of the handicapped and defective welfare state in Turkey and the step of becoming widespread the neo-liberal ideologies and the policies (Ibid.: 20).

Eventually, the Left thinks that West or Europe symbolizes the cultural image of the modern and capitalist life and, therefore, the Left tends to reduce the capitalism and imperialism into the cultural and national identities. I think that there should be some differences between the nationalist narrative which is radically excluding the European Union and the criticism of the Euro-centrism. Therefore, the identification of the

existing global political system with the Europe as a geo-political and cultural actor is a simplistic approach which is preventing to develop an argument to deal with the negative effects of this system. At the same time, if the Left rejects the integration with the European Union by arguing that the European Union represents the imperialism and globalism, it means that the Left avoids changing and dealing with the global, capitalist and imperialistic values which can not be prevented by ignoring, rejecting and closing into the autarchic systems. According to the Leftists, membership of the Council of Europe is sufficient to keep Turkey within the general framework of European values, especially those concerning democracy and human rights. The Membership of the European Union, however, should be opposed on economic, political and cultural grounds. In Europe there exist widespread prejudices regarding Turkey and the image of Turks as an inferior people. According to Alpay, as far as the Left is concerned, joining the European Union without these prejudices and images being changed would be tantamount to accepting treatment at the hands of the European Union countries as a second-class country. Turkey has first to get herself recognized as an equal status before entering into a relationship with Europe (Alpay, 1993: 73).

The most radical change of attitude towards the European Union integration issue took place on the Left. The internalization of the market economy, the expectations from the European Union to promote the human rights and democracy and the impossibility to discover and pursue vastly different economic models led the Leftist thinkers to recognize that it is impossible to build a self-sufficient economy to be able to function without market mechanisms and to create a more liberal and democratic state without the pushing power or incentive of the political culture of European Union (Birand, 1990: 377). In this context, according to Alpay, social democrats have arrived at the conclusion that it is important to let the market operate, though without complete submission to it. At the same time, there is also a political dimension to the change of heart regarding the European Union membership. In the sphere of politics, the view is now that pluralist democracy is the best form of political regimes and that one comes across fully developed democracies only in the European Union countries (Alpay, 1993: 72). At the same time, having in mind the experience of the military intervention, relations with Europe began to be seen as a safety valve against the growing importance of the religious movement by the Left (Nas, 2001: 185).

Nevertheless, it is necessary to notice that the left-liberal and social-democratic circle perceives the economic, technical and executive regulations which stipulate the European Union integration as unimportant and futile formalities within the orientation of the rights and freedoms (Bora, 2002: 17). However, in spite of all positive considerations, the Leftists deeply concentrate on the problems of social justice, poverty and human rights by overlooking the democratic liberties. Whereas, the emphasis of the Left to the poverty and the human rights problems does not necessitate her disregarding of the equality and freedom. I think that the Left needs the democracy as far as the other political identities. In fact, if the Left determines and constrains its democratic demands, understanding of human rights and democracy with the stipulations or the criteria of the European Union integration, it may lose its political will and strategic horizon as well as referential framework of its identity. As a matter of fact, Belge agrees with this argument by putting forward that: “In recent years the Left changed its attitude towards the European Union and saw it as a guarantee of democracy and human rights in Turkey. He continues as follows: “As a Leftist intellectual I believe that the membership is a formal issue which means nothing unless Turkey reaches the democratic maturity and tolerance as a result of natural process” (Belge, 1989: 80). Hanioglu, on the other hand, claims that the alternative of the European Union membership can not be integration with the Islamic countries because these countries do not share the similar mentality and political culture with Turkey. There is only one alternative that: to integrate into the European Union by preserving our differences and the distinctive features of the Turkish identity (Hanioglu, 1989: 52-53).

4. The Rightist Identity and European Union Integration Process

The Rightists’ narrative about the European Union integration concentrates on the loss and transfer of national sovereignty to the superior authorities and the erosion of the national identity. In this context, Türkeş, the late founder of the Nationalist Act Party, argues: “we are certainly opposed to the European Union membership. That is a natural attitude due to the fact that the European Union is a Christian Club which will exterminate our national sovereignty and national values” (Türkeş, 1989: 12). As a matter of fact, the rightists attach primary importance to the unity of the state and see the Copenhagen Criteria as creating problems in the particular state-society relations in Turkey. Nevertheless, their exaggerated sensitivities about the unity of state and the preservation of the national sovereignty and

independence were perceived as those who advocate preservation of status-quo. According to Nas, whether Turkey will be able to overcome those conservative forces and take up the challenge of full membership to the European Union remains to be seen (Nas, 2001: 187). Briefly, Nationalist Act Party, as the most powerful representative of the Rightists in Turkey, summarizes four main rejection points for the European Union integration process in its programme: Firstly, the national sovereignty which was held by the Grand National Assembly (TBMM) would be transferred to the European Parliament. However, such kind of a violation of the sovereignty can not be acceptable and this is the violation of the Turkish Constitution. Secondly, the national character of the economy will be distorted as a result of the European Union integration. Thirdly, the national character of property will be destroyed and, lastly, the degeneration of the socio-cultural identity will be accelerated with this integration process (Sezgin, 2000: 22).

The nationalist circle in Turkey claims that there are remarkable similarities between the imperialistic demands of the Western powers who attempted to divide the Ottoman Empire in 19th century (Bulaç, 2001: 104). For instance, in the period of Mahmud the Second, the order of property and land was changed with the pressure of the West and private property rights were accepted. Thus, a new bourgeoisie who exposed many rebellions to the Ottoman Empire emerged. According to the ultra-nationalist parties, some bureaucrats and intellectual saw the European Union as a guarantee for their positions as it was the case in the Ottoman Pashas and intellectuals in 19th century. In fact, the nationalists saw the European Union integration as a total movement which aimed to getting better the social, political and economic positions of the non-Muslim minority in Turkey by imposing the adoption of western codification system such as the Copenhagen Criteria as it was the case in Ottoman Empire Westernization of 19th century. Even they saw a similarity between the Customs Union and the capitulations, concessions and privileges which had been given to Europe in the Trade Agreement that was acted with the Britain, in 1838. In addition to these arguments, they criticized that Turkey presents herself as a consumption society to be exploited by the European Union countries. This was the refutation of the argument that “they are the partners and we are the market”.

Even though the Turkish modernization attempted to get closer to the European and the Turkish cultures, it did not disregard the distance between them. Nevertheless, the European Union integration process of Turkey aims to create a harmony between two identities. In fact, it is necessary to bear in mind that Europe did not forget the Eastern Question

which is the name given to the policy related with the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire and the previous biases and ambitions against Turkey (İlhan, 2000: 76-77). For this reason, according to the Rightists, Turkey will inevitably stay as a stranger and 'other' within the European Union. Moreover, the officials or Eurocrats of the European Union will find a way to hurt Turkey's pride and honour by using the European Union integration process.

5. The Islamists and the European Union

The Islamists, as a second constituent of the first category, opposed Turkey's membership to the European Union for different reasons. For them, European Union aims to wait for Turkey before the so-called accession partnership process in order to prevent to develop good relations with her geographical and historical interest areas such as Turkic Republics, Balkans and the Middle East. In the framework of identity formation or formulation, the Islamists envisaged that Turkish identity will be threatened to disappear by not tackling with the problems of the alienation, cultural shock and degeneration. In their mind, the Europeans have double standards and are insincere in their approach to the question of national identity. That is, on the one hand, the European Union tries to create and revitalize some vanished or non-developed regional and ethnic micro-identities by attributing to them a national identity character, while they endeavour to distort the national identity of Turkey by transferring the national sovereignty to the upper federalist mechanisms and turned it cosmopolitan and heterogenic identity by blending and fusing it with multi-ethnic and multi-religious ambiance. In their minds, the religion is the main parameter determining the identity, therefore, the Europeans, who overemphasized their religious identities during the Crusades and other alliances throughout history, do not shelter a political entity which has an Islamic character within their "Christian Club" by giving for example their support for the Armenians who claim land from Turkey with irredentist mentality.

The most radical opposition to Turkey's affiliation with the European Union comes from the Islamic groups. It does not however mean that there are no Islamic groups which view Turkey's membership to the European Union favourably. In this way, some Islamic groups believe that Turkey's European Union membership will not only enhance religious freedoms in Turkey, but will help Turkey in its positive role of bringing together the Realms of Islam and Christianity (Çakır, 1990: 37-42). Islamist

elites increasingly challenged the modernist project that was dependent on a secular and positivist state in Turkey. They ruled out the Republican alternative of Westernization, and turned to Islam and relations with the Islamic world as reference to guide their social values, lifestyles, and political world view. However, as Nas argues, while rising to power, the growing force of Islam was contained by the State Security Council under the leadership of the military. Although questionable in terms of democratic credentials, this move had an important effect on the outlook of the Islamists concerning Europe. They also began to see Europe as a guarantee of their democratic rights (Nas, 2001: 186). Nevertheless, at the beginning the Islamists had widespread suspicions about the sincerity of Westernization and European Union integration processes in many respects.

In this context, Islamists regarded the Westernization project as a threat to the traditional and religious values as Zaim argues: "Considering the fact that the ultimate aim of the Common Market is to construct a Union of European States, should we let Turkey become a province in this union? Since it will be a Union of Christian states, the inclusion of an Islamic-Turkish State can never be accepted" (Zaim, 1970: 95). The main spokesman of the Islamic right opposition to the European Union membership, Dilipak demands that the issue of European Union membership should be decided in a referendum. He says he is opposed to Turkey's membership of the European Union on moral, political, philosophical and historical grounds. According to Dilipak, what brings societies together is a consciousness of history, common patterns of social behaviour, and religious beliefs and traditions. In all these respects there exist fundamental differences between Turkey and the European societies. Turkey's membership would not only be against Turkey's national interests, it would also constitute a threat to the European Union countries, since it would mean millions of unemployed Turks rushing to Europe where many people are already out of work. European Union membership would also constitute a violation of the Turkish Constitution which emphasizes Turkey's independence (Dilipak, 2001: 27-28). He saw the European Union integration process as a continuation of Tanzimat mentality with these words: "Tanzimat is the main reason of the intrinsic identity crisis and the arranged conspiracy tended to divide the Islamic unity and collapse the institution of Hilafet (the most powerful religious authority). The European Union integration is a natural prolongation of the Tanzimat mentality and supposed to bring the primitivity and poverty instead of civilization, contemporarization and rationalism (Dilipak, 1989: 135). Similarly, the Islamist and right-wing parties formed had a dubious attitude towards the West. They reflected a growing

disillusionment with Westernization and the main tenets of the Republic. However, according to Keyder, these new right politicians could not develop a viable anti-western project either. The argument was usually to stay traditional while adapting and using the technical power of the West (Keyder, 1993: 29).

Some Islamic authors claim that the European Union integration will erode the national identities and there will be a unique criterion of difference between the Europe and Turkey: the religion and religious identities. Nevertheless, paradoxically, the Turkish people will confront with the people those who belong to Christianity as a dominant constituent of their identities and Turkish people will be much more conscious to possess their religions (Bulaç, 2001: 110). Bulaç is not alone in his argument that the European Union attempts to weaken the Islamic identity of Turkish people. Similarly, in his article "*Turkish Identity and Foreign Policy in Flux: the Rise of Neo-Ottomanism*" Yavuz argues that the European politicians and intellectuals advised Turkey to give up from the Islamic values in order to be European because they saw Islam as a threat and non-European. However, the exclusive policies of the European Union were reflected to the internal discussions on the national identity in Turkey. In this period, Turk-Islam synthesis which was accepted in order to provide the social unity and political stability in Turkey which confronted with the turmoil as a result of the fragmentation of the Kemalist secular bloc and the increasing ideological and ethnic differences after the military intervention of 1980. Nevertheless, the rejection of the European Union to accept Turkey as a European country weakened the western orientation of Turkey and Turkish politicians concentrated on the religious and historical differences between Turkey and Europe. It became the reason for the rising of Islamic identity and the loosing the legitimacy of Turkish governments' narratives which were depended upon European orientation perceived as identical with the rationality, progress and modernity (Yavuz, 1998: 34-41). Under these circumstances, the narratives and the arguments of the Islamists became more prevalent and dominant against the supporters of the European Union integration process.

Some Islamist politicians claim that the European Union is a political and cultural project which is based on the triangle of Greek, Latin and Christian cultures and it is being used in order to prevent the revitalization of Islam by perceiving the Islamic consciousness as a revitalization of fundamentalism which was attributed almost all negative dimensions of European identity (Yalçıntaş, 1989: 36-38). In any case, for

them, the ultimate aim of the European integration is the assimilation and degeneration of the Islamic world within the melting pot of the West. At the same time, they criticize the remarks of some Turkish politicians that Turkey will be integrated to the Muslim world if the European Union does not allow Turkey to access the full membership. According to Ađırakça, these threatening remarks are the reflections of European admiration and the insult of Islamic civilization (Ađırakça, 1989: 44-45). However, the Islamists think that Turkish political and intellectual elites minimize the cultural and religious differences between Europe and Turkey. Whereas, for them, Turkey will not be accepted to the European Union because of these differences. In addition to these differences, their economic and political interests will always compete with Turkey. In this case, according to Bulaç, the question should be asked to the supporters of the European Union: Isn't there any other alternative for the western institutions such as NATO and the European Union (Bulaç, 1989: 85-86). Lastly, they insist on their dubious attitudes against the European Union by questioning who is loser and who is winner as a result of this possible integration. Albayrak (1989: 92) has a clear answer for this question: "The poor and innocent people who belong to their own national and religious cultures in Turkey will lose and some politicians, bureaucrats and intellectuals who owes their power and legitimacy to the European admiration will win as it was the case in Tanzimat which provided with the catastrophe of the ignorant folk and the religious scientific strata who was loyal to their states strongly and the victory of the non-Muslim minority, state elites and the church".

According to Dađı, Islamic opponents developed some narratives which defend the democracy and the human rights and came close to the values of European Union. Nevertheless, this situation caused to emerge the suspicion and the lack of confidence about these values and the breaking off from the ideal of contemporary civilization in the traditional Kemalist Westerners. For this reason, it can be argued that the Westernization project gained a new turning point and even some Islamic groups who built their idea on the criticism and the rejection of the Western values changed their ideas and they became the ardent supporters of the European Union integration. Islamic identities clearly realized that the ultimate political model of the West is open, pluralist and the democratic governance. And their understanding that they would be more secure and liberated in a westernized political system oriented them to reinterpret the external dynamics of the democratization process of Turkey. For instance, Koru argues that those who desire to integrate with the European Union in Turkey differentiated from the traditional ideologies of Tanzimat movement because

the European Union changed and opened up to the liberal values. That is, Europe gave up from her totalitarian and oppressive character which had persisted during the Tanzimat period. Within the identity context, the European Union integration process will lead to emerge a new synthesis which will strengthen the Islamic character of the Turkish identity. In any case, the Islamic identity is so strong that the Europe could not degenerate and assimilate it in spite of all efforts (Koru, 1989: 121-122). In my view, this optimistic approach depends on the searching of Islamists to integrate the existing social and political system and the liberalistic approach of the European Union clearly displayed for different religious sects and implementations. However, according to Evin, the laissez-faire approach of the European Union to religion is hoped to disperse the ideological polarization around this issue. All these developments point to a process whereby the periphery may be integrated into a coherent system of competitive politics (Evin, 2000: 24).

In fact, if the European Union is perceived as the guarantee of preserving the differences with the liberal and democratic understanding, it will be considered as a guarantee of creating and protecting the differentiated and fragmented identities in Turkey (Dağı, 2000: 151). Nevertheless, the democratic understanding and the approval of the European Union for the Islamic governments and Islamic groups in Turkey created to invoke worry in the Westerner groups. The Westerner groups attempted to constrain the limits of democracy by aiming to exclude the Islamic groups from the power (Bulaç 2001: 102). In this context, I argue that the Islamic identity should not define the European identity as 'other' and with an antagonistic perspective. At the same time, the European value system should not be possessed by the pragmatic and conjunctural reasons. Instead, Islamic identity should try to provide some precious contributions in building and defining the universal and the global civilization. Thus, Islam and Turkey with her Islamic culture may be a complementary part of European modernity and civilization.

6. The Supporters of Change and the European Union as an External Dynamic of Change

The second category, Reformists, Liberalists and Westernists, sincerely believe in the necessity of change and the European Union is the unique future of Turkey and the solution in Cyprus and Kurdish questions as well as the globalization of economy. They perceive the European Union as a

civilization project enhancing the democratization and the freedom of thought and expression and the supremacy of law. Nevertheless, the people who exist in every level of the society do not support the absolute and total reform and change but their interests only by disregarding the situation of the other levels. At the same time, these people are disorganized and dispersed because they are deprived of the political ground that is necessary to express the insisting demand of reformation. Therefore the attempts of reformation do not lead to anywhere present for they are not strong enough to maintain the supremacy of law and justice as well as to be able to provide the transparency and openness.

Those who oppose Turkey's membership in the European Union constitute a small minority. The main argument in favour of Turkey's membership is political. It is argued that European Union membership will provide a strong guarantee for the development and stability of Turkey's fragile democratic regime. The liberals supported the issue of European Union membership for the reason that the future military interventions may be prevented (Alpay, 1993: 74). The frequent contradictory attitudes of Turkey's elite towards the West are well reflected by different political identities in Turkey. They often welcome political pressures from the West as support for the enhancement of democratic rights and freedoms. Western pressure concerning the rights of cultural and ethnic minorities, on the other hand, is often viewed as a violation of Turkey's independence and sovereignty and is sometimes even interpreted as part of a conspiracy by the Western powers to divide and weaken Turkey (Bulaç, 2001: 103). Some think that the greatest benefit of membership in the European Union for Turkey would be in the sphere of human rights. The notion of human rights is not a firmly established idea in Turkey. Integration with the European Union countries will help the Turks internalize this notion. It will also help Turkish society to establish rational ways of thinking and behaving which would sweep away current adherence to dogmatisms (Dağı, 2000: 152).

Some others support European Union membership on cultural grounds. This group thinks that the European Union membership is extremely important for Turkey's cultural identity. Because, for them, Turkey's entry into the European Union will be the climax of the country's efforts to modernize and westernize which began in the early part of the last century. In this way, integration with the European Union would bring a final solution to Turkey's prolonged wavering between the East and the West (Ertuğrul, 2000: 325). Some people do not believe that Turkey will some day become an European Union member, nevertheless supports

Turkey's efforts to become part of the European Union, because membership would help the country to transform its collectivistic culture into an individualistic one. For them, the group consciousness predominates in Turkey, while European culture rests on the realization of individual abilities and the development of the creativity of individuals (Gözen 2001: 163). Especially, the liberals give priority to democracy and human rights and see the European Union as a guarantor of these values.

7. Conclusion

The elitist Westerners behaved in reaction to the “democratizing Westernization” which was based on the social and cultural ground and civil character. They saw that the logical prolongation of the Westernization within the trajectories of European Union integration would be the creation of the democratic and liberal state model. Whereas, the Westernization projects at previous times were directed by the state initiative and without social and public support (Aktar, 2001: 22). The main deadlock of the Westerners is that they consider the West as a unique and fundamental dynamic of the social transformation and the state authority is the unique instrument for this process. Nevertheless, the western social and political model is viewed as jacobinist, forcible, pressing and anti-democratic models of change which are illegitimate and unacceptable. Thus, according to Dağı, the model of Westernization which was initiated by these elitist westerners will annihilate both this process and the strata of westerners ultimately (Dağı, 2000: 156). The goal of Westernization became the socialized as the first time with the European Union integration and the demands of change and the desire of more democratic and more liberal state model by the Turkish folk led to change the Westerners attitude towards the popular and civil Westernization. That is, while the Westerners had admitted that the European Union integration is the last and inevitable stage of the Westernization, they worried about its process and its potential risks, especially within the subjects such as human rights and democratization. It displays that the nature of the Westernization is changed with the European Union dynamics and this process gained the democratizing perspective by losing its elitist character. Whereas, these elite attempted to solve the identity crises by getting recorded the West the argument that Turkey is a western country as a complementary part of the European culture (Aktan, 1999: 66). As a result, the elitist ‘Westerners preferred the political and cultural closure and to get rid of the liberating influences of the European Union integration on the social, political and economic dynamics by putting forward the idea

that Turkey has special conditions and she is not ready for the western political and cultural values (Gözen, 2001: 171). The main problems are the lack of confidence to the West; the problematic of the survival of the state and consideration of the West as threatening political power and cultural 'other'; In fact, Turkey depended her Westernization adventure on the state initiative and she desired to protect herself from the danger of the West by including herself to the western civilization (Aktan, 1999: 59).

In fact, the fundamentals of the European Union depend upon strongly on the political will of seeking the permanent peace, stability, and welfare that it can disregard the privilege of the nation-state by transforming it into the federalist mechanisms and display the sacrifice to integrate with Turkey being the other of the Europe throughout the history. Actually the European Union envisages exterminating the challenge of the spread of the American identity that is prevalent with the globalization. In this context, to be an inclusively and comprehensively universalized European Union project needs Turkey which has potential and richness coming with the historical and geopolitical perspectives. In this point, the main identity parameters of European Union are the Charter of Fundamental Rights which was put to the agenda in Nice Summit of December 2000, Copenhagen Criteria of 1993 Summit, Maastricht Criteria of 1993 and European Convention of 2001 which included Turkey in this formation mechanism although Turkey is not a full-member of the European Union yet.

In the identity formulation mechanisms of the European Union, Turkey plays a critical role for many reasons, which are as follows: firstly, the European Union accepts that there are many common problems with Turkey and again European Union is optimistic about that it can solve these radical and complicated problems and control and manage the Turkish political and social trends just by including Turkey into the Union. These problems are Cyprus and Aegean issues pertaining to the frontiers. These issues need to be solved because the European Union never accepts any problems in their borders. Another problem that needs to be solved is the Kurdish question which is concerned with the political refuge and the universal value of the human rights. The other common problem is related with the prevention of the economic migration to the European Union countries which can be solved by enhancing the maintenance of the welfare for the Turkish citizens. The other point is the combating with the international smuggling and the organized crime organizations, and lastly the European Union hopes that the permanent stability and peace can be

reflected to Turkey at the same degree as they are reflected to other European countries as in the case of accession to the partnership.

The second challenging problem in identity formation, as mentioned in chapter three, is the drawback arising from the monolithic Christian identity. However, this one-dimensional identity makes to defend the humanistic values in universal level in persuasive way difficult and, thus, create a civilization project in comprehensive and perfect meaning. In this way, the existence of the different religions and the different religious identities is necessary in order to convince the people that the European Union secured and embedded all differences with tremendous and huge tolerance. That is the critical detriment to the enlargement process and the claim of the European Union embrace to hold the different cultures together and multiculturalism and, at the ultimate point, being a world civilization. In this turning point Turkey is a congenial companion to animate all far-possible projects by her rich cultural, historical and geographical flavours sponsored by the imperial past ruling in three continents. Moreover, it can be said that it is not possible for European Union to reach perfection or maturity in her idea of multiculturalism and democracy by excluding Turkey from the Union.

The other problem is directly concerned with the economic and pragmatic reasons. The young population, dynamic and energetic demography, and strong and durable economy are very attractive factors for the European Union's economic interests giving opportunity to opening up to the economically ambitious and insufficient societies. At the same time, the European Union advanced forward to the information society by partially giving up producing industrial products and turning to selling just technical knowledge, how-know, and information. Thus, Turkey can be turned to an industrial yard with her cheap working conditions and sophisticated experiences.

The other important issue is pertaining to the European Security and Defence Identity and, more importantly, the security worries in two respects. Firstly, the normalized and stable Turkey directly provides the security, peace and stability of the European Union. Secondly, the European Union is suffering a dramatic dilemma. On the one hand, the European Union wishes to replace the USA in the world, and being reluctant to spend money for the security of the world. At this point Turkey, as the strong partner in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the complementary part of

European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI), possess a strong experience with the terrorist attacks for 15 years.

Especially, after September 11th incidents, Turkey became in the eyes of the European Union a critically important country through which it can widespread the western humanistic values and democratization to the Muslim and Middle Eastern countries because for the European Union, Turkey was the unique secular Muslim country achieving to keep the Islamic values and modern mentality of life together by updating and re-evaluating/interpreting its traditional values. Ultimately, Turkey, as a moderate Muslim state, may be an exemplary model that will be a proof and standpoint to prevent the East and West conflicts which can possibly outbreak in line with struggle with the global terrorism. In fact, its geo-strategic significance can be isolated its symbolic appreciation to the concrete contribution to obstacle the clashes of civilizations as Huntington mentioned with the ferocity of an oracle. Therefore, for all these reasons, Turkey is complementary and indivisible part of the European Union especially in identity matters.

Nevertheless, it is an unfortunate event that some radical, ultra-rightist political movements agitating the xenophobia and multiculturalism are coming to the power both in Turkey and the European Union countries. Because of this, it is vitally important to impede the cultural and political reasons to cause the emerging of the misperceptions and negative images between two civilizations and identities.

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