The Europeanisation of Turkish identity: historical, sociological and geopolitical elements of the social perception of Turkey in the EU

By: Luis Bouza García, College of Europe

Abstract:

Although EU countries and Turkey come from different historical experiences and civilisations, and this plays an important role on the construction of public opinion on Turkey in the EU, the evolution of the countries belonging to the Ottoman Empire, Turkey included, in the XXth century proves that this historical experience does not make Turkey’s identity incompatible with the EU.

In fact this article considers the EU an open project and European identity the result of the Europeanisation process. If Turkey maintains its accession bid, it will have to go through a deep transformation process which will have a decisive effect on its identity, the success of which will be decisive for the creation of a public opinion in the EU which would be more favourable to Turkey. The object and major obstacle to this transformation process will not be Turkey’s cultural identity, but rather the kemalist heritage. This paradox, since the kemalist project consisted in adopting the European standards of the early XXth century, makes the Europeanisation process more difficult in that it implies a strong rearrangement of the political forces in Turkey.

1. Introduction

Turkey and Europe are characterised by polarised, contradictory yet mutual attraction and dependency relationships. For a long time each other’s mirroring image, they are coming today to the possibility of associating closely with each other in the EU. Obviously European countries and Turkey have participated in major economic, cultural, political and ideological exchanges for centuries, but this was done from a position of mutual rejection. It is not until the beginning of the European construction that Turkey and the EU are open to a mutual influence process: Turkey wishes to continue the path towards Europeanisation it began in the 1920s and the EU has declared its willingness to accept Turkey in.

This article analyses the major civilisational transformation that Turkey’s accession would mean both for the applicant country as for the European Union. It is written using a socio-political approach, based on the theoretical perspective of the concept of Europeanisation, understood in a broad sense, that allows to understand the institutional, political and cultural dimensions.

An important remark is that the paper does not take a simple reading of mutual transformation and cross fertilisation. As interesting it may be, this position only brings to dead ends. The aim is to analyse on the one hand the major challenges in Turkey’s Europeanisation way and on the other the conditions under which such Europeanised Turkey may eventually be accepted by the EU. It intends to analyse the strong identity implications for both the EU and Turkey of Turkish membership going beyond an “identity problem” based on a discussion over the nature and contents of European identity. The paper rather posits European identity as something to be acquired, which includes but is not limited to historical heritages, and thus analyses the identity implications of the accession process, that is, it analysis the set of “intimate transformations” that Europeanisation implies and the conditions under which those would be acceptable both in Turkey and the EU.
Methodologically this analysis wishes to establish a dialogue between reality and perceptions on both sides and try to explain how the perceptions are built. For this it will pay particular importance to the role of cultural, historical and communicative factors.

For doing so the perceptions of history are analysed, paying particular attention to the notion of civilisation and to the nation-building process in Turkey and some of its close neighbours. Having analysed the place that history and memory, that is, facts and perceptions, take in the relationships between Turkey and the EU, it is necessary to understand the importance of the perceptions in a “deep” sense, that is, not only public opinion on Turkish EU accession but the values that Europeans believe Turkey stands for and how they represent it as a country. Since these perceptions are quite diverse in general in Europe, and public opinions and governments are rather divided, the paper then analyses what Turkey “means” to different EU member states.

Building on the analyses of the perceptions, the paper takes into the analyses of the major transformations that Turkey's EU accession would imply. The notion of Europeanisation is key, in that it allows to understand Europe as an open reality that can be learned by a political system and public opinions. The final section explores what are the conditions for this process to be effectively launched in Turkey and to the acceptance of Turkish ability to be a member of the EU by political elites and public opinions in the member states.

2. Memory, historicity regimes and nation building

a. The notion of civilisation: historical memories enter into play

It is a frequent perception in Turkey and in the EU that Turkey's eventual accession would be problematic since for long centuries European states have perceived Turkey as its major challenge, both in political, military and religious terms, as far as considering that a common stance against Turkey has fostered some of the first projects for uniting Europe. Such perception would be responsible for EU citizens’ mistrust for Turkish candidacy and make Turkish opinion attribute the EU with a secret agenda, its aim not being a real accession negotiation but the creation of a series of burdens aiming to debilitate Turkey.

According to the perspective chosen, this paper argues that this historical conflict does not constitute two metaphysically opposite identities since this conflict has to be situated in its historical context, and both Turkey and the EU are new realities by comparison to the Ottoman Empire and European powers of the XVIth century. However, it assumes the position that these conflicts are still important in that they influence historical memories which influence the perception of that EU and Turkish peoples have of each other.

The accession of Turkey to the EU is often examined considering Turkey’s and Europe religious majorities. For many commentators and politicians, Turkey’s Islamic majority makes it impossible to join an EU that would rely on Christian values. Rather than

1 Sedat Laçiner (2005), Sylvie Goulard (2005), Claire Visier (2006)
2 Denis de Rougemont (1990) mentions that joining forces against the Ottomans was the inspiration of some projects of pan-European organisations between the XVth and the XVIIIth centuries.
3 Sedat Laçiner (2005), Claire Visier (2006)
4 Such position is sometimes clearly formulated, an example being Valery Giscard d’Estaing’s declaration while holding the presidency of the Convention on the future of Europe. Sometimes this fear of the religious difference is elaborated arguing that Turkey is not really a secular state.
taking this for granted, the objective of this paper is to analyse where these differences come from and what is their importance for Turkey’s EU accession. For doing so, the notion of civilisation has to be examined, and the historical clashes between Turkey and some EU states put back in this context.

Whereas the notions of civilisation and culture derive from Latin terms and have been used in modern political theories since the XVIIIth century, the modern usage corresponds to an understanding of civilisations in plural, that is, a civilisation is the result of a system of material and cultural settings historically inherited.

According to the French historian Fernand Braudel, civilisations are the consequence of the interplay of four major determining features. The first one is space; civilisations arise in a certain geographic milieu. The second determination of a civilisation is the mode of social organisation, concerning aspects such as the degree of urbanisation and social stratification. Thirdly, civilisations are the result of a characteristic form of economic organisation. Finally, civilisations are characterised by collective mentalities, religion being a key aspect in this sense.

Elaborating on Braudel's categories, it is necessary to consider that Turkey belongs to the Islamic civilisation since the middle ages. This is particularly true during the existence of the Ottoman Empire, whose characteristics in the four previous fields differ from those of the EU countries: the Porte is a major European power which relies nevertheless on territories in Asia and Africa, it did not go through feudalism and capitalism with their social and economic consequences such as most of the EU countries. Finally, Turkey and European countries have been shaped by Islam and Christianity respectively.

Of course civilisations are far from being harmonious ensembles, and their differences do not explain the existence of historical conflicts between them. However, the clashes between European states and the Ottoman Empire have made their way into Europeans historical memories as a major civilisational clash. In this sense, the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the battles of Kosovo and Mohacs and the sieges of Vienna have made their way into Europeans' collective mentalities as moments of fear, and as well as moments of shared risk requiring concerted action. In this sense, one can speak of the existence of a historical memory which that for a number of Europeans Turkey reminds of a series of historical challenges. This may explain the reticence of certain public opinions to Ankara's membership but does not forbid Turkey from joining the EU, which was designed to overcome conflicts.

The most important argument in this sense is that civilisations are open realities and the product of the circumstances listed above. A good example are the Ottoman dominated territories that have built themselves into the European civilisation, particularly Greece. Greece can be presented as the cradle of Western civilisation as Greek nationalists and European Enlightenment philosophers did, but is as well a

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5 Braudel (1993:33)
6 Ibid. p. 37
7 Ibid. pgs. 40-55
8 Even though Özkirimli and Sofos (2008:3 and footnote 3) remind us that a part of the studies on identity in Turkey have suffered by a dose of psychologism, this aspect is important when discussing the notion of civilization as it includes religion. Moreover, the formation of social perceptions that the article discusses pertains to a study of the construction of collective mentalities.
9 Ibid. p. 122-123
10 Laçiner, Braudel, p 122
11 Denis de Rougemont (1990)
13 Özkirimli and Sofos (2008)
country whose contemporary political experience is alien to Western tradition\textsuperscript{14}: in a sense, Byzantine and Orthodox experiences create problematic historical memories with the west. This should serve to demonstrate that the discussion about Turkey’s accession to the EU should be less about its “nature” or Europeaness, but about its willingness and openness to the Europeanisation process\textsuperscript{15}. That said, historical experiences must be remembered as they participate in the building of social perceptions.

b. Memories of the nation building: similarities and mutual construction of the “otherness”

The theoretical framework to which this article pertains is one which posits identities as the product of social interaction: any collective identity is socially constructed in a concrete historical framework. In global terms this pertains to constructivist social approaches\textsuperscript{16}.

This kind of approach has been taken by scholars working on nationalism and national identities. Today’s studies on nationalism have overcome “primordialism”\textsuperscript{17}, that is, the nation considered as a natural given that has always existed everywhere in human history and rather consider the nation a historic contingency which is the result of historical processes. Their matters of discussion lie on the moment of appearance of national identities, its relation with nationalism and the relation between nationalism, national identity and the state. To take just two main theoretical streams, modernist scholars\textsuperscript{18} consider national identities as the result of nationalist movements encouraged by states in need to create a new collective identity consistent with the needs of industrial capitalism and nationally defined states. An alternative position is held by scholars studying the ethno-symbolic content of national identities, that is, the connexion between ethnic groups predating nationalisms and national identities, bringing the analysis of the complex symbolic reconstructions and appropriations of the past to the study of the nation building processes\textsuperscript{19}.

Even though modernists tend to stress more intensely the socially constructed dimension of identities, this has become a generally accepted position in any academic debate on identities\textsuperscript{20}, hence, whatever approach is chosen, nations are the result of social transformations in which predating cultures and political identities are politically structured and linked to the state. That said, it is clear that the path of nation building in Europe is extremely diverse and resists a general definition. However, coming up with typologies of national trends may be useful. In this sense, the national identity of Turkey emerges during the second half of the XIXth century, in the context of the weakening and eventual fragmentation of the Ottoman empire. In order to understand some of the aspects that Turkish nationalism and national identity will acquire, it is important to put the emergence of the national identity in its historical context. A comparative perspective such as followed by Özkirimli and Sofos\textsuperscript{21} is extremely illustrating. This is so since Turkey was not the only nation emerging from the crush of

\textsuperscript{14} Winkler (2007)
\textsuperscript{15} Winkler (2007:251) calls for an opening without restrictions towards Western political culture as main criterion
\textsuperscript{16} Delanty and Rumford (2005)
\textsuperscript{17} Smith (2001)
\textsuperscript{18} Elie Kedourie with his 1960 book \textit{Nationalism} is considered the starter of such current and Ernest Gellner in \textit{Nations and Nationalism} (1983) and Eric J. Hobsbawm in \textit{Nations and Nationalism since 1780 : programme, myth, reality} (1990) critically develop these arguments, those being two reference books in this field.
\textsuperscript{19} Smith (2001)
\textsuperscript{20} Delanty and Rumford (2005)
\textsuperscript{21} Özkirimli and Sofos (2008)
the Ottoman empire. Considering “post-imperial” national identities as a category in a
typology is particularly fruitful in this case.

The argument is here that the several nation building processes coincided in time and
space in the territories of the former Ottoman Empire. Their struggle to build clear cut
national identities in what were often ethnically diverse lands posited these emergent
national identities as irreconcilable competitors, despite being clearly similar processes.

The comparison between Greek and Turkish national projects such as Özkırımlı and
Sofos do it is particularly paying since these projects have frequently represented the
other nation as the “Other”, an enemy that makes sense out of oneself identity during
the XXth century and to some extent still do so. However, as Özkırımlı and Sofos
demonstrate, the nation building path is extremely similar in both countries.

Both nationalist projects define their nation monolithically, as one which has “always
existed” along history and whose identity is defined in essentialist terms. This pertains
to the role of language and religion, minorities, history and territory. It is surprising that
in fact Greece and Turkey followed very similar paths when dealing with this issue, the
intention being to make disappear anything that would question the idea of an
homogenous nation. Some of the key aspects were language uniformisation,
secularising the territory and boundaries of the nation (including the renaming of places)
and the neutralisation of minorities, either by “converting” them in nationals or through
expulsions. Interestingly, Turkish and Greek nationalists which viewed each other as
major enemies, cooperated in ethnic cleansing of each other’s territory, by means of
the populations exchange of 1923.

Essentialist vision of the nation: history and territory: conclusion of the section: Turkey
and some of its neighbours today in the EU have defined each other as enemies. EU
integration may obviously serve to easy the situation, even though nationalism remains
strong, but the mutual perception of enmity is certainly a major obstacle. Examples of
reconciliation may be found in the history of European construction, but they were
clearly found on the vision of “deactivating nationalism”, at least in the sense of an
aggressive perception of the other.

c. Turkey’s kemalist heritage: diverging historicity regimes:

A striking fact is that Turkey is still perceived by some public opinions as alien to
Europe whereas it has since the 1920s followed a path of Europeanisation. After the
series of defeats that lead the Ottoman Empire to its destruction following the First
World War, the Turkish republic under the leadership of Atatürk chooses to imitate the
Western powers that have defeated the Empire, and follows a programme of
westernisation and europeanisation of the political system and society.

In a sense, the fact that this westernisation was reactive and hierarchically imposed,
has made the state the guarantor of this tendency. In fact the Turkish republic chooses
the European model of its time, one which is characterised by a strong state
and nationalism, that are contained in Atatürk’s six political principles. However, today
European countries have overcome this “historicity regime” characterised by a univocal
vision of the nation and the state such as Turkish nationalism posited it, whereas

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22 Özkırımlı and Sofos (2008)
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid
passage by Atatürk in which he clearly states that it is necessary to adopt Western features in order to
avoid domination from it. Since the beginning, the project was that of a “defensive westernisation”.

Turkey remains in this regime. The most relevant argument to support this is that still today the Turkish political system remains dependent on the army.

So in a sense, the Turkish republic is situated in a European regime of historicity that however all Europe has abandoned after the Second World War, European integration contributing to a tendency that authors like Jürgen Habermas\textsuperscript{26} qualify as post national. What are the implications of such “regime of historicity”? This is an essential aspect of this paper, as it posits that it is this heritage of the 1920s that creates bigger obstacles to Turkeys Europeanisation. In a sense, this regime of historicity makes it hard to renounce sovereignty and accept the influence in intimate identity aspects of the former colonial enemies.

3. The image of the brand “Turkey” in Europe: a weak concept for an important sociological reality

This section analyses how Turkey is globally perceived by the citizens of EU member states. This notion builds on the idea of social perceptions, following the sociological approach which considers that assumptions and more generally beliefs, whether justified or not, have real social consequences.

In this sense the paper uses the notion of “brand nation” that Katynka Barysch\textsuperscript{27} applies to her analyses of EU-Turkey relations in order to develop this perspective, all remaining critical to some aspects of this approach. The main aspect in which this idea is useful for the approach this paper takes is that it considers the social perception of a country by citizens of different states, that is EU citizens perception of Turkey, the global result of a whole set of assumptions and perceptions of different economic, cultural, political and social realities. The notion of social perception (brand image in this case) adopts a “longue durée” perspective\textsuperscript{28}, that this paper has considered in the previous section.

So the centuries-long opposition between the Ottoman empire and Christianity as well as more recently the traumatic nation-building processes and opposed historicity regimes do play a role, whose exact relative importance is to be further discussed beyond the scope of this paper, in the image of Turkey that citizens of EU member states have. And even though that the history of Europe and the Ottoman Empire – Turkey is not all about differences but as well about civilisational exchanges and similarities in the nation building process, the previous section has highlighted that history and its perception negatively influences the perception of Turkey among EU citizens.

So how are social perceptions built and what are their consequences? Social perceptions are the images or understandings of social and political phenomena that individuals or groups have as a result of socially constructed interpretations of these. It means that the way in which social actors understand the world and build their opinions does not only depend on their own perception on the basis of the information they have but as well and probably mainly on the whole set of messages about the social phenomena they receive. In the case of the image they may have of a certain country, this depends among others not only on their personal or social environment relations with it, but as well on the historical and present relationships with that country, on the evaluation of its culture and on the representations of the nationals of this country. All

\textsuperscript{26} Jürgen Habermas (2001)
\textsuperscript{27} Barysch (2007)
\textsuperscript{28} Braudel (1993)
these are conveyed in the form of messages conveyed by the media, political and social actors and institutions.

Why are social perceptions important? After all, it could be said that fulfilling membership criteria pertains to a legal, economic and political transformation process on the basis of which it could be objectively determined following some technical criteria if a country complies with membership requirements or not. However, as EU integration process becomes part of the political process in the member states and increasingly politicised, public opinion at EU and member states level has to be considered when decisions concerning the path of EU integration are made.

As said above, the merit of the notion of “brand nation” is that it brings the important idea that public opinion has to be considered and that this is constructed in the public sphere, rather by an individual approach to the phenomenon. However, this paper prefers to use the notion of social perceptions for some methodological and theoretical reasons.

The problem of the brand idea is that it is too much linked to the socio-economic features of a country, as the word brand implies. On the other hand, the idea of social perceptions includes the evaluation of the longer term features, such as abovementioned. On the other hand, as Barysch says, the brand cannot be easily transformed, but analysing social perceptions pays bigger attention to the strategies to create perceptions and opinions, which include issues such as public opinion campaigns and finally even manipulation, hence puts bigger emphasis in the socially constructed aspects, whereas using the notion of “brand” relates to an individual perception.

This is important because it pays attention to the strategies aiming at the creation of such perceptions by social actors. So, even though the notion of social perception considers on the one hand the longer term, and thus could seem somewhat immutable, it involves as well the analysis of how they can be shaped as well by social actors / coalitions.

The next section studies the diverse perceptions of Turkey in different EU countries. The fourth one considers today’s europeanisation process in Turkey as a major social transformation that can transform the social perceptions on Turkey in the EU.

4. Reasons for the branding and perceptions of accession perspectives in different European countries

As Katynka Barysch points out, European public opinions on Turkey are different. And this is because they are formed following different assumptions. It can be argued that these assumptions do in fact represent different understandings of what Turkey in the EU means for the EU project and identity.

a. Issues of the debate: geography, history, religion, immigrants, economy, politics and the power balance in the EU.

Several issues appear in the European debate on Turkey. In fact, they can be basically regrouped in three sets: geopolitical arguments pertaining to the perception of the

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29 Barysch (2007:2)
30 Two main references are used for this section: Barysch et al. (2005) and Barysch (2007). As well as a good summary of the situation of the public debates on Turkey’s EU membership in 2007 in France, Germany, the Netherlands, United Kingdom, Spain, Greece, Armenia and Turkey itself, which can be found at: [http://www.arte.tv/fr/histoire-societe/regards-croises/Regards-croises-n_C2_B0-8/1858122.html](http://www.arte.tv/fr/histoire-societe/regards-croises/Regards-croises-n_C2_B0-8/1858122.html)
geographical position of Turkey as well as to the functioning of the EU in day to day, historical and identity arguments, which tend to point out to the differences between Turkey and most EU countries and arguments pertaining to the socio-economic disparities between the EU and the applicant country.

However, not all of these arguments play a role in the formation of the social perceptions on Turkey. Moreover, each of them may be used in alternative senses, a good example being immigration. Whereas for some the fact that Turkey is a country with a young population is an argument in its favour, for others this arises the fear that more immigrants will be attracted to countries which already host a good number of immigrants and in which public opinion has become sensitive to this issue.

This is why it is difficult to hold a pan European debate on the issue of the accession of Turkey to the European Union. Although the arguments can be thought at the EU level, in fact Turkey is perceived differently according to the geopolitical, historical and sociological experiences between each EU member state and Turkey. This has to be taken into account whenever Turkey proceeds to reforms, it needs to know which aspects of its membership pose problem to each member state

b. The new “Turkish threat”: identity perceptions in some “old” European countries.

To begin with, it is evident that despite many official positions, Turkish religious majority is problematic for a part of the public opinion. In this sense, Turkey is presented as a Muslim country that will both bring the EU closer to the middle East, creating borders with Iran, Iraq and Syria and attract Muslim immigrants to the EU.

It is then an identity based fear, in that it presents a fear of the EU being submerged with Muslim immigrants, changing the national and local identities. Moreover, it is coupled with a fear of losing the sense of European integration, in that a more diverse EU will be more difficult to integrate.

The countries which represent this position more clearly are France, Germany and Austria. In these countries both public opinion and political leaders coincide in rejecting an eventual Turkish accession. In fact it may well be that the reasons are different among the public and the officials, however the position of the political elites is unlikely to change as long as the public opinion is strongly concerned.

c. Turkey as a major geopolitical chance: a “cold” reading in Spain, Italy, Poland and United Kingdom

There is another set of countries in which the governments are favourable, even though there is not a very strong public debate. That is, Turkish accession seems to appear as a classical EU politics affair in which national public opinions are not very eager to participate. The common characteristic is that the governments of these countries have a geopolitical approach to the possible Turkish accession, which however is not primarily concerned with the geopolitics of the Union as a whole but with how much Turkey would fit into their view of the Union.

31 Barysch (2007:3)
32 Barysch (2007)
34 Even though the recent suppression of the French constitutional provision for a referendum on any new accession may be a symptom that French political class is open to reconsider its position.
The first of these countries is the United Kingdom. In fact for the British government Turkish accession does not pose a particular problem in that in the present situation Turkey would not change the nature of the EU. In this perspective, Turkish accession would serve to create a larger internal market and could entail its extension towards the Middle East. Moreover, Turkey being an ally in NATO, it would ensure that when EU countries want to act together in foreign policy they can find grounds for agreement.

A second set of countries are Spain and Italy. For these two governments, the main issue is to balance the southern dimension of the European Union, that allegedly turned North and East in the last three enlargements. In this sense, in many aspects, such as agriculture or environment, these countries are likely to share interests. Moreover, in geopolitical terms these countries seem to prefer engaging with Turkey in the EU and expecting to have a positive impact in the Muslim World rather than leaving it to the Barcelona process or the eventual Union for the Mediterranean.

Finally, Poland’s attitude towards Turkey is as well characteristic of a geopolitical reading of enlargement. On the one hand, as a recent member of the EU, Poland is rather favourable to extending membership, as a way of extending the benefits of the EU to the neighbours of the EU. Secondly, Poland is strongly in favour of Ukraine’s accession, for a whole set of security, economic and energy security reasons. In a sense it tends to link both processes, and it has not to be forgotten that Poland counts on Turkey as an alternative supply route thanks to the Nabucco pipeline project. Finally, Poland’s security strategy relies strongly on NATO, and Turkish accession would allegedly strengthen the position of the atlanticist countries in the EU.

It is interesting to think that according to the debate abovementioned Spain and Italy on the one hand and Poland could have had good reasons to be reluctant towards Turkish accession: in fact Spain and Italy can be counted among the most pro integration countries, whereas Poland has hold in some summits the position that the EU should clearly state its Christian identity, not to mention the fact that Turkey would be a competitor for structural funds. However, it seems that for all these countries the positive perspectives deriving from Turkish membership outnumber the eventual threats. It may as well be important to consider that the experience of these countries public opinions with Turkey is more based on history that on present realities, particularly considering that only in Great Britain there is a significant number of Turkish immigrants. In fact, it may be worth researching how far the image of Turkish immigrants (and Muslims in general) in France, Germany, Austria and the Netherlands influences the public’s opinion on Turkey. If this was confirmed it would diminish the importance of the historical discourse.

d. Turkey: dangerous and promising neighbour

A last interesting position is that of a group of countries which emerged from the Ottoman Empire in the XIXth and XXth centuries. These are countries who still have important identity conflicts with Turkey (see section 2), and for some of them still open confrontations, such as Armenia and Cyprus. One could think that these countries would be opposed to the Turkish accession to the EU as a way of avoiding this country gaining international legitimacy in their disputes. However, it is remarkable that Greece, Cyprus and Armenia (the Armenian position being the most recent) support the entry of Turkey into the EU.

This is the most interesting aspect of the Europeanisation process: the calculation of these countries is that if Turkey maintains its will to join the EU it will have to conduct a whole set of reforms to comply with the Copenhaguen criteria and its political system.

35 Spain and Italy, victors in Lepanto, have had as many conflicts with Turkey as Austria
will be modified in such a way that it will become a more stable, willing to cooperate with its neighbours and free of the feeling of being encircled by enemies.\footnote{Laçiner (2005)}

5. Europeanisation: is Turkey ready to go through a deep transformation?

If Turkey takes seriously its accession bid, it needs to enter in a Europeanisation process. This includes the implementation of the “acquis communautaire” as a main issue, but the main challenge is to become and to be perceived as a member apt and interested to fully participate in the European integration process. Transforming social perceptions and preparing for membership are mutually reinforcing processes.

The advantages and risks of Turkey’s membership of the EU as well as the problems and advantages for the candidate have been thoroughly discussed in the EU and in Turkey.\footnote{{Uğur and Canefe (2004)}}. The aim of this and the next section is not to examine such debate, not even the coalitions advocating for and against membership in Turkey and the EU. Its double objective is on the one hand to discuss the identity implications of Turkish accession for both the EU and Turkey and on the other to know whether this process can transform the social perceptions in a sense that would make Turkish application acceptable for EU public opinions.

a. Europeanisation: an open notion for an open project

As the EU has gained competences and became more and more political, its influence on national politics and administrations has become evident. Academic interest has followed in the notion of Europeanisation. Its aim is to study the “processes of (a) construction (b) diffusion and (c) institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, ‘ways of doing things’ and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of EU decisions and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures and public policies.”\footnote{Radaelli (2000:3-4)}

The aim is not to discuss this concept here, but to use it as a paradigm to study the identity implications of the Turkish accession to the EU. In fact, according to this notion, the interest is not so much to discuss about the nature of europaness, but about the processes in which European features are constructed. Hence, this paper posits that Turkey’s accession bid needs to be evaluated on the light of its ability to adopt the EU norms and identity, that is, to engage in a complete europeanisation process. The following paragraphs try to analyse what are the core elements of this process and to which extent Turkey can engage in such process.

The EU is by its nature an open project. Although a debate on Europe’s finality and identity is called by some political leaders, the fact is that the nature of European integration is that of a “work in process.”\footnote{Nicolaïdis (2007)} Europeans share an identity as a result of history and culture, however the link between this identity and EU integration is not clear.\footnote{Delanty and Rumford (2005)} Moreover, it can be argued that European integration is a process which contributes to the creation of a common identity among the states and peoples it concerns, and that enlargement is a core element of the EU project.\footnote{Habermas (2001). An interesting perspective is to consider that EU identity is built in the exchanges among Europeans that are faced with common interests and challenges. The debate on the specific European response to those would be a strong incentive for European identity.}
There has been enormous debate about the pros and cons of the Turkish accession to the EU and about its strategic implications. However, this debate needs to take into account the public opinion implications of Turkey's Europeanisation. The question of the "borders of Europe" is relevant in this aspect. The discussion about Turkey's accession is paying as it unveils a series of assumptions on European values, borders and identity. According to some authors, Turkey would blur European identity and would not contribute to a clearer stance of the EU in the world, as it increases cultural and political heterogeneity and is expected to be reluctant to pool sovereignty. An alternative position is the one which considers that every country which shares the values can access the EU, whose aims are open. The position that this paper takes is that both are normative positions, and that the Europeanisation approach permits to apply the provisions of the Treaty, that is, a combination of geographical criteria (European countries) and political ones (that share its values). It is true that the exact geographical position of Turkey is problematic, however, Europe's borders are unclear. The Helsinki 1999 summit decision to admit the Turkish candidacy is consistent with its recognition as a European state since 1949.

b. Identity implications of the Europeanisation process:

Accession negotiations are today open with Turkey, even though only in a limited number of chapters of the "acquis communautaire", the rest being blocked following Turkey's refusal to recognise Cyprus. This represents the complexity of the Europeanisation process in a triple sense. Firstly, it is hard to call negotiations to the process Turkey is following today, in that in fact those are bilateral commissions analysing how far Turkey's legislation is in line with community law in all the sectors of European integration, the only margin of negotiation being the interpretation of the legal provisions and eventual temporary derogations. Secondly, the accession process implies not only legal, but as well highly sensitive political and identity issues. What is finally discussed is to what extent a candidate is ready to pool sovereignty in a big number of areas, and to share a set of values that pertain to the intimate dimension of identity. Thirdly, although a candidate is formally examined on the ground of its legal and administrative adaptation to the EU, as it was said above, Europeanisation is not limited to the adoption of community legislation but as well to which extent the legal provisions are a reality in the country.

In fact Turkey has gone through a fast and politically difficult process of reforms which concern both "low and high politics" issues. Since membership of the EU implies adopting EU legislation and respecting the Copenhagen criteria, both issues are closely scrutinised in the accession negotiations. However, despite the strong commitment showed by Turkey to EU integration, in the last one year and a half the pace of reforms seems to have slowed. This may well be the result of a distrust into

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42 Nicolaïdis (2007), Rupnik (2007)  
43 Just to mention a few good reviews from different points of view, Barysch (2007), Winkler (2007), Laçiner (2005)  
45 Nicolaïdis (2007)  
46 Independent commission on Turkey (2004)  
47 Independent Commission on Turkey (2004). Turkey is a member of other regional European organisations such as the Council of Europe.  
48 Visier (2006: 136)  
49 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Turkey (2001), Çarkoğlu (2004) and Independent Commission on Turkey (2004) recall some of the major reforms such as the abolition of the death penalty, safeguards against torture, granting the right to use languages other than Turkish in broadcasting and education etc. Çarkoğlu (2004) shows that internal consensus on these reforms was not always granted.  
50 According to the European Commission (2007)
the EU’s intentions, concerning the final decision of accession. The fact that the new French president is clearly against EU accession for Turkey together with the negative opinions in some countries, may have caused that the government does not want to convey difficult reforms that may finally not pay off.

Furthermore, the reforms lying ahead may be still the most difficult ones, since all the reforms approved need be implemented, and some of them may still be quite incomplete. Moreover, a decision will have to be taken concerning Cyprus, which is a decisive question on identity, that is, on the role that the Turkish republic attributes itself in the defence of the Turkish minority. And for most Europeans Turkey’s attitude towards Armenia, even though not a legal requisite for EU accession, may be considered a test to engage in the logic of reconciliation that Europe has followed after 1945.

All this represents a phenomenal challenge. Turkey is now located in a window of opportunity, since the AKP seems to have engaged in a project of “aggiornamento” of the inspiration and heritage of the Republic. In this sense, the recent reform of article 301 of the Turkish penal code that has been used to curtail freedom of expression has to be understood in the light of the pending demand on a ban over the AKP and its leaders. In the next months Turkey will have to debate and decide whether it is ready to proceed to the deep transformation that joining the EU will demand.

The way in which the nation was built still has an effect on Turkey’s identity. In that sense, it is important to consider that Turkish political system is strongly structured around the state institutions and services, that protect the kemalist vision of the Turkish identity. That makes the adoption of some of the reforms implied by the accession to the EU much more difficult.

The difficulty lies in that the kemalist heritage is well present in Turkey’s collective mentality and identity. As Ali Çarkoğlu recalls, a significant part of the Turkish population was against the necessary reforms for entering the EU. Interestingly enough, a large majority of Turks during the period is in favour of acceding the EU. Which seems to mean that those who wish to join the EU and consider that Turkey belongs into Europe, do not share some of the core aspects of the present European project concerning value issues.

Arguably, this is the result of the kemalist position on Turkish identity. The project of the Turkish republic is a modernisation one, often implying military interventions to ensure that the country would not abandon the pro-western orientation. In order to achieve the national secular project, any religious or ethnic group challenging the view of an homogenous Turkish republic has countered by the state. As it was said in section one, in fact this corresponds to a western and European tendency, which is that of the construction of the nation states. However today’s Europe is characterised by a conscious demobilisation of nationalism. Whether one adheres or not to Habermas post-national thesis, it can be said that the EU is today more than an international organisation, as it has engaged in a constitutionalisation process and an debate about

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51 Visier (2006: 137) points out that those who, arguably, would benefit the most from EU accession, business associations, are in favour of revising the “orthodox” kemalist doctrine that implies a centralised and somewhat monolithic state (Özkırımlı and Sofos 2008). On the other hand, one finds the “guardians of orthodoxy”.
52 Fokas (2004)
53 Çarkoğlu (2004:28). According to data from 2001-2003, a majority of Turks tended to disagree with lifting the death penalty, and allowing education and broadcasting in languages other than Turkish.
54 Ibid. p. 23. See also Visier (2006: 133)
55 Shaw and Shaw (1987)
56 Özkırımlı and Sofos (2008)
its popular foundations that require that national identities enter into a new logic, be it mutual recognition or cosmopolitanism\textsuperscript{57}.

The reforms which have been done and are going on demonstrate that the kemanlist heritage is open to reform, and that it can become an inspiration more than a guide. Two questions remain then for the conclusion section: under which circumstances can Turkey adopt such reform agenda and will it convince the Europeans to admit Turkey into the EU?

6. Conclusion: will successful Europeanisation be enough to transform European public opinion?

In fact, many Turks seem to assume that the EU should accept Turkey as it is, and that the contrary is a proof of the application of double standards or even that the EU is in fact a “Christian club”. This derives from not considering the identity transformations that the Europeanisation process entails. That is, even though the Union declares its respect for national identities, in fact this diversity is to exist in a context of respect for the common values and goals of the Union.

It is essential that the applicant country makes its mind concerning accession, that is, if it is ready or not to deeply transform its identity to join. If this is the case, it should need a strong determination from the political leaders to build a large political and social consensus not only for accession, but as well for the reforms that accession requires.

This is linked to the fact that Turkey is joining a pre-existing community, and that the risk of failure may remain. That means that the consensus on the identity transformation should be based on a national debate on the future of the country and not only on the will to join the EU to achieve some economic and social welfare in the mid term. In this sense, “Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has repeatedly pointed out that Turkey has to undergo sweeping reforms for its own sake, not just to ‘please Brussels’”\textsuperscript{58}. Moreover, it is on these grounds that Turkey’s accession bid will become credible, that is, it needs to create the impression that it derives from the fact that Turkey shares and is willing to share European values and identity, and not that those are a burden that Turkey is ready to assume\textsuperscript{59}.

It comes then to the EU. This paper has dealt with the process of Europeanisation in Turkey, rather on what EU leaders should do to convince public opinions, which is a topic on which much can be said. However, the approach is that if Turkey conducts the reforms and slowly engages in a full Europeanisation process, that is, accepting an identity transformation, public opinions in the EU is likely to change. In this sense the paper disagrees once again of the “brand nation” approach. In such approach, the “brand” is primarily the result of a whole set of social images that are difficult to transform and in which politics play a minor role. However, the social perception approach allows to link Turkish and European identity: if Turkey is perceived as in line with the emerging European identity, that is, no journalists are prosecuted and the Republic of Cyprus is duly recognised, Turkey will be duly recognised as a “member of the family” rather than as an outsider willing to join a group to which it does not belong. Not surprisingly, this requires that the debate on Turkey’s accession becomes

\textsuperscript{57} Delanty and Rumford (2005)
\textsuperscript{58} Independent Comission on Turkey (2004:19).
\textsuperscript{59} Fokas (2004:164) In this sense, Mr. Erdogan’s position goes in the sense of not using anymore the argument of the eventual destabilisation of the country if it does not join, even though obviously in most of the enlargements the geopolitical interest of the EU was to stabilise a certain region, as it is the case for Turkey as well.
European and linked to the EU project as a whole, rather than a debate on national fears.

It needs to be admitted that accession would still depend on the responsibility of national political leaders. It may be that public opinion in say Austria or France does not change enough or is worried about different issues if called to a referendum. However, in that case if Turkey has undergone this Europeanisation process for its own sake and on the grounds of a strong social and political consensus, this will be disappointing, but easy solvable in the medium term. A successful accession requires that Turkey sees Europeanisation as a goal and EU membership as its more or less immediate consequence, rather than the opposite.

Bibliography:


