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Turkey and the EU: A 'new' European identity in the making?

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Abstract

This paper conducts an ontological inquiry into the identity of the European Union, and seeks to establish whether its core identity is of a cultural or political nature through looking at the debate generated by Turkey's application for EU membership. The concepts of 'the other', the nation-state and a secularism rooted in Christianity contributes towards a peculiar culturalist understanding of the EU project both on the left and on the right side of the political spectrum. The debate also demonstrates that there is a gap between what the EU ought to be judging from its fundamental documents, and what kind form of the EU 'Europe' is ready for. The liberal idea of the EU being a purely political union based on Kantian ideals will require a whole new language for talking about Europe.

Keywords: EU, Turkey, European identity, Kant, enlargement, the other.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	
1. Introduction	1
2. The EU and cultural identity	3
(1) The Uniqueness of European Culture	3
(2) The Other	7
(3) The Nation-State	8
(4) Secularism	9
3. The EU and political identity	11
(1) Kant and the European Union	12
(2) The Lack of a Kantian Ambition	14
(3) Articulating a Political Identity for the EU	16
4. Discussion	18
(1) European Diversity	19
(2) The European Consensus	20
(3) The Cultural Trap	23
5. Conclusion	24
References	

Turkey and the EU: A 'new' European identity in the making?

1. Introduction

'The EU is in the process of building a civilization in which Turkey has no place', stated the European Christian Democrats to the Financial Times in 1997 (EU Center of University of North Carolina). And yet, two years later in Helsinki the European Council granted Turkey full candidate status. Today, negotiations over Turkey's accession are only symbolically moving, with several chapters of the *acquis* effectively blocked. Vocal opposition is heard in Paris, Berlin and especially in the group of Christian Democratic parties in the European Parliament. The public opinion polls conducted by Eurobarometer reveal widespread scepticism and opposition towards Turkey. In other words, Turkey's relationship with the EU has proved to be a divisive issue and has demonstrated that '(...) Europe (is) actually the torn country' (Casanova, 2003). But what exactly is it that makes Europe torn? Or to be more precise: what exactly is it that makes the European Union so torn when it comes to Turkey?

Turkey raises questions concerning the identity of the EU and consequently, questions about the EU's direction and underlying rationale. This goes a long way in explaining the uneasy atmosphere surrounding Turkey's membership bid. With Turkey's now long-standing bid for EU membership, the EU is pushed to test the limits of its universalist language and self-understanding: is the EU the offspring of a tradition of cosmopolitanism as formulated by Immanuel Kant? Or is the EU despite the oratory a closed club for Christian states located in between the Urals and the Atlantic? These are two radically different conceptions of what the EU is or ought to be, but adding to that is also the problem that only the Kantian or cosmopolitan

Turkey and the EU

understanding of the EU fits with Europe's self-understanding as being a unique space of Enlightenment.

The EU can be seen as the attempt to bring about that specific European identity that the Enlightenment promised. Thus Turkey's bid for EU membership presents a two-fold challenge: first, it exposes tensions within the EU as to what the EU ought to be and secondly, for the opponents of Turkish membership the challenge is to construct their opposition in ways that does not impinge on their self-image as enlightened Europeans. Turkey's bid for EU membership forcefully calls for an ontological inquiry into the nature of the EU.

On a pragmatic level, the arguments against Turkey joining the EU cover a wide range of themes, from economics to demographics to domestic political problems with democratization and human rights. Turkey is perceived by many as being 'too big, too poor and too different' (Verney, 2007; Redmond, 2007). However, upon closer inspection most of the pragmatic arguments do not hold. Especially since the AKP came to power in 2001, Turkey has undergone sweeping reforms and is well underway towards meeting the Copenhagen criteria, challenges notwithstanding (Müftüler Bac, 2005). Furthermore, the focus on actual implementation of reforms and not just promises thereof and passing of legislation is stronger with Turkey than it has been with previous candidate countries (Verney, 2007). It is therefore justified to look beyond the pragmatic arguments centring on energy security and strategic interest; if pragmatism was all there was to EU enlargement, Turkey would be in already. It is not that Turkey is too big or too poor for the EU, the main concern from the opponents of Turkish membership is that it is too different.

This paper will argue that it is possible to identify the EU's real self understanding as being of a Christian-culturalist kind through looking at the discourse on Turkey's bid for EU membership. This self-understanding is prevalent among both proponents and opponents of Turkey's accession, and it is in particular the European concept of secularism that makes it difficult for many Europeans to embrace Turkey. Casanova argues that the European tradition of Enlightenment-thinking, still vastly influential, correlates the decline of religion with progress and the attainment of normality.

Secularism signifies progress and modernity while religion becomes a sign of stagnation and of being unenlightened (Casanova, 2003). Turkey has not gone through a Christianity-inspired period of Enlightenment and thus does not live the *Christian* secularism that most EU-countries live today. No wonder Turkey's bid for EU membership has proven to be contentious: not only is the country a classic "Other" in it being predominantly Muslim; for liberal proponents of Turkey joining, its membership bid also requires a radical rethink of European secularism. Fundamentally, the debate highlights how Christian Europe still is, also when it is secular. This why the liberal secular elites are equally haunted by '...unspoken, "cultural" requirements...' as the Christian Democrats when they address the question of Turkish EU membership (Casanova, 2003; p.29).

According to Samuel Huntington, for a country to take on a new civilizational identity it is crucial that '...the dominant elements in the host civilization, in most cases the West, have to be willing to embrace the convert.' (Casanova, 2003 Huntington, p.129). The EU's indecisiveness regarding Turkey stems from it not yet having made up its mind as to what kind of civilization it wants to aspire towards; one based on a Kantian, cosmopolitan political identity or one based on culture?

Further complicating Turkey's road towards the EU, and connected to the above, is the question of exactly to what extent the idea of homogeneity acts as an underlying premise of the EU-project. To what extent is the ideal of a homogenous nation-state still part of the EU's DNA? The current political climate in Europe suggests that cultural homogeneity remains a strong desire. Turkey, being the ultimate Other as a predominantly Muslim country, suffers the consequences of this.

At the outset, it needs to be clarified how I use the concept of identity. This is not a paper about how to create a 'common European identity' with which citizens of the European Union can affiliate. Arguably, the EU is already (a small) part of EU citizens' multilayered social identities in that they have a sense of attachment to it, be it positive or negative (Kohli, 2000). Instead I am interested in looking at the concept of the identity *of* the EU, that is, by which features it wants to be recognised and by which it is calling itself to be. Kohli points out that it is the process of modern state-

Turkey and the EU

building that mostly influences the creation of a European identity (Kohli, 2000), and as 'EU identity' and 'European identity' are in most discussion treated as synonyms I contend that this is an observation also relevant to the building of a European Union identity and profile. Indeed, the processes of constructing a EU identity and a European identity overlap. But accounting for the organic form of social identity it is the attempt at an EU identity or profile that has the highest chance of success, as it is essentially about deciding on the underlying rationale of its institutions. This is a perspective informed by political science and philosophy, not social psychology.

2. The EU and cultural identity

Recalling that the European Christian Democrats argue that 'the EU is in the process of building a civilization in which Turkey has no place' (EU Center of University of North Carolina, retrieved 18.8.2009), it is pertinent to look at upon which basis, if any, the EU can construct an identity based on cultural affiliation and belonging by making Europe a concrete, delineated object. In short, what is unique about Europe?

The discourse on an EU identity based on culture makes explicit reference to 'history' and 'heritage' as ways to delineate Europe. It is a discourse that sees culture as an artefact of the past, not as a complex interplay of language, religion, economics, art, lifestyles, feelings and opinions (Zentrum für Europäische Gemeinschaft, 1992). In order to better understand the opposition which argues that Turkey is "too different" to become a member of the EU, I will in the following sections address the presumed uniqueness of European culture with a special emphasis on secularism before exploring how this spills over into the arguments against Turkey's accession to the EU.

(1) The Uniqueness of European Culture

As leader for the German Christian-Democratic Party *CDU*, Angela Merkel in 2004 wrote in the German newspaper *Die Welt* that ' The EU is more than an economic association. It is a political and economic union of the states and peoples of Europe,

(and it is) based on a value-system that has historical roots' (Merkel, 16.10.2004, own translation). The article was devoted to the idea that short of granting Turkey full membership of the EU, it should instead be offered a 'privileged partnership'. Turkey is according to this position not seen to be sharing the historical roots that the rest of the EU has in common; it is seen as a politically, culturally and historically Other. What are these roots that make it possible to claim that Europe is and must continue to be a presumably culturally homogenous entity?

Although it is by now commonplace to argue that the most prominent feature of Europe is its diversity (Delanty, 1995; Judt, 2007; Pocock, 1997), it is equally commonplace to invoke the idea of a pan-European heritage stretching from Ancient Greece and the Roman Empire through Christianity up to the Enlightenment (Federici, 1995; Mazower, 1998; Scruton, 2002). These historical experiences, it is argued, have left unique marks on the European mind. The synthesis of the Jewish and the Greco-Roman tradition is thought especially influential as it enabled the coexistence of instrumental rationality (*techne*) with coherence rationality (*logos*), explaining what one author thinks is the particular dynamism of the West as opposed to other parts of the world (Flis, 1997). Furthermore, Flis argues that Christianity enabled an anthropocentric and active worldview not possible within Eastern religions, inducing in the Western and European man an attitude of domination and supremacy (*ibid.*). Christianity in Europe is therefore first and foremost '...a civilizational idea, political culture and lifestyle' (Yilmaz, 2007, p.298). It is, in short, all-encompassing.

The idea of Europe shares with Christianity the idea of a redemptive end, an end characterised by unity. Up until the early modern period the idea of Europe was articulated in relation to Latin Christendom and against Islam; with the onset of modernity, the dichotomy between Islam and Christianity was replaced by the dichotomy between civilization and nature (Delanty, 1995). For the philosophers of the Enlightenment, civilization was the aim and Europe the model (Federici, 1995). Hegel explicitly stated that 'history moves from East to West, for Europe is the

Turkey and the EU

absolute end of history' (ibid.). Delanty argues that this idea of being at the centre has been the most enduring form of Western and European identity (Delanty, 1995).

What characterises Europe at the end of history? The Copenhagen criteria stipulates that in order to become a member of the EU, the candidate country must meet three criteria that must be common to all states 'European'. Firstly, there are the political criteria of (1) *stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities*; secondly, the economic criteria calls for the (2) *existence of a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union* and finally, a candidate country must demonstrate its (3) *acceptance of the Community acquis: ability to take on the obligations of membership, including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union* (www.europa.eu). These are not features that have always characterized Europe; it is enough to recall feudalism, Communism, Fascism and the lack of universal suffrage until the 20th century; instead, these are features that are *meant* to characterize the Europe of the idea of Europe. The EU is an attempt at Europe as it is thought that it ought to be. They are not empirical facts or shared history; rather, they are normative ends. The term 'a common European identity' is thus a term only of instrumental use, a political tool (Zentrum für Turkeistudien, 1992).

A European Union dominated by democracy, human rights, rule of law, minority protection and a market economy seems at a first glance to be a political union only, without any definitive cultural characteristics. Its principles are phrased in a universal language owing to the European enlightenment. And yet: although Turkey is well underway towards fulfilling the Copenhagen criteria it is kept at bay. It seems to have hit the glass ceiling of '(...) the unspoken "cultural" requirements (...)'

 (Casanova, 2003). It is these unspoken cultural requirements that form the fundament of a European cultural identity. In the following section I will argue that three impulses in particular inform the cultural requirements that in the realm of political correctness remain unarticulated (although decreasingly so); the concept of the Other, the homogenous nation-state and finally, a uniquely European understanding of secularism.

(2) *The Other*

While it can be argued that Turkey has been in Europe since the fall of Constantinople in 1453 (Delanty, 1995), public opinion within the EU displays strong doubts over Turkey's bid for formal membership of 'Europe' through the EU. The 2005 Standard Eurobarometer showed that in EU-27, one out of two respondents are opposed to Turkey joining the EU; 54 % thinks that the cultural differences between the EU and Turkey are too many to allow for accession, although 55% also agrees that Turkey 'partly belongs to Europe by its geography'. The same report goes on to show that the opposition is strongest within the EU-15 (Eurobarometer, 2005). Although history displays that Turkey has always been in Europe, the argument that it is also *of* Europe and part and parcel of the idea of Europe appears to be less attractive and thus less convincing to the public of the European Union.

The notion that Turkey is *in* but not *of* Europe is not a new one. Arguing that since Turkey has historically been Europe's significant Other due to its military might, physical proximity and a strong religious, rivaling tradition, Neumann also finds that it is Europe's constitutive Other, especially with respect to state-building (Neumann, 1998). Turks were not only *some* among other barbarians, they were instead positively recognized as Muslims and thus as representatives of Islam, a religion too similar to Christianity to *not* be perceived as a threat (Neumann, 1998). But history is a long time ago, and yet the image of Turkey in the European public mind is still that of a negatively construed Other. How is this negativity perpetuated?

In a round-table discussion titled 'EU-Turkey relations: the media perspective', moderated by the editor of the Financial Times, Quentin Peel, participants argued that overall, Turkey is more likely to get media-coverage when the news can be construed in the negative (Turkey-EU Relations: the media perspective, 19 March 2009). Neumann argues that '*in as much as European identity is tied to the existence of (a constitutive) Other, (...) European representations of that Other will necessarily be marked by that very fact*' (Neumann, 1998, p.41). Media-coverage aside, Lauren McLaren has demonstrated that to a large extent, popular opposition to Turkey's EU bid is

Turkey and the EU

strongest in countries with large Turkish immigrant populations (McLaren, 2007). The continued experience of Turkey as Europe's Other is therefore kept alive through an interplay of representations of prejudice and actual experiences.

Turkey's 'otherness' is essentially derived from the dichotomy between Islam and Christendom. Religion remains the major cultural difference between the EU and Turkey – significantly so because Christian religious roots are also the one factor that all the EU-27 states unambiguously have in common (Zentrum für Türkeistudien, 1992). This is why a cultural EU identity would inevitably be an identity rooted expressly in Christianity. In the following two sections I will explore how Turkey as the Other is perpetuated by the subtle presence of Christianity in two other movements that have been influential in shaping today's Europe and the EU.

(3) The Nation-State

The nation-state system grew out of the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, originally to limit the sovereignty of rulers to a specific territory, and to end the ravaging religious wars (Pagden, 2002). But although it was religion that prompted the division of the territory into separate states, Christianity remained as the one common denominator that enabled a sense of unity between the disparate parts of Europe, if only in opposition to non-Christians (Stråth, 2002). That this fragile unity rested on religion, the very factor that had also proved a splitting force, and in combination with the failure of Christianity to strongly consolidate Europe, may explain why from the late Middle Ages the idea of Europe slowly replaced Christianity as the common framework of reference for 'Europe' (Delanty, 1995). The growth of the idea of the nation-state as a culturally coherent entity thus took place against the background of a unity increasingly articulated along non-religious lines. The language of Christianity was projected onto 'Europe' instead; Christianity was replaced with 'civilization', Islam replaced with 'barbarians' (Delanty, 1995). But whereas the language of unity on a European level was secularized, the nation-state left a significant imprint on the European mind; the belief that unity and peace requires cultural and hence religious homogeneity.

The belief in homogeneity was reiterated at Versailles in 1919, and has again come to the fore with Turkey's bid for EU membership. Since Christian heritage is the only one cultural feature that all EU-27 states share it derives from this that for those who believe that cultural homogeneity is a necessary requirement for peace, religion becomes a minimal criterion for inclusion. In 2004 the then Commissioner for the Internal Market, Fritz Bolkestein, said that '(...) if Turkey accedes to the EU, then this means that the efforts of the German, Austrian and Polish troops that resisted the Ottoman's Turks siege of Vienna in 1683 would be in vain.' (Müftüler Bac, 2004). The battle of Vienna was decisive in ending the expansion of the Ottomans into Europe and is by the Catholic Church commemorated as a victory of Christian Europe over the Muslim Ottomans with the feast of the Holy Name of Mary (Holweck, 1911). Bolkestein's comment shows that religion and history remain a substantial challenge for Turkey.

Delanty argues that ' the search for new principles of European legitimacy is inextricably bound up with the attempt to create a space in which collective identities can be formed.' (Delanty, 1995, p.viii). The successful creation of collective identities has in Europe taken place within the confines of the nation-state, itself a concept based on the idea of homogeneity. This view also informs contemporary thinking about democracy, a concept which historically is seen to depend on homogeneity (Jackson-Preece, 2008). Taken together, the historical experience of the nation-state and the tradition of thinking Turkey as Europe's significant Other provide a strong mental obstacle to accepting Turkey's EU bid by those who favour a cultural identity for the EU. The European version of secularism is a third feature that must be considered in order to understand the currents informing the opposition.

(4) Secularism

While the consolidation of Europe took place against the external Other and while the nation-state created conclaves of homogeneity, the idea of secularism that grew out of the relationship between the Church, the nation-state and the Enlightenment is a peculiarly European phenomena. This is why the German CDU can argue that Europe is based on the Judeo-Christian tradition *and* the Kantian Enlightenment

Turkey and the EU

(CDU, 2007), a view also found in the preamble of the European Constitution which was adopted in 2004 (Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy, 2004).

Secularism takes on its significance by being the penultimate symbol of modernity and progress. Casanova argues that in Europe, secularization means both a decline in the social significance of religion as well as in individual belief and religious practices (Casanova, 2003). Furthermore, the cognitive, political and humanist critique that the Enlightenment leveled at religion created a narrative which tied secularism tightly to the process of modernity; to be modern and progressive is to *not* be religious (ibid.; Casanova, 2006). In other words, '(...) Europeans think that they are supposed to be irreligious.' (Casanova, 2003, p.9).

The problem for Turkey is that most Europeans only know how secularism built on Christianity looks like. Adding to that is the problem that there is no *one* European model of secularism. The smallest common denominator among European states is that there is a degree of institutional autonomy between church and state, but there are variances as to how that autonomy is codified (Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy, 2004). As of 2000, 30 out of 48 European states fell into the category 'states which promote (one) religion or religious institutions' while only 17 states, among which is Turkey, were considered secular as in neither promoting nor discouraging religion. (ibid.). Consequently, what makes European secularism European is not found in its implementation but rather in its Christian and Enlightenment roots, and this is what makes Turkish secularism so difficult for European to understand and accept.

Turkish secularism can be seen in different in two ways. Firstly, it is not Christian. Secondly, Perry Anderson argues that Kemalism was a '(...) cultural revolution without a social revolution.' (Anderson, 2008). In other words, there was no endogenous experience of Enlightenment, prompting the question whether Turkish secularism is really internalized and deep enough (Huntington, 2002). It is in subtle ways like these that religion forms a major component of a cultural identity for the European Union and becomes an unwritten requirement for membership.

What I have tried to demonstrate so far is that if the European Union is to opt for a cultural identity, it will be an identity that inevitably makes references to Christianity. Christianity is, to begin with, the only empirically based feature that unambiguously is in common to the EU-27, apart from being located between the Urals and the Atlantic. Furthermore, Christianity has also informed the contemporary European understanding of secularism as well as it has played a part in the formation of the nation-state. Finally, Turkey's maybe biggest challenge is its historical role as Europe's constitutive Other.

Over and above all these European experiences is the idea of unity, an idea that has kept reoccurring for centuries, the latest expression of it being the formation of the European Union. In the following section I will explore what kind of unity a political identity inspired by Kant's philosophy has to offer.

3. The EU and political identity

From a pragmatic point of view there are many good reasons why Turkey should join the EU. There is energy-security: Turkey could link Europe to the energy markets off its northeastern borders and by doing so lessening the EU's dependence on Russia (Barysch, 2007). There is demography: Turkey's young population could boost the economy in an ageing Europe (Grabbe, 2007). Then there is the idea that Turkey could act as bridge between the West and the Muslim world (Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy, 2004). Turkish EU membership can also be seen as a golden chance to protect the EU from the threat of Eurocentrism and cultural closure (Glendinning, unpublished manuscript). These are the arguments that are most frequently used by the proponents of Turkish membership. What is striking about these arguments save the last one is that they do not specifically address the same topic as the arguments in favour of an EU based on a common heritage and culture: that of what the EU should be. Clearly anyone putting forward pragmatic arguments for Turkey joining the EU has abandoned the idea of a culture- and heritage based EU. But what is offered as an alternative?

Turkey and the EU

The founding documents of the EU as well as the Copenhagen criteria clearly put forward the EU as a political union. Article 49 of the Treaty of the European Union says that 'any European state' is eligible to apply for EU membership (TEU, article 49). By not defining 'European' beyond demanding adherence to the political Copenhagen criteria and the values of the Union it embraces the notion that Europe is an idea more than a fixed territory. For those who put forward pragmatic reasons for letting Turkey in, this appears to be taken for granted. And yet; the heated debate over whether Turkey should join or not proves that the political identity of the EU cannot by any means be taken for granted. By failing to articulate what it means for the EU to take on a political identity rather than a cultural one, it is the advocates of the latter that get to set the premises of the debate. The failure of the proponents of Turkey joining the EU to not use the debate to offer a vision of an appealing political identity is all too evident.

In the following I will argue that the formal framework for a political identity for the EU is already in place. The EU, I will show, is heavily influenced by the political writings of Immanuel Kant and this provides a rich background against which a political identity for the EU can be articulated and elaborated.

(1) *Kant and the European Union*

Article 3 of TEU states that '*The Union's aims are to promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples.*' (TEU, art.3). But to follow Pagden in arguing that the objective of peace solely is what makes the EU Kantian comes across as too easy a conclusion (Pagden, 2002); many roads lead to peace but not all of them deserve the label Kantian. It is the EU's compatibility with Kant's three definitive articles as described in *Perpetual Peace* that makes the EU Kantian. However, Pagden is right to note that the objective of peace is essential since fundamentally, the definitive principles are means towards establishing a federation which aim is to secure peace through law-governed relations.

Kant's first definitive in *Perpetual Peace* article states that '*The Civil Constitution of Every State Shall be Republican*' (Kant, 1991, p.99). Republicanism here refers to

separation of powers and representative government; in other words, it is a version of contemporary democracy despite Kant's desire to distinguish between republicanism and democracy. All member-states of the EU are democratic in this sense and, according to article 49 of the Treaty on European Union, candidate countries must also respect the principle of democracy in order to be eligible to apply for membership (art.49, TEU).

Is it a problem that the EU itself as of yet does not have a republican system of governance? Yes and no. On the no side, the federation that Kant envisaged did not necessarily aspire to acquire state powers; instead it was conceived of as a system of binding states together for the purpose of peace. So a liberal reading of the first definitive article requires that *states* are republican and says nothing about the structure of the federation they form. However, it follows from this reasoning the more the EU takes on state powers as in having a say over domestic issues, the more of a problem it is that it itself is not republican. While acknowledging this I still hold that the EU is compatible with Kant's first article on the grounds that democracy as in non-despotic rule is a necessary condition for joining the EU.

Kant's second definitive article concerns the nature of the federation and stipulates that '*the Right of Nations shall be based on a Federation of Free States*' (Kant, 1991,p.102). What does Kant mean by free states? In essence, a state should be free from interference as concerns its constitution and government and therefore, given the extent of legislation made at EU-level, one can argue that this condition is violated. However, the crucial aspect is that in a Kantian federation all states are *equal*; that is why it is a federation and not a state, the latter marked by a relationship between inferiors and superiors. In this respect, given the formal equality of EU member-states the EU is also compatible with Kant's second definitive article, although it must be recognised that the procedure of qualified majority voting does to a certain extent infringe on absolute equality. The purpose of the Kantian federation is to escape the state of nature, and so a degree of common legislation is essential while its rightfulness hinges on the condition that it is created by equals (Kant, 1991). It is also important to consider the point that the EU in many respects goes beyond Kant's

Turkey and the EU

imagined federation. Even if in certain areas all states are not actually equal because of qualified majority voting the system is marked by formal equality as expressed article 4(2) of TEU: *'The Union shall respect the equality of Member States before the Treaties (...)'*.

Kant's third and final definitive article states that *'Cosmopolitan Right shall be limited to Conditions of Universal Hospitality'* (Kant, 1991, p.105). This implies that while every man has a right to freely migrate as he pleases, there is no automatic right to residence. Since Kant did not believe in the feasibility of an international *state* I will argue that it is possible to think of this restriction as also applying to citizens of states *within* the federation. In this line of reasoning the EU applies the cosmopolitan right generously within its borders through right to free movement and the abolition of border controls. While internal freedom has been coupled with external closure, the latter may not automatically be incompatible with cosmopolitanism. However, for external closure to be compatible with cosmopolitanism the federation must genuinely pursue enlargement or, in the words of Kant, expansion of the sphere of *Recht*. This is because peace cannot be guaranteed if the state in question does not have law-governed relations with its neighbours, and since only a state of peace if a moral peace the desire for enlargement must be genuinely present and pursued (Kant, 1991).

(2) The Lack of a Kantian Ambition

While Kant is often considered to have had a general rather than specific influence on politics (Reiss, 1991), his ideas are as demonstrated easily discernible in the EU-construct. EU can thus be seen as a movement towards the cosmopolitan civilization Kant envisaged. However the extent to which the movement is genuinely along Kantian lines is called into question with Turkey's application for membership given the unambiguous presence of unspoken cultural requirements. Turkey also radically calls into question whether Europe did indeed undergo both a cultural and social revolution with the Enlightenment and that it today is *'...rational, secular, rights-based, progressive and law-governed...'* (Ramadan, 09.3.2009), or if it is instead an ethno-cultural civilization, *'a peripheral peninsula of Asia.'* (Casanova, 2006). It is

only if the EU takes on a political-legal identity with a basis in Kant's philosophy that it will fall into the former category. It must institutionalize what Tariq Ramadan refers to as a philosophical European identity rooted in the classical European genealogy of Ancient Greece, Rome, Christianity and the Enlightenment (Ramadan, 09.3.2009).

For the EU to take on such a political identity it will have to move towards the principle of federalism, not as in centralization of powers but as in delegation and separation of powers to and between the national and EU level (Siedentop, 2000). Kant's definitive articles were not articulated in order to create a fundament for a culturally homogenous super-state but to enable peaceful coexistence between diverse states through interdependence and law-governed relations. A political identity implies that the EU cannot articulate ethnic, cultural (as in traditions, folklore), religious or historical requirements for candidate countries; instead, Kant can be read as arguing that politics deals with ethics and not culture or values. While this is not a plausible scenario on a domestic level, it could be more feasible on an EU level, granted that the EU remains more a union of economic interdependence than an attempt at a European nation-state. This follows Habermas' argument that a distinction must be made between the lived experience of national or ethnic identity and on the other hand, constructed nationalism (Matustík, 1993). A political identity must necessarily be articulated along the lines of constructed nationalism but in a non-xenophobic, more potentially inclusive manner as a pan-identity.

A political identity that builds upon a European philosophical identity is by no means neutral; it will unavoidably be normative. Although Anderson argues that this kind of a political identity is the only 'non-xenophobic alternative' (Anderson, 2008) to a cultural understanding of Europe, this does not mean that a political conception is devoid of prejudice or underlying cultural assumptions. When the Treaty of European Union states that

'The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.' (Art.2, TEU)

Turkey and the EU

the values are endowed with meaning beyond just being framework words. This explains why the EU in the name of democracy can put pressure on Turkey to diminish the role of the military while in Turkey the military is traditionally seen as a safeguard of secular democracy (Aydinli, Ozcan & Akyaz, 2006). It explains the paradox that the more 'modern' Turkey becomes – modern as in adopting European interpretations of the abovementioned values - the more visible religion becomes in Turkey (Casanova, 2006). The more politically 'European' Turkey becomes, the more visible the cultural differences between EU-27 and Turkey. Thus the discussion of secularism in the previous chapter is relevant also in the context of a political identity for the EU.

(3) Articulating a Political Identity for the EU

The contents of a political identity needs debating and clarification as it needs to be made explicit what kind of sovereignty the EU ought to be endowed with when it is not that of the romantic 'people', *das Volk*. Pragmatic arguments about Turkey's membership bid do not make it clear that the EU ought *not* be a culturally defined entity and so enable arguments and fears about the Other 'taking over'. They render legitimacy to claims such as the one made by the then Commissioner for the Internal Market, Fritz Bolkestein, who in a speech in 2004 likened Turkish membership of the EU to Turkey's siege of Vienna centuries ago (Müftüler Bac, 2004). To win Turkey membership on the basis of pragmatic arguments over security and economics will not eliminate the fear of a 'Turk's siege' of the EU. If Turkey joins the EU after a debate where the premises are set by the proponents of an EU cultural identity, the notion of cultural incompatibility and struggle will not disappear.

Articulating a political identity for the EU thus has two main purposes; firstly, it must generate legitimacy for the EU institutions of the EU and generate a new level of political affiliation for affected citizens. Secondly, it must reduce fear of the Other. Both conditions are essential for a Kantian EU. Constitutional democracy, which is Habermas' take on Kant's idea of an international federation and also his suggestion for the EU, is a '...normatively grounded procedure...' (Matustík, 1993, p.26) which aim is to enable the coexistence of '...life worlds off ethnic and national identities...'

(ibid. p.24). It is an attempt to solve the tension arising from the need to solve an increasing number of matters on an international level and the need to legitimately hold on to very different and diverse life worlds and points of particular identification. As such a political identity that emphasizes that difference is both legitimate and possible has the potential to diminish the fear of Other, no homogenizing attempts beyond this minimal procedural idea can be made. Thus, for the EU to credibly build a political identity it must do so without trying to forge a common history at the expense of national, specific histories. The EU must recognize that its history is 'empty' (Pocock, 1997).

While a political identity has a lot of potential, its success hinges on the extent to which it can also generate legitimacy for the EU. Pocock argues that the EU today offers 'nothing'; to become 'European' is to consider your national history irrelevant and to leave it behind but without being offered something of equal affectional value in return. To some observers, and to many EU citizens, the most striking feature of the EU is its essential lack of identity (ibid.). While agreeing with his overall argument, I do find that it is a very harsh judgment. The argument by Ramadan that there is a European philosophical identity that influences European identity as well as EU identity is not insubstantial, especially when considering the extent to which Kant and Enlightenment thinking influences the structures of the EU. Admittedly, a philosophical identity is remote from being a life world with which people identify. That does not however justify discrediting anything 'European' and failing to see the potential it has as long as it is not construed as yet another Other to particular (or national) identities.

To build a political identity on the basis of Kant's philosophy will allow the EU to address two pressing questions: how to best approach its increasing diversity and also, how to save its cosmopolitan ambitions which are by now well built into its treaties. But it is also to a certain extent limiting; federalism as in decentralization will restrict Brussels' power accumulation. A political identity is not an easy choice, but as Casanova points out, it is the only path unless the EU wants to turn its back on the values it has until now promoted (Casanova, 2006).

Having outlined two classical ideas for an EU identity I will for the remainder of this paper analyze more specifically how Turkey's bid for EU membership plays into the debate on EU(ropean) identity and reveals which identity is currently strongest within the EU. I contend that on both sides of the debate there is a strong bias towards a cultural conception of the EU.

4. Discussion

Rather than describing what kind of identity the EU has I have instead tried to elaborate on two 'ideal models' of respectively a cultural and a political identity and how these different concepts play into the debate over Turkey. It has been my argument throughout this paper that Turkey's accession bid calls for an ontological inquiry into the nature of the EU. Indeed, this inquiry is already well under way. Angela Merkel, now German chancellor, argues that the EU of today is different from the EEC of which Turkey was offered the prospect of membership in 1963; the EEC was nothing more than an economic association while today the EU is a political union based on common values (Merkel, 16.10.2004).

What Merkel ignores is that the EEC was never 'only' an economic association; the aim of its founders was peace through interdependence. That interdependence took on an economic character, but peace was nevertheless the primary objective. Thus the EU has from its early inception been decidedly political, its aim decidedly Kantian. In the following section I will move from theory to reality and discuss whether it is still valid to perceive of the EU in Kantian terms. I will use the German debate on Turkey's membership bid to show how a cultural conception of Europe still permeates the debate also among proponents of Turkish membership, making it difficult to argue that a political-Kantian identity of the EU is currently being consolidated.

(1) European Diversity

It is no coincidence that the EU has chosen 'Unity in Diversity' as its slogan; besides being located between the Urals and the Atlantic there is little the EU member-states have in common; for example, the World Values Survey found that Europe displayed very little unity over values (Casanova, 2006), enabling the claim that diversity is the preeminent feature of Europe and the EU (Judt, 2007). Cultural diversity among the EU member-states translates into three divides that influence their approach and attitudes towards the EU; the intergovernmental/federal divide, the liberal/social divide over economics and the secular/Christian democratic divide (Donnelly, 2006). The federal strand does advocate a political identity for the EU, but is mainly dominated by the French idea of federalism as centralization (ibid; Siedentop, 2000). The intergovernmental strand on the other hand argues in favour of safeguarding national identity and sovereignty. Thus to reconcile the needs for maintaining particular identities and simultaneously build a pan-EU identity a Kantian EU would have to draw on ideas coming from what at present are competing conceptions about the direction of the EU. This is a complicating factor since taking a stance on the identity of the EU implicitly also calls for taking a stance on the direction of the EU's organisational developments. In the case of the EU, identity is never only about affiliation but also about direction.

Neither the intergovernmental/federal divide nor the liberal/social divide pose big obstacles for Turkey's EU bid; it is not likely that Turkey will push either a federalist or an intergovernmental agenda, and given the prevalence of liberal economic thought at the EU level, a deepening of the internal free market would be welcomed (Arikan & Vassallo, 2006; Donnelly, 2006). As maintained in this paper the biggest challenge to Turkey is the secular/Christian divide. That again poses the question as to whether 'Europe' or the EU has indeed entered the age of Kantian cosmopolitics. The debate over Turkey does not affirm this. Interestingly, and perhaps contrary to popular belief, nor does the debate display any fundamental divides within the EU as to what the EU is and ought to be identified as.

Turkey and the EU

(2) The European Consensus

Dissenting views on Turkey's membership bid do not preclude the option that there is near-consensus as to what Europe is, and what the role of the EU is. While this might seem like a contradiction, a close look at the arguments used by the main German parties when they debate Turkey reveals that the disagreement does not run very deep. The debate is primarily dominated by the conservative CDU/CSU on the one hand and the social-democratic SPD on the other (Hülse, 2006), important members of their respective groups European People's Party (EPP) and The Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) in the European Parliament. The arguments used by the German parties are not limited to Germany; for example, Merkel and French President Sarkozy often make joint statements about the EU and Turkey. At a meeting in Berlin in May 2009 Sarkozy reiterated their position, that a '...Europe without borders is a Europe without values.' (Der Spiegel, 12.5.2009).

In his analysis of parliamentary debates in the German Bundestag Hülse found that despite the different stances taken on Turkey, there seems to be an overlapping consensus between the rivalling sides that Europe is indeed delineated by geography and culture (Hülse, 2006). Despite the attempts by the proponents of Turkish membership to argue for a political identity for the EU the specific arguments are based on a cultural understanding of Europe. Indeed, as I will demonstrate, the idea of Europe's 'civilizing mission' seems to permeate the arguments used by the proponents of Turkey joining.

A recurring argument often used by those who favour Turkish membership, and an argument also used by then chancellor Gerhard Schröder and his cabinet, is that if the EU does not support the secularists in Turkey, the country will fall prey to fundamentalism, 'that Turkey (...) is pushed back into the Islamic region.' (Hülse, 2006, p.223) In other words, the natural inclination of Turkey, or so it is portrayed, is to turn fundamentalist (ibid.) Fundamentally, Turkey is addressed as Europe's Other, a 'sick man' that must be saved. Even by the supportive discourse, Turkish secularism is not seen as 'natural' for the country (ibid.), supporting the point made earlier that only Europe knows the Christian version of secularism. Also, this can

explain why the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled in favour of upholding Turkey's ban on headscarves in universities, arguing that such a ban can be deemed necessary for the realization of the concepts of democracy and secularism (Leyla Şahin v. Turkey, 2004). Arguably, Turkish secularism is not perceived as deep enough to be self-sustainable.

A second argument used in favour of Turkey's accession is that it can act as a 'bridge' between the West and the Islamic world (Hülse, 2006; Silvestri, 2006; Martens, 2007). Good intentions aside this is not an argument that makes Turkey 'European', instead, firstly, it places Turkey effectively outside Europe's border and secondly, Turkey is welcomed not because it 'belongs' but only because of its strategic significance. Referring to Turkey as an 'Enlightened Islamic hinge' it is Turkey's difference from 'Europe' that is being emphasized (Hülse, 2006, p.). However, while the argument does embrace the notion of the Other and also rests on a geographical understanding of Europe, the line of reasoning is not inherently alien to a Kantian understanding of the EU. Recalling that Kant's emphasis is on the notion of *Recht* and lawful international relations securing peace such a strategic move could be permissible (d'Apollonia, 2002). However, the important role attached to geography renders such a conclusion unsatisfying.

The idea of Europe as having a 'civilizing mission' towards Turkey is subtly expressed in the arguments in favour of Turkish accession. On the other side of the table, the opponents of Turkey entering the EU do not speak in between the lines. The opposition represented by CDU/CSU unambiguously demarcate Europe; it is the experience of Enlightenment and the heritage of Christianity that characterizes what is the 'original' Europe. It is these experiences that together draw Europe's geographical border. The overarching idea is that culture determines policy and hence the impossibility of conceiving of a Muslim democracy in Turkey along the lines of Christian democracy (Hülse. 2006; CDU, 03.12.2007).

The most striking feature of the debate surrounding Turkey's candidacy is that it is the cultural language of Europe that prevails, also among those who argue in favour of a political conception of the EU. When the CDU rejects Turkey on the basis of

Turkey and the EU

Europe's Christian heritage, the SPD embraces Turkey in an act of enlightened self-interest. There is no trace of the idea that Europe is indeed *not* geographical, not 'fixed'. Kantian cosmopolitanism – a purely political and federal idea of 'Europe' – does not figure in the debate. It is a debate presuming homogeneity while there is heterogeneity, a debate that is unable to create a non-ethnically based point of reference when it addresses 'Europe'. It is a debate that embeds the very two points that Habermas urges the EU to overcome in pursuit of a federal constitution based on political criteria (Habermas, 1997).

It is not only the political parties that agree that 'Europe' is a special cultural construct different from Turkey. 63% of the public in the EU think that "the cultural differences between Turkey and the EU are too significant to allow for this accession", and there is a strong fear within this group that accession will mean a huge influx of Muslim immigrants (Eurobarometer 63, 2005). While all previous candidate countries have faced opposition before they accede, McLaren (2007) found that the presence of the Other – the Muslim immigrant – largely influences people's attitude towards Turkey, explaining the strong opposition found particularly in France (63%) and Germany (66%). This is the one point that distinguishes the popular opposition to Turkey from that expressed towards other candidate countries (McLaren, 2007). This mirrors the statement by Sarkozy, who said: 'We have a problem of integration of Muslims that raises the question of Islam in Europe. To say it is not a problem is to hide from reality. If you let 100 million Turkish Muslims come in, what will come of it?' (Hakura, 13.11.2006), skilfully ignoring the fact that Turkey's population is just over 70 million (World Bank, 2008). The same Eurobarometer also shows that 'pragmatic' arguments such as those about increased security and the "cultural bridge"-function do not enjoy much legitimacy in the eye of the public (Eurobarometer 63, 2005). Thus, the main challenge for proponents of Turkey joining the EU is to deconstruct Turkey's image of the Other. That is only possible if a new language of talking about EU is developed, one that goes beyond the historical-cultural language of Europe. The debate over Turkey's candidacy reveals that such a language is currently only noticeable by its absence.

(3) The Cultural Trap

What are the implications of the subtext of the debate over Turkey's accession? For once, it reveals a consensus amid the different attitudes towards Turkey's EU bid; while there is no agreement on its accession both its opponents and proponents agree through the use of language that Europe, and by implication the EU, is an entity defined by history and culture which in turn delineates its borders. Turkey is not intrinsically 'equal' to Europe and its modernity is contingent upon the support of the EU – or so it seems. Turkey appears to be caught between a rock and a hard place; if the alliance of Merkel and Sarkozy get their way it will not be able accede at all *or* accession will be founded on arguments that implicitly state that Turkey is not a properly European country and that it is subject to Europe's 'civilizing mission'.

It is apparent from the above discussion that Turkey can only enter the EU as an equal if not only the conditions but also the arguments in favour of accession are premised on a political-Kantian concept of the EU. The framework for such a discourse is already in place; the Copenhagen criteria do envision a Union based on a political identity. Also, public opinion is flexible; although Eurobarometer found strong opposition to Turkey becoming an EU member, it is noteworthy that as much as 23% of those asked were in favour of 'unconditional enlargement' while 84% said that Turkey must 'systematically respect human rights' and 76% that it must 'significantly improve the state of its economy' before it can accede (Eurobarometer 63). These numbers are much higher than the 54% who believe the cultural differences are too big. Arguably, there is a flexible reality underlying much of the rhetoric of 'cultural' Europe. However, as long as the premises of Turkey's accession debate are set by those who favour a 'Christian club' the only arguments that will make their way to the headlines are either cultural or pragmatist, both categories reinforcing the image of Turkey as the Other of Europe and the EU. As long as culture permeates the debate on both sides of the debate Europe as institutionalised through the EU cannot be said to have entered a cosmopolitan era. That is not to say that a Kantian political identity is not 'cultural', or that it is 'neutral'. But it has the potential to take Europe beyond romantic utopias of imagined unity and superiority.

Turkey and the EU

Is it justifiable to attach so much importance to the concept of 'identity' in the EU-Turkey relationship? It is also possible to analyze Turkey's EU bid in terms of power politics, much like one German politician did when referring to Turkey's "100 MEPs" as a reason to oppose its EU membership (Barysch, 2007). But although it might have been easier to pass a verdict on the EU's Kantian pretensions if the size of the culturally Other applicant was smaller, it does not render invalid the observations and analysis that I have presented above. The debate over Turkey's EU bid remains embedded in the language of culture and history, not that of power politics.

5. Conclusion

I began this paper by arguing that Turkey's bid for EU membership calls for an ontological inquiry into the nature of the European Union; is the EU to be defined in cultural terms or rather as a political union modelled on the philosophy of Kant? Before concluding that the EU is still articulated and understood along cultural lines I discussed first what would be the essential components of a cultural identity, and secondly how a political Kantian identity could look like. It is interesting to note that although the formal set-up of the European Union and the formal criteria for accession are purely political and by and large in tune with a Kantian understanding of the EU, the debate about Turkey's accession is of a cultural nature. It is therefore justified to conclude that not only does Turkey call for an ontological inquiry into the nature of the EU; the debate also demonstrates that there is a gap between what the EU ought to be judging from its fundamental documents, and what kind of EU 'Europe' is ready for. 'Europe' as it seems, still has to catch up with modernity.

Based on my conclusion that a cultural understanding of Europe prevails also among those who support Turkey's EU candidacy it is my argument that this concept of EU identity has implications for Turkey beyond a 'yes' or 'no' to accession. While a cultural understanding of Europe unites the 'Turkey-divide' the unity also extends to the idea of Turkey; an idea permeated by ideas of backwardness, of it being a fundamentalist hotbed, of Turkey being a culturally very different Other. If Turkey is

admitted on the basis of the 'pragmatic' arguments about security and safety it is admitted not as an equal but rather as a country in need of the EU's 'civilizing mission'. Yilmaz (2007) points out that collective identity building is linked closely to boundary drawing. In the case of Turkey, both admitting *and* rejecting its application conform to Yilmaz's dictum; admitting Turkey to the EU on the basis of argumentation centred on the EU's 'civilizing mission' does portray the EU as more enlightened, *more equal* than Turkey while the latter scenario delineates and 'otherizes' in a more straightforward manner by outright exclusion. As the discourse now stands, Turkey remains the EU's Other in either case.

That the EU is essentially a cultural union with a strong Christian heritage and that Turkey seems to be its eternal Other; could it be that this judgment is too harsh? Arguably, a better test case for what constitutes EU identity – politics or culture – would have been the candidacy of a smaller Muslim country, as there is no getting away from the fact that power politics or *realpolitik* does also significantly influence Turkey's application; for example, Turkey would upon accession get 100 MEPs while today, Germany has the largest delegation with 99 MEPs. Turkey's role in providing the EU with more energy security should also not be ignored. The potential candidacy of Bosnia-Herzegovina (European Commission, 11.8.2009) could therefore be an interesting case in point, and a close analysis of that debate may yield new insights as to where the EU is moving identity-wise. But even if Bosnia-Herzegovina should be admitted, that does not automatically invalidate the analysis in this paper, as a continued refusal of membership to Turkey is difficult to justify on grounds other than culture or geography.

The element of *realpolitik* does not make irrelevant my claim that Turkey's challenges are mainly cultural and that the EU remains a culturally defined entity. But nor do those challenges exclude the option of Turkey eventually joining; reluctance is from a historical perspective part and parcel of the European integration project (Verney, 2007).

On a different level, the discourse generated by Turkey's EU bid demonstrates that the creation of an EU political identity along Kantian lines requires a new language

Turkey and the EU

of Europe altogether. A political identity for the EU is premised on the development of a non-xenophobic language of Europe. The debate over Turkey's candidacy shows that the EU still has a very long way to go if it aspires to be a Kantian federation of Europe. No matter how modern and secular the European self-understanding; its modernity and secularism is heavily indebted to an Enlightenment rooted in Christianity. To say that the EU is a 'Christian club' fails to recognize that those who advocate a political identity for the EU reproduce the positions on Europe taken by that very club. The consensus across the 'Turkey-divide' on Europe being a culturally unique entity means, to answer the question raised in the title of this paper, that there is no genuinely new European identity in the making. Nor are there any immediate prospects of a genuine embrace and translation into action of Europe's modern, Enlightenment-inspired self-understanding. For the foreseeable future, Turkey will remain the casualty of Europe's torn personality as embodied in the EU.

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