# Working paper

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# The Axiology of EU Cultural Diplomacy in Muslim Majority Countries

## The Paradox of Turkey

*Naciye Selin Senocak*

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# Abstract

*The principal purpose of this theoretical analysis is to identify the different assumptions between Europe and Turkey regarding the axiological perspective which distinguishes the value judgments used as an instrument of persuasion by each culture. For decades, Turkey's accession process within the EU is a highly controversial issue which has been an intensive process, brimmed with ups and downs. Due to its geopolitical position and cultural identity, as a Muslim secular state, Turkey is a cultural bridge between the West and Muslim countries, making it particularly important in cultural diplomacy for EU foreign policy. Nevertheless, the cultural misunderstanding, the misinterpreted perceptions, the axiological nihilism between Turkey and the EU seems to be the sources of tension for Turkey's accession. The recent official declaration by both sides, which is dialectic rather than a consensus, has also deteriorated the diplomatic ties established between them, while also underlining the weaknesses of cultural diplomacy.*

## Introduction

The European Parliament voted to suspend Turkey's EU membership talks on November 22, 2016, allegedly due to post-coup purges in the country; however, the European Commission has warned that cutting ties with Turkey would be a lose-lose solution. The EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, has urged caution, emphasising the importance of European values for European membership. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said that the vote in the European Parliament on whether to freeze membership talks with Turkey has no 'value' to his country, and that Turkey could hold a referendum on whether to continue membership discussions with the EU in 2017. Turkey's accession process within the EU is a highly controversial issue. For decades, Turkey's engagement with the European integration project has been substantial, and both its advantages and disadvantages have been contested.

In June 2016, the European Commission and Mogherini presented the *'Strategy for international cultural relations'* with the aim of encouraging cultural cooperation between the EU and its partner countries to promote a global order based on peace, the rule of law, freedom of expression, mutual understanding and respect for fundamental values[1]. Turkey has special importance in EU external policies; nevertheless, the cultural misunderstanding, misinterpreted perceptions, ethnocentrism and axiological nihilism between Turkey and the EU are sources of tension for Turkey's accession to the organisation. Declarations made by both parties in early 2017 underline weaknesses of cultural diplomacy that are dialectic rather than represent con-

sensus. The central purpose of this analysis is to identify the different assumptions of the EU and Turkey regarding the axiological perspective that distinguishes the major philosophical value judgments that each culture uses as persuasive evidence. Which EU values are pronounced in the rhetoric of many EU politicians and are prerequisite for EU accession? Which perceptions between the EU and Turkey are flawed? What is Turkey's axiological orientation? What resolution exists for the axiological clash and 'crisis of values', which is the ultimate challenge that the EU faces when persuading the Muslim world to use cultural diplomacy?

The debate on the accession of Turkey emphasises the problematic of the EU's identity construction, which raises multiple questions. Can we legitimise the idea of a united Europe through a common cultural and historical identity? Can we conceive of Europe as a nation or federal state that possesses a homogeneous cultural identity? Or, in contrast, can we instead opt for building around common ideals such as freedom, democracy and human rights while respecting national identities? If the construction of a common culture is necessarily imprisoned in a past that is selectively constituted for the needs of the task, the future remains to be created and offers choices. In this sense, arguing for a common culture that dispels the founding myths of a national construction amounts to rejecting Turkey as its opponents do. The EU's axiology classifies Turkey as an 'other' in relation to the founding myths through which the union affirms itself but also with more or less conflicting relations. Christianity is among the foundational myths evoked, albeit not without ambiguity.

The notion of axiology derives from the Greek *axios,* which means the philosophical study of value[2]. It has developed from a certain crisis of morality or rationality, from the moment when the world of values is considered pluralistic, such as 'value system'.[3] Values can be moral, ethical or aesthetic; they vary between both individuals and societies. The concept of values corresponds with democracy, the political system in which parties represent systems of values.

The 'crisis of values' is today considered the ultimate challenge facing society, and the impression of this chaos affects all areas of life: cultural, ecological, political, social, financial and economic. Even the ongoing Syrian refugee crisis and transnational terrorism in Europe have triggered profound existential questions concerning the place of values in politics. This axiological crisis is part of a systemic crisis and raises the following questions: What is a value that many EU politicians pronounce in their rhetoric? What makes this value different from a social norm? Are certain values common to all of humankind, and can imposing universal values be legitimate?

Value has different meanings. In philosophy, it covers the axiological dimension. Value is a moral preference of a group of subjects. Notably, a value needs recognition from a community. Reflection on values is deemed 'axiological' and is organised around the terms 'good' and 'bad.[4] Raymond Boudon has formulated the problem as such: 'People tend to endorse a moral, prescriptive or value statement and to experience the feeling that *X is good, bad, legitimate, fair, etc.* when it appears to them—more or less vaguely depending on the circumstances—as grounded

on valid reasons.'[5] He has further emphasised that no theory − whether philosophical, physical or metaphysical − can be strictly true or certain. In other words, the question should be formulated as follows: How can one explain the meaning of values by weighing them based on ultimate principles? Boudon has asserted:

> *In the same way, a belief such as the belief that a democratic regime is more likely than an authoritarian one to respect the dignity of people is commonly considered as context-free. Clearly, the citizens of democratic societies do not feel that being democratic is better than dictatorial regimes simply because they have been socialized to think so, but because they perceive their feeling as right.[6]*

The system of values (axiology) is formed by a very complex mechanism. It can be based on the following factors: anonymous experiences, belief systems, culture and scientific activities. Society makes amendments and inversions according to its interests. While society harmonises the new rule with other related values, a change occurs in the composition of other values. In other words, the structure we call the system of values has a relationship with every aspect of both an individual's life and society. Under all circumstances, each culture preserves its essence within its axiology and the main structure gains sustainability.[7] The tendency to judge others' behaviour based on our own cultural norms is the principal reason of cultural misunderstanding and may constitute an obstacle to cultural diplomacy.

This paper consists of four sections based on the concept of 'perception from the outside looking in', the Turkish perception of the EU. The first outlines the European Cultural Diplomacy initia-

tive and its efforts and the willingness to create a European identity. The second section introduces the concepts of European cultural identity and axiology as prerequisites for EU accession, as well as the negative images that Turkey contends with as a result of socio-historical events. The third section details the axiology of Turkey, the paradox of its cultural identity – which is shaped by a forced marriage between the model of the Eastern State and the Western Republic – and its new politico-cultural orientation. The final section further explores the new political tropism of Turkey after the July 15, 2016 coup attempt and the April 16, 2017 referendum. This section focus on the Turkish perceptions of the EU and the recent diplomatic crises between both parties in analysing politicians rheetorics, press articles, reports and recent surveys. It emphasises the tensions and synergies between the EU and Turkey and focuses on a philosophical reflection of the EU's axiological nihilism and cultural misunderstanding regarding Turkey and European Muslim minorities and immigrants.

## I – Cultural Diplomacy: A New Perspective for European Foreign Policy

Over the last decade, the development of transnational terrorism, the political instability of certain regions, economic crises, inter-ethnic violence, the refugee crisis and inter-cultural misunderstandings have transformed societies into more obscure perceptions of both their futures and their pasts. Cultural diplomacy, which is commonly defined as 'the exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples in order to foster mutual understandings',[8] has gained im-

portance since the September 11 attacks. Former United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has stressed the following:

> *The world has never witnessed as many intra-state conflicts. These conflicts are of a new and complex nature, their causes varied and often intersecting. That is why almost half of the internal conflicts are related to issues of identity. They find their roots in ethnic, religious or cultural differences, and are often exacerbated by repressive measures taken by non-democratic regimes. Other conflicts are of a political-military nature. [...] If we want to avoid the cultural conflicts and the clash of civilisation which can be intensified with migrant crisis and terrorism we should defend the cultural diversity and democracy [...].[9]*

The feature of cultural diplomacy that is considered the most impactful 'soft power' for the diplomacy of influence is the process of interaction among and transformation of nations and societies. The concept of influence is essentially based on the 'ability of attraction'. The role of cultural diversity is the new core concept of international relations. The issue of 'cultural diversity' within the space of globalisation strives to reconcile the universality of rights with the diversity of the human condition.

Culture is a recurring theme in European policies. In times of both euphoria and turmoil, the 'artisans of Europe' have often engaged in a quest for the cultural foundations of the continent's unity, the essence of its identity and the limits of diversity. Culture is indeed at the heart of issues of peace and war in the world. The identity crisis that Europe faces is a key challenge for establishing a strong European cultural identity. As Lokorvic has stated:

*Culture is neither the cultivation of civil discipline amenable to civilised behaviour nor is it a depository of traditional, largely irrational beliefs inherited from an impervious, distant past, it is neither culture in the sense of the highest philosophical, scientific and artistic achievements nor any kind of special efforts […] The concept of culture is one of the systems of goods, and of the ways of producing them which permits these goods to exert an influence on all involved by making them experience the high symbolic value of these good […] Culture is the feeling of possessing a special dignity.[10]*

The European Cultural Convention,[11] which 14 states originally signed in Paris in 1954 and now has 48 signatories, was a major milestone in the European cultural cooperation process. It was the first – and remains the only – general international law instrument to encourage the development of a European cultural identity to safeguard European culture and promote national contributions to Europe's common cultural heritage.

The European Cultural Convention has proved to be an effective framework for facilitating the emergence of a progressive approach to culture and education, the influence of which now exceeds the largely limited field of intergovernmental relations. Under the influence of the convention, the Council of Europe has developed the contemporary image of culture with 'multiple identities'. European cultural cooperation activities have inspired many networks to promote the most basic human values. It has also motivated and encouraged artists, scientists, students and researchers from multiple perspectives to work towards building a multicultural, tolerant and harmonious society.

In recent years, the EU has been promoting cultural diplomacy, framed in terms of dialogue between civilisations/cultures, and aims to exploit its role in the conduct of its foreign policy. European cultural cooperation has been oriented towards European cultural diplomacy. In EU Commission press releases[12] from April 2014, Androulla Vassiliou, the former EU Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, has stated the following:

*Culture is a vital part of our collective European identity and helps to underpin our shared values such as respect for human rights, diversity and equality. Cultural diplomacy is an opportunity for us to share these values and our European culture with other countries. Developing a more active and dynamic role for European culture on the international stage is one of my key priorities. Used intelligently, I believe this 'soft power' can benefit the EU and its Member States in their relations with the wider world.*

To develop a better understanding of the new EU cultural diplomacy strategy, it is helpful to consider a recent declaration from Mogherini:

*Our Europe is a cultural superpower, even though sometimes we do not recognise it: our culture is fascinating for the entire world, we are a reference point at global level. This power needs to be used, we need to turn it into a tool of peace and growth… Culture is a resource as well: of course, an economic resource, but also a resource for our foreign policy…. Investing in cultural diplomacy could help strengthening the economy of your region, but especially creating bridges, letting others know us and knowing others reciprocally, establishing*

*bonds among people especially during these hard times, to prevent fears and radicalisation both in Europe and abroad. This is why we have worked so hard to the first European strategy for cultural diplomacy.*[13]

In a sense, this initiative is consistent with Robert Schuman's May 9, 1950 declaration that *'Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity.'*[14] The initiative promotes improved co-operation among member states and seeks to maximise the added value of European cultural diplomacy. Nevertheless, the designation of 'cultural superpower' is highly controversial, as it can be interpreted as a postcolonial ambition of the EU, this kind of dual-sense statement should be used with caution.

The constitution of a European cultural identity should be a priority for increasing the influence of European cultural diplomacy. European cultural identities are often identified through universal cultural values related to the concept of 'universalism'. Furthermore, it is important to understand that the universalism at the heart of the Enlightenment in Europe emphasises the European cultural experience, with its particular version of rationalism and political values.

The 'cosmopolitan' thinker Kant, who in his famous text founded cosmopolitanism, not only sought the roots of its ideal governance model in Classical Greece and Rome; he also anticipated a time when the European continent would probably legislate for all others.[15] The tendency towards universalism that Kant expressed often co-exists with commendable humanistic visions. The ideal of a progressive cosmopolitan cultural policy, 'universalism' deserves to be considered seriously.

The first challenge of globalisation seems to be the continuation of the cosmopolitan ideal without the imposition of a model that is oriented towards a specific culture. However, this does not necessarily mean that ambitious projects must be approved by 'global governance'. In 2014, the European Commission launched an action plan entitled 'Engaging the World: Towards Global Cultural Citizenship',[16] which is in a sense a cosmopolitan ideal and has questionable effectiveness and applicability.

As the globalisation process spreads quickly and forces institutions into modernism, it generates institutionalised forms of cultural belonging. Rather than destroying cultural identities, globalisation has been the most significant engine for creating and proliferating cultural identities. Paradoxically, the real danger of globalisation is that it generates a surplus of identity, as evidenced by various outbreaks of ethnic violence.

However, the assertion of maximising the impact of European cultural diplomacy conflicts with Europe itself, which highlights many paradoxes: the non-existence of a European cultural model, the equilibrium between European and national identities, the positioning of Europe vis-à-vis global security problems and the migrant crisis. A 'Europeanness' in the response to global problems appears to be non-existent. The variation in the social, economic and political structures of European countries and their bonds to national interests will likely remain an obstacle for the creation of the 'European mind'. According to Hans Magnus Eizenberger, the European mentality is a conglomerate of national mentalities that will continue to cultivate diversities.[17]

These concerns – legitimate or not – are the principal subjects of many debates.

Cultural Europe cannot be conceived of as a simple sum of national stereotypes. Instead, it should be conceptualised as a 'cultural proposal' that considers 'cultural diversity' one of the most powerful political components. As Christopher Kelly has mentioned:

> *The eve of an important step toward European unity is a useful occasion for reflection on the foundation of political unity of all sorts. Because European Unity is frequently seen by its friends and foes alike as leading to a weakening of nationalism, this reflection naturally focuses on the status of attachments to a particular nation.*[18]

This is in line with Rousseau's statement that '*as soon as one man was recognised by another as a being who was sentient, thinking, and like him, the desire or the need to communicate his feelings and his thoughts made him seek the means to do so*'.[19]

According to Strath, the concept of a European identity is fluid and has different meanings depending on the particular type of discourse and the underlying agenda for promoting the concept of European unity. Within nations, the concept of a European identity often varies by gender, age and social class.[20] Bruter has suggested that a model of European identity is composed primarily of civic and cultural factors. Civic factors relate to the degree of identification with political institutions that define the laws, rules and rights having an effect on citizens' daily lives. Cultural factors concern the sense that individuals from other European nations are closer than individuals from non-European nations in terms of shared values, norms and beliefs.[21]

In his analysis,[22] Bruter makes a highly useful distinction between 'civic' and 'cultural' components of European political identity. Civic identity is 'the degree to which they feel that they are citizens of a European political system, whose rules, laws, and rights have an influence on their daily life'.[23] On the other hand, cultural identity refers to the perceived level of sameness with other Europeans.

Despite the exhortations for a 'European mind' that dominate political discourse and demand the development of a European consciousness, European institutions and the mass media have been cultivating European allegiance via a declaration of common values. The German philosopher Herder identified a distinct people as having a separate *Volksgeist*,[24] which is expressed through the group's culture and thereby encompasses the whole community. From this perspective, a nation is a community that is discernible from others through its own inner spirit, which is expressed through its language and culture[25]. The EU, with its 28 member countries, should construct its 'inner spirit' for a common European cultural identity. The EU as a cultural identity is a particularly complex issue, as the question of identity has superseded the objective of cultural unity.

It is important to underline the last theme of 'solving the problem of common interest in Europe'. While globalisation increases cross-cultural exchanges with a strategic dimension, the 'competition of cultures' is more focused on market share of ideas and values. Evidently, each European country has its own cultural diplomacy strategy that is comprised of self-interest

foreign policy strategies, which have been chosen with regard to the nation's cultural interests.[26]

According to a survey from the Pew Research Center, Euroscepticism is on the rise across Europe. The percentage of Europeans who view the EU favourably has fallen considerably, which reflects a common unhappiness with Brussels' management of Europe's refugee crisis, fight against terrorism and continuing economic woes. The United Kingdom is not the only member with doubts about the EU. In a number of nations, the portion of the public with favourable views of the Brussels-based institutions suggests that the EU is again experiencing a decline in public support in many member states. Only 38% of respondents in France indicated that they view the EU favourably, which demonstrates a 17-point decrease compared to 2015. Support for the EU fell by 16 points to 47% in Spain, by 8 points to 50% in Germany and by 7 points to 44% in the United Kingdom.[27]

As the new EU strategy for international cultural relations has declared, the main objective is an ever-closer union among the peoples of Europe. The Pew Research Center survey has revealed that in 6 out of 10 countries, more people prefer devolution of EU power to maintaining the status quo or providing more power to the Brussels-based institutions.[28]

As Charles Grant, the Director of the Centre for European Reform think tank, has explained, 'Brexit is a momentous event in the history of Europe and from now on the narrative will be one of disintegration not integration.'[29] German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble has underlined that Brexit could trigger a knock-on effect in several of the bloc's Eurosceptic member states.[30] The

most significant and pertinent declaration after the Brexit referendum was made by European Council President Donald Tusk: '*Obsessed with the idea of instant and total integration, we failed to notice that ordinary people, the citizens of Europe, do not share our Euro-enthusiasm. The spectre of a break-up is haunting Europe and a vision of a federation doesn't seem to me like the best answer to it.*'[31]

Pew Research Center survey and the Brexit referendum demonstrate that cultural unity as a cultural superpower without nation-state identities is utopic, as Donald Tusk notes in the above statement. A self-questioning with regard to the mutual understanding within the EU should be envisaged. Cultural, religious and ethnic minorities in the EU can constitute the foundation of the new EU cultural diplomacy strategy. The EU, together with its member states, should construct an 'inner spirit' for a common European cultural identity to promote a European branding. This identity is a mutual construction, not an inflexible possession.

## II - The Role of Cultural Identity in Turkey's Accession to the EU

The issue of the European enlargement process has revealed a previously obscured problem. Turkey's 'Europeanness' has always been a controversial issue. Obstacles, and even cultural barriers, have prevented the integration of certain states into the EU, as is apparent in Turkey's 54-year wait for entry. This is comparable with the difficulty of integrating Muslim immigrant populations whose customs or beliefs render them too far removed from the lifestyles and es-

sence of so-called Western societies into European nations. '*The discourses that emphasize the exclusive aspect of European identity based on geography and culture construct Turkey as inherently different. On the other hand, the discourses that emphasize the inclusive aspects of European identity construct Turkey as different from Europe solely in terms of acquired characteristics.*' [32]

Pragmatically, Europe has indeed built itself on the basis of establishing a certain number of mainly economic links, which essentially aim to prevent the recurrence of major military conflicts. The problem of identity is inextricably linked to the question of the limits of Europe and the foundation of its identity and project.

Europe does not have an identity that can be considered 'quasi-ethnic', but it does have a structural reality. History and common values for mutual benefit unite the continent. However, attempts to render Europe's cultural dimension explicit have been lacking. The French poet Paul Valéry described the 'European' as having a triple identity, which can be symbolised by Rome, Jerusalem and Athens: 'From Rome come the Empire, with organised state power, law and institutions, and the status of citizens. From Jerusalem, or rather from Christianity, emerge ethics and the self-examination of one's own consciousness. Finally, Athens has contributed rationality, knowledge and the spirit.'[33] In other words, 'the subtlety and disputed dimension of this identity exist because the identity refers to different cultures and conflicts, thus forming an immense complex of ideals and ideas'.[34] Europe is not an immutable object and has constructed its history throughout time. The complexity of a notion of 'European culture' occurs because it is constructed from various sources, as Valéry mentions in his essay 'The Crisis of the Spirit'. '*Identification with the European continent has always been linked to the continent's history, geography and culture. However, the current, particular meanings of a European identity have been reshaped, expressed and amplified through the process of European integration since the 1950s'.* [35]

Turkey's accession to the EU raises the question of the EU identity and value system. The EU's indecisiveness regarding this accession has underlined its continued uncertainty regarding which axiological path it will take. Europe is experiencing an identity crisis and is divided by its utopian political ambition of cosmopolitanism and its ethnocentric conservatism.

Over the past 50 years, the EU integration process has witnessed highs and lows, including hopes, disappointments, deadlocks and crises. Following the 2016 Brexit referendum, it has transformed into a disintegration process. Any country wishing to join the EU must satisfy two conditions:[36]

- Be a state within geographical Europe; and

- Respect and commit to the values set out in Article 2 TEU, which call for respect for: human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law; human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities; and a pluralistic society and for non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men (Article 2 of TEU).

The applicant country must also satisfy EU eligibility criteria defined by the European Council,

which are commonly referred to as the Copenhagen criteria:[37]

- Maintain stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities;

- Have a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competition and market forces in the EU; and

- Be able to assume and effectively implement the obligations of membership, including the aims of political, economic and monetary union.

Turkey's EU accession process has been a highly controversial issue since 1963. An analysis of the two afore-mentioned conditions for being member states suggests that Turkey is on the European tectonic plate, destined to become a European country by its geography.[38] The second condition – namely respect for and commitment to the values set out in Article 2 TEU – seems to be a major obstacle for Turkey's accession. The argued reason is that Turkey still does not fulfil the criteria on human rights, respect for and protection of minorities.[39]

However, Hurt emphasizes another hidden obstacle for the Turkey's accession to the EU:

*"Even if economic and political obstacles to Turkey's accession are lifted, even if Turkey is deemed to be in unambiguous conformity with the Copenhagen criteria, European opposition to Turkish membership will persist ... the Turkish case is controversial in cultural and religious terms, as it involves the potential accession of a Muslim-majority country to an arguably, at least historically Christian Europe".*[40]

Examining the arguments put forward, which are likely as important as the admission or refusal of Turkey's accession to the EU, the question becomes: Which points separate Turkey from Europe culturally?

According to a Eurobarometer survey on public opinion in the EU published in 2005, out of all of the candidate and potential candidate countries, the accession of Turkey to the EU generates the most disapproval. Specifically, 48% (Standard 64: 55%) of those polled were opposed to Turkey's entry, while 39% (Standard 64: 31%) were in favour provided it complies with all of the conditions set by the EU.[41] This result leads to the question of why European citizens are opposed to Turkey's entry into the EU. What reasons are behind European opposition? Survey data indicates that 55% of the public believes that 'the cultural differences between Turkey and the EU are too significant to allow for this accession', and that 63% has a strong fear that accession would cause a large influx of Muslim immigrants.[42] Religion continues to be the major cultural difference between Turkey and the EU, while Christianity remains the one common denominator and a base of unity among the nation-states of Europe.[43] Europeans have trouble seeing Turkey as culturally compatible with the European Union. EU citizens do not believe that Turkish accession would have a positive effect on cultural understanding, they believe that Turkey's history places it outside of Europe, and it does not meet the economic and human rights standards required of EU members.[44] The data indicates that EU's public opinion on Turkish accession is based on elements connected to the culture and history rather than on universal value such as human rights and democracy. The lack

of knowledge about Turkey seems to be a major indicator that many of the negative perceptions held by EU citizens with regards to Turkish membership may be founded on a lack of cultural understanding. The cultural aspect of Turkey as a Muslim-majority country being considered a threat to European identity has shaped European minds for centuries.

Since the 'Christian-Muslim divide is a central line of demarcation between Turkey and contemporary Europe', a historical investigation is relevant to identify traces of this demarcation.[45] For centuries, awareness has emerged regarding the threat of Islam in Europe in the struggle between the crucifix and the crescent. Opposition between the West and the East and between Christianity and Islam has structured Europe on a common ground. Critical approaches to the modern period have implicitly assumed a binary opposition between a civilised Christian 'West' and the encroaching barbarity of an infidel 'East'.[46] It is worth noting that since the reign of Charlemagne in the 8th century, a negative perception and fear of Islam have arisen as a sociopsychological and cultural rejection of Europe: 'Without Islam, the Frankish Empire would never have existed, and Charlemagne without Mohammed would be inconceivable'.[47] To maintain its supremacy in Europe, the Catholic church played a crucial role in expanding negative perceptions of Islam. Pope Innocent III identified the Prophet Mohammed as the 'beast of the Apocalypse', represented with the number 666 as the symbol of the Antichrist.[48]

According to many European historians, the most evident embodiment of Muslim power is the civilisation of the imperial Ottoman dynas-

ty.[49] The process of Turkey's accession to the EU is a complex issue, as the relationship between the Turkish and European cultural identities highlights differences in terms of their 'culture, history, and manners'. Many differences that are perceived as difficult to moderate exist de facto at the cultural level.[50]

Europeans have viewed the Turks as alien for two reasons. First, they were primarily Muslim rather than Christian, and therefore not fully European. Second, it was the Ottoman Empire that destroyed Byzantium, the successor to the Eastern Roman Empire that Constantine founded. When the Turks seized Constantinople in 1453, they appeared to the Europeans as a threat to its civilisation.[51]

The conquest of Constantinople in 1453 signified the extent of Ottoman imperial ambition in Christendom, but it also inaugurated a period of unprecedented exchange – both material and notional – which undermines the representation of a period defined by unremitting hostility between two supposedly alien cultural traditions. During *this* period, the propaganda of Catholic and Protestant priests intensified the hatred of Turks in Europe. The leader of the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther, declared, '*To fight against the Turk is the same as resisting God, who visits our sins upon us with this rod.*'[52] For Luther, the Turks were a divine punishment from God for the sins that Christendom had committed.[53] The two sieges of Vienna in 1683 further escalated the obsessive fear and hatred of the Turks in Christian central Europe. Therefore, 'these historical experiences of Europeans with the Muslim world still have a contemporary influence on the hearts and minds of the peoples of Europe'.[54] A declaration from former EU Commissioner Fritz

Bolkstein underlines this prejudice: 'If Turkey accedes to the EU, then this means that the efforts of the German, Austrian and Polish troops that resisted the Ottoman Turks' siege of Vienna in 1683 would be in vain.' [55]

The 'Europeanness' of the Ottoman Turk was also debated in the 20th century:

*The primary and most essential factor in the situation is the presence, embedded in the living flesh of Europe, of an alien substance. That substance is the Ottoman Turk. Akin to the European family neither in creed, in race, in language, in social customs, nor in political aptitudes and traditions, the Ottomans have for more than five hundred years presented to the European powers a problem, now tragic, now comic, now bordering almost on burlesque, but always baffling and paradoxical.*[56]

These above-mentioned prejudgements stem from the fear of the 'Turk'. The European people have perceived the 'Turk' as a barbarian, uncivilised and a common enemy for centuries and this negative perception is still alive in European minds. Turkey's Ottoman past still haunts its relations with Europe. *"The Ottoman Empire and its Muslim identity as opposed to Christian Europe have been crucial in shaping the minds of Europeans in conjunction with the Turkish membership to the EU. In particular, when one starts considering the civilizational dimension of the European integration project, ideational and religious factors inevitably come to the forefront".*[57] Turkey's Europeanness has always been a controversial issue.

After the Turkish War of Independence following the collapse of Ottoman Empire, the main objective of the founder of the Turkish Republic Mustafa Kemal ATATÜRK, was to establish an independent modern secular state and to join 'Western Civilisation'. He was the first secularising reformer in the Muslim world. As stated by Friedman, Ataturk's objective was to modernise and reach the level of contemporary civilisation and remove the obstacles preventing the emancipation of Turkish society;

*When the Ottoman Empire collapsed, after World War I (…) Kamal Ataturk took two complementary directions. One was toward founding a nation-state to replace a multinational empire, following the model created by the European Enlightenment. Second, he made the state secular, so that the distinction between public and private became central, and the religious dimension was made part of private life. He remodeled a Muslim state to reflect contemporary European values.*[58]

The concepts of 'modernisation' and 'Westernisation' themselves represent the EU's value system as an equation. Turkish secularism and the Westernised cultural revolution (Kemalism) initiated by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk in 1923 is a national modernisation ideology. Kemalism is a democratic and pragmatic-democratic system of thought that takes intellect and science as a guide[59], and it is still unknown in European public opinion.

Nowadays, mass media plays significant role in the EU perception of Turkey. The mass media's power to impact public perception makes it one of the most important influences in developed societies. According to Tocci, European media, which on the whole tends to paint a rather negative image of Turkey, driven by commercial logic,

largely reports 'stereotypes, sensationalism, and alarmism in regards to Turkey in an attempt to sell their product'[60]. The EU decision-makers' rhetoric based on cultural identity and distorted news from some European media sources are influencing EU's perception and public opinion on Turkey's accession process to the EU. Now that the socio-historical reasons for the cultural misunderstanding of Turkey and Turco-scepticism in European public opinion have been briefly analysed, the next section presents the axiology and new politico-cultural identity of Turkey.

## III - The Axiology and Cultural Identity Construction of Turkey

Since the Party of Justice and Development (AKP) assumed power in 2002, Turkey has progressively pursued a new foreign policy that has generated astonishment in the great capitals of the world.[61] Turkish foreign policy has been radically restructured over the last fifty years. This new foreign policy does not meet the expectations of many political theorists. To cite a few examples, many famous works – including Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man*,[62] Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations*[63] and John Mearsheimer's *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*[64] – have exposed the role and position of Turkey between Islam and modernity without knowing precisely whether or not Islam would play an important role in the 21st century. Hugh Pope has noted and inquired about the following:

*Turkey does not fit neatly into anyone's conception of the world order. For centuries, people have debated or fought over whether it is part of Europe, the Middle East, the Mediterra-*

*nean, or Eurasia. Some see its current government as careening toward 'Islamist fascism'; others believe it is integrating into a basically pluralistic, secular, globalized international order. Does its fast-growing economy, the 17th largest in the world, make it a rising international power on a par with Brazil, China, India, and Russia? Or is it a minor player that is overextending itself?*[65]

Pope has further highlighted that 'Turkey is particularly vulnerable to misunderstandings, in particular since the Turks themselves often seem not to know exactly what they want for their country.'[66]

According to David Fromkin, the new Turkish foreign policy, which he describes in the form of Pax-Ottomana or Neo-Ottomanism, clearly demonstrated that the fall of the Ottoman Empire broke the regional peace that had reigned for centuries and created a state of continuous war. According to Fromkin, a new Ottoman Pax could be indispensable; for this, it was first necessary to train those capable of defending the Neo-Ottoman perception. Fromkin has described the forces that pivoted the Middle East in the 1920s as follows:

*The European powers at that time believed they could change Moslem Asia in the very fundamentals of its political existence, and in their attempt to do so introduced an artificial state system into the Middle East that has made it into a region of countries that have not become nations even today. The basis of political life in the Middle East- religion – was called into question by Russians, who proposed communism, and by the British, who proposed nationalism or dynastic loyalty, in*

*its place. The French government, which in the Middle East did allow religion to be the basis of politics – championed one sect against the others.*[67]

Richard C. Holbrooke, a renowned diplomacy expert, has written, 'Today we live with the consequences of these almost forgotten events.'[68] With respect to the profile established by both Fromkin and Holbrooke's judicious and important analyses following this analogy, it is evident that as an Islamist party -the AKP- is attempting to create a new identity in contemporary Turkey. This 'new model of identity' has undoubtedly been designed on the basis of Jean Monnet and Konrad Adenauer's conception of the 1957 Treaty of Rome.[69] According to the Turkish political analyst Aytun Altindal, 'the efforts to create a new identity are determined by the relations of the trio Umma-Republic-State'.[70]

It is important to note that in the last general elections with the leadership of President Erdogan, the AKP gained 45–49% of the vote to become the first political party in power for 15 years. The results of constitutional referendum held in Turkey on April 16, 2017 exposed the politico-cultural split and political tropism of the country's population: 'yes' votes dominated with 51.41%, while 'no' votes captured 48.59%. Voter turnout was 85.46%.[71] As a result of this referendum, Turkey will replace its parliamentary government with an executive presidential system and give the president absolute power. In view of this, Turkey has concluded a chapter of its pluralist-democratic secular state system and is moving towards a more conservative-dogmatic political system. The results of this referendum are also a reaction to the EU. Repressed and discrimi-

nated against for decades, Turkey's main concern is to build an alternative regional space and new axiology by highlighting its Turkish-Muslim cultural identity. As stated in Stratfor special report, a deep power struggle is under way in the Republic of Turkey. Most outside observers see this as the latest phase in the decades-long battle between Islamism and Kemalist secularism. Others paint it as Anatolia's traditional struggle against modern Istanbul, egalitarianism versus economic elitism or democracy's rise against authoritarianism.[72] The renewed interest in the Ottoman past and Islam appears to drive the Turkish population to reconnect with an authentic Turkish identity.

Turkish society has been deeply divided by the identity questions. However, for many years centre-periphery tensions representative of the dichotomy between secular culture and Islamic tradition have dominated Turkish politics.

To assess this new political orientation of Turkey, it is necessary to study the events and changes that Turkey has experienced during the past 90 years.

It is essential to examine the radical changes – which may also be called a revolution – that have marked Turkey in this time. It is also critical to seek the source and initiator of these changes in the comprehension of 'the State', and briefly address Turkey's geopolitical situation as well as its historical and cultural components.

*From Ummah to Westernised Secular Citizenship*

The Ottoman Empire was a complex 'Ummah' society that ruled for 600 years. Its collapse was due to external pressures, military defeats, and

external debts, which resulted in the abolition of the sultanate and khalifat to facilitate the creation of a Western-style republic. In his book *Devlet ve Kimlik* (State and Identity), Altindal explains this 'difficult and complex' transition process:

> *'Ummah' is an Arabic word derived from the word 'Umm'. This word in Arabic is used to mean 'fertility and motherhood'. Therefore, Ummah is a concept to designate the characteristics of motherhood and to express the verbs nurture, educate and learn. According to Islam, the founder and generator of the Ummah is God. It is for this reason that the Ummah means, the agglomeration of all the Muslims, conducted with the permission of God. In the Ummah, each Muslim has a status of 'Kul = subject', – being Kul is not devaluing quite the contrary, it is a concept used to designate 'honour' (in the sense of spiritual superiority). In the concept of the Ummah, sovereignty belongs unquestionably to God and there can be no clergy which monopolizes the divine representation as in Christianity.*[73]

Ummah is not based on common biological origin or elements of socio-historical identity generators. Rather, it is grounded in common values that emanate from a spiritual message. Membership in the Ummah is founded on the consent of its individuals to the common spiritual message. It is, by right, co-extensive with all of humankind. Ummah represents the universal value system for the Muslims, it implies an openness to humanity for two reasons:

- The values of the Ummah are destined for all mankind. In practice of the moral rules, a Muslim should make no distinction between another Muslim and a non-Muslim;

- The Ummah occupies a mediating position between a universal divine message and humanity.'[74]

After briefly introducing the concept of Ummah, Altindal compares it to the concept of the republic and clarifies the essential link between the concepts of the republic and sovereignty. According to Altindal, national sovereignty is the republic's *sine qua non*. Sovereignty, which belonged to Allah in the Ummah, was transferred to the nation in the republic. Altindal asserts that the Kul in the Ummah is considered 'an individual' in the republic:

*Therefore, the right and freedom of the individual are not determined by the Sharia which is the declared will of Allah, but by the Constitution written and approved by the nation. This written document (the Constitution) is precisely a 'secular contract'. It is a contract established between the individual and the Republic at the level of citizenship, and the State is its guarantor. For the State in order to fulfill its duty, it must possess the secular and nominal qualities.*[75]

These explanations suggest that it was not easy to destroy the Ummah – the Ottoman Empire – to create the Republic of Turkey. Religion and belief form one of the most fragile aspects of societies.

Even though the Turks have adopted secularism with the switch to the Republic, they always tolerated the different faiths and religions of those they reigned over in the past. Millions of Turks, Arabs, Circassians, Lazes and Kurdish ethnic minorities who live in present-day Turkey preferred being citizens of the republic to being the Kul of Allah. Moreover, Bernard Lewis

has explained Turkey's secularisation process as follows:

> In the secularization of the West, God was twice dethroned and replaced − a source of sovereignty by the people, as the object of worship by the nation. Both of these ideas were alien to Islam. Only one Muslim state, The Turkish Republic, formally adopted secularism as a principle, and enacted the removal of Islam from the constitution and abrogation of the sharia.[76]

In his analysis, Altindal has highlighted a second crucial point: the difference in the West and Turkey's understandings of the state, which are based on drastically different roots. Their connotations and perceptions of the concept vary greatly. In both the East and Turkey, the word 'state' is a derivative of the word '*Dawla*', which is used to signify 'the power to change, to transform'. In other words, for this region, the state refers to the force that has the power to change and transform. The mission of 'transforming' in the Ummah belonging to Allah is given to the state in the Republic of Turkey. As a result, all 'reforms and revolutions' are conducted in accordance with state-defined permission and limitations. In the West, 'state' is used to refer to 'stability'. As such it is not possible for the state to appropriate itself via 'transformation', as is the case in Turkey (where both the bureaucracy and the army have this ability). In Turkey, reforms are implemented 'from top to bottom'; this is the reverse of what happens in the West, where they are realised 'from bottom to top', following the will of an organised population. It is the forced marriage of the Eastern state and the Western republic models that has defined Turkey's internal and foreign policy for the past 90 years.[77]

Ataturk's vision of modernisation was based on two basic elements that were linked: political change, which involved abolishing the Ottoman state and its restrictive value system in favour of a westernized democratic system; nevertheless, the socio-cultural revolution and western values were not interiorised by a certain part of the Turkish population, especially in the rural areas such as the Islamist-oriented Anatolia region (which are more attached to the conservative value system). Two surveys[78] conducted in 2006 and 2007 revealed that the most important demand for change among the Turkish population is related to a return to a revered moral past.

As stated in an Anna Lindh Foundation Report written by Cengiz Gunay, 'In Turkey, transition to a post-industrial age, induced by the shift to liberal market economy in the 1980s, triggered a revival of spirituality. Rapid urbanisation, unbridled capitalism, unequal socio economic transformation, corruption, and the influx of new lifestyle-images in the course of globalisation have been factors which enhanced the feeling of many Turkish citizens that morals and values are in erosion. There emerged a call for the restitution of the moral order of an idealised past which seemed more protected and less complex. Since Turkish secularism had failed to produce a secular moral and ethical code, in times of crisis, the demand for values fell back on tradition and Islamic conceptions.'[79]

According to Gunay, secularists and Islamists have battled over the role that religion should play in public life. This battle has also embodied elements of a competition over economic and cultural dominance.[80] Both sides have claimed that their own nostalgic interpretation of the

past should determine the nature of legitimate politics in contemporary Turkey.[81]

The above explanation of all of the transformations that Turkey has experienced is necessary to better analyse the AKP's new domestic and foreign policy and the current political tropism of the Turkish population.

## IV - Towards a New Turkish Political Model in Cultural Diplomacy

The AKP is a political party that is supported by Islamist groups that want to become the new leaders of Dar-ul-Islam (House of Islam)[82] in Turkey and the Middle East. The policy that it pursues would therefore not be 'Neo-Ottomanism', but rather a new 'Pan-Islamism'. Altindal has called this new Islamic political trend 'Unitarian Islamism'. This model cannot be considered as 'Neo-Ottomanism' or 'Pax-Ottomana'. In the context of the AKP's role, the only allusion to the Neo-Ottomanism and Pax-Ottomana theories is not politics, but 'geography'. The direct historical and geographical links between the AKP and the 13 emerging countries around Turkey after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire represent a situation altogether as a natural environment. It is perfectly natural for Turkey to prioritise relations with neighbouring countries.[83]

The Islamic vision was rooted by the Milli Gorus (National view) in the 1970s, followed by the Refah (Welfare) Party which officially brought political Islam and later on, a more moderate strand emerged with the appearance of the AKP. Though the AKP was more cautious of exposing its Islamist-rooted political vision in its early days of power, it has become clear that the party represents those in Turkey who embrace the country's Islamic past. The AKP's vision of Turkey is a country that goes out of its way to defend its Turkic brothers abroad, that infuses religion with politics and that gives rise to what it sees as a long-neglected Anatolian class.[84] In his political discourse, President Erdogan seeks 'to be the voice of the oppressed'. He refers to the Muslim world in the following statement:

> *We are the voice of our brothers, our friends, the oppressed; we are that voice opening up to the world', and that 'When they tell us: 'Is it left to you to take care of the oppressed of the world, tell what's right and defend justice?' We will remind them that our basic principle is: 'If your brother is in difficulty, you cannot be in security and stability.' You cannot make your country prosperous by veiling your heart and your conscience.[85]*

Moreover, Erdogan adds that the ruling AKP policy was based on enhancing 'brotherhood' in the region. Keyman underlines that *as a modern nation-state formation with a secular, democratic government, largely Muslim population, dynamic economy and a highly mobile, young and entrepreneurial population, Turkey was a model country or inspiration for the future of democracy, stability, and peace in the Middle East and Muslim world in general.*[86] According to The Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV), public opinion surveys conducted between 2010 and 2012 after the post-Arab spring repeatedly showed that approximately 60% of the Arab public saw Turkey as a model and believed that Turkey could contribute positively to the transformation of the Arab world.[87]

If Turkey does not want to be divided, it is obliged to create a new space for itself. However, the

new Neo-Ottoman or Ottoman Pax theories do not correspond with this new strategy. In the current situation, it is Islamic rhetoric that can yield opportunities for Turkey; Islam, not Ottomanism, has credibility in the Arab world. Graham Fuller, a U.S. Central Intelligence Agency Middle East expert, has stated:

> It is of course, absurd to argue that the existence of Islam has had no independent impact on the Middle East or East-West relations. Islam has been a unifying force of a high order across a wide region. As a global universal faith, it has created a broad civilization that shares many common principles of philosophy, the arts, and society; a vision of the moral life; a sense of justice, jurisprudence, and good governance – all a deeply rooted high culture. As a cultural and moral force, Islam has helped bridge ethnic differences among diverse Muslim peoples, encouraging them to feel part of a broader Muslim civilizational project. Islam affected political geography as well: If there had been no Islam, the Muslim counties of South Asia and Southeast Asia today – particularly Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia and Indonesia – would be rooted in the Hindu World.[88]

The community to which Fuller refers is the Ummah (which is explained above). The difference between AKP and Ottoman governance appears in the subject of 'identity'. For the AKP, Islam is a 'fundamental identity', while being Ottoman, Turkish, Circassian and so forth is a 'subordinate identity'. The AKP considers the attempt to develop a new identity to be a condition of existence for the new Turkey.

The Muslim world encompasses 57 countries and 1.7 billion adherents, comprising over 23% of the world's population[89]. It thus represents a substantial economic market that is as important as the Chinese market. Turkey wants to become a leading country to guide this space and views the Middle East as an indispensable hinterland. In this conjuncture, Turkey could have a choice between becoming a pivotal power (or state) – similar to Russia, China and Brazil – or undergoing the threat of 'separatism', fragmentation and civil war.

The question of whether the AKP government has sufficient foreign policy experience and knowledge to play this leadership role effectively in the Muslim World is critical. Even if the AKP government lacks the necessary experience and knowledge, it is interesting to note the willingness of the Arab and Muslim countries to define Turkey as a role model. President Erdogan receives great admiration in the Arab world. His charisma, rhetoric and political positioning incite fascination, and he is considered both the 'strong man' against the West and the 'voice of the oppressed'. Nevertheless, the gap between the AKP and Arab Islamists' political views is important, some of the radical Islamic political organizations like Hizb-ut-Tahrir Al Islami are fully opposed to the Turkish model in the Arab world: 'The Turkish secular regime represented by AKP and its leader Erdoğan have not defended the interest of the Ummah ever since they came to power. Moreover, it did not hesitate, even for a moment, to implement American plans in the region" implement American plans in the region.'[90]

The AKP decided to change the Turkish secularism according to their definition 'rigid secularism'

through 'liberal secularism'. "The Turkish Constitutional Court has made a revolutionary decision on secularism definition in Turkey, it changed it as liberal secularism, rather than a definition of old rigid secularism, the decision no. 2012/128 was published in the Official Journal. Liberal secularism refers to liberal democracy and tolerance; it is increasingly replacing rigid secularism, which is more dogmatic and conceived on the basis of a radical republic"[91].

Relations between Turkey and the EU are undergoing a radical change. In 2004, then Prime Minister Erdogan proclaimed that the EU is a 'union of values' and that he aimed to make 'European values Ankara's values'.[92] Today, he stresses:

> If we look at to the past from the perspective of values, we can see that they never keep their words. They won't this time either. I am aware. Why? In the past, when a negotiation chapter would be opened, it had to be closed as well. Only the chapter on education could be closed. There are now 14 chapters opened but none of them closed. Why? Because they have suspended the closure of chapters. Why? This is Turkey. When they implement this for another country, they immediately close them.[93]

Since Turkey has new strategic partners in Russia, Iran, China and Qatar, it is less stimulated by relations with the EU, which has been confronted by many economic and structural crises (such as those evident in Greece, Portugal and the Brexit event). Turkey has suggested that it may instead join the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, an economic bloc that includes China and Russia.

The rhetoric of many European leaders, including Nicolas Sarkozy, Angela Merkel and Sebastian Kurz, communicates, 'We are never going to admit Turkey within the European Union since we don't share the same values.' This has had impressive repercussions on polls in Turkey. According to a survey conducted by the German-based Turkish European Foundation for Education and Scientific Studies (TAVAK) in 2008, 80% of the Turkish population was in favour of integration into the EU; this rate has since dropped to 17-19% in 2016.[94] The Turkish people have lost their confidence in Europe, and a growing and culturally imbedded opposition to the idea of Turkish EU membership exists. The Turkish public is abandoning EU-related hopes due to the rise of Islamophobia, as well as to Turcophobia and negative perceptions of Turkey in Europe.

After the deadly coup attempt organised by the Gulenist Radical Islamist Terrorist Group (FETO) on July 15, 2016 marked a turning point in Turkey's political history with the EU, with Turkey feeling betrayed by the EU. The Turkish foreign affairs minister declared, 'Unfortunately the EU is making some serious mistakes. They have failed the test following the coup attempt ... Their issue is anti-Turkey and anti-Erdogan sentiment.'[95]

For many Turks, the failed coup attempt signified the rebirth of modern Turkey; it was a victory of 'democracy' over Occidental enemies who wanted to destabilise the country. After the event, President Erdogan appealed to the unity of the country and received support from the main opposition, namely the Republican People's Party (CHP) and the far-right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) President Erdogan declared, 'Every coup which does not kill us, makes us stronger.

Just like here and now.'[96] Regardless of ethnic, religious, cultural, class and lifestyle differences, Turkish citizens were united against the coup. From political parties to economic actors, from media to civil society organisations. The unity displayed by Turkish citizens was remarkable in the name of protecting democracy over military rule, living together rather than polarization.[97]

According to several press articles and reports, the lack of empathy and support by European media and politics, which emphasised on its anti-Erdogan propaganda, at the result of the coup attempt that was regarded as a 'victory of democracy' by the Turkish population; created a sense of disappointment among the Turks, who interpreted their reaction as a Western plot against their country's integrity[98]. "There are several theories as to who was behind this failed coup attempt. One theory suggests it was a 'false flag' event staged by President Erdogan to gain more power, but common sense dictates the event went too far to be a false flag"[99]. The Turkish government accused Europe of hypocritically interpreting democracy and values according to its self-interest.[100] This situation has intensified the nationalistic feelings of Turks, invoking the proverb 'the Turk has no other friend than the Turk'. The discrimination against President Erdogan is considered discrimination against Turkey and the Turkish population.[101]

Since the coup attempt, Turkey has suspended the European Convention on Human Rights and declared a state of emergency. Erdogan has accused FETO of being a 'parallel state' within the Turkish state. The government began purging those who were suspected of involvement in the coup or affiliated with the Gulenist movement.

Thousands of soldiers, police officers, judges, civil servants and teachers have been suspended, detained or placed under investigation so far.[102]

For years, the AKP government gave full power to the FETO and accepted the infiltration of Gulen's followers as diplomats, bureaucrats and civil servants into state institutions. According to a Stratfor special report, the Gulen movement has spent the past three decades working aggressively in the education sector to mould young minds in Turkish schools at home and abroad. The goal is to create a generation of well-educated Turks who ascribe to the Gulen tradition and have the technical skills (and under the AKP, the political connections) to assume high positions in strategic sectors of the economy, government and armed forces.[103] The political marriage between FETO and the AKP exploded in December 2013, as Gulen-linked officials raided the homes of dozens of individuals, initiating a ground-shaking corruption scandal that involved President Erdogan himself.[104] Since then, the president has publicly expressed regret over his once-friendly relations with Fethullah Gulen, likening what he perceives as 'betrayal' by Gulen and the Gulenist movement to being stabbed in the back.[105]

European Parliament President Martin Schulz has accused Turkey of enacting 'revenge' against its opponents and critics. He has also said that a debate over restoring the death penalty in the country is 'deeply worrying'; indeed, the EU has warned that such a move would end talks over Turkey joining the bloc.[106]

As a result, an escalation of tension between the EU and Turkey has been unavoidable. The European Parliament's suspension of negotiations with Turkey in November 2016 has jeopardised a fragile deal reached by the two sides. Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim has asserted that relations between the parties were already strained, and that the vote would not have much consequence: 'It is a relationship going grudgingly, with difficulty. The EU should understand this; it should decide whether it wants to shape its vision for the future with Turkey or without Turkey.'[107]

Relations between Turkey and European countries have deteriorated since the attempted coup in Turkey in July 2016, the disproportionate EU-wide ban on Turkish politicians campaigning inside Europe and the EU's suspicion about the referendum results' legitimacy.

According to the Anatolian Press Agency, more than 60% of Turkish expatriates living in Europe casted 'yes' votes on the referendum to enhance the power and scope of the Turkish presidency; in contrast, more than 60% in Middle Eastern countries voted 'no'.[108] Nearly 76% of the Turks in Belgium voted for the proposal, which represents the highest percentage in Europe; Austria was in second place, with more than 72%. While only 51.3% of Turks actually living in Turkey want more autocracy, those living outside – and precisely in the heart Europe – are more enthusiastic about political limitations in their home country.[109]

The outcome of the referendum in Turkey had immediate repercussions in European countries. Flemish Christian Democrats (CD&V) lawmaker Hendrik Bogaert called for the abolition of dual citizenship, saying: 'We cannot say that nothing has happened. Such dual nationality is not conducive to integration. One is eventually more engaged in foreign than in Belgian politics.'[110]

Deutsche Welle's Editor-in-Chief Ines Pohl has argued a similar line, stating: 'If so many people living in Germany support a man who wants, among other things, to reintroduce the death penalty, then, all attempts at integration notwithstanding, things have gone very wrong somewhere'.[111]

Both Europe and Turkey should judiciously analyse the outcome of the Turkish referendum. Europe should reconsider its Turco-sceptic positioning that has persisted for 54 years and how its anti-Erdogan stance is seen as a pretext for Turkey's non-accession to the EU.

Tensions between Europe and Turkey are likely to result in a 'lose-lose' situation. The EU accession process has created many positives for citizens of the Republic of Turkey such as; a modern, dynamic, and inclusive market economy with regulated cooperation, social welfare, healthcare and labour standards, a predictable justice system, participation in European education, technology and social development programs and greatly increased exports, high-standard food and industrial products, consumer rights, and environmental regulations due to the Customs Union.[112] Solutions should employ a new form of cooperation in terms of cultural relativism, taking into consideration that Turkey is in the history of Europe, but not in its culture – which is a prerequisite for its accession to the EU.

## Conclusion

As a source of cultural misunderstanding, 'axiological nihilism', due to blind ethnocentrism, is the main reason for the escalation of tensions between EU and Turkey. Certain cultural differences have been dramatised and have led to the common misperception that Turkey's cultural values are irreconcilable with European civilisation. This general misperception can be easily traced to the general lack of knowledge that EU citizens seem to have about Turkish society.

The rationalists explain that social subjects have axiological beliefs for strong reasons, which can be accepted by others and understood by an outsider.[113] Cognitive theories seek to demonstrate that values and norms result from irrefutable deductions because they are part of a universal rationality. EU's values cannot pretend to be universal, the system of value is culturally dependent, and no moral principles can be made to apply to all cultures. The ideological opposition of moral universalism is cultural relativism, which proclaims the equality of cultures.

Many European philosophers have criticised the concept of universalism and claimed that it leads populations to a form of cultural nihilism and the decadence of the Western civilisation. Pocock argues in an essay that the EU presently offers 'nothing'; to become 'European' is to consider one's national history irrelevant and leave it behind, but without being offered something of equal affective value in return. To some observers and many EU citizens, the most striking feature of the EU is its essential lack of identity.[114]

The EU's values create social exclusion, identity crisis within Muslim minorities in Europe who are culturally perceived as the 'others'. The social exclusion of Muslim in Europe is undeniably linked to the identity crises which have rendered European Muslims vulnerable to Islamist radicalisation and indoctrination. Olivier Roy, one of France's most distinguished scholars of Islam, has called European Muslim migrants who join terrorist groups the 'Generation of Nihilists'. Marranci has also argued the following:

> *However, Muslim immigrants have to deal with a schizophrenic language and political behaviour. On the one hand, Europe asks them to become part of it, in other words to become, if not 'fully' Europeans, at least Muslims of Europe; in other words, Muslims that re-elaborate their cultural and religious identity to become citizens of a new Europe, which include also Islam. But, at the same time, Europe acts in a way that Muslims can only remain Muslims in Europe; in other words, aliens in a Christocentric European environment to whom tolerance might be only granted. It is Islamophobia and, in particular, what could be called institutional Islamophobia that prevents Muslims to become of Europe.[115]*

The analysis of controversial French philosopher Michel Onfray should also be considered: 'The mistake of the West is the ignorance of Islam and its rejection to be recognised as a civilization'. Onfray compares the West and Islam: '*Judeo-Christianity ruled for two millennia. An honorable period for a civilization. The boat now sinks: we can only sink with elegance. We have nihilism, they have fervour; we are exhausted, they have a great health; we have the past for us; they have the future for them*'. He claims that Europe no longer has values; it has lost its spir-

ituality. According to Onfray, Europe is forgetting the philosophical lessons of Hegel and Sprengler: civilisations are born, grow, live, culminate, decay, collapse and disappear to make room for a new civilisation to be taken into consideration. In this context, the new civilisation is Islam, which represents a true spirituality and values to defend. The Ummah is a community that represents a universality in which the individual finds an existence and an identity".[116]

Despite Onfray's pessimistic and controversial analysis, Europe should question the relevance of its universal values. Cultural relativism seems essential for both promoting cultural exchanges and understanding and integrating with other cultures. For centuries, cultural and scientific exchanges between the East and West have produced innovation and progress in the world, even during dark moments in history such as the Crusades. This enriching exchange stagnated after the French Revolution and the Age of Enlightenment, during which the West perceived universalism as an absolute truth. The European willingness to build a cultural identity based on global cultural citizenship cannot bring a sense of openness to the world, but it could simply isolate it.

Europe should develop a new axiology that is adapted to 21st century challenges, taking all of the parameters of other cultures and the failures of the past into account. Its relation with Turkey can constitute a basis for creating a new approach. Cultural diversity remains a major force for European integration. Cultural diversity represents a wide-ranging resource for innovation, growth and local economic, social and cultural development, making possible an opening up to

other cultures and an inflow of new knowledge, methodologies, skills and ideas which increase a society's creativity and make it better able to face up to new situations, crises and challenges.[117] The success of European cultural diplomacy in Muslim majority countries will depend on the success of its public diplomatic efforts with the European Muslim community and their integration into the European secular public sphere.

# Working paper

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# Working paper

## About the author

Associate Prof N. Selin Senocak is Political Scientist, Chair Holder of UNESCO Cultural Diplomacy, Governance and Education, Director of Diplomatic and Strategic Studies Center Turkey and Researcher for the European Leadership in Cultural, Science and Innovation Diplomacy (EL-CSID) Project. She served as Deputy Dean at Ecole Polytechnique de Lausanne - EPFL (Swiss Federal İnstitute of Technology). She was the Founding Director of Occidental Studies Applied Research Center at IAU.

She graduated from Ecole des Hautes Etudes Internationales, where she obtained her PhD's degree on International Relations, Strategy and Diplomacy. She studied at Sciences-Po Paris, Université de la Sorbonne and CNAM Paris/ParisTech. She is an International Relations expert with a real passion in the Cultural field. She focuses her academic career and research studies on cultural diplomacy and implementation of educational system in emerging countries. Senocak, teaches, publishes, and organizes initiatives in the field of cultural diplomacy, western studies, Turkish foreign policy with a focus on intercultural dialogue between Western and Muslim countries.

## About EL-CSID

EL-CSID stands for European Leadership in Cultural, Science and Innovation Diplomacy. This research project analyses the relevance of cultural, science and innovation diplomacy for the EU's external relations. The project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 programme and runs from March 2016 to February 2019.

*For more information about the project visit www.el-csid.eu*