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**“Understanding the European Identity. Underlying the Turkish  
Identity”**

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**JEAN MONNET WORKSHOP**

# **Turkish Identity to Analyze EU-Turkey Relations on Identity Level**

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Underlying the Turkish Identity Context

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**Table of Contents**

<i>Abstract</i>	3
<i>Introduction</i>	3-4
<i>Europeanization as a Reason behind European Identity</i>	4-5
<i>Criticizing the European Identity?</i>	5-8
<i>European Identity vs. Turkish Identity</i>	8-12
<i>Conclusion</i>	12-13
<i>References</i>	14-15

## **Abstract**

This volume presents a preliminary framework designed to help understand the importance of the identity conflict within the European Union (EU). The intension is to give a view about identity issues that are the new topic and also the problem of our century because of the tolerance concerning the concept of citizenship. Due to this, a main focus must be to understand the meaning of Europeanization, identity, and tolerance within different concepts and critiques. Examining all these issues about the recognition of others using examples from the European Union points to a new perspective about the European Identity. In addition, the problem of the Turkish identity is another main component of the paper, because all these aspects are quite important and related with each other as they are all in a conflict within European context. The underlying premise is to express the impact on all the varying aspects of society. In the following, there will be clear explanations of the examples of the EU and Turkey, the importance of granting human beings the status of citizenship, potential conflicts, and the detailed content of democracy. Turkey is included as an example because all these concepts are very problematic and questionable within the country. Moreover, Turkey also is in the process of negotiating its accession to EU membership, which is another faith of the European Identity. This volume is based on article reviews and examples derived from the Union.

In this article, the first aim is to draw a general knowledge about European Identity and its critiques. The final aim is to demonstrate the similarities and differences between European Identity and Turkish Identity to analyze EU-Turkey Relations on an identity level.

## **Introduction**

Identification involves a progressive process, because identifying a human being is much more complicated than for any other creatures in the world. Moreover, minorities are the most complex group to identify due to their cultural, religious, ethnic and traditional connections with the past to protect themselves from assimilation. In this example of identification, minorities are quite political and economic rather than social aspects of society. Especially focusing on the EU, this is quite impressive given all those “democratic” regulations and implementations, because of the minorities and their identification problem. Minorities are a problematic part of the Union that clash with the European Identity. The assimilation level of Europe is also quite impressive in its scale. The creation of an Identity of Europe, in a way, is simply questioning toleration on a daily basis in the European sense. However, democracy is always a part of the conflict about European Identity; the problem of toleration is more effective than democracy

even for the European Case. The power of toleration magnificently controls every single detail within the way of understanding the identification process of others due to toleration. If one of the key concepts of the social sciences is to be able to analyze the aspects of nationalism, minority and tolerance, identity will become brighter issue.

### ***Europeanization as a Reason behind European Identity***

Europeanization is very helpful to analyze member states as it is helping to improve new member states and candidate states. However, the study of Europeanization has not been completed, which makes new member states more similar to candidate states, because they both did not participate in the decision making process and they just have to follow accepted protocol if they want to become part of the European Union. But in recent years, the research area of Europeanization improved with the importance of the idea; it became more analytical and comparable across the new member states and candidate states within EU Studies. *“Finally, some studies frame the question in terms of the relative importance of EU conditionality and domestic politics in shaping domestic political change”*<sup>1</sup> (Sedelmeier, 2006).

Europeanization added some required characteristics to candidate states. First, the status of a candidate country as a non-member state put some more weight on the state's shoulders by the Union, because, not yet being full members, they do not have to follow the rules and regulations according to treaties. But, they do have to be softer and democratic especially in economic, political, and social standard conditions for their citizens. Secondly, a candidate country as a non-member state has no right to say *no* to any regulations, laws or treaties within the Union if they want to gain full-member status. All these laws and regulations change the candidate state from within to make it healthier democratically and economically with the help of the Union.

Moreover, domestic politics is one of the key points of the Union to be succeeded. As EU Studies highlights, there are some sets of factors on the influence of Europeanization that are the polity dimension and the policy dimension. The polity dimension is a more liberal governmental approach which employs democratic principles, human rights and minority protection. The policy dimension is a low 'actor pointed' concept that uses a low number of veto players. They both help the Union to improve its influences on new member states and

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<sup>1</sup>Sedelmeier, U. (2006). *“Europeanisation in New Member and Candidate States”*. *Living Reviews in European Governance*.

candidate states. EU Studies also helps us to analyze the power of the EU to improve democracy, human rights and minority rights in new member states and candidate states. Sometimes the EU does not need to put pressure on candidate states because they already have liberal democratic views, but sometimes they do indeed need it. Europeanization also affects politics within the Union, but it is a very slow process on political parties and interest groups. New member and candidate states still rarely have interest groups and lobbying, so the Union mostly intervenes in political parties and systems.

### ***Criticizing the European Identity***

There are many key aspects that shape the European identity: history, tradition, culture, politics, religion, geography. Not only did all these aspects help to design and re-unite a common identity for the Union after WWII, but along with them; democracy, human rights and rule of law came. If we think about the great enlargement of the Union in 2004 and later on 2008, we can clearly understand the reasons behind the Copenhagen Criteria. But, does the integration process help the Union to achieve a better Europe when it comes to multiculturalism? I would say; not yet. As Morley and Kevin said, *“European identity, for all its apparent self-confidence, remains a vulnerable and anxious phenomenon, and is increasingly articulated with regressive forms of pan-European white racism<sup>2</sup>.”* European identity created another clash of multiculturalism. In theory, people there should be equality before the law and free movement of citizens, a schengen visa, etc., but in practice we may clearly see that all the ‘free movement’ increased the level of racism and xenophobia today. Understanding of others, respect and non-discrimination may wait in line, because ‘otherness’ is a huge problem of Europe nowadays. *“European unity is being defined against ‘alien’ culture and around a self-image of European superiority<sup>3</sup>”* highlights the problem of aliens within the Union, and shows that outliers of the Union are part of that alien space. After the removal of movement of labor regulations, many European citizens (mostly those with a CEE background) moved out from their homelands to find better jobs. They were less qualified, less picky and were non-speakers of the native language of the welcoming country helping them to find jobs quickly. While they were finding new jobs and starting new lives, natives of that welcoming country lost their jobs. It is a typical capitalist reaction to the economy and social life that no one can stop. This creates another question: Didn’t the Union foresee this problem, or was it created by the Union to

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<sup>2</sup>Morley, David; Robins, Kevin. “Spaces of Identity Global Media, Electronic Landscape and Cultural Boundaries”. *Routledge London and New York*. Pp:3.

<sup>3</sup>Morley, David; Robins, Kevin. “Spaces of Identity Global Media, Electronic Landscape and Cultural Boundaries”. *Routledge London and New York*. Pp:82.

collapse the future integration process? Either way, it is hard to understand or believe while all the important political figures of the Union are working to improve this day by day, such as Morley and Kevin mentioned: "...we are moving from an *ethnocentric racism to a Eurocentric racism, from the different racisms of the different member states to a common market racism. Citizenship*<sup>4</sup>." It is quite creepy to think about increased racism within the Union since 2004 which points to the citizenship phenomenon as the cause of this problematic issue. It does not seem that the 'who is more western?' clash may be ameliorated in European thought anytime soon when it comes to the European identity phenomenon.

Richard Rorty called his understanding of nationalism "*the emotion of national pride*<sup>5</sup>" and "*a sense of shared national identity*<sup>6</sup>". Consequently, ethnicity shapes politics, creating a political division within an ethnically divided society. A sense of shared national identity is more than just emotion, because environment and politics categorize us along with our shared identification. The community that we live in puts us in different levels according to our nationality, religion, ethnicity, language, culture, gender, sexual orientation. From the given facts arises another type of question, namely is it really the society or the politics? Even so, people are all shaped by many factors while growing up. In particular, people may not describe themselves in terms of any nationality or with any religion, or blood connections, but people have those small hints of nationalism in them one way or another, whether or not they scream it out in public to be accepted or applauded. None like to be called a 'nationalist' or 'discriminator' in specific terms. It's clearly highlighted that today's world cannot carry out 'the other' fact, because of the combination of the cultures, religions, ethnicities, languages, traditions, etc. There is no such thing as pure blood or language anymore, but there is still the word 'nationalism', with 'patriotism' rising behind it. Globalization thought up a new theory on border control, eliminating borders but not discrimination in the future. Cosmopolitanism will help to some extent, as cosmopolitanism essentially creates a new understanding of humanity in that no gender, no religion, no ethnicity, no language, nor sexual orientation will matter one day.

Unfortunately, nationalism did not end; it just lost its importance due to the new scene of Europeanization in the Union. In Europe the scene is not quite different; especially after 2004 and 2008 accessions. The EU welcomed most of the former Soviet States, who were not ready

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<sup>4</sup>Morley, David; Robins, Kevin. "Spaces of Identity Global Media, Electronic Landscape and Cultural Boundaries". *Routledge London and New York*. Pp:82.

<sup>5</sup>Nussbaum, Martha C. (2001). "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism" in J. Cohen (ed.), *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism*. Boston: Bacon Press. Pp:2.

<sup>6</sup>Nussbaum, Martha C. (2001). "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism" in J. Cohen (ed.), *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism*. Boston: Bacon Press. Pp:2.

to be part of the EU economically, politically, and socially. The 2004 and 2008 accessions created a huge gap between the member states on many levels. The EU is still trying earnestly to solve these problems and bring equality to states in many aspects, but it is not that easy. Today discrimination, nationalism and patriotism are rising within European society. The EU is trying to stop it, but what about national governments? The fact that conservative parties are rising in member states is quite concerning to the current state of the EU. All the effort toward cultural diversity and European Identity and ending hate crimes will be for naught. It may be that the reason people do not describe themselves as European Union Citizen is the gap between states within the EU.

Particularly, as mentioned in the above, European identity created another important problem in the conflict between European identity and national identity within the Union. Most of the Union's citizens still describe themselves using their national identity, not as European citizens. Besides integration there should not be a clash between identities in Europe. As Moes said, *"If we focus our attention on matters of social constructions and collective identification (instead of on economy and politics, for example), we would most likely conclude that European integration will not replace national identities. However, neither will European socio-cultural, political and economic integration be without any social consequences whatsoever"*<sup>7</sup>. Since European identity should be about common similarities for the Union, citizens can be still British, French, Polish, Cypriot while they are European. 'Europeanness', unlike, say, economic and political classifications might be different, and understandable. What's more, the description of Europeanization should cover the concepts of democracy, rule of law, liberation, justice and human rights, not the concepts of history, tradition, culture, politics, religion, and geography. Because *"...joins together nicely with much of the public debate surrounding Europeanization, in that it suggests a kind of either-or mechanism between Europe and the state. As McNeill rightly notes, this makes the debate about Europe's territorial future often overly simplistic, "assuming either the continuing existence of a nation-state led form of European integration [...] or a federalization model that simultaneously enhances the power of the regions and the EU at the expense of national autonomy" (2004, p. 36). If a power-struggle between national and European identifications is at hand, it would be simple enough to determine which people identify themselves with Europe"*<sup>8</sup>. Moes also highlighted the Europeanization concept with *"so, instead of looking at Europeanization as the inevitable demise of the European nation-state, we*

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<sup>7</sup> Moes, Jeroen. (September). "European Identity Compared, a Mixed Method Approach". Prepared for the ECPR Fourth Pan-European Conference on EU-Politics in Riga, Latvia. Pp:4.

<sup>8</sup> Moes, Jeroen. (2008). "Cosmo Poles: Shifting Boundaries In the Identification with Europe". Radboud University Nijmegen.Pp:19.



should focus on the “more complex political process of repositioning, remapping, and rebranding of the nation-state” (McNeill, 2004, pp. 36-37), in order to understand European identity<sup>9</sup> for all of us to understand how easy it would be to solve the problem: just respect the citizen’s ability to value himself however he would like.

Specifically, Europeanization is a harmonization of the concepts of democracy, rule of law, liberty, justice, human rights and free market economics as its personal identity. The Union is on its way to ruling the world with its humanistic and libertarian concepts of Europe. However, creating the identity clash between its citizens will never help her to rule world politics. Therefore the concepts of Europeanness, Europeanization and European identity are quite important for the Union.

### ***European Identity vs. Turkish Identity***

European identity has been defined as shared fundamental values, respect for common heritage, and cultural diversity by the Council of the European Union in 2008. The main problem of European identity is not the definition; the main problem is how to achieve it. There are no specific resources that clearly explain how European identity should be drawn. Freedom, democracy, secularism, liberalism, multiculturalism, diversity and justice may be the main aspects of European identity, but how can we achieve that identity?

On and off since 1959, Turkey has been in line to join the European Community. Not only ‘modern’ Turkey, but also the last Sultans of Ottoman Empire wanted to be ‘modernized’ one way or another. And modernity has always been about the West; as Kaya highlighted, “...modernization is equated with Westernization, which is the case very much visible in the narrative of Turkish modernization<sup>10</sup>”. After Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s presidency, it became very obvious that Turkey was going to be ‘modernized’ in a Western way. The main reason behind all the revolutions and changes in Turkey was that Atatürk had studied in Western schools, spoke several Western languages fluently, and became accustomed to a Western life style that he also wanted for his citizens. Building a Turkish identity on a ‘modernized’ level created a male dominated militarist and nationalist society. Even the ‘Girls of the Revolution’ were dressing up in a Westernized way and getting education in a Westernized way, but when the time came they were getting married, having kids, and staying in their houses. They were proud of their nation even if they had kids, because their kids are the ones

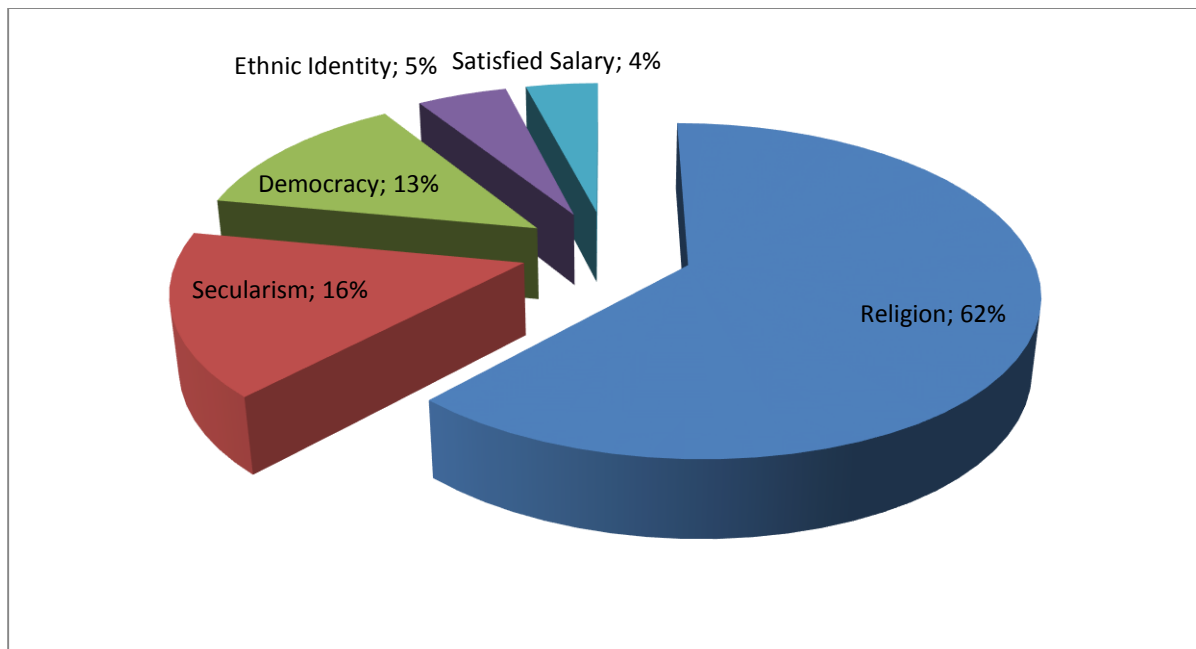
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<sup>9</sup> Moes, Jeroen. (September). “European Identity Compared, a Mixed Method Approach”. Prepared for *the ECPR Fourth Pan-European Conference on EU-Politics in Riga, Latvia*. Pp:4.

<sup>10</sup> Kaya, Ayhan. (2009). “the State of the Art: Various Path to Modernity”. *Istanbul Bilgi University*. Pp:2.

who are going to become successful, polite, and educated Turkish citizens in a brighter future. After a while, women's rights went beyond voting and ability to hold public office. They went to work as teachers, nurses or secretaries, the best job for a Turkish woman, which is still a common belief in Turkey. Even in primary school books, when children learn about Turkish family and its life, they learned that it is normal for our fathers to help our mothers with small actions such as setting the table for dinner or preparing the salad, etc. Women and men have never been equal in practice, even today. Many hate crimes still happen against womanhood. Government intervention in women's personal lives still continues, affecting working, having babies, abortion, and birth control. In the past 10 years, it is clear that women's rights got worse in Turkey according to hate crime rates on women, increased rape numbers and anti-woman regulations. In this situation how can we really say that Turkey is ready for the Union when Union is stands strictly for democracy, rule of law, liberty, justice, and human rights?

**Figure I. What Is Most Important For Turkish Citizens?<sup>11</sup>**



Moreover, when we think about the similarities between European identity and Turkish identity, there is not much in common between the two. Due to this, the Turkish accession process has been on and off since 1959. Two main problems, Islam and the democratization of Turkey, always impede the process. Another main problem is that Europe cannot get away from

<sup>11</sup>Esmer, Yilmaz. (2009). "Radicalism and Extremity" research with 1715 people in 34 different cities in Turkey. *Bahçeşehir University International Relations and Political Science Department*.

turning diversity into a unity which will also cover Turkey. Unlike the above problems, economic and political common interests of the Union and Turkey are the cause of a partnership that may succeed in the end, even more so than many other member states' accession. (Bressand, 2011:73).

There exists another saying that can be consider Kemalist view of Turkey: "*Western civilization was chosen "not for it is the civilization of the West, but because it represents the modern civilization which incorporates values created by entire humanity in thousands of years by adding an independent, scientific, and rationalist philosophy of life" (Inan, 1971: 37)<sup>12</sup>*", but would the governance of the AKP also cover the same interest? It is doubtful, as there are many clashes between Islam and Westernization, such as democracy, rule of law, liberty, justice, and human rights. It is quite difficult to believe that the AKP will follow the Union's regulations for democracy, rule of law, liberty, justice, and human rights in Turkey even if full-membership were on the table instead of privileged membership.

On the other hand, the Union will bring many much freedom and independence such as the recognition of many minorities, to banish the thought that all Turkish citizens are Sunni-Muslim and Turkish while they're not "*...membership of the EU can be expected to sharpen rather than assuage what is already an increasing polarization of Turkish society between those supporting greater space for religious identity in politics and those who consider themselves to be firmly rooted in the Kemalist secular camp<sup>13</sup>*". All those important changes are on the way waiting for Turkey to be democratized.

There already exists a large conflict between European minorities; what will happen if Turkey becomes a full member of the EU? There is not a very bright prospect for minorities within the EU, especially after Turkey joins. The minorities living within the Republic of Turkey whom would gain a lot of recognition, representation, equal access to education, health and job vacancies, etc., but the current system regarding minorities within the EU will not be enough for all those minorities in Europe. The ethnic roots of Turkey are very rich and diverse, but the ethnic identity of Turkey was unjustly established for the white, middle class, Sunni Muslims after 1923. All of the social policies of the Republic of Turkey were shaped for this sector of the nation; nobody talked about Alevis, Kurds, Circassians, Armenians, Jews or Romas for a long time. Today we only hear loudly the voices of Alevis and Kurds, and lately Circassians as well. In this way, we can clearly understand that the ethnic identity is a very political aspect. Ethnicity

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<sup>12</sup> Kaya, Ayhan. (2009). 'the State of the Art: Various Path to Modernity', *Istanbul Bilgi University*. Pp: 11.

<sup>13</sup> Bressand, Albert. (2011). 'Between Kant and Machivelli', *International Affairs* 87:1. Pp: 74.

is socially constructed by the government according to geography, politics, economy, ecology and history of a specific group of people, creating a sociological marker as Baarth says. But where are the sociological markers of the boundaries for those different ethnic routes within Turkey? Are those boundaries also shaped by government policies? That can easily be answered in the affirmative; ethnicity is socially constructed mainly by the government not just in Turkey but all around the world. Regarding the EU for Turkey, there are many issues that should be faced, especially when it comes to ethnic identity. Turkey does not seem very interested in all these issues waiting in the line of the EU membership process, as it is not only about ethnic identity but also about democracy and recognition.

### ***Conclusion***

For the aforementioned reasons, the aim of the Union may have changed since it began, but the importance did not. Europe has always held a very unique position in history, economics, politics and sociology. Especially in regards to politics, the Union has a very important place in world politics, which may retake the leading power position with the help of its organizations, systems and theories very soon. In all due fairness, with the new intuitionist perspective may help the Union achieve more because of the importance of the EU intuitions are heading to the EI as Beck and Edgar says, *“The new, enlarged and globalized EU will only have a chance if the integration of Europe adopts a new approach, one based on the principle of differentiated integration<sup>14</sup>”*.

Furthermore, The European identity is also another important aspect of the Union regarding the Europeanization process. The Union has become what it is today in world politics because of all its member states and their differentiated background, history, and experiences achieved formerly, and what they will accomplish tomorrow. For this reason, if the EI cannot be fulfilled by all members, there should be an alternative pathway for the ones that cannot be part of the EI fully, and at the same time. If a different EI could be tolerated for different states the Union would achieve more and improve at a domestic and international level. National differences are not an excuse to simply bail out from the Union. Accepting and organizing better program for those that have differences will create a more efficient Europe. Likewise, national differences and interests should not come first before the Union, as that view may be integrated to all member states and its national organizations.

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<sup>14</sup>Beck, Ulrich; Edgar Grande. (2007). “Cosmopolitanism: Europe’s Way Out of Crisis”. *European Journal of Social Theory* 10 (1). Pp:73.

### ***Turkish Identity to Analyze EU-Turkey Relations on Identity Level***

However, there is no way that we can prevent the inevitable conflict between European identity and Turkish identity, as these clashes happened for many member states. In time, Turkey has to face with it, too, just to a greater extent. Turkey's nationalistic, Islamic and dominant cultural aspects may block the way to the Union, but the creation of an alternative integration process for Turkey may help both sides. Turkey is unlike any other member that the Union has today given its history, heritage and cultural differences, even within the country. Even so, understanding one another and achieving multiculturalism is not a dream, it is just out of reach until we integrate it into our political system. Turkey still has a lot to learn from the Union, especially when it comes to democracy, rule of law, liberty, justice, and human rights, but it is not impossible.

In sum, the accession of Turkey to the European Union may be problematic, but not impractical, unlike privileged membership. Only that way can both sides become the ruling power of world politics, together with the Union's morals, chiefly democracy, and rule of law, liberty, justice, human rights, and a free market economy. Otherwise, disregard of human rights in the international arena will not help anyone to fulfill their dreams. Turkey needs to learn this through the Union, and the Union needs Turkey as its closest ally economically, politically and socially.

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