TURKISH-GERMAN UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

THE EUROPEAN IDENTITY IN TURKEY-EUROPEAN UNION RELATIONS

Asiye Bilge KIRCA
188101009

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ADVISOR
Prof. Dr. Atilla Eralp

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the bilateral relations of European Union and Turkey, the latter is the one that has a long historical journey. Starting from the association process in 1963 with Ankara Treaty, Turkey has been turning in the orbit of the Union almost in every step of her that it takes for its own sake. The signing of the Association Agreement confirmed the notion that Turkey was perceived as a European country (Nas, 2001, p.182). Nevertheless, there are times which has witnessed the ups and downs in bileteral relations. These tides stem from variety of reasons such as economical , political as well as social elements. From one hand, being a supranational organization and from the other hand, being a sovereign state are two different sides of one coin. The only common point that, they are the opponents of the same international system but yet, they have numerous divergences. One but not the only one disparity between them is Turkey's and European Union's social and cultural differences. In this context, many ingredients could be counted down such as religion or education but as it is the analyse topic of this paper the identity differences will be argued.

In the context of European identity, one can find itself in a complexity of identity thoughts regarding the size of the continent of Europe as well as its history that full with conflicts derived from the identity matters. Having these features in its identity, Europe and particularly European Union in its relations with Turkey have multidimensional divergencies in the context of social and cultural elements. Regarding all these disparities, is European Union right to put aside Turkey as a candidate member for an unlimited time? In this paper, this question will be taken on the ground throughout the whole content of the analysing. For doing this, first of all the European identity will be analysed on the ground of the question whether this identity could be understood by social identity theory or it is something natural. Within this theory, as Tajfel clearly points out that the part of a person's concept of self comes from the groups to which that person belongs and an individual does not just have a personal selfhood, but multiple selves and identities associated with their affiliated groups(Tajfel, 1982, p.13). And then, the influence of the European identity in the Turkey-European Union relations will be argued. Especially regarding the European Commission's identity terminology, the bilateral relations will have an outlook from the identity perspective. Finally, in the conclusion the most significant outcomes will be summarized.

II. WHAT IS "THE IDENTITY" FOR EUROPE AFTER 20th CENTURY?

It is not an easy matter to give a definitive judgment on the concept of identity, which has a complex nature and has been the subject of many debates for all along history that is ongoing. Just to give a brief etymological expression, the term of identity in Latin is a concept derived from the word "identitas" which means "being the same" and being identical which is seen as a human characteristic(Etymonline Dictionary). Therefore, most of the time identity is affiliated with society and given a dynamic feature. In this sense there are some existential questions on European identity claiming that is there really a European identity or it is indeed fictionary but with some common undertsandings? To be able to give plausable answers to this question it would be beneficial to make a brief periodization in this chapter on the evolution of identity in Europe in 20th century.

II.I. Identity Crises in Europe After World War II

The European continent has witnessed various of devastating wars and the most striking memories for it indicates to the two successive World Wars in the 20th century. The reasons on these wars are numerous infact, but one is needed to be out which derived from the identity matters. Particularly in the Second World War, the international agenda was been shaking with one striking goal coming from Hitler - the former fascist leader of Germany- and one of his main motivation was his belief on the superiority of the Aryan race. For him, this race must have been dominating the world (Longerich, 2011). And counting on this desire of him in his to do list, the WWII broke out. In a broader sense, it could be concluded that personal identification on an identity -not really matter if it is on ethnicity or religion- can be used for some purposes in several ways either peaceful or in a negative way. That flexibility makes the identity dynamic and multidimensional.

Coming to the end of the Cold War era, another identity based conflict(s) broke out. The collapse of Soviet Union(1991) gave a start a series of ethnic wars. In Balkan region many ethnicities living together under the shelter of Soviet, had gone to war right after the collapse(Sander, 2013, p.576). There are numerous reasons for those wars in Balkan region yet the prominent reason was seen the ethnicity divergences in the same region. In Soviet times, the sides of these wars were sharing the same destiny for decades due to the binding feature of the Soviet system. As soon as it collapsed, the side effects of identity divergences came on the stage. Just as Hitler, some ultra-nationalist leaders such as Slobodan Miloseviç

from Serbia in those times was using the identity divergences stemmed from ethnicity to fulfill his goals.

Regarding all these brief historical outlook on the identity and the outcomes of misusing it, one can conclude that in Europe there has been several conflicts that were to some extent identity based. Thus, the European identity was shaped in the shadow of this sort of identity crises and mostly because of that, a third country outside of this continent stays behind in sharing this background.

II.II. European Identity As a Cultivated or Natural Process?

After the WWII, there was a need to help this devastated continent to make it rise from the ashes for the sake of the welfare. Hence, after having its architecture the European Union has began to develop some common values that were seen able to gather those people in a shelter. To be precise, European Union was based on those values; respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law, respect for human rights including the rights of persons belonging to minorities (European Parliament, 2009). By having a look from this point, one can have inferences on the European identity on its artificial characteristic. In this sense, Erdenir clearly points out that the identity of Europe is a fiction that can be shaped continuously as an answer to historical conditions, but it does not appear in the true sense of its side, which gives a common sense of belonging(Erdenir, 2005, p.14). On the other hand, some do not see it possible to unite under a collective identity due to the lack of common language and history that helps to develop collective identity by emphasizing the diversity of Europe, where the foundations of European identity are some prominent universal values, such as democracy, human rights, rule of law, freedom, and democracy, which are considered to be the founding elements of Europaen Union (Commission, 2012) In this point, it is necessary to consider the identity policies of the European Union. Generally, these policies would be the goal of providing an already existing identity to be noticed by the people of the member states of the European and it could be the trying to awaken the consciousness of being in a European identity which respond to their needs. This can be the exact point to apply social identity theory. For this theory, a group of people name themselves by some common values and beliefs and this created identity is not observed as a threat to the individual identity (Tajfel, 1982, p.278). Rather, the social identity is complementary in making a society as a whole. According to the European Commission –executive arm of EU- , the real matter is that the Europeans are not very aware of the common cultural values and the shared European heritage and are not sufficiently informed of the European Union's

work on this issue (Shore, 2000, p.24). The important point of the European identity is that it can not develop unless individuals of this continent participate in social interactions related to the European Union or Europe. The conception of European identity proposes an abstract feeling of belonging but not in an actual term of emotional sense. In order to realize this belonging, individuals acquire a common sense of political identity, not through a common history, but by adhering to the principles of justice and procedural principles set out in the public sphere, or through an understanding of good life and by participating in this process of identity formation the individuals gain an identity not only at the national level, but also at the transeuropean level (Guisan, 2012, p.110). Moreover, the establishment of the identity is not only used for the citizens' welfare but also in order to keep integration alive to make it useful for politics in the international system. On the other hand, there are some thoughts on the replacement of national identity by the newcomer European identity. However, European identity is unlikely to replace the national identity as the European Union is characterized by cultural diversity, rather than a simple unity (Karolewski, 2010, p.49).

It would not be so wrong to claim that the debates on whether the European identity is cultivated or it is natural will keep its place in the international agenda. Nevertheless, through the initiatives after WWII by the European elites, one can understand that today's European identity is more or less cultivated accompanied with some historical shares such as wars. When we look the European Union's criteria for its canditates, these criterias are also to ensure this identity to those who want to be a member. From human rights to the environment field, the familiarization process of European Union for its member as well as for the canditates will keep its trait as an ongoing process. The predominant critics on this identity is the unawareness of the people in the Union. For this arguments Schmidts claims that "if citizens are ever to identify more with the Union, let alone be actively engaged with it politically, they need a clearer understanding of EU identity" (Schmidt, 2009, p.7). As soon as the individuals are more educated the qualities of this identity via political tools or social elements, it would be such a fruitful step for the Union to be known with this identity.

III. THE INFLUENCE OF EUROPEAN IDENTITY IN TURKEY-EU RELATIONS

The European identity has an influencer feature in its nature. Because of the concept of the identity that was cited in the previous chapter, it is open to spread. Indeed, it seems one of its objectives regarding the Union's endeavours on common values to make them applied as a main duty for candidate states. It can be clearly seen in Copenhagen Criteria(1993) that the

Union is highly giving importance to those values. In this criterias the very first one is political criteria and within this title the candidate state is expected to have democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities (Commission, 2016). As a candidate member, Turkey's approach the European identity which is mostly bolstered by the European Commission is highly significant. In this chapter, Turkey and EU relations will be argued on the ground of European identity and its effect on the bilateral relations.

III.I. The Perceptions of European Identity in Turkey After Having Candidate Status

The recognition of Turkey as a candidate state was a milestone in the bilateral relations at Helsinki European Council in 1999 . Later on, the accession process has been started in 2005. With these steps Turkey left behind one circle more to reach the core of the Union to the membership. Nevertheless, there are some blanks in bilateral relations regarding the long-lasting accession process which is now about to be 15 years and consequently no acceptance for membership. It is needed to be point out that no country that has reached this stage has been rejected for full membership (Guisan, 2012, p.97).

In Turkish society, the European identity is mostly aligned with a reductionist and essentialist understanding which has been gaining more support in the direction of the development of European culture that has a long history particularly on the basis of Christianity (Bodur, 2008, p.6). This argument is actually common among the conservativist. Furthermore, they oppose Turkey's membership in the Union believing that the membership will threaten Turkish identity through alienation as well as degeneration (Inaç, 2004, p.47). For the Leftist side, the European identity as well as its culture is affiliated with capitalist, modernist and globalist ideas, resulting in Europeans being perceived as arrogant and hegemonic over the rest of the West(Inaç, 2004, p.48). Liberalist part of the society are mostly open to the acceptance of the European identity considering the endless civilization movement with the wealth of the free market economy.The current governing Justice and Development Party had a positive approach to the Union when it came to power in 2002. In this context, JDP took the helm on the association process with a series of legal changes e.g. enhancing the freedoms of association, rule of law, human rights and minority rights (Göksel& Eralp& Lindgaard, 2017, p.3). Despite having several ups and downs with the European Commission it would not be so wrong to claim that the positive approach to the European identity and its bringings still protects its place under the shadow of the current bilateral relations. For example, president Erdogan has emphasized in an intergovernmental meeting that "Turkey will continue its efforts toward full membership to the European Union" which he described as the "most

important peace project of Europe" (TRT World, 2018). Even from this statement of him, one may conclude that the current government's approach to the European identity is still positive since it has been a crucial way to the membership. Addition to that, it is needed to be seen in the implementations of the government whether it does well in accession process, particularly with the criterias that are originated from European identity.

III.II. The Projection of European Identity in the Turkey-EU Relations

The familirization process of the Union for the European identity on Turkey has been ongoing for decades. And it is not actually only a one side process. The Union has also been giving endeavors into the process. All these efforts of both sides have an undeniable influence on the Turkey's accession process to the Union. However, it can be seen from the current situation of Turkey that it could not have the European identity for the time being. To accelerate the process, a shared social space should be provided in order to generate new devotion that would lie at the heart of European identity(Guisan, 2012, p.64).

The political criterias which were mentioned above, are *sine qua non* for Turkey as for the other candidate states. Despite some debates on the European identity as if it is unspoken notion, this paper claim that with the Copenhagen Criterias the European identity gained a written form. Hence, Turkey has been trying to meet with these criterias particularly with the political one. Otherwise, there is no any other alternative for Turkey to be a member in the family of Europe. Significantly, there is a predominant debate on European identity on its feature of being Christianity based. Looking from this perspective, it would not be so wrong to say that Turkey has a deadlock on that regarding 99% muslim population of her. And this is the exact point where the bilateral relations have big poles. The prominent argument of those who do not want Turkey in European family stems from the religion based identity divergences(Turunç and Rumford, 2016, p.249). There is no doubt that the European identity is shaped by internal and external elements and it makes this disparity one of the constitutive element in bilateral relations. In this regard, it is important for Turkey to be an attractive candidate in its implementations for being familiar with the Europaen identity especially in the eyes of the European states.

IV. CONCLUSION

It is an undeniable fact that the European identity has not been shaped only in one segment

especially on the ground of the European Union. Rather, this identity has an eclectic trait regarding the truth coming from the historical occasions such as the two devastating World Wars. Due to the this historical fact, it would not be so wrong to emphasize that Turkey may not be able to understand the motivations of the creating a European identity under the shadow of the European Union. The idea of "how it is possible to not have this type of faith that is based one wars again" in Europe, paved the way for this identity. And Turkey, as being partly in this continent has its own path to have the identity. To be precise, despite the inner or outer obstacles on her way that Turkey has to tackle, one can conclude from her endeavors that Turkey shows a desire to have the European identity.

On the other hand, the projection of this identity in Turkey-EU relations depends on the both sides attitude's inside of the bilateral relations. As long as Turkey keeps its motivations to have this identity, it would be easier for her to reach its goal. As it has been cited on the previous part of the paper, the ingredients of the European identity ensured by the European Commission are not unfamiliar with Turkish society. Despite of different fractions in Turkish society, there is a common sense for having the ingredients of the European identity such as respect for human law and rule of law. Implementations for having this identity may show a fluctuating tendency from time to time depending on the domestic policies of the time. However, being a member in the European family will be keeping its place as one of the Turkish objective. In this sense, one can conclude from the overall of this paper that if Turkey proves herself in the way of being a member in European family by achieving the necessary steps one by one, the binding feature of European identity will implicate Turkey in the end.

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