

CHAPTER III

Turkey's Identity and Attitude of Itself and towards the EU

On this chapter, the perception of Turkey will be analyzed deeply and comprehensively. I try to gather some of the academic essays regarding to the distinctive nature of history, identity, and attitude from Turkey that is perceived by European countries which most of them represent the majority voice in the European Union. I have briefly described the relations by history between Turkey and Europe in terms of socio-politics. Each of the occasions on the historical timeline underwent a dynamic process of engagements and adjustments. Most of the time, both sides put the underlying basis of their arguments on their differences which become the main key factor of the distinctive perspective on this writings.

However, I strongly advise and invite us to look deeper beside those numbers mentioned above and to see things quite differently between both sides on identity matters.

A. History of Turkey's Itself and Towards the European Union

In hindsight of the post-World War II, following the Association agreement various political opinions, ideologies, and socio-economic interests could express their views more liberally within the framework of the 1960 constitution which provided extensively for rights and freedoms (Nas, 2001). On this period, the modernization spread across the words giving more access about the idea of individual rights which threatened the existence of repressive ideology. In Turkey, along with the modernizations of the era the problem ranging from politics to economy arose rapidly in the country. Such problem began to be experienced in Turkey as well leading to

political instability, economic problems, civil unrest, radicalization of politics and anarchy. Turkey's priority was mainly socio-economic development and industrialization process in Turkey. Based on this reason, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, an institution devoted to Republican ideals, defended increased relations with the EC while other states institutions and agencies such as the State Planning Agency adhered to the developmentalist perspective arguing that liberalization of trade against the EC should proceed gradually to avoid harmful effects on industrialization (Nas, 2001).

In the aftermath of the Cold War towards the modern world, Turkey's perception of itself and the world had changed dramatically. The elites from the Islamic groups had challenged the process of modernization in Turkey that resulted in the increasing number of conservative from the religious groups. They ruled out the Republican alternative of westernization, and turned to Islam and relations with the Islamic world as references to guide their social values, lifestyles, and political worldview (Nas, 2001). Since 2005, Turkey's accession negotiations have progressed slowly and are expected to last for at least a decade. Furthermore, many news resources consider the EU commission's 2012 progress report on Turkey to be "the harshest report" of the 14 released so far and it has been called "unbalanced" and too focused on "negative elements" by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as a result, only 13 of the 33 *acquis communautaire* chapters have been opened for negotiation with Turkey (Young, 2014). Many of the unresolved chapters are because Turkey is unable to fulfill it and even though Turkey managed to fulfill the criterion, its effort is up for debate in the consideration.

Participatory democracy did not come easily when modern Turkey arose from the rubble of the Ottoman Empire. To quote Professor Dogu Targil of Ankara University, the Republic that Kemal Ataturk and a small circle of serving and retired military officers established in 1923 was created to

make the new regime national and secular, which would legitimize their position as the new ruling elite.” They believed they were “charged with the mission of breaking with the past and creating a new Western-oriented nation (Bonner, 2005). However, he recognized two “problems.” One was Islam which he accused of fostering backwardness. Ataturk did not try to suppress Islam but did insist that it be kept under tight government control. The other was the Kurds which he had just fought to save Turkey from European powers that favored, among other things, the establishment of separate Kurdish and Armenian states (Bonner, 2005). The process of modernization, although seemed to be progressive, did not go well due to the abovementioned obstacles.

An ever-present question in Turkish politics is whether Turkey will ever complete its transition to democracy or whether it will revert to more authoritarian forms of government. Turkey’s problems with the process of democratization are derived, first, from the enduring role of the military in politics, second, from the rise of radicalism and third, from structural problems exemplified by the Anti-Terrorism Law, ‘thought crime’, and the State Security Courts (Muftuler-Bac, 1998). The influence of military in Turkish government has, in Europeans eyes, regressed the human rights development but at that time, Turkey was under a crisis and immediate action needs to be undertaken to restore power.

The developments of 1997, specifically in administration and educational reform, while intended to deal with the threat of political Islam, stress the role of the military through the National Security Council in Turkey (Muftuler-Bac, 1998). The NSC and its role as a supervisory body is not accepted by the EU, since in liberal democracies the military should be under the control of civilian power and not in a position to guide civilian authority. In Turkey, the power of the Generals through NSC indicates that the military is in a position of highest command. For example, on 28 February 1997, during an NSC meeting, the Generals were adamant on

reforming the education system and asked the government to prepare an educational reform (Muftuler-Bac, 1998). The NSC announced on March 1, 1997 that it expected the government to take measures to strengthen secularism and that failure to do so might result in military intervention. The inability of the government in power—the coalition between the True Party and Welfare Party—to pass an educational reform is because one of the factors that led to its downfall in June 1997 (Muftuler-Bac, 1998). The EU opposes this omnipotent military presence in politics and cites it as concrete proof that Turkish democracy is far behind the European standard. One interesting note, however, is that military in Turkey is the institution most trusted by the public at large (Muftuler-Bac, 1998). Turkey's democracy is still under question for some times up to the latest coup which was trying to overthrow Erdogan's presidency after being re-elected as president. This is the concern which still makes EU highly reluctant in opening more advanced negotiations upon Turkey's accession to EU.

B. Turkey's Identity and Its Distinction with the European Union

In the process of membership accession, it is also known as clashed of identities and that reminds us of Samuel P. Huntington description of clash civilizations. Identity is a central notion in constructivist analyses of European enlargement. The idea is that the more two countries identify with one another, the more likely they are to 'pursue horizontal institutionalization', in Frank Schimmelfennig's and Ulf Sedelmeier words (Svensson, 2007) The notion of perceiving other's identity that change our behavior are talked in the context of states hereby between the relation of Turkey as a state and European Union as a collective states and that their distinctive identity in the process. A description of the European Self and Other in constructivist terms is different

from the axiomatic essentialist descriptions rationalists have to depend on (Svensson, 2007). As aforementioned, constructivists claim that the actor's identities and preferences are endogenously given, which means that they are social constructions emanating from the political process and its actors (Svensson, 2007). In this process, the identities that are the result merely more or less arbitrarily defined, and referred to by convention. Accordingly, identity can be, and sometimes is, changed (Svensson, 2007).

In 2015, the governing party, Justice and Development Party (AK Party) lost most elections while at the same time Turkey was under an economic crisis: growth rates remain low, around 2.5% annually, and the Turkish Lira continues to devalue. Consumer Confidence Index has shown its decline to the level similar to the 2009 financial crisis. The *Turkish Perceptions Survey* shows the impact of these breath-taking developments on the perceptions of Turkish citizens on both domestic and foreign policy issues (The German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2015). On Account of its foreign affairs, it has been published the perception's measurement of Turkish people towards its foreign affairs. When asked with whom Turkey should cooperate on international matters, 29% said that Turkey should act alone. On the other hand, 25% said it should cooperate with the countries of European Union and 14% preferred the United States, adding up to a plurality (39%) that prefers cooperating with western countries. Ten percent of respondents said Turkey should cooperate with countries of the Middle East; only 4% gave the nod to Russia (The German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2015). The majority of the voice is still favor in developing their country under their own hands, which gives the picture that represents the conservatives. However, it is such an anomaly to see the spirit of optimism pulled off by Turkish society on the latest survey in regards with Turkish membership to the EU. This goes to show there was a shift of perception in Turkey society as a reaction of foreign policy made by their government and

EU gives feedback towards their country to bolster relations between both sides.

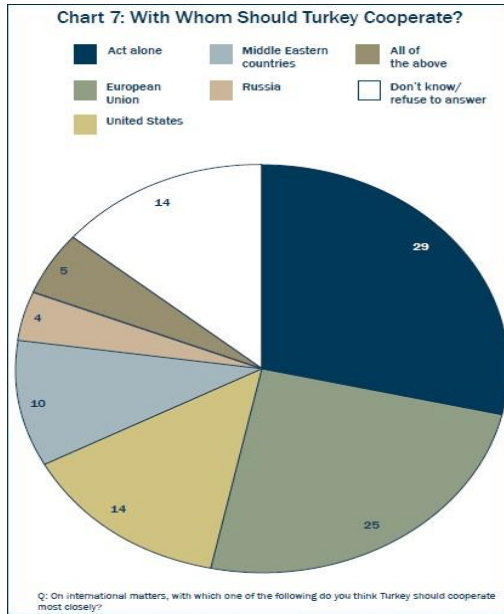
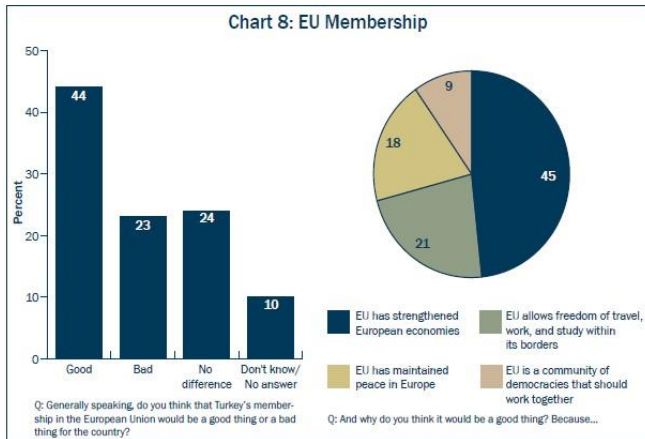


Figure 2 2.1 Turkey’s National Cooperation Poll

It has also been published on the survey about the opinions regarding the membership towards EU. One has to say it is quite surprising to see that a lot of Turkish society think that membership in the Europe would be such a good idea despite the prolonging process. While Turks have generally unfavorable opinions of other countries and groups of countries, but this was less so in the case of the European Union, which was viewed favorably by 41% of respondents. Likewise 44% of respondents think that full-membership in the EU would be beneficial for the Turkish economy; 23% think it would be bad. Those who said that membership in the European Union would be good for the Turkish economy were then asked about their reasoning. Given a list of possible choices, 45% choose “the European Union has strengthened

European economies”; 21% said that “the European Union has maintained peace in Europe”; and 9% chose “the EU is community of democracies that should act together (The German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2015). This is an anomaly and such a strange turn of event to perceive, especially given that both distinguished perception in their identity as a fundamental matter.

Figure 4 3.1 The EU Future Cooperation Poll with Turkey



Turkey’s modernization process has resulted in socio-political divisions, impacting on how Turks now identify themselves. In their studies, Hortacsu and Cem-Ersoy looked at Turkish university student’s values, identities and opinions of the social structures of the European Union (Gumus, 2016). Islamist identity is the most dominant of the four. This is no surprise when you take into account that 99% of the Turkish population is Muslim. But the perception of Islam in Turkey has a different characteristic to that of Islam in the Arab world, for two reasons; firstly, the interpretation of Islam in Turkey goes back to the time of the Ottomans and Seljuks, where Turks believed in the cultural elements of Shamanism, prior to their conversion to Islam (Gumus, 2016). Secondly, the

Ottomans were subject to significant immigration from different parts of the regions, such as Rumelia, the Caucasus, Iraq, Syria and Crimea between 1832 and 1914. Kemalist Ideology can be described as an alternative to Islamic identity which was the notion by the country's figures called Mustafa Kemal Ataturk (Gumus, 2016). There is a clear of misunderstanding to what Europeans think of Islam in Turkey. However, they should acknowledge the idea of Muslims in Turkey because that is exactly how Turkey identify themselves as Muslims in the country.

A way through which group membership influences opinion information is through symbolic concerns surrounding group status, as considered by social identity theory (Arikan, 2012). This perspective stated that group identity is the source of individual self-esteem. Therefore, people are motivated to achieve a positive identity by differentiating their group positively from others. On contextual matters, identity politics plays a crucial role in attitudes concerning the EU. In some multivariate models, national identity emerges as a key explanatory variable concerning rejection of Turkey's membership. Yet, given the rise in nationalist sentiments in the discussion of Turkey's relations with the EU, especially in the post-Brussels summit period, we can hypothesize that stronger national attachments are an important factor generating opposition to the EU in Turkey (Arikan, 2012). Political identity is a common thing in the realm of politics. However, the difference on the identity somewhat put barriers on the process to unite ergo political identity is not a tool to create an advance relations especially with a worldly union like EU.

As Cautres and Monceau note, identification with Europe in Turkey appears to be much weaker than in Europe as a whole. According to a 2007 Eurobarometer survey, for instance, 96 percent of Turkish respondents said that they felt attached to their country, 94 percent to their town or village and only 25 percent to the EU (MacMillan, 2013). As Yilmaz argues, Euroscepticism from EU member states, Abusara

argues that Turkish Eurosceptics are more likely to be poorly educated, right wing, belong to a low or middle-income group and be potential losers from accession (MacMillan, 2013). He also argues that a majority of the Turkish population is most concerned about the effects of EU membership in the area of culture, in terms of the weakening of national or religious values, while issues such as the constriction of national independence, the breakup of national unity and the violation of the secular social and political order were considered much less important (MacMillan, 2013). It is without doubts to say that there is a dynamic and shifting of identity throughout the history of Turkey's accession into the EU. The maneuver by Turkey's elites and its political figures based on its culture and identity play an important role to shape the public opinion.

The Westernization project was attacked both from the Right and the Left, Islamist and ultra nationalist parties saw it as a threat to traditional and religious values. An ideologue of the newly emerging Islamic world view approached the issue in the following way: "Considering the fact that the aim of the Common Market is to construct a Union of European States, should we let Turkey become a province in this Union? Since it will be a Union of Christian States, the inclusion of an Islamic-Turkish State can never be accepted" (Nas, 2001). The firm statement made by the Islamist groups made Turkey had a stance ground upon their position amidst their membership in the Union. One of the leading intellectual in Turkey who stood as unique among others drew attention to the fundamental impossibility of Turkey's being accepted into Europe: "Even if we burn all the Korans, run down all mosques, we are Ottomans in the eye of the European; Ottoman meaning Islam. A dark, dangerous, hostile crowd" (Nas, 2001). Islam have always been perceived in a negative way in European countries, meanwhile on the other hand, Turkey's identity as a country is highly adhered to Islam. Although Turkey is a secular country, Islamic ideology and teaching have gone hand-in-hand throughout the country's history. Thus, the existence of Turkey as a country cannot be

simply separated from the notions of Islamic country. It is also known for its strong history to the Ottomans whereas we know that the Empire once had a long-last history to the European countries.

Those elements of Turkish identity that contrasted most with Europe, namely, religion and traditional and religious culture became more pronounced. Together with the integration of the periphery to mainstream politics, a schism developed between defenders of the official doctrine and those vying for traditional and religious values. Reaction to Europeanization in private and public life became more visible leading to a questioning of official views. A process of reconciliation of traditional culture with Europeanization also started that would make it possible to integrate with Europe while maintaining cultural particularities (Nas, 2001). Eventually, those notions of identity that was driven by their agents of structures in such institutions will always say that the accession of Turkey to European Union will never become as ideal as it is expected. The clash of two different identities might construct the society life in Turkey and that influence of modernization process is never widely accepted.

The criticisms to the westernization project, although causing some alterations, could not change the essential preference of Turkish society (Nas, 2001). In the period following the Helsinki Decisions of the European Council, the main scheme of among intellectuals and political elite concerns the following point: While some attach primary importance to the unity of the state and see the Copenhagen criteria as creating problems in the particular state-society relations in Turkey.

While the cultural and religious rights of non-Muslim citizens were protected as minority rights by the Lausanne Treaty of 1923, Muslim ethnic and sectarian differences were denied distinct cultural representation. "Turkish ethnic identity" was thought of as an exact replacement for the

Muslim millet under the Ottoman administrative system, defined in terms of religion rather than ethnicity. Accordingly, Turkish ethnicity would embrace other Muslim ethnic groups. Ironically, by denying them a separate ethnic identity and perceiving them as “ins” rather than “outs” of Turkish ethnicity, the system opened to them path towards upward social and political mobility. Kurds and other Muslim ethnic groups were not excluded from this project of nation building—hence, Muslim could not be given minority status (Kosebalaban, 2002). There are two main actors in Turkey who shape the norms and values in Turkey’s society in which we cannot exclude or deny them from analyzing, and both are the Kurds ethnicity and Muslim society. During the times, both have been influencing Turkey as well creating norms and values inside Turkish society. These norms and values brought by both actors have become the foundation of Turkey as a country. Therefore, both actors played an important role to shape Turkey’s norms and values as we can see these days.

The sense of belonging or not belonging to Europe is likely to determine Turkish identity in the near future. EU membership may help resolve the major paradox of Turkish identity stemming from geographic and historical factors (Nas, 2001). Inclusion into the most important European organization would mean the conclusion of Turkey’s quest for westernization. The perception of psychological isolation stemming from being situated on the periphery of two continents would be nullified, burying with it the maxim “There is no other friend to the Turk than the Turk himself” (Nas, 2001). On the other hand, membership may not serve to put the final note to Turkey’s pursuit of self-improvement. As a member of the EU, Turkey’s reference point will continue to be other European countries that may be seen as ‘more European’ (Nas, 2001). Thus, it may be likely that the paradox of Turkish identity in relation to the perception of Europe—both a sense of admiration and a sense of mistrust- will persist in the near future in the form of a sense of urgency to change and become more like the ‘more European’s and a sense of

anxiety about the need to change and weariness of criticism due to not being able to fulfill necessary standards (Nas, 2001). In the end, it is believed that Turkey's as a nation state will need to decide its faith on the merge of identity and accept the fact that most of the countries in the European Union have strong dislike towards them and then they need to consider whether that nation is worth the tag of being member in the European Union.

One factor bound up with Turkey's problems with democracy, making incorporation unlikely, is the perceived cultural differences between Turkey and the rest of Europe (Müftüleri-Baç, 2017). According to social identity theory, individuals may perceive a threat due to symbolic concerns, such as a threat to their identity or values from out-groups. Perceived threats have previously been found to have a large influence on perceptions towards other ethnic groups, towards immigration, as well as on racial policies in the USA (Arikan, 2012). The social identity have become the main threat of Turkey's accession into Europe in constructivist approach because Turkey's identity along with its cultures are considered not friendly with European Union so called "Christian Club" to quote Erdogan on his statement.

Many skeptical political observers point out that Islamist support for EU membership is tactical; they would simply like to use the membership process to improve their own political rights. However, as Ihsan Dagi suggests, this presumably purely tactical support is slowly becoming internalized into their identity. The main obstacle to this internalization seems to be the European Court of Human Rights have been very sensitive to Kurdish human rights, they have maintained a persistent indifference to political problems like the headscarf issue and the closure of Islamic-leaning political parties. As a reaction, many Islamists perceive their support for EU membership to be a unidirectional rapprochement that does not have much resonance among Europeans themselves (Kosebalaban, 2002). The bad image of

European perceived by Islamist group in Turkey has put Turkey under difficult situation in determining and fulfilling the criterion made by the EU. Turkish society seems to have been sharply divided into two opposing camps as far as EU membership concerned, but not along the lines she suggests. Since the militarization of politics during Erbakan's government in 1997, Islamists have started to campaign for EU membership. Yet even before that, there was disunity among Islamists on the membership issue. Some moderate Islamic groups, like Fethullah Gulen's movement, supported the European integration process from the very beginning. Gulen does not share the establishment's security fears: "We will not lose anything from our religion, nationality, and culture because of developments like globalization, customs union or membership in the European Union. Although Islamist parties in Turkey opposed the EU ardently, the two currently active Islamist parties support EU membership. Tayyip Erdogan, popular leader of the Islamic-leaning Justice and Development party, is strongly in favor of EU membership: "In a developing and globalizing world, we view the membership as necessary in order not to remain on the fringes of civilization and development as a peripheral nation (Kosebalaban, 2002).

Most of the analysis on identity and its culture are collective of essays which reflect Turkish perceptions and attitude of Itself as a country-- which it includes how they construct their own ideas of such democracy in a modernization process and also their dynamic governmental administration ideology—and also towards the European Union. The public voices, on this case, are included to show how far the influences on the constructions of identity and their cultures. However, the main focus was their government over the years in tightening and also at some of the times loosening their relations with European Union. The relations of the two parties have gone significantly dynamic due to the shifting power in Turkey's political administrations. Not to mention that the leaders of Turkey's Republic possess distinct interests on each other that make the prolonging of the

accession is very much influenced by that concept. Hence, the relations are fluctuated, per se. The deeper role of secularism and how the religious sentiments react towards it will be discussed on the next analysis below.

C. Turkey's Attitude towards the European Union

Erdogan once said that "Islam is a religion. Secularism is just a style of management". The idea to analyze norms derived from the country's political ideology, which in this case, is secularism. Secularism is a notion to divide religious teachings from political matters or in a state declared to be neutral on matters of belief, from the imposition by government of religion or religious practices upon its people. However, it is assumed that secularism in Turkey is considerably flawed because studies say that Islam and secular democracy are not inevitably incompatible. Indonesia, for example, after Indonesians in 1998 broke the autocratic grip of former president Soeharto, participatory democracy did not easily take root, beset by repeated separatist and religious violence (Bonner, 2005). Turkey and Indonesia have quite a lot in common. Both have Muslims as their majority of citizens and at the same time are struggling towards the betterment of democracy. The process of democratization in both countries is also faced with similar obstacles which are religious extremists and conservatives. Turkey has the more difficult struggle as they also adhere to secularism as their country's ideology which is not easy to maintain properly. On norms and values, the role of these extremist groups is analyzed to give a wider approach in understanding the constructs these groups share with society and on how they can also advocate and influence the government in the decision-making. As Dietrich Jung observes, basic ideas of Turkish nationalism—Anatolia as the Motherland, Turkish historical consciousness and the Turkish language as the cultural foundation—were the result of intellectual discourses

on the political future of the Ottomans (Kosebalaban, 2002). As he notes, there is a strong similarity between the Kemalist principle of secularism and the French political thought that influenced the intellectual discourses in the last decades of the Ottoman Empire (Kosebalaban, 2002). The normative foundation has the distinguished root with the European countries. However, after Kemal Ataturk took over the charge of leadership—there is a mixture of culture whereas the idea of secularism was mixed into the original values of Turkey’s culture.

The process of getting into EU was a brave move by Turkish government. On April 14, 1987, Ali Bozer, Minister of State in Turgut Ozal’s cabinet submitted Turkey’s official application for full membership in the European Community. This was a historic turning point; for the first time Turkey was offered a specific roadmap with conditions (Copenhagen Criteria) to be fulfilled in return for membership (Kosebalaban, 2002). At this point, Turkey somehow managed to increase the possibility to get into EU and that EU assessed there were improvements made by Turkey in getting into EU by fulfilling the Copenhagen Criteria. However, it did not always undertake as expected. There are always excuses made by the EU while Turkey is fulfilling the criterion. At first, this created a new mood of optimism in Turkey and a strong motivation for implementing the required economic, political and human-rights reforms. However, the Turkish political establishment was very slow to put these reforms into practice, and the Nice summit of December 2000 did not name Turkey in the official strategy of expansion until 2010, causing anger in Turkish political and intellectual crisis, which questioned Europe’s sincerity (Kosebalaban, 2002). In addition to that, there is a parallel change of attitude towards Europe in Turkey’s Islamic political movement. Today no political force, including the Kurdish separatist movement opposes the country’s membership in the EU. In the context of the militarization of politics in Turkey that intensified after the February 28 process, the Islamic opposition revised its stance

and has begun to give full support to the idea of membership. It would be flawed logic to frame Islamism as the only source of anti-Western in the country as some analysts, including Meltem Muftuler-Bac, suggest. Agreeing with Samuel Huntington that Turkey is a country torn between the modernizing state and resisting traditional societal forces, her simplistic account divides the country into two camps:

“One is based on the modern, secular, Western-oriented discourse, and the other is traditional, Islamist, and Oriental in its formulations. In the past decade several traditional elements, most prominently the Islamists, began to challenge Turkey’s official identity. The Islamic movement in Turkey has always opposed the process of modernization and Europeanization”
(Muftuller-Bac, 2000)

The Turkish political system is a puzzling sight to the foreign analyst. The years of 1996 and 1997 turned out to be highly interesting for Turkish politics. In some circles Turkey is said to be the only Muslim country that is a secular democracy. This statement is, however, highly dubious if one takes into account the omnipresent and omnipotent role of the Turkish military, the rise of political Islam and the cloud surrounding Turkey’s human rights record. Thus, since Turkey is neither a democracy nor secular the only certainty in that statement is that it is Muslim (Müftüler-Baç, 2017). The shifting of Turkey political system and its refusal towards getting into EU, particularly by Muslim society are Turkish biggest concern to be permanent member of the EU. Some parts of Turkish society still think that there is a huge difference between Turkey and those of European countries. This becomes the major obstacle as Turkey is threatening the European will to get Turkey into the EU.

The process of European Union membership will be affected not only by opinions from within the EU, but also by the views of Turks themselves (Gumus, 2016). It is based on data from the International Strategic Research Organization (USAK), as well as on Sadiye Kocabas's work on Turkish university students' perceptions of the European Union and European identity (Gumus, 2016). In his work, he considers the historical and cultural background, as well as geographic factors. It indicates that students from the Aegean (Western region of Turkey) perceive their identity to be closer to that of the Europeans, while students from Eastern Anatolia and the Black Sea region, which are more conventional and conservative areas, have the highest level of 'othering' (Gumus, 2016). Her study also clarifies cultural negativity in the Turkish perception of Europeans. For example 50.5% of those asked thought Turkey should not join the EU because they could not count on Europeans (Gumus, 2016). And 35.6% cited reasons of cultural background and religion as to why Turkey should not join the EU. 37.3% of respondents to Kocabas's survey thought Turkey would not be accepted into the EU because it is a Muslim country, and 31.5% thought that this was down to a different cultural background (Gumus, 2016). Even students in Turkey have a dichotomy of voice between the Western students and Eastern students. This will lead the country to the necessity to decide on their own fate immediately which axis needs to be followed. Is it the Western modernization or Eastern normative cultures?

Other studies conducted by USAK in 2004 and 2006, indicate that the number of supporters of the European Union decreased sharply from 75% in 2004 to 50% in 2006 (Gumus, 2016). The survey was carried out in six of the biggest cities in Turkey (Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Bursa, Adana and Konya) and 1,100 people were questioned. 81% of the participants said "No" to the question "Do you think EU is sincere to Turkey"; 54% of the participants didn't think that Turkey will be a member of European Union in the next 15-20 years (USAK, 2006); and 38% of the participants didn't think

that Turkey would ever become a member of European Union (Gumus, 2016). To the question “If the political and economic circumstances of the non-Muslim minority in Turkey, through forced adherence to western systems such as the Copenhagen Criteria similar to what occurred in the westernisation of the Ottoman Empire two centuries ago (Gumus, 2016). The poll speaks on another layer about the economic benefits and what effects could be brought. It is added as additional information regarding to the behavior of Turkish society.

Islamists oppose Turkey’s membership of the European Union. They believe the EU intends to disrupt relations between Turkey and her geographical and historical partners such as the Turkic Republics, the Balkans and the Middle East (Gumus, 2016). They also think that EU membership will, through alienation and degeneration, threaten Turkish identity. For Islamists, religion is the main parameter which designates identity and the European Union is

a “Christian Club” (İnaç, 2004, p.46). Islamists see westernisation as a threat to conventional and religious values. Zaim (1970) argues that since the aim of the Common Market is to construct a union of European Christian States, why would the inclusion of an Islamic state such as Turkey ever be accepted? Ultimately, Islamists view European integration as an attempt to assimilate and degenerate the Islamic world (Gumus, 2016). Islam has stood, throughout the years as antagonist actors who blatantly refuse the influence of European Union in the country. Islam perceive the European Union as “Christian Community” which could threaten the existence of Islamic teachings and influences in Turkey.

During the 24 December general election held in Turkey, there was a coalition of three different governments—and at that time, charge of corruption became something usual to experience by the Turkish government and political Islam emerged as one of the recommended power at that particular time (Müftüler-Baç, 2017). There was a presence of Turkish military power which increased rapidly in politics which

threatened the idea of democracy in Turkey (Müftüler-Baç, 2017). A key development in this period is the notorious Susurluk incident—the coincidental discovery of an illegal formation within the state apparatus—the so-called ‘state, mafia and *asiret* [tribe] triangle’—when a parliamentarian, a police commissioner and a fugitive hitman wanted by Turkish police were discovered to have been sharing a car involved in a traffic accident (Müftüler-Baç, 2017). This incident had various aftershocks; first it demonstrated state involvement in clandestine activities, second, the security forces acted as a party to these activities, and third, it showed the state’s weakness in so far as various governments failed to explain the connection these three men (Müftüler-Baç, 2017). There was a rigged election which stained the process of democracy in Turkey as part of the fulfillment towards permanent membership in the EU.

The Justice and Development party which is headed by the popular Islamic leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan recent policies have invited many controversies in the process of Turkey’s accession towards EU. He is considered to be the obstacles of the process. The reason is because of his background and party coming from Islamic organization. These groups have always known to be skeptical when it comes to European Union. However, at times his policy is shifted leaning on the process of the accession but it seems that the EU is no longer appreciate what have been done in Turkey in the recent days following the military coup in the country.

The military leaders have expressed their anti-EU opinions in recent years. Retired General Suat Ilhan, an outspoken critic of Turkey’s EU membership, brings up some of these concerns in his book “Why “No” to the European Union?”. He believes that Turkey’s membership in the EU would be detrimental to its political independence and therefore against Turkish national interests. His rationale, however, is rather cynical; the support of Greece and the Kurdish political groups for Turkish membership are presented

in his book as evidence of the threats it would pose to the country:

“[Look at those] who were delighted by Turkey’s EU candidacy: Greece, the Patriarch of the Fener Rum Orthodox Church Bartholomeus, the Greek Cypriot, the PKK supporters who in fact demonstrated against our candidacy in Europe, HADEP and Apo (Abdulla Ocalan). Please tell me candidly, don’t you at least suspect something wrong with this?”

If Turkey joins the EU, the independence of [our] country will lose its present meaning; we will be part of EU’s independent [entity] and sacrifice our own sovereignty. The independence that Ataturk longed for was not this, Ataturk showed [us] civilization rather than Europeanization as [our] mission. Integration with Europe is incongruous with Ataturkist thought” (Ilhan, 2000)

On the other hand, the Kurdish question seems to be a major challenge for Turkey in its process of democratization. The Turkish government’s handling of the problem is used as the yardstick by which Turkish democracy is judged, and there is increasing pressure on Turkey to improve the situation. For example, the European Parliament passed a number of resolutions condemning Turkey for the bloodshed. In July 1996, European parliamentarians met in Bonn for a ‘peace

conference' and accused the Turkish government of state terrorism and pleaded for international legal action against Turkey (Müftüler-Baç, 2017). The Islamist and the Kurdish Separatist Movements have both to be known as the obstacles of which the process of democratization in Turkey is regressing. Meanwhile, both actors are the main reason of the implementation of conservative values and religious norms. This is disliked by the European at any times.

The military and the nationalists have influenced the EU membership process most significantly by shaping Turkey's reform program, endorsed by the cabinet on March 19, 2001. Turkey's political situation is highly influenced by its opposition agenda to overthrow the incumbent and most of the oppositions are coming from the Islamic groups. When these groups managed to get into the majority voice, then they can drive the government to "less secular" as it has to be while maintaining good relations with the EU.

Turkish accession to the EU has become the most important agenda on political move in Turkey. All of the politicians, academicians, journalists, and even the military are now talking about this issue. Some view membership, with its attached conditions, as a threat to Turkish national security and sovereignty; some view it as an opportunity to expand Turkey's sphere of influence (Kosebalaban, 2002). The politically powerful anti-EU groups in Turkey are able to influence the process of political and cultural reform and thus slow down the progress of the country towards membership (Kosebalaban, 2002). Kemalists have forcefully Westernized Turkish society and now find it difficult to reverse the process. Even the Islamic political and social groups strongly desire EU membership. Radical Kemalists and Ultra-nationalists remain the only opponents. Their reaction attests to the fact that Westernization policies have not caused an internalization of the West into their national identity. Therefore, the evolution of Europe into a supranational entity disturbs these groups, who are sensitive to national sovereignty. They also fear that

democratization and cultural reform would transform the concept of a “homogeneous nation”, which they perceive as the basis of national security (Kosebalaban, 2002). To this extent, the norms and values implanted by the conservative and religious groups still infiltrate Turkish society which shape their norms and values.