

## Two Visions of EU Identity: Implications for Turkey's Accession

Catherine MacMillan

### Introduction

Each new round of enlargement encourages reflection within the European Union (EU) on the nature of its identity and borders. Never has this been so true as in the case of Turkey's bid for EU membership. As Baban and Keyman, for instance, argue, '... the debate about Turkey is in essence a debate about the future of Europe in terms of its identity, its geography, its political and institutional structure, and its role in our globalizing world'(2008, p.109).

This paper, then, explores the attempts to construct a European identity in the context of Turkey's accession bid. A social constructivist view of identity is taken here, according to which identities are constructed and reconstructed rather than fixed. Discourse, in particular elite discourse, is regarded as a particularly important tool in constructing identity; thus the focus in this paper is on the discourse of EU politicians as well as official EU documents and discourse. In addition, following social identity theory, it is argued that identities are constructed *vis-a-vis* an 'Other' .

It is put forward here that the prospect of Turkish accession has provoked two different visions of EU identity in EU elite discourse. The first, most visible in the EU Treaties and the discourse of EU officials as well as in the discourse of politicians in parties and Member States which support Turkish membership, constructs a so-called *civic* identity for the EU. Here, there is little attempt to construct an EU identity based on cultural values beyond 'universal' norms such as democracy and human rights. Thus, from this view, any geographically European country, including Turkey, which respects these norms is considered eligible for EU membership.

However, many politicians on the European right, particularly in France and Germany, argue that the EU needs a 'thicker' cultural identity. In the context of possible enlargement to Turkey, this identity has increasingly been defined in *civilisational* terms. Thus, in line with Huntington's famous 'clash of civilisations' thesis, the values on which the EU is based are specifically the result of European civilisation, including Christianity, classical civilisations, the Renaissance and Enlightenment and so on. In this discourse, Turkey is seen as belonging to Muslim rather than European civilisation; it is thus considered *a priori* incapable of fully

accepting 'European' values such as democracy, the rule of law or human and minority rights and, as such, is an unsuitable candidate for EU accession.

## **I. Social Constructivism, Social Identity Theory and EU Identity**

According to social constructivism, while there is a relation between cultural variables (including ethnic belonging or religious or political affiliation) and collective identity this connection is much less fixed than in the primordialist or essentialist version<sup>1</sup> and is subject to construction and reconstruction (Risse, 2004, p. 167). From this theoretical viewpoint, 'human agents do not exist independently from their social environment and its collectively shared systems of meaning'. Thus, institutions, which gradually become part of the social environment in which individuals act, play an important part in the construction and reconstruction of identities. Social structures and agents, then, are mutually constitutive. Moreover, social norms may not only regulate behaviour, but may also play an important part in defining the identity of a social community (Risse and Engelmann-Martin, 2007, pp. 160-163).

In the social constructivist view *discourse*, particularly that of elites and epistemic communities, is an important factor in social learning and, ultimately, identity construction. As Fearon and Laitin argue, for instance, 'discourses define identities and shape or determine actions' (2000, p. 853). While epistemic communities tend to have an impact on policy learning, the discourse of political elites tends to have more of an impact in framing particular issues (Milliken, 1999, p.233). Active efforts to construct a territorial identity, then, tend to be an elite driven, top-down process. However, from a constructivist view, this tends to be more successful when the ideas promoted by the elites in question do not significantly clash with those held by the public; the audience should have 'few prior, ingrained beliefs inconsistent with the socializing agency's message' (Checkel, 2001, p. 59).

According to social constructivists, elite attempts to construct identity are more likely to result in social learning on the part of the general population during a time of perceived crisis (Checkel, 2001, 2005). As Checkel argues, when 'the target of the socialization attempt is in a novel and uncertain environment ... [it is] cognitively motivated to analyze new information

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<sup>1</sup> Essentialist concepts of collective identities argue that cultural variables are givens which then develop into national identities during the process of nation building. Thus, in this view, identities are fixed and the creation of supranational or postnational identities is impossible (Risse, 2004, p. 166)

(2005, p. 9). Secondly, the public is more open to elite attempts at identity construction when the elite in question is viewed as legitimate and credible; in other words it must be part of the audience's 'in-group' (Checkel, 2001, p. 59).

Moreover, constructivists tend to argue that it is possible to hold several territorial identities at a time, although there are different ideas about how this may occur. In the first instance, these identities may be nested within each other in the manner of a 'Russian doll'; a person may identify themselves simultaneously, for instance, as Parisian, French and European. In the second case, the multiple identities may bear more resemblance to a marble cake, in that it is difficult to separate the different identities neatly as they mesh and blend into each other. French identity, for instance, in the marble cake model, would inherently include aspects of European identity and vice versa (Risse, 2004, pp. 166-167). As Kaelbe points out, it is sometimes argued that each nation 'develops its own characteristic identification with Europe, based on its specific national experiences including perceptions of national security, national past and future, and basic national values' (2009, p. 202).

Empirical research appears to support the argument that European identity is held alongside other territorial identities. While an overwhelming 86% of respondents are proud to be citizens of their country, 68% are proud to be European (Eurobarometer, 2005: 94-105), and 74% feel European to some extent (Eurobarometer, 2009). Moreover, when asked whether they felt attached to their city, their region, their nation or Europe the majority of respondents claimed to be attached to all of them. Respondents felt mainly attached to their country (92%), then their region and city (88% and 87% respectively) and finally 68% felt attached to Europe (Eurobarometer, 2005, pp. 94-105). This research, then, illustrates two important points. Firstly, Europeans do appear to be able to hold several territorial identities at a time. Secondly, for most people some kind of European identity already appears to exist, although it is held alongside, rather than instead of, national identity and other territorial identities.

Moreover, identities also imply limits; if some people are included in a particular identity group there must be others who are not. Social identity theory argues that identities necessitate 'Others'; in other words, in order to define who we are we must also define who we are not. The 'imagined community', then, is further defined by a sense of difference in relation to other communities: thus an imagined community needs an 'Other'. Moreover, individuals tend to perceive their group identity as more positive than that of their 'Others', therefore increasing their self-esteem. Social identity theory also puts forward that an

individual has several social identities which correspond to widening circles of group membership, and the identity that is most salient at any given moment depends on the social context. Thus, just as identities appear to be multiple in nature, it follows that the 'Others' which define those identities can also differ (Risse and Engelmann-Martin, 2007, pp. 292-293). In Kaeble's words, these Others may be 'close or alien, amicable or inimical, helpful or menacing, linked to or separate from Europe' (2009, p. 207).

## **I. Two Visions of EU Identity**

In the context of the EU, then, the question of a European identity to underscore EU integration has become particularly important since the widened impact of the EU following the Maastricht Treaty, as both the salience and the divisiveness of public opinion on European integration have increased (Hooghe and Marks, 2005, p. 4). Other events, including enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) as well as the attempt to develop a 'Constitution' for the EU have also prompted considerable soul-searching about the nature and identity of the EU. Most notably, perhaps, the prospect of Turkey's accession has intensified this debate. As Huntington points out, for instance, President Özal remarked in 1992 that Turkey's human rights record was just an excuse for keeping it out of the EU, the real reason being that 'we are Muslim and they are Christian' (Huntington, 1997, p. 146). As Jose Casanova argues,

The public debates in Europe over Turkey's admission have shown that Europe is actually the torn country, deeply divided over its cultural identity, unable to answer the question whether European identity, and therefore its external and internal boundaries, should be defined by the common heritage of Christianity and Western civilization, or by its modern secular values of liberalism, universal human rights, political democracy and tolerant and inclusive multiculturalism (2006, p. 241).

Thus, the increasing politicisation of EU identity issues has revealed two contrasting EU identity projects. The first of these is the 'official' version of EU identity; an outward-looking, cosmopolitan civic identity project generally promoted by EU elites and based on 'universal norms'. The formation of a cosmopolitan European identity has also been supported by philosophers such as Habermas, among others. It is this cosmopolitan, civic identity which is embodied, for instance, in the Lisbon Treaty and other EU legislation. Such an identity rests on shared political and social values rather than on an ethnic, linguistic or cultural identity.

Therefore, in this view civilisation is one, and the borders of the EU are potentially open to any country considered geographically European regardless of culture or religion as long as they are seen as respecting the ‘universal’ norms cited above.

The second attempt to construct a European identity is more inward-looking, populist and cultural in nature and reflects and responds to mass politics, focusing on ‘the economic and cultural threats posed by the infamous Polish plumber and Islamic headscarves’ (Checkel and Katzenstein, 2009, pp. 9-10). As is discussed below, such populist movements, most notably those of the French and German right, have argued that a strong Europe requires a strong cultural identity. Increasingly, this has taken on a ‘civilisational’ nature; thus, in this view, the borders of Europe are considered to be the borders of ‘European civilisation’. In Huntington’s words,

The people of different civilizations have different views on the relations between God and man, the individual and the group, the citizen and state, parents and children, husband and wife, as well as differing views of the relative importance of rights and responsibilities, liberty and authority, equality and hierarchy. These differences are the products of centuries. They will not soon disappear (Huntington, 1993, p.3).

In this view, then, the ‘universal norms’ on which the EU is based are the product of European civilisation (itself, in Huntington’s terms, a ‘sub-branch’ of Western civilisation). They are specifically the result of the European experience, notably the influence of classical culture (particularly Roman law) and ‘Christian values’, as well as the Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment. On this basis, it is argued that a country such as Turkey, perceived as coming from a different civilisation, in this case ‘Islamic civilisation’, is inherently incapable of properly comprehending and adopting such values.

## **II. A European Civic Identity**

So far, due to the cultural diversity of Europe, the EU’s drive to construct an EU identity has focused mostly on the creation of a civic rather than a cultural identity. Cerruti, for instance, defines civic identity as ‘the set of social and political values and principles that we recognise as ours, or in the sharing of which we feel like ‘us’, like a political group or entity (2003, p. 27). According to this view, then, the EU is conceived as a ‘rights-based, post-national Union founded on universal principles such as democracy and governed by the rule of law, rather

than on traditional 'national' values such as language, ethnic group, religion and culture' (Ruiz-Jimenez and Torreblanca, 2007, p. 5).

There have also been attempts at EU level to construct a cultural identity, through, for instance through exchange programmes encouraging contact between young Europeans of different nationalities, and the development of cultural symbols such as the European flag, the anthem, Europe day, or, indeed through the Euro itself. However, of these, it has been argued that only the European flag, the Erasmus exchange programme and the Euro have fully succeeded as cultural symbols, the others having remained weak or ambiguous in comparison, for instance, with national cultural symbols (Kaelbe, 2009, p. 206).

Despite this attempt to create European cultural symbols, however, the concept of a European cultural identity beyond universal norms such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law has not been emphasised in the Treaties, so that any country which is considered geographically European and to fulfill these universal values qualifies potentially for EU membership. More than cultural 'Europeanness', then, EU accession implies the voluntary acceptance of a certain set of rules as binding and legitimate.

An analysis of the TEU<sup>2</sup> indicates that the identity referents are generally of a universalist nature rather than based on a common past, and are limited to universal principles. Article 2(1a) of the TEU affirms that 'the Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities'. In addition, article 3(2) of the TEU stresses 'unity in diversity', as it emphasises the EU's commitment to respect the 'rich cultural and linguistic diversity' of the Member States, and 'shall ensure that Europe's cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced'.

Moreover, the focus on the preservation of national identities, cultures and traditions means that there is room for a certain degree of divergence of interpretations and implementation of these values between the Member States. This implies appreciation and tolerance of differences between countries, regions, political orientations and individuals, in other words respect for and interest in the internal Other, at least in so far as the 'universal values' underpinning the EU are respected. Thus, the appreciation of difference is seen as one of Europe's greatest achievements, and a stimulant for democratic institutions as well as for cultural and economic innovation (Kaelbe, 2009, p. 201).

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<sup>2</sup> The numbering of the TEU is that used following its amendment to the Lisbon treaty (Open Europe, 2008)

Importantly, the Preamble to the TEU does not mention 'a community of Christian values' although, as discussed below, during the European Convention, some Member States, as well as the Catholic Church and some intellectuals such as Weiler, wanted Judeo-Christian values to be more openly mentioned in the Constitutional Treaty. Instead, the Preamble makes a more general allusion to European religious values as the foundation of universal values on which the EU is based: 'Drawing inspiration from the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe, from which have developed the universal values of the inviolable and inalienable rights of the human person, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law'.

Thus, while the Treaty mentions 'Europeanness' and 'European values', these values are actually universal and somewhat neutral in nature. More specific references to 'Europeanness' and 'European values' were avoided in order to prevent dissent and to bolster the EU's legitimacy among European citizens. Moreover, the emphasis is again more on the creation of a future common identity through universal values and integration than on a shared past. In addition, the Charter of Fundamental Rights also emphasises universal values coupled with respect for diversity in areas such as religion, language and custom (Zürcher and Van der Linden, 2007, p. 449).

Similarly, the Copenhagen criteria, set out by the European Council in 1993 demand that the candidate countries meet four conditions as follows:

The stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities, the existence of a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union ...[and] the ability to take on the obligations of membership, including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union (European Council, 1993).

As Ruiz-Jimenez and Torreblanca point out, then, 'whether the candidate country is Turkey, Norway or Switzerland it should not make much difference' (2007, p. 6). Thus, from this point of view, there is no cultural criteria for EU accession; instead any country that is accepted as geographically European and fulfills these criteria should be allowed to join regardless of broader identity questions such as religion or history.

However, even such a seemingly loose and flexible civic identity must have its 'Others'. Thus, the Copenhagen criteria, for instance, serve to delineate the border between the democratic Europe as 'a force for the good' and a variety of Others lacking in the standards of European values (Diez, 2006, p. 245; Aydın, 2009). In addition, according to Habermas and Derrida, a cosmopolitan European identity of this nature could also help to

shape global politics by providing an alternative to the 'hyperrealist', US-dominated world-order. It would do this by promoting a world in which states were willing to share their sovereignty with international institutions operating within a cosmopolitan legal framework (Habermas and Derrida, 2003, p. 293).

In this view, then, Turkey should be accepted as a full member of the EU on condition that it fulfills the Copenhagen criteria. Supporters of Turkey's accession also often emphasise the pragmatic benefits that accrue to the EU as a result of Turkey's full membership, particularly in the economic and security spheres. Most notably, perhaps, it is argued that Turkey's membership of the EU could prevent a 'clash of civilisations' of the type predicted by Huntington. This argument has been frequently used by the European Commission (Aydın Düzgit, 2009) and by governments which are supportive of Turkey's EU accession, such as that of the UK (Aksoy, 2009). Indeed, as Baban and Keyman argue, 'Some suggest that –just as Monnet defined securing peace among European nations as the main objective of the EU – Turkey's membership would serve the purpose of providing peace among cultures', and would thus provide an alternative to the US's 'War on Terror' approach (2008, p. 112).

### **III. A European Cultural (or Civilisational) Identity**

A contrasting argument is that an entity such as the EU needs to be constructed on the basis of a solid cultural identity, such as a common religious and historical experience. A shared history in this context has often been understood as Europe's classical Greek and Roman past, the Renaissance and/or the Enlightenment. As has been pointed out, in Huntington's view, for instance, 'European civilisation' is informed by 'classical civilisation', which, for him, includes Greek philosophy and rationalism, Roman law, Latin and Christianity (1997, p. 69). However, he also adds several features which are expressly linked to democracy and the rule of law:

- The separation of temporal and spiritual authority, also seen in Hindu civilisation. Huntington argues that 'In Islam, God is Caesar; in China and Japan Caesar is God, in Orthodoxy, God is Caesar's junior partner'.
- Representative bodies including parliaments, estates and other institutions which eventually evolved into the institutions of modern democracy.

- The rule of law, inherited from the Romans and developed by medieval thinkers, which eventually laid the basis for constitutionalism and the protection of human rights.

As has been argued, since the opening of Turkey's accession process in the Helsinki summit in 1999, and especially since discussions began over the opening of accession negotiations in 2004-2005, opponents to Turkey's EU membership have often tended to phrase their arguments against Turkey's accession in terms of cultural identity. This has been the case both in moderate right-wing parties, most notably in France and Germany, and on the far-right. Christianity in particular, for many, appears to still be an important component of 'European identity'. Thus it follows that Islam, and an 'Islamic' country such as Turkey, continue to be seen as an important 'Other' at the popular as well as right-wing elite level. In this view, whatever the pragmatic benefits of Turkish accession, these are overshadowed by Turkey's perceived 'non-Europeanness' and non-democratic nature.

Despite the fact that Turkey is actually a secular state, then, the fact that the vast majority of its population are, at least nominally, followers of Islam is often cited as a reason for excluding it from the EU, which is considered by many to be founded on 'Judeo-Christian values'. As Yılmaz argues, 'it is generally believed that Turkish secularism is fake, it is artificial, it has been assimilated by a small Westernised elite, it has not submerged into the 'cultural genes' of the larger Turkish society, and it has been protected only by the force of arms' (2007, p. 300). The objectivity of this view is questionable. As Tekin points out,

The discourse that constructs Turkey through centuries-old historical stereotypes makes no reference to European religious ingroup enmities of the distant past, the two World Wars, or the Holocaust. The ingroup bias in this particular sub-type of predication often leads to the assertion of the superiority of its own culture and civilization. In this type of ingroup favouritism, Europe is constructed as the home to human values, high culture, rationalism, scientific progression, etc. (Tekin, 2008, p. 739).

There was much discussion during the European Convention of 2003-2005 over whether the EU constitution should include references to Christianity. The idea that Christianity should explicitly underlie EU values has also, unsurprisingly, been supported by the Catholic Church. Pope Benedict, for instance, argued that 'Christians and Muslims could be privileged partners', indicating that the Catholic Church would find it difficult to accept that Turkey could be a full member of the EU' (Rehn, 2007, p. 146). Centre-right political elites, particularly but not exclusively in France and Germany, have also tended to emphasise such

cultural elements in addition to geography and universal values when defining European identity (Yılmaz, 2007; Szymanski, 2007, p.34).

Yılmaz describes the role of Christianity in right wing discourse of European identity as an 'extinguished volcano'; thus, as has been argued above, Christianity is viewed not as a belief system but as a cultural marker. Thus, in this view Christian heritage is viewed as the basis of some secular European values, including the separation of religion and the state, the idea of the natural rights of man and even the culture of capitalism. Therefore, conversion to Christianity is viewed as insufficient to acquire 'Judeo-Christian values', as the convert 'does not carry the Christian heritage in his or her 'cultural genes' (Yılmaz, 2007, p. 298). From this point of view, then, the accession to the EU of a country like Turkey with a majority Muslim population, is seen as highly problematic. As former Belgian prime minister and current permanent President of the European Council Herman von Rompuy argues, for instance, 'The universal values which are in force in Europe, and which are also fundamental values of Christianity, will lose vigour with the entry of a large Islamic country such as Turkey' (cited in Cronin, 2010).

Thus, in this view, these norms are specifically the result of Western, or European, civilisation, in contrast to other civilisations, especially 'Islamic' civilisation. The concept of the democratic West is thus constructed against that of the 'barbarous' East. This is by no means a new idea. The 'Orient', particularly the Islamic East, has been a traditional and constitutive 'Other' for European or Christian identity. Although the concept of the Orient as an undemocratic and authoritarian 'Other' can be traced as far back as ancient Greece, it was the rise of Christianity in Europe and the subsequent threat posed by Islam to 'Christendom' due to the expansionist nature of neighbouring Islamic regimes at the time that developed and consolidated the image of the Near and Middle East as Europe's principal 'Other'. This was partly due to elite constructions of a 'Christian' identity in opposition to a Muslim, non-European one (Mastnak, 1994, pp. 3-5).

This was provoked by a series of conflicts with Muslims. Firstly, Spain came under Arab rule in the seventh century, while in 732 the French prevented the Arabs from entering further into Europe with the Tars war. Later, the expansionist nature of the Ottoman Empire, its arrival at the gates of Vienna and its conquest of Rhodes in particular, reinforced this view, and caused 'the Turk' to be seen as the antithesis of the European (Kuran-Burçoğlu, 2007, pp. 156-157). As has been pointed out, it appears to be in such times of crisis that identity

construction is most effectively passed from elite to mass level (Risse and Engelmann-Martin, 2007, pp. 292-293).

The calling of the First Crusade in 1095 by Pope Urban II is perhaps the single greatest medieval example of the attempt to construct an anti-Muslim identity from above. In this way, the European view of Muslims evolved from that of simple 'heretics' to that of 'the enemies of Christianity' (Kuran-Burçoğlu, 2007, p. 157). This, coupled with the growing success of the Ottomans' military campaigns, led Christians to perceive Islam as an aggressive, war-like religion, a view which persisted into the early modern period and survived the Reformation. Indeed, for some Early Modern Christians, such as Martin Luther, the Turks, when not represented as the devil incarnate, were the embodiment of the wrath of God, a punishment sent by the Almighty to negligent Christians. On this basis, Luther encouraged pious Christians to wage war against the 'common enemy' (Kuran-Burçoğlu, 2007, p. 157). As Said points out, by the twentieth century negative images of Islam persisted in the West (1978, p. 63).

Such distrust of Islam has probably increased further in the 21st century as a result of the terrorist attacks suffered by the USA on September 11 2001, and the subsequent attacks on Madrid and London. Surveys among the European public tend to support this perception of a negative attitude towards Islam, and indicate that many Europeans view Islam as being incompatible with 'universal' values. According to a German survey carried out in 2006, for instance, 83% of respondents agreed with the view that 'Islam is driven by fanaticism', 71% believed Islam to be intolerant, and, significantly, 61% considered Islam to be 'undemocratic' (cited in Bardakoğlu, 2008, p. 113). Europe-wide surveys support this negative view of Islam. In the 2006 Transatlantic Trends survey, for instance, 88% of respondents from the 9 EU countries included believed that the values of Islam are not compatible with democracy, rising to 95% and 98% in France and Germany respectively (Transatlantic Trends, 2006)<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> In contrast to these arguments, research suggests that Turkish people do not significantly differ from those in the EU in their evaluation of democracy. As Dixon points out, 'Contrary to Huntington's clash of civilizations thesis, there are no civilizational divides in analyses of democratic values'. While Turkey does differ from the majority of EU states in its support for more religious and authoritarian values, there are no important differences in this regard with the Orthodox Member States (Greece, Romania and Bulgaria), perhaps as a consequence of Ottoman (or even Byzantine) rule. The only value on which there was a significant difference was in tolerance for minority rights, on which Turkish respondents scored considerably lower than their EU counterparts, perhaps because of the Kurdish issue (Dixon, 2008, p. 13)

In addition, in a 'cross-civilisational' study, Norris and Inglehart found that both Western and Islamic countries were similar in their support for democratic ideals, and indeed, were more similar to each other in this respect than to most of the other 'civilisations' examined. Where there did appear to be a clear divide between 'Islam' and 'the West' was on issues relating to gender equality and sexual liberalisation, with Western countries generally more accepting of both (Norris and Inglehart, 2002, pp. 14-15).

Therefore, as Kaya, for instance, points out, 'Islam is, by and large, considered and represented as a threat to the European way of life' (2005, p. 9).

In this framework Turkey is, then, seen as inherently alien to European civilisation. As French President Nicholas Sarkozy, for example, argues:

I am in favour of signing a contract with Turkey. I am in favour of a joint market with Turkey. But I am against Turkey's integration into Europe. Turkey is a small Asia. And there is no reason for it to be a part of Europe. In 25 years, Turkey's population will be 100 million. Turkey is a great civilisation; but not a European one (2007a)

Moreover, perhaps most notably in French political discourse, Turkish full membership is construed as representing the 'death' of European integration through the dissolution of European cultural/civilisational identity. Valery Giscard d'Estaing, former French president and head of the European Convention, famously argued in 2002 that Turkish accession would mean 'the end of the European Union' (2002). Such views have also been put forward by Sarkozy, who points out that, although he does not consider the EU to be a future superstate, Europeans would close the doors to Turkey's full membership as they were 'a Europe of nations exercising their sovereignty and decided to stay themselves' (2007a). His reasons for viewing Turkey as a potential threat to European identity (or identities) were put forward in more detail during his 2007 election campaign. Here he emphasises what he views as the fundamental 'non-Europeanness' of Turkey:

Turkey is not a European country, and as such she does not have a place inside the European Union. A Europe without borders would be the death of the great idea of political Europe. A Europe without borders is to condemn her to become a sub-region of the United Nations. I simply do not accept it (2007b).

Thus, proponents of this view tend to be in favour of offering Turkey a 'privileged partnership' instead of eventual full membership. This, in fact, is the official position of the European People's Party (EPP), the largest group in the European Parliament. Moreover, the Commission itself also seems to have made some concessions to such views<sup>4</sup>. The Negotiation Framework adopted by the European Council in October 2005 reflects these concerns, emphasising the 'open-ended' nature of the negotiations. The Negotiation Framework states that 'while having full regard to all Copenhagen criteria, including the absorption capacity of the Union, if Turkey is not in a position to assume in full all the

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<sup>4</sup> Indeed, Casanova notes that the Commission itself was divided on whether to open accession negotiations with Turkey. Viviane Reding, the Luxembourg commissioner, and the commissioners from Austria, Poland and Greece were against opening negotiations with Turkey on October 3 2005 (Casanova, 2006, p. 1).

obligations of membership it must be ensured that Turkey is fully anchored in the European structures through the strongest possible bond'. Therefore, the possibility of alternative outcomes, such as a privileged partnership is suggested in the document, and the EU's absorption capacity is emphasised (Duyulmuş, 2008, p. 28). This differs not only from the Negotiation Frameworks of the countries which acceded to the EU in 2004 and 2007, but also from that of Croatia, which was issued on the same date as Turkey's (Aydın, 2006, pp. 7-8).

## **Conclusions**

Turkey's accession has intensified the debate on European identity that was sparked by the widening and deepening of European integration that took part as a result of the Maastricht and Amsterdam treaties, the enlargement to the CEECs and the European Convention. However, particularly since the opening of accession negotiations with Turkey in 2005, it is possible to discern two separate broad visions of European identity in the discourses of European elites. The 'official' EU discourse constructs a largely 'civic' identity for the EU, in which accession is open to any (geographically) European country which is considered to fulfill the political norms on which the EU is based according to the Treaties. Hence, there is an attempt to construct a political community without a strong cultural/religious identity. Instead, the focus is on 'unity in diversity'.

On the other hand, there is an alternative attempt to construct an EU identity among many centre-right as well as extreme-right politicians, most notably those in France and Germany among others. The argument here is that European integration should rest upon a solid cultural identity. While this is difficult to define in a multinational and multicultural EU, this has increasingly been defined as a civilisational identity. Thus, the EU is seen as based on 'European civilisation'. However, importantly in this view the apparently 'universal' values such as democracy, human rights and so on on which the EU is founded are not considered to be universal at all; instead, they are seen to be the specific product of European civilisation, including Christianity and classical culture as well as events such as the Renaissance and Enlightenment.

This identity is therefore constructed with other civilisations, in Huntington's terms, as its Other. Most notably, Europe's old Other, Islam, has been reconstructed as its new Other. Here, if Europe is seen as the home of democracy and human rights, 'Islamic civilisation' is constructed as its antithesis. In this view, then, there is clearly no place for an Islamic-majority country such as Turkey as a full member of the EU; indeed, as many right-wing politicians have argued, its accession would signify the death of European integration. Thus,

the cries for Turkey to be offered a so-called 'privileged partnership' rather than full membership.

However, Turkey's rejection on civilisational grounds would have serious drawbacks. It would turn the EU into a 'Christian club', not only sending a negative message to Turkey and other Muslim countries but also to the EU's own significant Muslim majority. It would thus intensify, rather than prevent, the dreaded 'clash of civilisations'. Secondly, there is very little evidence that the Turkish population, or even Muslims as a whole, differ from the EU population regarding attitudes to democracy and other related values.

Despite this, the outlook for Turkey's EU accession bid is rather pessimistic, not least because each Member State has the right to veto it. This problem has no easy solution. However, as has been argued so far, the supporters and opponents of Turkey's EU membership have been speaking fundamentally different languages; while the supporters focus on 'universal' values the opponents argue that these are specific to 'European civilisation'. Thus, more emphasis on shared cultural and historical factors, such as the positive contribution of Islamic civilisation to the European Renaissance, or the Byzantine influences on the Ottoman Empire, may be of more use in convincing Turkey's opponents within the EU of its fundamental 'Europeanness'.

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**Catherine MACMILLAN** completed her doctorate in European Studies at the European Union Institute, Marmara University, Istanbul in 2008 with a dissertation on the EU's Justice and Home Affairs policies. She is Assistant Professor in the department of English Language and Literature at Yeditepe University, Istanbul. Her research interests focus on discursive attitudes to Turkish accession in the EU Member States as well as the EU's Justice and Home Affairs policies. Her main publications include 'The Application of Neofunctionalism to the Enlargement Process: The Case of Turkey' in *Journal of Common Market Studies* 47(9) and

'Privileged Partnership, Open Ended Accession Negotiations and the Securitisation of Turkey's EU Accession Process' in *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 18(4).