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PROTRACTED BETROTHAL: A BRIEF HISTORY OF PRESENT TURKEY-EUROPEAN UNION ANTAGONISM

Mustafa Onur TETİK*

Abstract

The European Parliament called for the suspension of European Union (EU)-Turkey accession negotiations on the basis of democratic conditionality in March 2019. This development was a link of the chain of events that soured Turkey's relations with the EU roughly since 2013. This article presents historical assessment of Turkey's interrelations with Europe and the EU that provides the historical context on which the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government constructed its foreign policies antagonizing the EU since its third term. Scholarly and journalistic literature on the negative trend in Turkey-the EU relations mainly focuses on the failing democratic conditionality aspect of relations. This approach inevitably causes presentism trap in analyses. The paper sheds light on the historical context of relations turned into ideational baggage carried by the sides. In its overview of the past of interrelations, the article locates four historically institutional dimensions: (1) Mutual "otherness", (2) Turkey's modernization, (3) symbiotic modus vivendi and (4) regional power politics. The article also touches the role played by Turkey's domestic secularist and conservative political schism. This analysis of political interrelations comes to the conclusion that the current problems are not only consequences of the AKP's or the EU's recent moves but also the burdens inherited from fluctuating historical experience. The parties' past, and thus today's, are saliently intertwined. Therefore, these conditions do not let Turkey and the EU have a complete break-up or union regardless of contemporary agents' intentions or decisions.

Keywords: Turkey, European Union, Turkish National Identity, Western Civilization, Historical Context

UZATMALI NİŞAN: MEVCUT TÜRKİYE-AVRUPA BİRLİĞİ ÇELİŞKİSİNİN KISA BİR TARİHİ

Öz

Avrupa Parlamentosu 2019'un Mart ayında Avrupa Birliği (AB)-Türkiye katılım müzakerelerinin demokratik koşulsallık temelinde askıya alınmasını önermiştir. Bu gelişme 2013'den beri Türkiye'nin AB ile ilişkilerini bozan olaylar zincirinin son halkası olmuştur. Bu makale Türkiye'nin, Avrupa ve AB ile olan

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karşılıklı ilişkilerine dair bir inceleme sunmaktadır. Bu inceleme, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP) hükümetinin üçüncü döneminden beridir AB ile ihtilaflı olan dış politikasını üzerine inşa ettiği tarihsel bağlamı ortaya koymaktadır. Akademik literatür ve basın, Türkiye-AB ilişkilerindeki negatif eğilim konusunda ana olarak ilişkilerin başarısız olan demokratik koşulsallık tarafına odaklanmaktadır. Bu yaklaşım kaçınılmaz olarak bugüne, tarihsel bağlamdan izole bir şekilde yoğunlaştırılması sorununu ortaya çıkarmaktadır. Bu çalışma, taraflar için fikri bagaj haline gelmiş olan, ilişkilerin tarihsel bağlamına ışık tutmaktadır. Çalışma karşılıklı ilişkilerin geçmişinin incelemesinde, tarihsel olarak kurumsallaşmış dört boyut bulmuştur: (1) Karşılıklı ötekilik, (2) Türk modernleşmesi, (3) simbiyotik yaşam modu ve (4) bölgesel güç ilişkileri. Makalede ayrıca Türkiye'deki seküler ve muhafazakar siyasi blokların oynadığı role değinilmiştir. Karşılıklı siyasi ilişkilerin bu analizinin ulaştığı sonuca göre, bugünün sorunları sadece AKP ve AB'nin günce faaliyetlerinin bir sonucu olmayıp, geçmişten miras alınan, ilişkilerdeki gelgitli tarihsel tecrübenin yükünden de kaynaklanmaktadır. Tarafların dünü ve haliyle bugünleri iç içe geçmiş durumdadır. Bu şartlar, günün aktörlerinin niyet ve kararlarından bağımsız olarak, Türkiye ve AB'nin tam bir kopuş yaşamasına ya da mutlak olarak birleşmesine müsaade etmemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türkiye, Avrupa Birliği, Türk Milli Kimliği, Batı Medeniyeti, Tarihsel Bağlam.

Introduction

The European Parliament called for the suspension of European Union-Turkey accession negotiations on the basis of normative/democratic conditionality in March 2019. This development was a link of the chain of events that soured Turkey's relations with the EU roughly since 2013. Even though the conservative Justice and Development Party (AKP) government of Turkey was eager about the EU membership bid, harmonization reforms and democratization conditionality during its first two terms (2002-2011), its enthusiasm about the membership gradually declined for various reasons. The Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan repeatedly urged the EU to clear its mind about the possible Turkish membership and emphasized the EU is not indispensable for Turkey (Kaplan, 2019; DW Türkçe, 2020; BBC News Türkçe, 2021). Turkey and the EU reached to the brink of ending the everlasting membership process and reformulating it with an alternative mode of relationship. This negative development in interrelations has been widely attributed to the anti-democratic trajectory that the AKP government has been supposedly pursuing lately (Bayramoğlu, 2016; Kirişçi and Sloat, 2019:1; Saatçioğlu, 2020:169). Nevertheless, the lack of confidence between the parties goes deeper than the contemporary events.

Since its foundation, the Turkish Republic has had a mistrust vis-à-vis European intentions about Turkey due to various historical reasons such as European countries' occupation of the Turkish mainland and the role played by them in the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire (Aybey, 2004:20). This political scepticism towards Europe/West has been deeply rooted in Turkish social cognitive structures regardless of domestic

ideological differences. On the other hand, European or Western civilization has been an epitome of development for Turkey's founding secularist elites and their successors as well as the elites of the late imperial era. The supposed core identities and values of the Turkish nation have been sometimes considered as mutually exclusive like being part of Islamic and Western civilizations. These supposedly contradictory identities and emulative modernization had echoed in Turkey's relations and positionings in the international arena. Even though the Republican Turkey pursued a more or less coherent pro-Western foreign policy for a long time, the political symptoms of dissociative identity disorder caused by historical experiences shared with European countries sometimes reflected itself in Turkey's international politics. Nevertheless, this situation has never become a basis to entirely cut the interrelations of Turkey and European countries.

This article presents a historical institutionalist assessment of Turkey's interrelations with the conceived totality of Europe and the EU providing the social cognitive context on which the AKP government constructed its foreign policies antagonizing the EU since its third term. Scholarly and journalistic literature on the negative trend in Turkey–the EU relations mainly focuses on the failing democratic conditionality aspect of relations and other forms of reductionist contentions like “*reductio ad Erdoganum*” (Kadercan, 2015). This approach inevitably causes presentism complication in analyses. The historical overview in the article demonstrates that historical legacy feeding today's interrelations has four historically institutional dimensions: (1) Historically mutual “otherness” regarding civilizational identity, (2) institutional process of Turkey's modernization/westernization, (3) materially symbiotic *modus vivendi*, (4) regional power politics.

The paper sheds light on the historical context of relations turned into ideational baggage carried by the sides. The article delves into the enduring paradoxical historical interrelations of the sides to show that the contemporary antagonisms are anchored in the past events displaying meaningful parallelism with today. The various forms of historical “otherness” to each other come into play in this analysis. The article also touches the role played by Turkey's domestic secularist and conservative political division in its relations with Europe and the EU because Turkish understanding of the national-self that influence its perception of the West has not been stable. This analysis of political interrelations comes to the conclusion that the historical experience until the AKP rule still feeds current fluctuating relations significantly. The current problems are not only consequences of the AKP's or the EU's recent manoeuvres but also the ideational burdens inherited from the fluctuating historical experience. The parties' past, and thus today's, are saliently intertwined. Therefore, as the article suggests, these conditions do not and will not let Turkey and the EU have a complete break-up or union regardless of contemporary agents' intentions or decisions.

1. THE PRE-MODERN PERIOD: HISTORICAL OTHERNESS

The Turkish official historiography dates the first Turkish – European encounter back to the Huns who are considered to be the proto-Turks. This sort of mythical narratives and supposed genealogical lineage are hard to track objectively. However, there is a historically and objectively traceable continuous interplay between the “European” polities (including the Eastern Roman Empire) and the Turkmen/Oghuz-ruling dynasties (Seljuk and Ottoman) and other small-scale tribal polities, which are accepted as predecessors by the Turkish Republic, since the 11th Century when nomadic Turkmens began to massively settle in the Anatolian Peninsula. This long history of interaction and confrontation comprises an ample discursive arsenal for identity narratives. For instance, the memories of the series of battles between the Crusaders and Seljuk Turkmens in the 12th and 13th Centuries on Turkey’s contemporary territories are still a crucial component of Turkish historiographical narrative which conceives a binary constitutive relation between the “West” and the “Turks”. The Ottoman-Turkmen Empire’s steady expansion into Europe through Balkans until the defeat in the second siege of Vienna in 1683, and its gradual retreat from the European continent until the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923 contains numerous wars, peace, social, economic, diplomatic, cultural interactions between the Turkmen-ruled monarchical state and European polities.

The historical interactions between the “Turkish Empire”, as commonly referred, and European powers contributed to the creation of “the Muslim invader” view of Turkey as cruel and heretic (Aksu, 2015:18; Kuran-Burcoğlu, 2007:162). During the medieval period, Turkey was seen as the realm of “the bloodthirsty warriors”, “the blasphemous aggressors of Christendom”, “the infidel occupiers of the holy sites” (Tekin, 2010:28). The Ottoman Turks gradually inherited re-articulation of Christendom’s entrenched hostile, fierce, savage, infidel and barbarian (Gehan, 2014:156) Muslim Other images of past Western-Arab/Muslim encounters (Levin, 2011:81) as they militarily advanced deep into Eastern European soil. The “terrible” and “lustful” Turk images with stereotypical narratives have been deeply rooted in European imagination as the evil other which can also be observed even today in more sophisticated forms and various facades (Tiryakioğlu, 2015). Historical “otherness” in perceptions, instrumentalized especially by European right-wing populists, still contaminates the political atmosphere in European countries (Yılmaz, 2007; Casey, 2016; Black, 2016; Lindgaard, Wessel and Banke, 2018:7; Ağcasulu and Ossewaarde, 2019).

Likewise, the Ottomans defined themselves as a Muslim polity (dar al-Islam/abode of Islam) and European lands as dar al-harb (abode of war/enemy territory) whose residents were wicked (Yapp, 1992:140). The Empire had customarily regulated its foreign relations with European polities by unilaterally issuing a pronouncement of their will rather than bilateral agreements until the realization of its decadence against the West (Naff,

1963:295-296; Arı, 2004:36-37). It was because defining the European counterparts as *dar al-harb* necessitated the non-recognition of them as moral equals to have bilateral conventions (Khadduri, 1956:359-360). The dominant political pattern of Turkey's predecessor polities' relations with European powers have been "historically mutual otherness". A strong anti-western posture stimulating the cognitive residues of historical otherness in discourses by the governing elites of Turkey has become more mainstream during the last decade (Hürriyet, 2014, 2015, 2016a, b; Kaliber and Kaliber, 2019). Nevertheless, these contemporary popular discourses of "civilizational mutual otherness" are not the products of the AKP era, but they have long histories for both sides. Therefore, it would be factually incorrect to construe Turkey's Islamic anti-Westernism solely to the AKP's agency.

Although the civilizational otherness has been the dominant aspect of the pre-modern era, "regional power politics" has been another nexus between Turkey's antecedent polities and European actors. The Ottoman Empire's economic bonds with the Republic of Venice, the alliance with the Kingdom of France against the Habsburgs or support to European Protestants are some of the historical instances that determined the history of interrelations (Sander, 2006: 52-82). Today's Europe seems unified and too harmonious to start a great power competition among each other. However, the AKP government's contemporary policies of balancing a hostile European power with a friendly one (e.g. balancing France with Italy in Libya) or a European state's instrumentalization of Turkey for the balance of power in Europe (e.g. the UK's balancing the EU with Turkey after Brexit) is still operational today. Therefore, this dimension of regional power politics did not stem from the AKP's political program, but it represents a continuation in interrelations.

2. THE LATE OTTOMAN AND EARLY REPUBLICAN PERIODS: INSTITUTIONAL MODERNIZATION

The Ottoman Empire had conducted *ad hoc* diplomacy with European powers until 1793 when the first permanent Ottoman Embassy was established in London, followed by Paris, Vienna, Berlin embassies. It was a development taken place during the reign of Selim III who initiated major reforms in order to obstruct the Empire's undeniable melting down and revitalize the glorious days via modernization/westernization. When Europeans' objective political, scientific and military superiority over the Ottomans had reached to a non-negligible level, the Ottoman-Turkish elites started to perceive the supposedly "infidel" Europe as an epitome. The Ottoman elites from different ideological backgrounds began to idealize the "Western civilization", at least in the sense of scientific development (Nas, 2001:179-180). This development impelled the Ottoman statecraft to adopt the Western reciprocal diplomatic practices and processes (Karaosmanoğlu, 2000:205).

After the Crimean War (1853-1856) in which the Ottomans allied with the European powers (Britain and France) against the Russian Empire, the Ottoman Empire was admitted to participate in the Public Law and System (Concert) of Europe by the 1856 Paris Treaty whereby the Empire became subject to the provisions of international law applied to “civilized nations” (Karpat, 1972:258). The “Turkish Empire’s” relationship with the European states system was ambiguous. Simultaneously being within the greater “imagined community” of Europe and out of it has been an enduring theme affecting Turkey’s relations with Europe. We still do not know whether the “Turks” lives in the European box or not since the definition of this originally geographical concept is socially constructed, contingent and slippery. Nevertheless, for that time, the Ottoman Turks were deemed “the sick man of Europe” but “of Europe” at the end of the day.

The modernization/westernization tendency of the Empire went hand in hand with establishing modern diplomatic relations with European countries. A crucial topic of friction between the European polities and the Ottoman-Turkmen Empire for the time was the question of Christian minorities whereby the Europeans meddle in the Empire’s internal affairs. The European countries (Britain and the France) had been urging the Empire to improve the conditions of religious minorities, specifically Christians. The Empire declared the Imperial Reform Edict of 1856 in order to ameliorate the status of religious minorities under the pressure of European powers which turned them into de facto “protectors” of Ottoman Christians (Roderic, 1963). The Ottoman statecraft also intended to avert European interference with the demonstration of its commitment to modernization (Karaosmanoğlu, 2000:207). These partly enforced reforms aiming equality on the Ottoman citizenship base regardless of ethno/religio-cultural identity also became a springboard to create a multi-cultural Ottoman identity/nationalism which failed to protect the imperial unity in following years. Nevertheless, the Ottoman Empire maintained its political status within the European balance of power until the First World War (WWI) by joining the 1815 Vienna System with the 1856 Paris Treaty.

The major European powers of Britain and France along with Imperial Russia have decided to solve the “Eastern Question” for good and renounced their commitment to the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire just before WWI. The Empire allied with the rising German power in WWI with whom the Empire had been getting closer since the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II who pursued to construct a more “Islamic” Ottoman identity rather than a secular-cosmopolitan one relied on the power of British-French consortium (Kösebalaban, 2014:89-94). After the disastrous defeat in WWI, the Ottoman lands were partitioned mainly among Britain and France. The new Turkish Republic portrayed itself as a rupture from the Ottoman past even though it is a successor of the Empire in many institutional aspects (Turkey’s bureaucratic state institutions still officially dates their foundations back to the Imperial era). Multi-cultural/religious Ottoman

identity (Ottomanism), Islamic identity (Pan-Islamism) and Turkic identity (Pan-Turkism) were rejected by the new republic because the founding fathers considered these three nation-building projects maximalist and beyond the capability of the country (Atatürk, 2015:337; Lewis, 1968:326-327).

The Republic had an ontological contradiction like being in favour of building European values-oriented Turkey, notwithstanding it bid political defiance to Europe because of entrenched mutual distrust. This was a manifestation of continuity in paradoxical historical interrelations. The early republican elites were “cynical” against Europe due to fresh memories of the European invasion of Imperial Turkey (Oğuzlu, 2002:581; Karaosmanoğlu, 2000:208). The new Turkish Republic’s supposed paradoxical relation to the West is considered as an exemplar for postcolonial nationalisms (Ateş, 2014:56-59) which are both imitative and hostile to the models which they think superior materially but not spiritually/essentially (Plamenatz, 1973: 22-37). Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the Republic’s founding father, devoted his policies to build a modern/westernized nation via strong bureaucratic mechanisms (though naturally party politics and bureaucracy were intermingled during the one-party rule). According to him, the contemporary Western civilisation, for his era, was representing the most advanced stage that humanity reached in thousands of years (Atatürk, 1961; Demirağ, 2006:157).

The Republic inherited highly bureaucratic and state-centric political culture from the Ottoman Empire (Kırval, 2007:199). Hence, foreign affairs have remained de-politicized bureaucracy-centric realm dominated by the secular bloc of the country for a long time. The Republic westernized/modernized its legal system by basing it on the Swiss civil code, the Italian penal code and French administrative law. The early republican Turkish elites preferred to stay in the Western economic “liberal” camp as opposed to the nascent Soviet Socialist experiment next to its borders. The Republic mostly pursued a “defensive” realism inherited from the late Ottoman experience (Aras and Köni, 2002:48; Karaosmanoğlu, 2000), active isolationism and pro-status quo/anti-revisionist path in foreign affairs (except the annexation of Hatay province) in order to conduct a nation-building inside during the secularists’ one-party rule and to maintain the hard-fought-for territorial integrity of the state (Kösebalaban, 2014:120-132; Desai, 2005:370).

Beside civilizational transformation and nation-building objectives, since the westernization program has been a security strategy to prevent European powers potential aggression towards Turkey by being recognized as a Western state by them (Oğuzlu, 2007:84; Ateş, 2014:119). The young republic refrained from antagonizing European powers, denounced irredentist policies and imperial claims in order to prevent potential identity-driven conflicts and finalize the modernization project. This position of the Republic deepened the institutional anchor in westernization which began

during the Imperial days and made it “founding principle/value (kurucu ilke/değer)” of the new regime. The modernization/westernization trend partially explains Turkey’s persistence to join the EU even during antagonistic times with a historical and institutional perspective (Camyar and Tagma, 2010).

Even though “historical mutual otherness” dimension of the relations between Imperial and Republican Turkey and European powers did not disappear, the institutional westernization aspect overwhelmed the interrelations particularly in the 19th and the first half of 20th centuries. Turkish modernization has been the main driver of the relations of the period. Nonetheless, the logic of regional power politics was also still in play as in the example of the British Empire’s functionalization of the Ottoman Empire as a buffer state on the way of Russian ambitions that were in conflict with the British interests during the most of the 19th century (Subaşı, 2018). This westernization aspect of Turkey-Europe interrelations displayed itself during the early AKP rule as well when the AKP government strongly supported the EU-driven reforms regardless of its intentions. Therefore, the historicity of Turkey-Europe relations did not only and always reflect itself in a negative way.

3. THE POST-WAR WORLD: SYMBIOTIC MODUS VIVENDI

The channel that connected Turkey to Europe during the Cold War was twofold: NATO and the EU. Turkey maintained its relations with European states individually and peacefully during the interwar period and pursued a foreign policy to secure the new borders and sovereignty of the Republic via bilateral relations and, multilateral pacts, conventions or agreements. Turkey engaged in “active neutrality” (Deringil, 2002; Tamkoç, 1961; Balci, 2013) in the Second World War in order to avoid possible destructive effects on the new regime and country due to military and political weakness. Turkey sided with the “free” Western World after the war and joined the NATO alliance as a respond to the Soviet aggression towards its vicinity which also reflected overall pro-Western attitude in foreign affairs. Despite episodic fluctuations in relations like the one during and after Turkey’s intervention in Cyprus in 1974 (including the US embargo on arms sales to Turkey), Turkey has lingered under the military and political protection of USA via NATO umbrella and adhered to European countries economically during the Cold War years. Turkish institutionalized adherence to the Western alliance provided both physical and ontological security to Turkey since it helped to maintain secular self-understanding inside. NATO has been a “security community”, not only a security alliance, because it was “loosely defined under a ‘western’ identity” (Aybet, 2012:20) which requires certain norms to be part of. Europe-Turkey relations were mostly problem-free during the Cold War period in terms of security considerations (Oğuzlu, 2002:583).

Turkey joined the IMF and the World Bank in 1947, the OECD in 1948 and the GATT in 1951 that coupled Turkey with the Western institutions in the economic realm and drove it to organize its economic structure more or less in accordance with the Western liberal-capitalist bloc. Turkey's strong allegiance to the Western bloc diminished its level of autonomy in foreign affairs. Nevertheless, the Cold War consolidated the Turkish anchor in the Western alliance (the US-led) along with sporadic rapprochements with non-Western countries. For instance, Turkey developed especially economic relations with the Soviet Union without abandoning the Western alliance politically or militarily due to the fact that the Western states and institutions refused to finance industrial development in Turkey enough. However, Turkey failed to institutionalize its relations with the non-Western countries and interactions with them remained conjectural. Turkey mainly used its rapprochement with non-Western countries as bargaining chip or alternatives in times of crisis vis-à-vis the Western bloc and thus Turkish elites did not perceive relations with them as mandatory but optional (Ateş, 2014:272). We observe this historical fact recently in Turkey's ambivalent positioning between Western and non-Western government in regional power politics.

The priority of security concerns during the Cold War made "materially symbiotic *modus vivendi*" dominant factor in Turkey-Europe interrelations. Fractured societies and ideological turmoil in Turkey and Europe along with the common threat perception from the Soviet Union enabled establishing an operational *modus vivendi* between sides. Today, economic and security related interdependency of the sides has been the main driver of this symbiotic relations during the AKP era. The refugee deal signed by Turkey and the EU in 2016, following the immigration crisis in Europe, was the most tangible display of these symbiotic interrelations. Nevertheless, episodic fluctuations in relations during the Cold War like the Cyprus crisis (1974) were also manifestations of that regional power politics are still there, albeit behind the scenes. In the meantime, the economic and political integration project of Europe was launched following the WWII. The institutional harmonization (or unification) attempts of European countries brought a novel form to Turkey-Europe relations. These initiatives goal was to diminish the negative effects of regional power politics and promote interdependence, norms and values in Europe. Therefore, over time, Turkey's enduring modernization project coupled with Europe's supposedly norm-driven "regionalization" process has become the main junction and dimension of interrelations.

4. PROTRACTED BETROTHAL: TURKEY'S RELATIONS WITH THE EU AS A MONOLITHIC ACTOR

The beginning of Turkey's relations with "Europe" as a "modern" supranational unitary/monolithic actor was with the creation of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957. Turkey joined the Council of Europe

in 1949 and applied for associate membership of the EEC in July 1959. The then Turkish Prime Minister, Adnan Menderes, stated that this economic union had a great potential to be a preamble for a “political union of Europe”; thus Turkey was supposed to be part of this European venture (Kabaalioglu, 1999:110). The aim of membership became an “official state policy” regardless of different administrations from then on with episodic disruptions. There has been an almost inter-party consensus on becoming part of European economic sphere, although different political parties have had various dissenting opinions about the issue. For instance, whereas Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) was sensitive about the potential damages on national unity, Republican People’s Party (CHP) was concerned about possible economic disadvantages for the public (Akçay, 2012). Moreover, the Turkish radical left and right traditionally opposed the membership due to diverse reasons (Yılmaz, 2011:190).

Despite all hesitance of various groups, according to the most of Turkish elites, membership in the EEC might have improved Turkey economically, and been complementary to the Republic’s aspiration for the westernization guided by the principles of Atatürk (Balci, 2013:122; Eralp and Torun, 2015:16; Uluğ-Eryılmaz, 2015:133; MacLennan, 2009:22). Therefore, this step would be both materially beneficial and ideologically in parallel with the modernization project. The negotiations between Turkey and the EEC resulted in the signature of the Ankara Agreement in September 1963, which was the first step on the path to full membership. The agreement set out three stages (preparatory-transitional-final). The Ankara Agreement was supplemented by the Additional Protocol, signed in November 1970, which finalized the preparatory phase and determined the preconditions of the transition period. The political developments in Turkey such as coup d’états, financial crises, street violence in the 1970s, the Cyprus crisis, etc. influenced Turkey’s relations with European countries and the EEC.

Besides, Turkish elites were sceptical about the EEC’s possible effects on Turkish industrial development in the 1970s because economic self-reliance was a core state value which guided the founders of the Turkish Republic. This situation caused tension between two major national principles which are westernization and self-sufficient development (Eralp, 1993:198; Eralp and Torun, 2015:18). Turkey has been desiring both modernization through the Western examples and to remain independent from Europe. Turkey’s historical otherness was bewildering the Turkish elites and causing political bipolarity despite of profitability and ideological (modernization) satisfactory aspects of the process.

In 1982, The EEC froze the relations with Turkey due to undemocratic aftermaths of the 1980 coup d’état. The acceptance of Greece into the EEC in 1981 became another obstructive factor for Turkey’s accession to the EEC since Greece diplomatically worked against such an outcome. Nevertheless, relations between Turkey and the EEC were gradually restored after the

civilian authority was re-installed by the 1983 general elections. In September 1986, the EEC-Turkey Joint Committee reactivated the relations in spite of German and Greek opposition. In April 1987, the Özal administration, enthusiastic about relations with the EEC, applied for full membership under article 237 of the Treaty of Rome instead of the Ankara Agreement. The Özal administration committed to economic and political liberalization that approximates Turkey to Europe along with redefining Turkey's international position in a more balanced way between the Western world and Turkey's historical and traditional hinterlands like post-Ottoman and Turkic regions.

The avant-garde approach of Özal, a right-wing politician, in foreign affairs faced resistance from traditional secularist hegemons of Turkey because it also aimed to weaponize the membership process to undermine the dominance of the Turkish secularist bloc (Kösebalaban, 2014:237-249; Balcı, 2013:184-185). In February 1990, after two years of examination of Turkey's application, the EEC turned down due to several political and economic reasons but still left the membership door ajar for the future if Turkey solves political, structural problems and modernizes, liberalizes its economy (Aksu, 2012:19-26). The European Community used this membership card as a carrot for reforms in Turkey.

Meanwhile, the Western European states' interests are changed from a security-driven agenda to the promotion of the so-called Western principles like democracy and human rights in the post-Cold War World (Aybet, 1999:105). Turkey's stability could not be jeopardized for democracy in the delicate international settings of the Cold War (Usul, 2003:142). As in the past, Turkish internal affairs regarding minorities became a subject of international relations between Turkey and European polities because the EU states gradually converged on common liberal and democratic norms rather than a traditional security-based conglomerate of self-interested nation-states, specifically as a consequence of the disintegration of the Soviet threat (Oğuzlu, 2002:584).

Most of the time, the Turkish state has not perceived the controversial cases that she deems a national security threat such as ethnic/religious minority problems as part of modernization/westernization agenda. European interference in Turkey's domestic politics regarding such disturbing issues jogged Turkey's memory about her historical and civilizational otherness vis-à-vis the EU. Therefore, these political interventions through conditionality were recognized as ill-intentioned attempts of the "other" to undermine Turkey's national security. The "belief that European states have attempted in the past and are still trying now to divide Turkey by supporting ethnic separatism" is generally conceptualized as "the Sèvres Syndrome" (Yılmaz, 2011: 200). At this point, mutually symbiotic *modus vivendi* became in conflict with the institutional westernization dimension of Turkey's relations with Europe. This might seem as a paradoxical conflict since it is expected that symbiotic relations

would be reinforced by institutional westernization. The sense of historical otherness or so-called Sevres Syndrome plays a role of an intervening variable that bolsters the mistrust of Turkish elites in European intentions and institutional expectations.

Even though there was no major positive progress in relations between Turkey and the EEC during the first half of the 1990s, Turkey joined the Customs Union in March 1995. This development was perceived by public opinion as a leap forward on a roughly 200 years old westernization path which created an optimistic atmosphere in Turkey. Even though the Customs Union was economically disadvantageous for Turkey according to Eurosceptic elites, the membership was eulogized as the realization of an enduring national ideal (Ateş, 2013:135; Uluğ-Eryılmaz, 2015:145-147). The Customs Union without foreseeable full membership would mean partial loss of sovereignty because Turkey would have to obey rules it never would be able to influence (Eralp and Torun, 2015:24). The Custom Union was a compromise for the conflict between symbiotic relations and institutional westernization dimensions.

It is crucial to note here that, as the Customs Union membership took place under a right-wing party, conservative-liberal political parties in Turkey backed by the mainstream conservatives put significant importance on the pro-European path of traditional Turkish foreign policy that helped them to weaken the supposed anti-democratic influence of the secularist establishment (The Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) as the guardian of the secular regime) in the political sphere. The secularist Turkish military has long been defining itself as “the mystical embodiment of the Turkish nation”, characterized as defending the secular and democratic pillars, and integrity of the Republic (Jenkins, 2007:354; Güney, 2015:109). However, the EU has considered the autonomous role of the secular Turkish military in the political sphere as a major impediment to democratic consolidation in Turkey (Güney, 2015:108). The EU was also instrumentalized by the AKP elites to emasculate the secular bureaucratic hegemony.

The EU refused to give the status of candidate country to the EU in the 1997 Luxembourg Summit of the EU Council, which caused scepticism as to the EU’s intentions and disappointment in Turkey because the decision was perceived as discriminatory and unfair in comparing Turkey with some supposedly less advanced countries within the EU (Eralp and Torun, 2015:24). Europe’s conservatives stood against possible Turkish membership on an identity ground that coded Turkey as a “Muslim country” (Kabaalioglu, 1999:133-140). For instance, conservative political figures like Nicholas Sarkozy, Sylvie Goulard, Philippe De Villiers, Valéry Giscard d’Estaing Angela Merkel, Michael Glos, etc. adopted discourses that either anchors the European identity in the Christian roots as a general statement or particularly targeted Turkey for being Muslim that disqualifies it to be a member of the EU (Yılmaz, 2007). Turkey’s candidacy became a hot topic among Europeans since Turkey was perceived by many European elites as

the representative of a non-European civilization (Islam) and considered as the Muslim other. Therefore, the question of Turkish membership was also a matter of defining frontlines of the European-self and questioning the EU's supposed Judeo-Christian roots (Rumford, 2000:335; Yankaya, 2015:109; Tziampiris, 2009:68; Levin, 2011). Even though there are arguments preaching that the modern supra-national European identity "revolves around the EU" (Baç and Taşkın, 2007:40), "identification with the European continent has always been linked to the continent's history, geography and culture" (Mayer and Palmowski, 2004:592; Baç and Taşkın, 2007:40).

The end of the Cold War made European countries re-assess the supposed European/Western character of Turkey through a cultural prism instead of securitized political obligations stemming from the common Soviet threat (Aybet and Müftüler-Baç, 2000:567-582). The EU began to build and institutionalize a political-collective identity beyond economic/security partnership, based on a shared civilizational sense of belonging. The security-laden European discourse did not construct Turkey discursively as European but a pro-European other whose friendship was in Europe's security interests. Especially abovementioned conservative circles perceived a possible Turkish membership as a potential threat to the EU as a political project and as a diluter of European cultural/civilizational homogeneity (Aydın-Düzgit, 2012:32, 99, 131). A culturally essentialist stream of thought within the EU argued that Turkey cannot be part of the EU or can become at the most a "privileged partner" because of cultural, civilizational and religious divergences (Charalambides, 2009:62). To them, Turkish people did not share the emphasized "common cultural heritage" of Europeans (Kuran-Burçoğlu, 2007:154-155). Turkish entry to the Union would most probably mean that the most powerful state within European institutions (especially in terms of voting power) would be a Muslim country, which is extremely difficult to accept (MacLennan, 2009:24). The historical otherness aspect has become an ideational obstacle for Turkey's unification with the EU at this point, not from the perspective of Turkey but Europe.

The 1999 Helsinki Summit was an important turning point for interrelations and the EU mainly became leverage to promote democratic reforms in Turkey (Usul, 2003:302). International relations with the EU began to overwhelm Turkey's external agenda and domestic affairs after Helsinki. In the 1999 Helsinki Summit, the EU declared that Turkey could start accession negotiations only if it fulfilled the political requirements of the Copenhagen Criteria. Again, normative principles like minority rights or democratization and political preconditions such as the Cyprus question or conflicts with Greece were brought to the table by the EU. This approach was perceived by many Turks as a pretext to exclude Turkey from the EU. The EU's interest in Turkish internal affairs also resurrected traditional fears of ethnic separatism in Turkey inherited from the Ottoman experience. Euro-

sceptic circles in Turkey cultivated the idea that the EU planned to divide Turkey and rule (Tacar, 2007:126).

Progress in the process of the EU accession crystallized an ontological contradiction or a dilemma for the Turkish secularist establishment. While the EU was a natural continuation of their modernization project, it was also an undermining force for both principles of the unitary Turkish nation-state and enduring hegemonic position of the secularists (Kösebalaban, 2002:130-146; Sugden, 2004:241-264; Müftüler-Baç and Gürsoy, 2010:419) because the EU conditionality required regulations which debilitated the bureaucratic power of the secularists over politics. Ironically, traditionalist Turkish Islamists have been opposing the membership bid because they have been perceiving the EU as a “Christian Club”. This Islamic understanding of the Turkish national-self considered the EU as the “infidel” historical other. Likewise, Turkish nationalists were standing against the potential consequences of the membership such as sharing national sovereignty with a supranational institution whose members once invaded the Turkish homeland. According to the Euro-sceptic Turks, the EU accession process was undermining the viability of self-confident Turkish national identity and Turkish pride (Güneş-Ayata, 2003:205-222; Spiering, 2007:169-184). Therefore, the mutual historical otherness dimension made it easy for the AKP government to find domestic allies for its recent reluctance about the membership process and its hardliner position vis-à-vis the EU and particular European countries.

However, Turkish politicians began to push hard for the EU bid because the infamous 2001 economic banking crisis in Turkey presented EU membership as an alternative means of political and economic relief. The aspect of profitability of Europe overwhelmed other institutionalized dimensions of the interrelations for Turkey’s part. The recognition of Turkey’s candidacy in the 1999 Helsinki Summit became a stimulus for Turkish domestic politics and facilitated the development of a powerful civic pro-EU coalition, including NGOs and the business world (Keyman and Öniş, 2004:182). Turkish political elites’ discourses started to increasingly focus on human rights, rule of law and democracy (Taniyici, 2010:181-195). While a significant part of the Turkish elites perceived the EU accession process as a way of also enhancing Turkish security, others considered the Post-Westphalian order supposedly offered by the EU and the promotion of ethnic minority rights (specifically Kurdish) as a threat against the territorial integrity of the Turkish state (Oğuzlu, 2002:579; Ateş, 2013:165).

The DSP (Democratic Left Party) – MHP (Nationalist Movement Party) – ANAP (Homeland Party) coalition government (1999-2002) had discord on threat perception regarding the EU requirements; thus, they followed the membership process hesitantly. However, social and economic pressures made them legislate three constitutional amendment packages (harmonization packages including broadcasting and instruction in the minority languages and the abolition of the death penalty) and a new civil

code from the parliament in order to address the Copenhagen Criteria until they passed political power to the one-party AKP administration with an early general election in November 2002 (Aksu, 2012; Müftüler-Baç, 2005:17-31; Avcı, 2004:194-214). Turkey has undertaken significant reforms especially in the areas of human rights and fundamental freedoms in order to comply with the conditionality of the membership (Keyman and Düzgit, 2007:73). The EU played a major role, particularly after 2002, in inter-bloc power shift in favour of conservatives via the instrumentalization of the EU conditionality that emasculated the secular-dominated military and judiciary vis-à-vis elected actors. The EU conditionality itself, ironically, became the gravedigger of Turkey's membership process since the so-called moderate Islamist AKP blamed by the EU officials for the supposed authoritarian turn of Turkey was enabled to hegemonize the country by the political assistance of the EU membership process.

Conclusion

The rise of populism in Europe has a transformative effect on the central identity definitions of EU countries which increases the possibility of that the historical otherness dimension to become more apparent in interrelations. This potential transformation in Europe's self-identification might be a negative force for Turkey-EU rapprochement. Besides, the pluralization of modernization programs in the world and alternative developmental strategies has a great potential to dewesternize Turkey's institutional modernization goal. This might completely cut the ties of modernization with westernization for Turkey. Turkey's pursuit of alternative models for its development would be a centrifugal effect on the magnetic force of institutional westernization. Nevertheless, there are other dimensions of interrelations that make us optimistic for the termination of Turkey-EU antagonism. Firstly, profound changes in the design of global and regional power politics, like China's trajectory to become a globally hegemonic power, might push the EU to embrace Turkey to install a defence line against such challenges in high politics as during the Cold War. Secondly, the problems which the EU cannot overcome without Turkey's solidarity as in the recent refugee crisis might invite the symbiotic *modus vivendi* dimension to the political scene.

By 2021, there is no consensus among the EU members on terminating Turkey's membership bid although there is growing discontent with Turkey's political trajectory in terms of democratic conditionality. Likewise, despite all negative rhetoric towards European countries and declaring the EU membership is revocable, Turkey does not still show any intention to withdraw its application to the EU. This paper presented a panoramic overview of Turkey's historical relationship with Europe and the EU and drew the picture of interrelations when the AKP came to power in 2002. This retrospective recapitulation addressed the question of why neither Turkey nor the EU was not able to end the membership process in spite of

recent seismic crises. This historical overview of the pre-AKP era comes to the conclusion that today's frictions between the sides are not only the consequences of contemporary agents' moves but also embedded in shared historical past feeding mutual mistrust. Historical dimensions like mutual "otherness", Turkey's modernization process, materially symbiotic *modus vivendi* and regional power politics are structural factors beyond the agency of contemporary actors to a large extent. The article demonstrated these dynamics in a historical continuum. The paper also presented the ideational background of Turkey's policy contradictions towards the EU that are rooted in domestic political blocs' preferences and how they use the membership bid for their own political agendas. This historical experience demonstrates that Turkey cannot strip off entirely its "Europeanness" and cannot be European in the strictly cultural sense, thus it can be expected that Turkey will be institutionally anchored in the EU with alternative settings than the membership.

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