CONSTRUCTIONS OF EUROPEAN IDENTITY

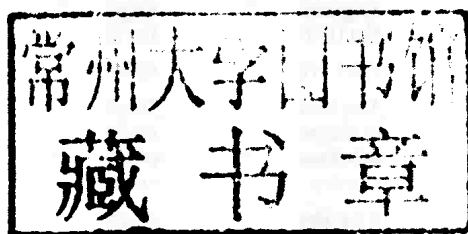## Debates and Discourses on Turkey and the EU
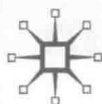
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Constructions of European Identity

Debates and Discourses on Turkey and the EU

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Acknowledgements

Series Introduction: *Identities and Modernities in Europe*

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The *Identities and Modernities in Europe* series examines one of the central issues in the social sciences, modernity, by way of a comparative study of processes of Europeanisation. Arising from a European Commission-funded FP7 project, 'Identities and Modernities in Europe', an international collaborative research project, the series brings together the latest research findings into modernity carried out by cutting-edge researchers across Europe using 'identity' and 'Europe' as a way into the study of modernity.

In the post-Cold War, 9/11 and Lehman Brothers era, which is also marked by a rapid pace of globalisation, questions concerning 'Europe' and identity are becoming more and more urgent and the debates are heating up. With the unfolding of the euro crisis, both 'Europe' and European identity are earnestly interrogated on a daily basis by a wide range of people, not only at the periphery of 'Europe' – both member states and non-member states of the European Union – but also within the euro area. In fact the question of 'Europe' has not been so pertinent for a long time since the inception of the European Union. This is taking place against a wider background of rapid globalisation which is accompanied, perhaps paradoxically, by an increasingly fragmented world. In such a supposedly fragmented world, identities inevitably attract more and more attention. Identities are a modern concern and 'Europe' is the birthplace of the currently dominant form of modernity, and therefore these existential questions about 'Europe' and identities eventually lead to the questioning of modernity as we know it. The series endeavours to address these concerns by gathering latest and interdisciplinary research results about the idea of Europe, European identities and Europeanisation.

The volumes collected in the series present original research grounded in history, sociology and anthropology on the question of 'Europe', identity and modernity. Some contributors present a comparative analysis; others present a one-country-based case study. The geographical areas covered in the series go beyond the European Union and include Turkey, Croatia and Japan. Various dimensions about 'Europe', identity

and modernity are explored: Europeanisation and modernisation, tolerance, discursive construction of Europe, religion, nationalism, collective identity construction and globalisation. A variety of methods to collect data are employed: in-depth interviews, discourse analysis, civilisational analysis and biographical interviews. Each volume's nuanced analysis will come together to help realise a more comprehensive understanding of 'Europe', identity and modernity.

Contents

Introduction

At the end of the 1990s, the French political scientist Dominique Moisi (1999) used the phrase 'soul-searching' to describe Europe's quest for identity in an era of rapid change. The Eastern enlargement, the latest round of Treaty reform and, more recently, the Euro crisis have all significantly fuelled the drive to define Europe's identity and where it is heading. The question of Turkish accession to the European Union (EU) provides an ideal case to assess the essence of this 'soul-searching' in the EU. Turkey's relations with the EU officially dates back to 1959, when Turkey applied for associate membership in the European Economic Community (EEC). Despite the long history, the relationship has been a thorny one. Economic and political instability in Turkey set the slow and unsteady pace of relations over the following four decades. Turkey was then officially declared as a candidate country destined to join the EU at the December 1999 European Council Summit in Helsinki. Although accession negotiations between the EU and Turkey began in October 2005, the outcome seems to be uncertain.[1]

Turkey has made important strides in fulfilling the Copenhagen political criteria and in aligning its legislation with that of the EU. Yet as the accession process has progressed, debates on the desirability of Turkish accession have intensified in the EU. As the prospect of accession has become more real, opposition has been increasingly based on the grounds that the country poses a profound challenge to the European project due to the perceived ambiguities over its 'Europeanness'. It has been explicitly and increasingly voiced, most prominently by the former French President Nicolas Sarkozy and the German Chancellor Angela Merkel among others, that Turkey's democracy, geography, history, culture and the mindset of its politicians as well as its people qualify it as a non-European state that is unfit to become a member of the EU.

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Amidst this strong emphasis on the criteria of being European with respect to Turkish membership, this book aims to take up the challenge of looking into the ways in which Europe is discursively constructed through current EU representations of Turkey. Europe is hereby taken as a contested notion, the meaning of which is not fixed. Nevertheless from a poststructuralist perspective, which theorises identity as relational and discursively constructed through difference, European identity is conceptualised as discursively constructed within representations where its construction is dependent on the definition of the European Self with respect to various Others (Connolly, 1991). On the basis of this assumption this book argues that EU discourses on Turkey, through their representations of the country, give significant insights into the discursive construction of European identity. This book is thus about *how* the EU talks about Turkey and, more importantly, about identity – belonging and estrangement, inclusion and exclusion. The two major questions tackled in the book relate to how the Europeanness of Turkey is represented in EU discourses and the ways in which the conceptualisations of Turkey lead to the discursive construction of European identity.

Identity in international relations

The importance accorded to identity in international relations is largely dependent on the conceptual framework utilised in analysing the international system. This book adheres to a poststructuralist reading of international relations that accords a fundamental emphasis to the concept of identity in the discipline. Poststructuralism is not the only theoretical stance in international relations that deals with this notion in its analyses. While rationalist approaches such as realism and neoliberalism sideline the notion, constructivism also accounts for identity in its conceptualisation of international relations. Nevertheless there are significant differences in the ways in which constructivism and poststructuralism approach the concept.

One major divergence is seen in the nature of constructivism as an explanatory theory that treats identity as a variable that impacts on the policies of international actors (Katzenstein, 1996; Wendt, 1999). Works from this approach argue that states acquire their identities in interaction with other states and, at the same time, that they view themselves and each other in terms of the subject positions that are constituted by the social structure of international politics (Wendt, 1999). In contrast to this argument poststructuralist accounts underline that identity

cannot be treated as a variable in foreign policy since the representations of identity are constitutive of foreign policy (Campbell, 1992; Hansen, 2006). A relationship of causality cannot, therefore, be formulated between identity and foreign policy since the two are intertwined through discourse (Hansen, 2006: 10).

Another important difference between constructivist and poststructuralist approaches relates to the role of difference in identity formation (Rumelili, 2004). Social constructivists, most prominently Wendt, argue that identity does not necessarily have to be constructed through difference (Wendt, 1999: 224–28). He highlights that states have pre-social corporate identities (as bodies and territories) in addition to their social identities, and these corporate identities are self-organising structures that remain aloof to Self/Other relations (Wendt, 1999: 225). He also distinguishes between two types of state identity, namely 'role identity' and 'type identity'. Whereas 'role identity' is constructed in relation to other states, 'type identities' such as democracy are intrinsic to a state and thus require no interaction with others (Wendt, 1999: 226). For poststructuralists, however, identity is unthinkable without difference. Identity is thus theorised as *relational* in the way in which it is constructed through difference. There is thus no authentic identity to a state apart from the various constructions that it incurs through its encounters with other states and collectivities.

The poststructuralist approach adopted in this book in turn requires an explanation of the relationship of poststructuralism to the two aforementioned constitutive dimensions of identity, namely discourse and difference, as well as its outlook on foreign policy, to which I turn below.

Identity through discourse

In poststructuralist approaches, identities are constructed through discourses. They are not grounded in any ontological truth and 'no identity is the true identity' since every identity is particular and constructed (Connolly, 1989: 331). Better known as the anti-essentialist theorising of identity, this approach stands opposite those who argue for an inherent content to identities and underlines that it is in fact the impossibility of identity that drives the search in the first place (Laclau, 1994: 4). Identities 'emerge out of a process of representation through which individuals ... describe to themselves and others the world in which they live' (Weldes et al., 1999: 14) and in line with this discursive nature, they remain unstable and fragmented. Nonetheless particularly in conditions of ambiguity, one can come across attempts at attaining cohesion in

discourse to 'fix' identities once and for all (Norton, 1987) to the extent that they can be considered as part of what Neumann (2004) calls the 'deep structure'. This can have significant repercussions on the world since identities are often acted upon by social actors *as if* they truly exist. This brings forth the relationship between the discursive constitution of identity and the concept of power whereby those who 'control identity obviously [have] profound influence over the destiny and life of an individual, group or society' by imposing a certain constructed identity that leads to the marginalisation of alternative constellations (Vasquez, 1995: 223).

Within this framework, the notion of discourse as analysed in this book also deserves attention, particularly with respect to the ways in which it is tied to a specific understanding of language, which is hereby not viewed as a simple mirror of reality where it basically reflects what takes place in the social world. Rather language is treated as constitutive of social reality where there is no social reality existing outside language, rendering the process of interpretation crucial. It is only through interpretation that different versions of the social world can be analysed. Discourse is hereby theorised as 'a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – i.e. a way of representing – a particular kind of knowledge about a topic' (Hall, 1992: 291). Discourses systematically produce multiple subject positions from which individuals or groups act. For example the state is often viewed as an important subject produced through discourses on insecurity (Weldes et al., 1999). Similarly nationalist discourses often produce 'imagined communities' argued to be unified by blood, language or culture (Anderson, 1983).

Discourses help create a 'discursive economy' that consists of argumentation, metaphors and various other linguistic formulations. They can gain strength by borrowing from, reconstructing and recontextualising historical myths and tropes as well as various other current texts to the extent that they may be treated as accurate depictions of reality. This constitutes an act of *intertextuality*, which implies that 'texts are situated within and against other texts, that they draw upon them in constructing their identities and policies, that they appropriate as well as revise the past, and that they build authority by reading and citing that of others' (Hansen, 2006: 55). This means that similar discursive practices can be reformulated in different contexts (Wodak, 1999: 3). The concept of intertextuality is in fact similar to Laclau and Mouffe's (1985: 105) concept of *articulation*, which refers to the discursive practice of 'establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice'. Just like intertextuality,

articulation also embodies the point that discursive practice draws on earlier or contemporary discursive formations in constructing different versions of reality (Phillips and Jørgensen, 2002: 141).

Once constructed, discourse as the 'representation and constitution of the "real"' provides a 'managed space in which some statements and depictions come to have greater value than others' (Campbell, 1992: 6). Hence although discourses do not 'cause', they can 'enable' certain actions by 'set[ting] limits to what is possible to be articulated', hence leading to 'political struggles' between different versions of reality (Diez, 1999: 611). In such a contestation, certain discourses have the benefit of being located in institutions with power. For instance the statist discourse is a classic example of how discourses of state officials gain their power via being 'constructed as representatives who speak for *us*' due to their access to information from the state, their constitutional legitimacy and privileged access to the media (Weldes et al., 1999: 17–18).

A remark that is deemed necessary here relates to the 'interests' of actors who produce the discourses. From a poststructuralist standpoint, this book is interested in broader discursive structures rather than the individual intentions or interests of actors. This, however, does not imply that the 'interests' of the discourse participants are completely omitted from the picture. Nevertheless the way in which they enter into analysis is different from rationalist accounts that try to explain the 'true' interests of actors. Since discourse participants treat various depictions of the world '*as if* they come from groups and individuals with interests, desires, ambitions and stake in some versions of what the world is really like', the invoking of interest in discourse needs to be considered as a powerful discursive tool in poststructuralist analysis (Potter, 1996: 110). Claims about interests are thus treated as descriptions themselves, not independent from the discursive constructions of reality (Potter, 1996: 114).

Identity through difference

From a poststructuralist outlook however minimal differences are constructed to be, they are still central in the very construction of the identity of the Self (Neumann, 1999: 35). In the words of Connolly (1991: 64):

An identity is established in relation to a series of differences that have become socially recognised. These differences are essential to its being. If they did not coexist as differences, it would not exist in

its distinctness and solidity ... Identity requires differences in order
to be, and it converts difference into otherness in order to secure its
own self-certainty.

Hence identity is unthinkable without its 'constitutive outside' (Butler,
1993), without its Other(s). Conventional wisdom stipulates that the
Others that constitute the Self are often depicted as dangerous and/or
threatening. Applied to international relations, Campbell's (1992) work
on the construction of US identity during the Cold War, for example,
puts forward the argument that representations of a state's Others out-
side its borders as dangerous is a key requirement for the discursive
construction of a state's identity. Nevertheless this need not always
be the case in the discursive construction of the Self. In the words
of Rumelili (2004: 36), 'the differences of the Other may be repre-
sented through various, more or less favourable predicates, metaphors,
binaries', and 'it is through these representational practices that the con-
structed Other may be idealised or completely denigrated, affirmed or
negated, or even eroticised and exoticised'. Previous poststructuralist
research in international relations indeed finds that representations of
the Other may well be cast in less negative terms, leading to binary
dichotomies such as leader/partner (Milliken, 2001) or parent/child
(Doty, 1996) in the respective construction of the identities of the Self
and the Other.

Early research in fields other than international relations, most
notably literature, rightfully underlined that there were various
dimensions to Self/Other relations beyond evaluative representations.
As Todorov (1999: 185) suggested in his seminal work on the rela-
tions between the Self and the Other based on an analysis of the
early sixteenth-century Spanish clerical debate about the status of 'the
Indians' of the New World, Self and Other relations cannot solely be
grasped at the level of value judgements (the axiological level), but
involve two other levels: the praxeological level that entails the extent
of the distance between the Self and the Other, and the epistemic level
that refers to the level of knowledge the Self has of the Other. In line
with the aforementioned empirical studies in the international relations
discipline on Self/Other relations he also argues that the evaluation of
the Other does not necessarily have to be in radically negative terms.
Regarding the praxeological level he suggests that the distancing of
the Self from the Other may take the form of indifference towards the
Other, the submission of the Self to the Other or the Other's submis-
sion to the Self. His analysis also denies the conventional thinking that

the more collectivities get to know each other, the less negative the representations become (Neumann, 1999: 21).

Identity through foreign policy

Poststructuralist views of international relations reject treating the notions of the state and its sovereignty as given, inevitable concepts, underlining instead their socially and historically constructed nature (Walker, 1993; Vasquez, 1995). They argue that the notion of sovereignty has been used in constructing the modern political identity of the state in relation to a given territory. In turn the imposition of a national identity on a geographic territory has not only played a crucial role in the pacification of competing identities, such as that of the church, in the domestic sphere of the modern state, but it has also served to draw borders between the national Self and the Other(s) outside. The state, with no ontological status, has thus been left to constantly (re)construct itself through discourses of identity with respect to both its inside and outside simultaneously.

It is in this framework that – unlike in constructivist thinking where foreign policy is treated as a medium for the expression of state identity – poststructuralism views foreign policy as a discursive practice that serves as a 'specific sort of boundary-producing political performance' through which a state constructs its own identity and hence its very own being (Ashley, 1987: 51). The discourses instantiated by foreign policy actors 'produce meanings and in so doing actively construct the "reality" upon which foreign policy is based' (Doty, 1993: 303). Conceptualising foreign policy as a discursive practice also implies that 'policy and identity are ontologically interlinked' (Hansen, 2006: 21). It is through foreign policy that particular subject identities are constructed for states, positioning them vis-à-vis one another and thereby constructing a particular reality in which certain policies become possible (Doty, 1993: 303).

This does not mean that there is a clear-cut distinction between a state's attempts at hegemonising a certain identity at home and another in the international system through foreign policy. In fact the two do not exist independently from one another. Often elements resistant to securing an identity on the *inside* are linked to discursively constructed external threats on the *outside*. For example, studies repeatedly demonstrate the ways in which national debates over migration and immigrants construe them as a national security *problematique* (Doty, 2000; Bigo, 2006; Huysmans, 2006; Kaya, 2009). Similarly David Campbell has shown how the US discourse on the 'communist threat'

from the outside during the Cold War was utilised to silence rival identity claims from within (Campbell, 1992: 195–223).

Construction of Europe through enlargement policy: The case of Turkish accession

From a poststructuralist standpoint, the EU, as any other collective entity, can be described as an imagined community that is constantly in need of articulation of its meaning (Diez, 2004; McNamara, 2011). This implies that just like in the case of the state where the lack of its ontological being requires the discursive construction of its identity (Campbell, 1992: 91), any attempt to define the EU entails the discursive construction of the collective entity by attempting to fill in and fix the meaning of the collectivity. This brings forth significant repercussions for the concept of European identity, due to the widely accepted discursive equivalence formulated between the 'European Union' and the concept of Europe that not only characterises, but also extends beyond the official EU discourse (Shore, 1999; Hülsse, 2000; Risse, 2004a, 2010; Krzyzanowski and Oberhuber, 2007; Tekin, 2010).[2] One only needs to be reminded of how the concept of European identity is much more widely used than EU identity in both academic and political debates, or the way in which the influence of the Union on its member states or on candidate countries is referred to as 'Europeanisation' and very rarely as 'EU'isation. The discursive struggle to define Europe is a political act, which, by definition, entails the drawing of both spatial and temporal boundaries that can only be revealed through deconstructing the various meaning(s) given to Europe in order to make more transparent the attempts at the fixation of the concept under the rubric of the European Union.

The EU has been characterised in various ways in the academic literature, ranging, among others, from a 'regulatory' state (Majone, 1996) to a system of 'multi-level governance' (Hooghe and Marks, 2001). In defining the EU, a popular debate in both academia and policy circles has entailed the argument that the EU is moving beyond the modern state to resemble a postmodern or a post-national order.[3] This implies that the EU is becoming increasingly associated with more porous borders where strict territorial differentiations and imposition of uniform identities over a designated territory are diminishing (Ruggie, 1993). In other words, this involves 'moving beyond the hard boundaries and centralised sovereignty characteristics of the Westphalian, or "modern" state towards permeable boundaries and layered sovereignty' (Buzan and

Diez, 1999: 56). Hence in this perspective, the Union is viewed as more than merely an act of intergovernmental cooperation; it is also as an entity that does not resemble the modern nation-state with its baggage of sovereignty and a fixed, coherent notion of collective identity. This suggests that a European identity, which is open to a plurality of 'identities' both with respect to its 'inside' and the 'outside', is under construction whereby 'the distinction between the Self and the Other' is becoming blurred (Antonsich, 2008: 507).

Much of that claim, however, rests on an analysis of the institutional and the societal relationship between the members of the EU, rather than on the EU's relations with the outside (Rumelili, 2004: 27–8). EU enlargement policy, by contrast, provides the discursive space through which the discursive struggles over defining Europe, hence the relationship of the constructed European identities to that of the modern nation-state, can be discerned in the EU's relations with its outside. This stems from the conceptualisation of EU enlargement as a specific type of foreign policy. The EU official discourse flags enlargement under the rubric of a 'powerful foreign policy tool', particularly with positive connotations of 'success' due to its allegedly transformative impact on the political and economic systems of Central and Eastern European countries.[4] Similarly EU enlargement has also been described in academic circles as a form of foreign policy due to the EU's being in a position to shape large parts of applicant states' domestic and foreign policies through the prospect of accession (Sjursen, 1998; Smith, 1999).

Although this is indeed an important aspect of enlargement, the rationale behind referring to enlargement as a specific form of foreign policy hereby lies in the poststructuralist theorising of identity and foreign policy. From a poststructuralist perspective, EU enlargement policy can be considered as a specific type of foreign policy for this collective entity since the policy establishes certain boundaries. The decision to include or to exclude is based on two major conditions. The first requirement, based on Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), is to be a European state. This condition alone suggests that the enlargement policy involves primarily a decision to include/exclude on the basis of an evaluation of who is European and who is not, thus inviting various constructions of what it means to be a European state in discussing the accession prospects of an aspirant country.[5]

In addition to being a European state, aspirant states are also required to comply with the political, economic and *acquis*-related criteria, namely the Copenhagen criteria, that the EU introduces.[6] Identity constructs can also be traced in discussions over the Copenhagen criteria