Are the official economic and political obstacles to Turkey's EU accession merely a 'fig leaf' covering real unofficial cultural and religious reservations?
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Abstract
This study will argue that the slow pace of Turkey’s accession to the EU is not simply down to a failure to comply with the ‘official’ membership criteria. European resoluteness towards these official issues represents a double standard which is understood in the context of significant, unspoken cultural and religious fears. These fears are due to ‘unofficial’ reservations concerning identity and values. However, these ‘unofficial’ European concerns also do not stand up as an argument for rejecting Turkey’s accession bid. Analysis of qualitative survey data will delegitimise the claim that Turkey is too culturally different to be allowed to join the EU. The study will also suggest that such arguments are based upon misunderstood, out-dated and xenophobic attitudes towards Islam and ‘The Turk’, and suggest that Turkish values are not all that different from those of the current EU member states.
1. Introduction

Millions of pages of academic analysis and opinion have been published on the issue of Turkey’s stuttered accession negotiations with the European Union (EU). Economics, human rights, geography, international relations and democracy all play an important role in the debate over Turkey’s candidacy. These important factors are represented within the ‘official’ criteria by which the EU considers new members. Turkey has long attempted to reform its political conventions in a dedicated attempt to conform with the EU’s official standards. It is evident, however, that these criteria do not represent the whole picture.

“Even if economic and political obstacles to Turkey’s accession are lifted, even if Turkey is deemed to be in unambiguous conformity with the Copenhagen criteria, European opposition to Turkish membership will persist ... the Turkish case is controversial in cultural and religious terms, as it involves the potential accession of a Muslim-majority country to an arguably, at least historically Christian Europe”. (Hurd 2006: 402)

Mirela Bogdani summarises this argument by stating that, “fulfilment of the Copenhagen Criteria or other specific issues seem to be a fig-leaf to hide the real religion and culture based reservations.” (Bogdani 2011: 47) The EU hides its unfounded, negative, Orientalist feelings behind endless criteria, legislation and constant ‘moving of the goal posts’ in a concerted effort to ‘respectfully’ reject Turkey. Identity and values have formed the unofficial reasons why Turkey is excluded from the Europe, however these reasons are often far exaggerated, and rarely quantitatively backed up.

1.1. Methodology

Whilst studying Turkey’s accession it is obviously important to look at the current major stumbling blocks delaying the process. Within this study, I will look at the extent to which these delays represent a distinct double-standard within the EU’s policy on enlargement, a double standard which can only be explained by the existence of alternative, ‘unofficial’ issues. The main objective will be to assess the role that these ‘unofficial’ factors, namely religion, identity and values play in the debate, factors which are often unspoken of or ignored. In order to investigate these issues thoroughly, it is important to look at the problems associated with European identity creation, as well as the reasons for European reservations about Islam, ‘the Turk’ and the values that they represent. The final Chapter will focus on
values, using the ‘Clash of Civilisations’ thesis by Samuel Huntington the central argument for the rejection of Islamic compatibility with the West, and therefore Turkey with the EU. With regard to these values, empirical data from the World Values Surveys will be analysed alongside the work of Ronald Inglehart in order to investigate the legitimacy of previously stated reservations, and the extent to which these reservations are exaggerated.

1.2. History of European Enlargement

The EU has expanded extensively since its early beginnings as the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). The Schuman Declaration of 1950 accelerated the idea of a united Europe, with a particular emphasis on making war between its members impossible by creating an international economic community. Schuman, the French Foreign Minister, wanted to make war ‘not merely unthinkable but materially impossible,’ after the end of the Second World War. The Treaty of Paris in 1951 set up the ECSC, and expanded with the signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1957 by the six original member states, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Belgium and The Netherlands. The Treaty of Rome created the European Economic Community (EEC) and European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM). The theory of spillover, or the Monnet Method, created by Jean Monnet, the ECSC’s first ‘President of the High Authority’, was the idea that European cooperation in one area of policy, would inevitably require cooperation in others in order to make it efficient. Monnet suggested that market integration would inevitably lead to political integration. Enlargement and integration has now been the EU’s most successful policy, with the EU now a 27 member, political, economic and social entity, with legislative bodies and set principles and values. It makes European wide legislation in areas including agricultural subsidies, trade and security as well as attempting to develop a broadly common foreign and security policy. The phrase ‘super-state’ has often been used in describing the EU’s current manifestation. Part of the reason behind its current state is the successful integration of 21 new member states over a period of 53 years since the Treaty of Rome. Enlargement is an important policy area of the EU, with new members having to conform to the Copenhagen Criteria, drawn up in 1993, just before a wave of membership applications from ex Soviet Eastern Europe. “As long as they meet the economic and political criteria for membership, the EU has no grounds for excluding countries that are undeniably European, in the conventional sense of the word.” (Dinan 2004)
The criteria ensure new members meet a certain socio-economic standard, as well as insisting upon western European values of democracy, liberalism and respect for human rights, rights which may not have previously been available. The EU’s eastward expansion was met with caution in Moscow, recognising the fact that former Soviet states such as Latvia, Poland and Hungary would now focus, politically and economically, on Brussels rather than Moscow. The European project as a whole has been described as an attempt to quell the fear and threat of the USSR. Former Belgian Prime Minister and influential figure in the formulation of the Treaty of Rome, Paul-Henri Spaak once allegedly quipped that it was in fact Stalin who was the father of the EEC and NATO, in as much as fear of the Soviet Union had provided the impetus to hang together rather than hang separately. (Neumann 1998: 68) European enlargement is as much about the security of its existing members as it is the democratisation and development of others.

The process of enlargement has vast benefits for new members. The EU is the largest economic body and trade block in the world, membership of such understandably reaps rewards. The liberal-democratisation of politics and society and the ability, particularly for smaller nations, to punch far above their weight on the international scene also count as obvious benefits. In return, Europe secures its borders and the surrounding neighbourhood. Turkey, an Islamic state, has struggled in its negotiations with the EU. The acceptance of a state which has been a functioning democracy for decades, has a stable economy and is making extensive reforms to conform to European social standards, would normally be seen as a positive move, further guaranteeing security and democracy within Europe. The Turkish case exposes the fact that the previously stated official criteria are not the sole conditions for accession, and additional, unofficial obstacles play a significant part.

2. Official Factors Delaying Turkish Accession

2.1. History of Turkey/EU Relations

Turkey has long been a ‘thorn in the side’ of EU enlargement policy. Turkey’s accession negotiations have been the longest, and most difficult of all the waves of enlargement, including the complexities over the UK’s accession in 1973 and the vast Eastern Enlargement and accession of 10 new member states in 2004. Turkey applied for membership in 1959, and
signed the Ankara Association Agreement with the EEC in 1963. The aim of the agreement was to;

“Promote the continuous and balanced strengthening of trade and economic relations between the Parties, while taking full account of the need to ensure an accelerated development of the Turkish economy and to improve the level of employment and the living conditions of the Turkish people.” (European Economic Community 1963)

From this initial agreement relations between Turkey and the EEC developed, and a customs union was signed in 1995. At this time, “Turkey conducted over half of its foreign trade with the Community, and its economy was enjoying strong growth.” (ENA 2010) Both parties were benefiting in terms of trade, and their relationship was growing. The EU agreed to formally open accession negotiations in December 2004.

The year 2004 also saw the ambitious Eastern Enlargement, in which ten former Eastern European and some former Soviet states joined the EU. At this time, Turkey was still far behind other candidates such as Poland and the Czech Republic in terms of the accession criteria. This was noted by Michael Emerson, who stated,

“If the EU strictly followed its prior doctrine, the conclusion would have to be that Turkey does not yet fulfil the Copenhagen criteria, in spite of the huge progress with constitutional amendments and seven harmonisation packages, since there are too many implementation shortcomings (e.g. penal system, judiciary)” (Emerson 2004: 1)

2.2. The Copenhagen Criteria and the Acquis Communautaire

Since 2004, Turkey’s leadership has continued with reforms to pursue compliance with Copenhagen and the acquis communautaire, particularly “The stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities.” (European Council 1993) “As confirmed in the progress reports, Turkey has made great progress on these fronts in the last few years.” (Gerhards and Hans 2011: 3) (European Commission 2009) The constitutional reforms of 2010 continued to ‘Europeanise’ the Turkish legislative and judicial systems. The referendum has helped to “finally dissociate European Union-aspiring Turkey from the remnants of autocratic rule.” (The Economist 2010) The referendum passed with a 58% ‘Yes vote’. The amendments relax restrictions on
strike action, and grant civil servants the right to conclude collective agreements, as well as lifting immunity from prosecution for the leaders of the bloody 1980 military takeover. (BBC NEWS 2010a)

Along with the Copenhagen Criteria, successful EU candidates must adhere to and accept the EU’s ‘acquis communautaire’, the rights and obligations deriving from EU treaties, laws and regulations. (Dinan 2000: 2) The ‘acquis’, as it is shortened, is set out in thirty-five chapters (thirty-one for the 2004 and 2007 enlargements) and consists of chapters including Freedom of Movement of Goods (Chapter 1), Transport Policy (Chapter 14) and Energy (Chapter 15). Each chapter must be satisfactorily met for accession to take place. The acquis is the framework which underpins the Copenhagen Criteria, and is designed to bring applicant member states up to an acceptable ‘European’ level in all aspects of political, social and economic policy. Progress on some chapters has been frozen by the European Council, as a sanction against Turkey’s refusal to open its ports or airports to traffic from Greek Cyprus in 2006. Others have been frozen due to politically motivated blocks from Cyprus and France. This means Turkish accession will remain on hold until these issues are resolved.

Other chapters continue to be behind European standards, and the Turkish government has continued to pursue its criteria obligations.’ Minister for European Affairs and Turkey’s Chief ‘negotiator’ with the EU, Egemen Bağış stated that Turkish adherence to the Copenhagen Criteria is well on its way.

“We are working on it. That's why we established the male-female gender equality committee in parliament, that's why we announced 1 May as a national holiday, that's why we have allocated more than 500 million Euros to the South East Anatolia project, that's why we have changed the criminal code to allow members of the military to be prosecuted in civilian courts, that's why we have prepared a reform strategy for the judicial branch, that's why we have announced an anti-corruption strategy document, that's why the prime minister has had meetings with leaders of minority groups in Turkey.” (EurActiv 2009)

2.3. European Institutional Difficulties

Turkish accession would have complex implications for the European institutions. EU policy would need to be significantly altered in order to accommodate Turkey. 41% of the EU budget (€58 billion) which is currently spent on the CAP would be significantly destabilised due to Turkey’s large agricultural sector. (European Commission 2011) Politically, the issue
of voting weights in the Council and Parliament has become divisive. With a population of 70 million, it would necessarily have a significant say in the decision making process. Migration is also a complex subject. With large labour force and around 50% of the population being under 18, a significant migration of labour is expected upon Turkish accession. Immigration in Europe has already been stated as a major obstacle to accepting Turkey. After 2004, the freedom of movement and of labour led to significant number of Eastern Europeans moving to Western Europe. One example is the considerable number of Polish migrants who moved to the UK in search of employment and higher pay. Acceptance of Turkey, it is feared, will result in another influx of migrant workers into Western Europe, in particular Germany, where an already significant Turkish population have settled. (Benhabib and Isiksel 2006: 229)

2.4. Economics

The Turkish state has undergone vast changes in the last 30 years, somewhat as a result of its accession ambitions. The creation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923 under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk saw the implementation of Atatürk’s ideological ‘Six Arrows’, also known as ‘Kemalism,’ as the basis for the new Turkish constitution. It formed the ideological basis for Turkey’s future development. Atatürk stated Republicanism, Populism, Secularism, Revolutionism, Nationalism and Statism as the six guiding principles of the newly formed Turkish state. Within this, Statism was to play a crucial role in the economic development of the country. It meant that Turkey’s economic development during the twentieth century was heavily regulated and organised by the state. ”The state has acted not only as a regulator and planner, but also as a significant producer and employer” (Uğur 2004: 76) Following World War II, “the Turkish economy...was characterised by heavy regulation, protection from foreign competition and extensive state involvement in commercial activity.” (Bredekbamp, Josefsson and Lindgren 2009: 45) Statism, however led to slow growth and high inflation. The markets were liberalised during the 1980’s, resulting in initially strong growth figures, however political insecurities, numerous different governments and a failure to follow one economic policy path led to volatile markets and steep recession and, in turn, a devastating banking collapse in 2001. Turkey’s banking crisis was partly ignited by a public quarrel between the then Prime Minister, Bülent Ecevit and President Ahmet Necdet Sezer over security policy. This political uncertainty triggered a collapse in confidence in the already fragile markets, resulting in a rescue package at a cost of $47 billion, one third of Turkey’s
national income. (Bredebkamp, Josefsson and Lindgren 2009: 44) The period post 2001 saw the implementation of an IMF backed banking sector restructuring program, with priorities of, “restoring confidence in the banking system and credibility to economic management.” (Bredebkamp, Josefsson and Lindgren 2009: 47) The IMF reforms were successful and resulted in the Turkish economy averaging a growth of more than 6% annually until the 2008 global economic downturn. The financial collapse of 2008 has had a huge negative impact on economies throughout Europe. Countries throughout Europe are now undergoing huge economic austerity measures to try to repair the damage done by the crisis. Greece, Ireland and Portugal have all recently required EU funded bailouts, and Spain is also said to be at risk.

Since the peak of recession, Turkey’s well regulated financial markets and banking systems have responded strongly, with GDP growth per annum now at 7.3%, the 17th fastest growing economy in the world. The highest ranking EU member state is currently Sweden in 77th place, the only EU member state in the top 100, with the EU’s average GDP growth of 1.7% placing 160th. (CIA 2011) As well as a rapidly growing economy, it also currently has the 17th largest economy in the world (GNI) (World Bank 2009) The EU as a single economy entity is the world’s largest economy in terms of GDP, ahead of the United States, with individual member states Germany, France and the UK in 5th, 6th and 7th places respectively. However, the EU has struggled to keep up with the rest of the world in term of growth (CIA 2011) Turkish accession, therefore, could increase the economic power of the EU substantially, as well as introducing a member state with very positive growth figures and access to new Asian markets at a time of economic instability in Europe. With this in mind, Turkey’s relative economic success would be of benefit to the struggling EU economy.

However, it needs to be seen if Turkey’s economy can stand up to European market pressures. The Copenhagen Criteria states that “membership of the Union requires the existence of a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union.” (European Council 1993) The 2009 European Commission Progress report states that Turkey has a functioning market economy, the existence of which has not been affected by the economic crisis. It also confirms the fact that the Turkish economy has responded well following the global economic crisis in 2008, remarking that “under difficult crisis circumstances, the financial sector has shown remarkable resilience thanks to earlier reforms.” (European Commission 2009: 38) Turkey’s
economic interdependencies with the EU continued to be prosperous, despite an increase in trade to and from non-EU neighbouring markets in the East, including Iran and Syria. Trade and economic integration with the EU remained high.” Turkey showed remarkable flexibility and diversified its trade towards new markets, thereby partly alleviating the impact of the crisis.” (European Commission 2009: 40) Turkish membership of the EU could open up new opportunities for the stagnating ‘old world’ Western European markets into promising, Middle Eastern and Central Asian emerging economies.

The economic case for membership seems relatively strong, especially when compared to the 2004 and 2007 waves of enlargement. However, Turkey must also comply with other official political obstacles, which stand as the major stumbling blocks behind Turkish accession. The EU has stated that in order to be accepted into the EU, “Turkey had to continue its process of democratisation and protection of human rights, establish relations of good neighbourliness with Greece and seek a just settlement of the Cyprus problem.” (ENA 2010)

2.5. Human Rights

The human rights debate has become a major stumbling block halting accession. The negotiation progress report on Turkish accession in 2004 shows that, despite positive legislation from President Erdoğan’s government banning torture, abolishing the death penalty and improving the rights of Kurdish and non-Muslim minorities, these laws had not been sufficiently implemented. (European Commission 2004: 34) The Commission rightly critiques Turkey on its human rights situation, on its limited freedom of speech and on its lack of gender equality. However, Turkey has made progress in these areas too, even if this progress is far from sufficient. (Gerhards and Hans 2011: 4) Human rights is one of the cornerstones of European values, as show by Eurobarometer data which suggests that human rights are the biggest issue regarding Turkish accession amongst public opinion in Europe. (Gerhards and Hans 2011: 9) Other concerns included economic issues, immigration and cultural differences.

2.6. Cyprus

Issues surrounding Cyprus are another hurdle within Turkish-EU relations. The Turkish army invaded Northern Cyprus in 1974 in retaliation for a Greek-sponsored coup attempt to gain
control over the island. It resulted in the previously mixed Turkish and Greek Cypriot communities dividing, leading to a majority Turkish-Cypriot North and a Greek-Cypriot south. In 1983, The Turkish north declared itself ‘Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus’, a state which is recognised by Turkey alone. UN attempts at talks between the two communities broke down in the 1980s and 1990s, which led to former UN Security-General Kofi Annan presenting a plan for reunification, known as the Annan Plan. A 2004 referendum on the Annan Plan saw it accepted by the Turkish community, but rejected by the Greek-Cypriots. The ‘Republic of Cyprus’, under a flag featuring an outline of the whole island, and run from Greek-Cypriot government in Nicosia, joined the EU a month later. (EurActiv 2007) The Cypriot Government in Nicosia, however, has had no control over the Turkish north since the 1974 invasion. The EU’s decision to ignore the negative result of the Annan Plan referendum, as well as the ongoing internal issues over territory, sovereignty, property rights and growing cultural tensions must be seen as a lazy error on the part of the EU. The EU was so determined and focused on the success of 2004 enlargement, that it completely ignored these problems. It is also worth pointing out that with the EU’s refusal to recognise the legitimacy of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and the accession of the whole island territory, means that the EU currently has a de-facto state, heavily influenced and funded by a non EU-member, within its borders. Northern Cyprus is not controlled from Nicosia, and is strongly supported from Ankara. Turkish minister Egemen Bağış makes the point that, “the Cyprus problem was not a prerequisite for the membership of Cyprus itself. Therefore it should not be a prerequisite for the membership of another country.” (EurActiv 2009) This is an important point. If the EU is to follow its previous discourse on enlargement and treat Turkey’s accession in the same way as the previous enlargement candidates, then, as it was not a prerequisite for Greek or Cypriot membership, it is unfair for it to be an issue in the Turkish negotiations. The issue over freedom of movement, with the Turkish refusal to accept Greek-Cypriot shipping into its ports is simply an extension of this problem and if, as already discussed, the EU is to follow its previous discourse, then the issue should not form such a hurdle to Turkish accession. In any case, the EU has a history of forcing through accessions.

2.7. Bulgarian and Romanian Accessions

The Bulgarian and Romanian accessions in 2007 are one such example of rushed negotiations. The EU has come up for much scrutiny due to the ongoing problems of crime
and corruption within the two states. Bulgaria and Romania are regularly at the bottom of EU performance indicators in almost all areas of policy and organised crime remains rife. Indeed, only 2 years prior to accession, Amnesty International published a report regarding serious human rights concerns in both countries. (Amnesty International 2005) German MEP, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, joint leader of the Green group in the European parliament accepted that, “We decided to let them in too early, we said ‘Yes’ before the reforms were really implemented.” (Condon, Hope and Parker 2007). The EU has a history of accepting new members, regardless of their full implementation of so called ‘necessary’ reforms.

2.8. A Double Standard? - Conclusions

So why, again, is the full implementation of the Copenhagen criteria, and the underlining of the Cyprus and human rights debates, absolute pre-requisites for Turkey? These same issues have not been a problem for Greek, Cypriot, Romanian or Bulgarian accessions, so why are they in this case? This shows that the accession of Turkey is different, and that there are other, far more powerful issues stalling accession. There seems to be a distinct double-standard when it comes to any discussion of Turkey joining the EU. Economically, Turkey stands up to EU standards and in some sense has been far more successful in dealing with the financial crisis than any of the EU’s current members. There are political obstacles which still need addressing, such as Cyprus and human rights. These sorts of issues have been ignored in past negotiations, but are being vigorously insisted upon in the Turkish case.

The real issues in Turkish accession have nothing to do with legal criteria, economic requirements or international relations. As suggested previously, “the Copenhagen criteria are a thin veneer coated over old religious and cultural prejudices.” (Benhabib and Isiksel 2006: 221) As Hans Van Mierlo stated in a speech to the European Parliament in 1997, it is “time to be honest” and admit that the problem is of admitting a large Muslim country into the EU. No-one had previously posed this problem officially before. (Neumann 1999: 62) These are realist, ‘unofficial’ issues concerning the compatibility of Turkey and Europe, ‘East and West’ and Islam and Christianity. Issues involving culture, values and identity have become ‘the elephant in the room’ within EU enlargement policy. “The notion of a ‘different culture’ in the Turkish case is assumed to be used frequently as a code-word or euphemism for ‘Muslim religion’.” (Bogdani 2011: 164) It has resulted in a heightened attempt by Europeans to define
themselves in order to exclude Turkey from the European club. Opponents of accession will cite differences in culture and values and emphasise the incompatibility of Islam and the West, preaching Turkey’s unsuitability as member of the EU. (Huntington 1993) (Lewis 1993) Others will point out the positive similarities between the two ‘civilisations’, exposing the ignorance of Western and EU policy and attitudes towards it’s ‘other’, in particular, Turkey and Islam. (Norris and Inglehart 2003) (Said 2003) (Neumann and Welsh 1991)

“The argument over Turkey goes beyond geopolitical pluses and minuses of EU membership and raises the larger issue of Europe’s troubled relationship with Islam. It is an old acquaintance, one stretching back more than 1,300 years. And it is marked by countless wars and occupations as well as a vibrant, steady cultural exchange.” (Pew Forum 2005)

3. European Identity and the Exclusion of ‘The Turk’

One of the most common arguments against Turkish accession is that European and Turkish culture and values are fundamentally different from each other, and that the conflict between the two is so great that they are incompatible. This argument is backed up by historical assumptions of ‘the Turk’ and the existence of a common European culture. However, there are serious complications within these arguments which are fed by misconstrued ideas of Islam constructed within the European mindset.

3.1. European Identity

The uniquely European problem of identity has become a far larger issue today than it ever was in the past. Enlargement of the EU has created a crisis of identity and a problem in the definition of Europe and Turkey’s accession has played a central role in the development of this debate. “What is meant by European is ambiguous. Are we speaking about geography? Are we speaking about European rights and institutions, as specified by the Copenhagen criteria? Or about values and identities?” (Le Gloannec 2006: 264) Europe has long struggled to define itself. Geographically, it has been described as, “a jagged and ragged end of the Eurasian landmass, but there is no agreement at all where this part begins.” (Jacobs and Maier 1998: 13) The geographical definition of Europe is disputed, and there have been many
attempts to define its borders using other criteria. One such definition lies in the medieval
territory of ‘Christendom’. “Up until the mid-nineteenth century, contemporaries saw the
frontier of Europe as stopping where the Ottoman Empire began.” (Neumann and Welsh
1991: 330) This definition is insufficient, as the borders between Christendom and the
Ottoman Empire frequently changed. The height of Ottoman expansion into Europe saw it
reach as far as Vienna, and included most of the Balkan states.

An abstract values-based definition, which seems to be the EU’s preferred classification,
would define Europe as an international community of shared values and institutions.
Numerous notable political thinkers have attempted to foresee a united Europe as a way of
promoting and ensuring peace. Immanuel Kant, Jeremy Bentham and Jean-Jacques Rousseau
each had theories of peace centred on a united Europe. However, these values must have a
common founding principle. Christianity is the principle that formed the foundations of such
ideas. The existence of Christian influences on European culture is undeniable, and religion
has been recognised as a major unifying factor amongst European nations throughout history.
Edmund Burke’s notion of ‘The Commonwealth of Europe’ was based upon “the cultural
similitude throughout Europe of the monarchical principle of government, the Christian
religion, the Roman law heritage and old Germanic customs and feudal institutions.”
(Neumann and Welsh 1991: 341)

“At the centre of this universalistic culture, however, is the Christian religion,
particularly Roman Catholicism, which dominated individual views of society and politics
in most of Europe from Constantine to the advent of the Beatles. Even in a rapidly
secularising Europe, the Church’s influence lives on in the values of European citizens
and in the rhythms of their lives.” (Nelsen and Guth 2003: 91)

The ‘founding fathers’ of the European integration project were also heavily influenced by
Christian ideas. “Integration in the post-war period was largely a Christian Democratic
project led by Catholic politicians – such as Konrad Adenauer, Robert Schuman and Alcide
de Gasperi.” (Nelsen and Guth 2003: 89) The importance of Christianity to the EU became an
important issue in the formulation of the European Constitution, the forerunner to the Lisbon
Treaty. The debate raged over the question of whether or not the EU should officially
recognise its Christian origins in the preamble of the constitution. The final treaty stated the
following compromise.
“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,” (European Union 2007)

This undeniably recognises that Christian values have had a significant impact on the development and evolution of European culture and the European political project, however the treaties avoid any reference to ‘God’ or religion at all. This was to avoid potential problems with future accessions of non-Christian states, the strict secularisation of members such as France, Germany and Sweden as well as avoiding accusations of contradicting itself through its official secular credentials and its ‘unity in diversity’ mantra. The treaty goes on to state the guiding principles of the EU, which are also evidently heavily influenced by Christianity.

“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. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.” (European Union 2007)

These Christian based values have been the foundations around which the EU has attempted to forge a European identity, over and above that of the individual nation states. The difficulty in defining the borders of Europe means the creation of an identity is even more difficult. “To situate Europe geographically is therefore already problematic, but it is even more difficult to define Europe historically and culturally.” (Jacobs and Maier 1998: 13) The problem with European identity is multifaceted, and the inability to define itself, as well its refusal to accept its Christian heritage means it will not be able to create its own coherent identity.

The vast differences between the member states also play a role in destabilising the European identity. It is hard to state that the culture of the UK is similar to that of Finland or Greece. “This suggests that European ‘common values’ are not as common as they are believed to be.” (Akçomak 2006: 1) There are Christian similarities, and religion does seem to be a common denominator amongst the EU member states. However, due to the resistance of the EU in accepting this fact, and...
the vast non-religious differences within Europe, any argument rejecting Turkish accession on the grounds that it is culturally different is invalid.

3.2. The ‘Other’

The European identity is more focused on what it is not, rather than what it is. “From the beginning, Europe was defined partly in terms of what it was not. In other words, the ‘Other’, i.e. the non-European barbarian or savage.” (Neumann and Welsh 1991: 329) The presence of an ‘Other’ is an important part of identity creation, and more important than the need to define geographical borders. “Others are created as the external antagonist against which internal identity is mobilized” (Dalby 1990: 4) Whether distinguishing between ethnicity, nationality, gender or religion, differing identities have different ‘others’. In the historical European sense, “the dominant Other...is ‘the Turk’.” (Neumann and Welsh 1991: 330) “The exclusion of the Turk was so central to the becoming of ‘the European’” (Neumann 1999: 60) The use of the medieval term ‘Turk’ in this sense is not refined to Turkish or Ottoman nationals, but to Islamic peoples of the Middle East as a whole. In the quest for a European identity, there is a need for the existence of an ‘Other’. This ‘Other’ can help distinguish the European from the ‘barbarian.’ “European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient (Other) as a sort of surrogate and even underground self.” (Said 2003: 3)

Throughout history, “encounters between Europeans and non-Europeans often assumed an extremely violent and bloody character.” (Kapuściński 2008: 19) European encounters with the ‘Turkish Other’ are epitomized by the Greek clashes with the Persians, the Roman Empire’s eastward expansion, the Crusades of the early-middle ages, the Ottoman Empire’s westward expansion, British and French colonisation of the Middle-East, and even up until today’s American led War in Iraq. These frequent encounters have fostered the ‘European’ identity, defining themselves by what they were not. “The military might and physical proximity of the Ottoman Empire, combined with its strength of its religious tradition, made it a particularly relevant ‘Other’ in the evolution of European identity.” (Neumann and Welsh 1991: 330) European visions of the ‘Turk’ are still influenced and shaped by the history of conflict and this has understandably led to prejudiced perceptions of the ‘Turk’. Thomas Diez suggests that European perceptions of the Turk as inferior exist, “in order to represent European values as much more unified and positive than they actually are.” (Diez 2007: 415)
The exclusion of the ‘Turk’ by modern day Europeans seems to hark back to that long divisive period in history. The centuries of conflict between East and West over the South-Eastern frontier of Europe still appears to inform opinion on contemporary Turkey-EU relations.

3.3. Orientalism

European stereotyping and exclusion of the ‘Turk’ is investigated by Palestinian-American academic, Edward Said in his book ‘Orientalism’. Orientalism, Said describes, is the Western habit of assuming intellectual, philosophical and physical dominance and superiority over the East, or ‘the Orient.’ Europeans have created their own view of the Orient in order to support the invention of its ‘Other’ and view the Orient as, “a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences.” (Said 2003: 1) European attitudes to the Orient are, according to Said, always going to conform to some form of stereotype due to the historical evolution of the Orient as Europe’s ‘other’. Said states that Orientalism is,

“fundamentally a political doctrine willed over the Orient because the Orient was weaker than the West, which elided the Orient’s difference with its weakness...It is therefore correct that every European, in what he could say about the Orient, was consequently racist, an imperialist and almost totally ethno-centric.” (Said 2003: 204)

The study of Orientalism relies upon the “ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the Orient and ‘the Occident’ (Europe).” (Said 2003: 2) That is, the differentiation between what is East and West. “It is well known that Orientalism involves dividing the world into two ‘civilizational’ blocs, one having rationalised and secularised and hence modernised, the other having remained ‘irrational’, religious and traditional.” (Isin 2005: 33)

The modern, secular Turkish state has been ignored by Europeans, and the stereotypical, Orientalist visions of the ‘Turk’ still exist. This helps to explain ongoing attempts by Europe to exclude Turkey on the grounds that they are fundamentally different, a difference pre-programmed into the European mind-set by centuries of conflict and Orientalist visions of the Turkish people.

However, with the onset of the era of ‘multiculturalism’ and globalisation and the increased knowledge and understanding of Europe’s ‘Other’, it would be expected that such Orientalist stereotypes would be less subscribed to, and not as relevant today. However, the increase in
Islamic fundamentalism since 9/11, and high profile terrorist attacks throughout the world in the past 10 years have created a new and increasingly negative stereotype of Islam. Said stated this when he was asked about the staying-power of idea of Orientalism. He said, “Orientalism has a remarkable holding power, supported by the media and popular discourse, in which Arabs and Muslims and terrorism are all evil wrapped up together.” (Paul 2004: 54)

Orientalist attitudes towards Islam may continue to have an impact on public and elite opinion about Turkey’s accession into the EU. The recent rise in fundamentalist Islam has served to revitalise Orientalist visions of the ‘Turk’ within Europe. “Orientalism has been an integral part of European identity for several centuries and its dogmas served very well for strengthening ‘Europeanness’, and it is for this reason that the EU still clings to it in its relations with Turkey.” (Becan 2007: 88) Turkey is still seen as Europe’s ‘Other’ due to its historical and religious differences, despite the Kemalist revolution at the beginning of the twentieth century and Turkey’s concerted effort to become part of the EU. European perceptions of Turkey as its ‘other’ have not gone away. “The ‘private nightmare’ of Europeans... is the ‘Saracen raiders in Western Europe and the Turks at the gates of Vienna.’” (Huntington 1997: 146) The perceived differences between Europe and Turkey are, according to Saïd, enhanced by the epistemological background of Orientalism. “Although such perceptions are softened and have evolved to another dimension, in essence they have not changed much in the past 500 years.” (Akçomak 2006: 3)

The rise of the Soviet Union had, temporarily, provided Europe and the West with a new ‘other’. “After World War II, the Soviet Union definitely came to occupy the position of constitutive other.” (Neumann 1999: 60) This ‘Other’ was ideological, rather than historical, cultural or religious. It was down to the Soviet Union’s ‘overwhelming military power and existential threat’ that it quickly became seen as the more important ‘other’. European enlargement and the seemingly desperate attempt to ‘democratise’ Eastern Europe has been described as an attempt to finally secure Europe from the dilapidated threat of the Russian ‘other’. (Neumann 1998: 68) The end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union, meant the ‘Turk’ returned as Europe’s immediate threat, a threat through which Europeans could identify themselves as opposed to. The rise in Islamic terrorism, especially since September 11th 2001, has further enhanced the ‘re-othering’ of Islam and the ‘Turk’.

European identity creation finds reasons to exclude the ‘other’. Turkey represents the historical European other, and accepting it as part of ‘the occident’ would destroy an already
fragile and stretched European identity. The mantra of “Unity in Diversity” does not refer to external, non-Western, non-Christian actors. However this is not a sufficient enough reason to exclude modern Turkey from the EU, especially if it successfully conforms to the Copenhagen Criteria. These Orientalist fears have formed the foundations upon which additional arguments about the role of ‘the Turk’ have evolved.

4. A Clash of Values?

4.1. The ‘Clash of Civilisations’ Thesis

The fall of the Soviet Union, and the end of the ideological conflict between capitalism and communism led to a number of academic works stating what, to borrow George. H. W. Bush’s phrase, ‘The New World Order’ would look like. Francis Fukuyama’s 1989 work, ‘The End of History’ suggested that the fall of the Soviet Union would result in “liberal democracy constituting the ‘end point of mankind’s ideological evolution’ and the ‘final form of human government.” (Fukuyama 1992: xi) Fukuyama foresaw a world whereby bi-polar ideological differences had ended, and liberal democratic values would reach all part of the world without conflict. Contrary to Fukuyama’s work, Samuel Huntington wrote another major piece of post-cold war academia, his ‘Clash of Civilisation’s’ thesis. Huntington stated that, “The fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of global conflict will be cultural.” (Huntington 1993: 1) Huntington states that the fall of the Soviet Union has led to this new, cultural based, civilisational conflict, in which the new threat to western ideals would mainly come from the Islamic and Confucian civilisations. Huntington suggests that there is no such thing as ‘universal values’, as has been argued by Trinidadian-British academic, V.S. Naipaul, who suggested Western values as a, “universal civilisation that fits all men.” (Huntington 1993: 17) Rather, Huntington argues that, “Western ideas of individualism, liberalism, constitutionalism, human rights, equality, liberty, the rule of law, democracy, free markets, the separation of church and state, often have little resonance in Islamic...culture.” (Huntington 1993: 17) He suggests that the promotion and exportation of Western values into non-western civilisations is a by-product of the West’s unopposed power and control over international institutions. Writing in 1993, he suggested that world political and security issues are “effectively settled by a directorate of the United States, Britain and France,” whilst “world economic issues are settled by a
directorate of the United States, Germany and Japan.” (Huntington 1993: 16) The West has used this international influence to dominate over its ‘other’ and accelerate the process of globalisation. “The west in effect is using international institutions, military power and economic resources to run the world in ways that maintain Western predominance, protect Western interests and promote Western political and economic values.” (Huntington 1993: 17) A similar conclusion could be drawn with regard to the EU’s enlargement and trade policies.

In Huntington’s later expansion, or ‘bloating’ as Said suggests (Google Videos 2007), of his original 1993 thesis into a book, first published in 1996, Huntington argues that Muslims are “convinced of the superiority of their culture, and obsessed with the inferiority of their power.” (Huntington 1997: 217) His take on the relationship between Islam and the West seems extreme, and has been much criticised as such, not least by Said, who described Huntington’s visions of East and West as, “a cartoonlike world where Popeye and Bluto bash each other mercilessly, with one always more virtuous pugilist getting the upper hand over his adversary.” Said goes on to describe The Clash of Civilisations as, “a gimmick... better for reinforcing defensive self-pride than for critical understanding.” (Said 2001) Huntington’s vociferous assertion of the differences between the West and ‘the Rest’ suggest that he believes that different civilisations cannot co-exist and are incompatible due to fundamental differences in the way each of them see the world and their own personal values and beliefs. The differences between the two ‘civilisations’, and the issues facing the compatibility of Western and Islamic values are summed up by Mirela Bogdani, who argues that,

“Some Islamic values and norms contradict modern and Western values, such as human rights and freedoms, the role of women ... ideas about the relations of religion and the state, moral codes of everyday behaviour and the boundaries of religious and moral tolerance.” (Bogdani 2011: 54)

Such a division in social values surely enhances civilisational conflict. “The divide between religious identities becomes one among many fixed markers of civilisational difference.” (Hurd 2006: 410) The major differences between the Western and Islamic ‘civilisations’ are, according to Huntington, Bogdani and Hurd, based around values which have grown and evolved from their distinctive religious histories. It is Huntington himself who wrote that “civilisations are differentiated from each other by history, language, culture, tradition and most important, religion” (Huntington 1993: 4)
4.2. A ‘Torn’ Country?

Huntington does address the classification of Turkey specifically under the heading ‘torn countries’. He suggests that a ‘torn country’ is one which, “has a fair degree of cultural homogeneity but are divided over whether their society belongs to one civilisation or another.” (Huntington 1993: 18) Often, political elites will pursue a western course, whilst ignoring their own cultural, religious and historical traditions. Turkey, he suggests, alongside Mexico, Post-Communist Russia and, somewhat surprisingly, Australia, are examples of torn countries. On Turkey, Huntington suggests that the implementation of Kemal Atatürk’s ‘Six Arrows’ is an example of the elites pursuing a Western vision, not necessarily with the support of its citizens. “Turkey, for long the sword and buckler of Islam against the West, made a deliberate choice for westernization, and for a Westward political orientation.” (Lewis 1994: 45) He also suggests that the resurgence of Islam in politics, culminating in the current ruling Islamist AK Parti’s tenure in power, has disrupted the elite’s attempts at westernisation. Turkey portrays itself as, “the most westerner country in the Orient and most oriental country in the West. Therefore, we act as a bridge and peacemaker.” (Bağış 2009) The common rhetoric of Turkey acting as a ‘bridge’ between East and West, Huntington argues, is a euphemism which confirms his argument. “A bridge... is an artificial creation connecting two solid entities but is part of neither. When Turkey’s leaders term their country a bridge, they euphemistically confirm that it is torn.” (Huntington 1997: 149)

4.3. Elite Opinions

The elites and populations of countries such as France, Austria, Germany and Greece fervently oppose Turkish accession, not least due to the perceived values-based differences between Turkey and Europe, as stated in Huntington’s thesis. Their experiences of Turkish and Islamic immigration and their failure to integrate into European society has informed this opposition. Germany has a substantial Turkish immigrant population, at around 2 million whilst the EU as a whole is already home to some 3 and a half million Turkish immigrants. However, “The local circumstances of these communities, their continuing lack of social and cultural integration, their economic and social mobility or lack thereof, are the lens through which European views concerning Turkey are shaped.” (Benhabib and Isiksel 2006: 222)
Indeed Angela Merkel and David Cameron have confirmed this fact, with both stating that multiculturalism has failed in their countries. (BBC NEWS 2010b) (BBC NEWS 2011)

Huntington also suggests reasons why Turkey’s EU bid has so-far been unsuccessful. He quotes former Turkish President Turget Özal, who stated that the reason Turkey will not be accepted into the EU was because, “we are Muslim and they are Christian and they don’t say that.” (Huntington 1993: 19) The existence of anti-Turkish feeling within EU elites is evident. French President Nicolas Sarkozy and German Chancellor Angela Merkel are both against full Turkish accession, and favour some form of ‘Privileged Partnership’, a form of agreement below full membership, which has been vigorously rejected by the Turkish government. Sarkozy has openly stated his opposition to Turkish membership stating, “Whether Turkey meets the conditions for entry or not does not solve the problem. On this matter, I have always been clear: I do not think Turkey has a right to join the European Union because it is not European” (National Interest 2007) Sarkozy’s petulant dismissal of Turkey has been highlighted by a recent Wikileaks exposé, in which it was reported that a plane carrying Sarkozy was diverted in order to avoid him seeing the Eiffel Tower draped in Turkish colours, in honour of Turkish President Erdogan’s state visit. (Guardian 2010). These simplistic attitudes are based upon an acceptance of an Orientalist differentiation between Europe and the Islamic world, which simply does not exist.

The acceptance of the clash of civilisations thesis, and using it, as Sarkozy does, as a reason for excluding Turkey from the EU is insufficient and simplistic. Numerous politicians have played down the existence of the clash of civilisations and see Turkey’s potential accession as an opportunity to break down this outdated presumptuous barrier between the West and the Middle East. UK Prime Minister, David Cameron, on a visit to Ankara in July 2010 stated his support for Turkish accession and his opposition to subscribers to the Clash of civilisations thesis. “They see the history of our world as a clash of civilisations, as a choice between East and West. They just don’t get the fact that Turkey can be a great unifier, because instead of choosing between East and West, Turkey has chosen both.” (Cameron 2010) Former Spanish Foreign Minister, Miguel Angel Moratinos also recognised the opportunity for breaking down the civilisational ‘velvet curtain’. He stated, “This is our challenge in dealing with the Islamic world: We must show that interfaces exist between Muslim societies and between universal values, which are represented by the EU, that co-existence and consensus are possible.” (Rettman 2010)
The existence of this ‘interface’ between the West and the Muslim world is rejected by Huntington and other Western academics and elites, who simplistically reject any commonality between the two ‘civilisations’. As Huntington, suggests, western values cannot co-exist alongside Islam and its traditions. “Huntington’s claim is that the strongest distinguishing characteristic of Western culture, the aspect which demarcates Western Christianity most clearly from the Muslim world, concerns values associated representative democracy.” (Norris and Inglehart 2003: 8) The small number of democratic governments within the Islamic world, and the complete lack of democracies in the Arab world would seem to support Huntington’s incompatibility idea. Such is the relevance of Huntington’s assumptions, it is vital to our understanding of international relations to confirm or reject his ideas. In the absence of survey data from the ordinary people of these countries, it has been assumed that Arab publics have had little interest in democracy. (Norris and Inglehart 2003) The ideas of Huntington can be understood in this situation, however the results and conclusions from the World Values Survey must result in a re-think about Western perceptions of Arab and Muslim values.

4.4. The World Values Survey – Testing the ‘Clash of Civilisations’

The World Values Survey (WVS) is an ongoing collection of investigations into political and socio-cultural change, created to help social scientists and policy-makers better understand worldviews and changes that are taking place in the beliefs, values and motivations of people throughout the world. (World Values Survey 2010) Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart (2003) have used WVS data from 1995 and 2001 to quantitatively investigate Islamic political and social attitudes. In the most recent set of WVS surveys, conducted between 2005 and 2008, some interesting facts regarding Huntington’s assumptions have been revealed. Within the survey, the following question was asked; “How important is it for you that you live in a country governed democratically, marking on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being ‘absolutely important’” (World Values Survey 2008) (see fig.1)
Fig. 1

Question: V162 – Importance of Democracy

“How important is it for you that you live in a country governed democratically, marking on a scale of 1-10, with 10 being ‘absolutely important’?”

**Islamic States** – Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq, Iran, Malaysia, Morocco, Jordan

**European Union** – Bulgaria, Cyprus, Finland, France, Germany, UK, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden

**Turkey**

Results from the survey discredit Huntington’s view that Islam and democracy are incompatible. Muslim respondents from Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Malaysia and Morocco gave an overwhelmingly pro-democratic response, with 82% or those surveyed stating the importance of democracy as 8 or above out of 10, with 57.2% of those selecting ‘10 or absolutely important’. When compared with the respondents from participating EU states, (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and UK) it appears that the citizens of Muslim majority countries have a similar, if not slightly higher appetite for democratic governance as the citizens of the EU. 81.6% of EU respondents answered with scores 8 or more, with 51.6% ranking the importance of democracy as ‘absolutely important’. (World Values Survey 2008) This result suggests that any civilisational clash will have nothing to do with democracy.
Within Turkey, 88.7% of respondents ranked the importance of democracy as 8 or more, higher than both results from the Islamic states and the EU, whilst 56.2% selected ‘10’. The percentage of Turkish respondents selecting ’10, absolutely important,’ was higher than some of the more developed ‘promoters of democracy, specifically France, UK and the United States. (World Values Survey 2008)

These similar democratic results paint a far different picture of Islamic values. “Huntington is mistaken in assuming that the core clash between the West and Islamic concerns democracy...evidence suggests striking similarities in the political values held in these societies.” (Norris and Inglehart 2003: 5) This would suggest that the ‘Clash of Civilisations’ thesis, which was heavily based upon the incompatibility of representative democracy, is flawed. It would be too simplistic to state that there were no differences between East and West. Indeed, this is the conclusion that Norris and Inglehart come to when analysing their earlier WVS data. “The Huntington thesis fails to identify the most basic cultural fault line between the West and Islam, which concerns the issues of gender equality and sexual liberalisation.” (Norris and Inglehart 2003: 5) Norris and Inglehart only half confirm Huntington’s ideas, but identify the fact that the civilisational divisions between the West and Islam are based upon social, rather than political values. In this sense, a clash of civilisations does exist, but does not fundamentally concern the political values that Huntington suggests. “The central values separating Islam and the West revolve far more centrally around ‘Eros’ rather than ‘Demos.’” (Norris and Inglehart 2003: 7)

4.5. Islam, Liberalism and Democracy

The West, and Europe, prides itself upon its liberal democratic principles, and has attempted to promote these values worldwide. However, there is a difference between the concepts of ‘liberalism’ and ‘democracy’, both of which are often intertwined and their differences overlooked. Democracy is, in the ‘Athenian; sense of the word, people power, the right of the people to have a say in government. Representative democracy has formed the foundation under which liberal values are put into practice and flourish. Modern liberal values espoused by the West are based upon the values of democracy, tolerance, individualism and human rights. Any cultural clashes are not based upon democracy, but upon the liberal values of tolerance, individualism and human rights. Islamic peoples, despite the desire for democracy, as pointed out by the WVS, are “incompatible with the principles of liberal-democracy, in
particular with human rights.” (Bogdani 2011: 60) The WVS, whilst identifying very similar attitudes towards democracy, gave vastly differing results with regards to social, liberal values. As also identified by Norris and Inglehart, The West is far more liberal and tolerant than Islamic societies. Within the WVS, liberal indicators included ‘approval of gender equality, homosexuality, abortion and divorce. (Norris and Inglehart 2003: 20) In the most recent WVS, the differences between Western and Islamic attitudes towards these indicators are strikingly apparent. (see fig.2)

Fig. 2
Liberal indicators - Approval of homosexuality, abortion, divorce and gender equality.

Questions:
- V202: Justifiable: **Homosexuality**
- V204: Justifiable: **Abortion**
- V205: Justifiable: **Divorce**
  - “Please tell me for each of the following statements whether you think (homosexuality, abortion or divorce) can always be justified, never be justified, or something in between on a scale of 1 (never justifiable) to 10 (always justifiable)”
  - (answers ranked 8 or above counted as ‘approval’)
- **Gender Equality** based on the following 4 questions: A pooled average of positive attitudes towards gender equality is shown in graph below.
  - V61: “One the whole, men make better political leaders than women do. (disagree calculated)
  - V44: “When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women. (disagree calculated)
  - V62: “A university education is more important for a boy than a girl. (disagree calculated”
  - V59: “If a woman wants to have a child as a single parent but she doesn’t want to have a stable relationship with a man, do you approve or disapprove? (approve calculated)”

**Islamic States** – Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq, Iran, Malaysia, Morocco, Jordan

**European Union** – Bulgaria, Cyprus, Finland, France, Germany, UK, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden

**Turkey**

EU attitudes towards these four indicators are, perhaps predictably, far more tolerant and liberal than those of the Islamic states. Islam and the EU differ substantially with regards to these individualistic liberal values, and this is, according to Norris and Inglehart, where the real clash of civilisations occurs.

“There is a substantial cultural cleavage, although one underestimated by Huntington, in social beliefs about gender equality and sexual liberalisation. In this regard, the West is far more egalitarian and liberal than all other societies, particularly Islamic nations.”
(Norris and Inglehart 2003: 30)

This division also exists between the EU and Turkey, with Turkish liberal attitudes and tolerance levels conforming far more with traditional Islamic states than with European ones, as shown by figure 2. These figures will strengthen the argument that Turkey and the EU are too different. On the other hand, the democratic similarities act as an argument for Turkish accession. Turkey’s democratic credentials have been apparent since Kemal Ataturk’s early twentieth century reforms.

“It is true that Turkey, unlike most other Muslim countries, is a secular democracy, and has been for almost 80 years. It has a constitution, not Shari’a law. However... there are still many limitations of fundamental freedoms, and problems with human rights, that are not in conformity with the standards of liberal-democracy.” (Bogdani 2011: 71)

Here lies the clash. Turkey, along with other Islamic states, suffer a deficiency in western liberalism, and especially tolerance of sexual liberalisation and gender equality. Therefore, the liberal-democratic principles that the West espouses cannot take hold. However, there is a difference between democracy as a system of government and liberalism as a set of values, despite the general ignorance of this fact. If allowed to, democracy could take hold in Islamic states, but would be based upon Islamic religious values, rather than western liberalism. This type of Islamic democracy would take account of these specific Islamic traditions, traditions which are often in direct conflict with western liberalism. Perhaps the democratic revolutions in the Middle East and North Africa will result in such governments, which may not be to the taste of Western leaders, but will be the type of democratically elected government that the people of these countries seek. The fear, however, is that traditional Islamist parties wishing to enforce traditional religious policies may take power, due to the popular support they will receive from the Islamic publics. Examples of these can be seen within Iran, under Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Palestine under Hamas and, potentially, Egypt under The Muslim Brotherhood. These governments, whilst being unpopular with the West, are democratically
elected by their people. As one of the USA’s founding fathers, Anthony Hamilton stated in 1799, “a government must be fitted to such a nation as much as a Coat to the Individual, and consequently that what may be good at Philadelphia may be bad at Paris and ridiculous at Petersburg.” (Hassan and Ralph 2011: 510) Democracy and liberalism go hand in hand, but are not inseparable. There is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ system of government or values, and it would be naive to suggest that the western system of liberal-democracy can be transplanted into Islamic states. Historically, within Western states, liberalism and liberal values were a precursor to the development of modern democracy. Democracy and elections came afterwards, as the public were more inclined to act upon, and fight for their evolving liberal rights. In modern times, democracy is being pursued before liberalism. (Zakaria 2003) The global obsession with democracy promotion, vigorously lead by the West, ignores the long process of values change and the introduction of liberal values, especially into the traditionalist Muslim world.

4.6. Post-Materialism, Turkey and the EU

The clash has nothing to do with democracy, and all to do with values. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the evidence suggests that traditional Islam and liberalism are polar opposites. With this in mind, it is worth looking more deeply at the needs of individuals in order to better understand the relationship between the people and the values they live their lives by. Liberal values are intertwined with post-materialism, however post-materialism can offer more scope for looking at individual human needs and desires, whilst removing the preconceptions of an individual’s religious beliefs. Analysis of such individualistic indicators and the removal of any religious bias, will help to analyse any difference in Turkey’s values compared with European ones. Ronald Inglehart’s work, The Silent Revolution (1977: 28) states that an individual’s values change depending on their own personal circumstances. Inglehart’s research asked respondents to choose which of following four statements were the most desirable.

- Q1 - Maintaining order in the nation
- Q2 - Giving the people more say in important political decisions
- Q3 - Fighting rising prices
- Q4 - Protecting freedom of speech
These four statements are not affected by religious bias, but give genuine individualistic human answers. Answers based on these four indicators led to Inglehart being able to categorise people into materialist, post-materialist or mixed categories. These indicators are taken from Abraham Maslow’s ‘Hierarchy of Needs’. Maslow suggests there are five stages of basic human needs. The lowest is ‘physiological’ - the basic requirement for sustenance and bodily function. The next is ‘safety’ – the security of property, health and finance. These lowest two stages are referred to by Inglehart as ‘Materialist’ needs. They take priority over any other ‘post-materialist needs, especially when they are in short supply. The higher three stages of Maslow’s hierarchy include ‘belonging’ - the need for friendship, love and family; ‘esteem’ - meaning confidence, achievement and respect; and the highest stage, ‘self-actualisation’ – the need for creativity, intelligence and morality. Each of these three come under the ‘post-materialist’ banner. “Persons with a materialist value-orientation (materialists) give the highest priority to things related to economic and physical security; (Q1 and Q3) post-materialists, on the other hand, give priority to things that are more directed to the fulfilment of a person's intellectual needs, his need for belonging and his striving for independence and self-actualization”(Q2 and Q4) (Janssen 1991: 445)

In demographic terms, the post-materialist nature of a country’s population could be used as an indicator of social development and the relative success of economic and welfare policies. The populations of modern, developed countries are less concerned with materialist values of sustenance or safety. There are state apparatus’ in place to keep most of the population in a comfortably ‘mixed’ or post-materialist social category. The needs of their populations have evolved beyond the basic materialist requirements, into more humanistic ‘wants’ rather than basic ‘needs’. “In short, people are safe and they have had enough to eat.” (Inglehart 1977: 22) With this in mind, it is important to look at the materialistic and post materialistic credentials of the EU. The EU is a body which insists upon more than materialistic values in its Copenhagen Criteria, as would be expected of a post-materialist, developed body of nations. The materialistic wishes of a stable economy, economic growth and basic food infrastructure, which are taken for granted in more developed states, are required within the acquis communautaire. However, post-materialistic factors are also required of candidate countries. The Copenhagen Criteria requires member states to achieve the “stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights, respect for and protection of minorities...”, (European Council 1993) none of which can be counted as materialist, and all of which are pre-requisites of EU membership. The EU is a group of developed, liberal
democratic states, with post-materialist goals, placing much emphasis in the realms of environmental policy and on the improvement of societal conditions within its borders.

Inglehart’s indicators of materialist and post-materialist values have lead to qualitative surveys of values and beliefs. In his work The Silent Revolution (1977) he used survey data collected by the European Community (EC) in 1970 and 1971, as well as a similar survey carried out in 1972-1973. Similarly, the WVS carried out in a number of countries between 2005-2008, also included Inglehart’s indicators from his 1977 work. (World Values Survey 2008) This allowed them to quantify the ‘materialist’ and ‘post-materialist’ values of each country. Turkey’s modern WVS results suggest a state whose population is still in search of materialistic needs. (see fig. 3)

Fig. 3
Post-materialism – Y002: Inglehart’s Indicators
Materialism and Post-materialism in the populations of the EU and Turkey.

(World Values Survey 2008)
Materialist’s accounted for 32.9%, whilst 13.8% of those surveyed were counted as ‘post-materialists’ with the remaining 53.3% being placed in the mixed category. When compared to the highly developed major EU states such as UK, Germany and France, Turkey is shown to be in stark contrast. In the UK only 9.9% of people surveyed were placed in the materialist category, whilst 23.8% were designated as post-materialist. Indeed Sweden, Germany, France, Italy, The Netherlands, and Slovenia were alongside the UK in being designated as more post-materialist than Turkey. This suggests that one of the major differences between the EU and Turkey is, as Norris and Inglehart suggest (2003) values based, not only traditional, religious based values, but also in terms of the basic needs of the population. If Turkey’s population is still in search of materialist needs, can it successfully become part of a post-materialist EU? This materialistic result could add to the anti-accession arguments building against Turkey. However, it is important to note that a number of EU member states continue to harbour significant materialist populations. Among the most noticeable are the two newest EU members, Bulgaria and Romania, which both have far greater materialistic populations than Turkey. Bulgarian materialists accounted for a huge 55.8% of those surveyed, whilst a miniscule 2.4% were counted as ‘post-materialist’. Romania also returned similar results. It is necessary to point out that these two countries are both former Soviet states and similar conclusions can be drawn with respect to Poland. With the fall of communism still fresh in the memories of most generations, and the relative infancy of their liberal economic markets, it is easy to see why materialist values still take precedent amongst respondents.

The Spanish results, therefore, are even more striking. A country which has been an EU member state since 1986, and is widely seen as one of the stronger powers within the EU, delivers a more materialistic result than Turkey. In the Spanish survey, 35.9% of respondents answer materialistically, compared with 32.9% in Turkey. Post-materialists accounted for 11.9% in Spain, compared to Turkey’s 13.8%. It is also worth noting that only the results for Sweden, Great Britain and Italy had post-materialist majorities, whilst the two most influential EU drivers, France and Germany, returned a materialistic result.

The post-materialistic rhetoric within EU treaties cannot be said to be in line with the values of its citizens. The EU is still considerably materialistic, as shown by its average result in figure 3. Of the EU members surveyed, Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, Cyprus, Finland and Spain all had lower post-materialist results than Turkey, suggesting that European
reservations over Turkish EU accession cannot be based upon a fundamental difference in values or on Turkey being unable to pursue the post-materialistic goals of the EU. Turkey’s results are noticeably close to the EU average, and therefore it may be stated that the post-materialistic values of Turkey and the EU are the same. The memberships of a number of ‘more materialistic’, and therefore ‘less developed’ states again points to a double standard in terms of the EU’s policy towards Turkey.

Turkish values are not all that different to European ones. Democracy and the wants and needs of the population are the same, the clash only exists over liberal values. Islamic traditions are not easily compatible with Western liberalism, a fact which has been noticed by the previous difficulty of social integration of Islamic communities already within Europe. However, Turkish values are different to other Islamic states. Another criticism of Huntington is the fact that he assumes the existence of one overarching ‘Islamic civilisation’. This fact is seen in arguments against Turkish accession, when the issue of religion is debated. This is, however, totally insufficient. Turkish values, as shown by some of the previous analysis, are more in-line with European states such as Spain, Finland and Slovenia than they are with Islamic nations such as Iran, Egypt or Indonesia. Any rejection of Turkey’s EU membership bid on the grounds of a difference in values would be unfair and illegitimate.

5. Conclusions

Analysis of Turkey’s EU accession has exposed European hypocrisy and distinctive double standards with regards to its relationship with the Islamic world. “Turkey will perceive and accept a rebuff by the EU as another example of a mixture of blatant racism, and hypocrisy aimed at Turkey” (Kalaycıoğlu 2010) The EU has insisted upon complete conformity with its legal criteria, criteria which Turkey has faithfully endeavoured to meet, whilst also attempting to resolve any other existing European reservations. Turkey admits it has not yet reached the level of reforms required by the EU, but, as this study has pointed out, previous accessions have not required fully implemented Copenhagen reforms. The EU will not compromise with Turkey or help it from within, as it has in previous recent accession negotiations. A distinct double standard is apparent in this sense, a double standard that is explained by the fundamental fact that the EU does not want a large Muslim country to be
part its community. The legal, political criteria are, in Turkey’s case, a ‘fig-leaf’, covering the substantial Orientalist, and to an extent racist, attitudes of the EU towards Turkey and Islam.

This is the reason why Turkey’s accession is so controversial. No other accession has had so much academic, media and public interest in it. This is due to the religious aspect of the negotiations, an aspect which is, genuinely ‘the elephant in the room’. Identity and culture form the framework around which the arguments supporting these religious reservations are built, however these reservations are misconceived. European identity is fragile, and the existence of the Turk as an ‘other’ is vital. This fact is ignored in the official negotiations, but undeniably still plays a role in the thought process of European policy makers. These Orientalist undertones have been exposed in the EU’s recent relations with Turkey. The fear-mongering vision of the ‘Turk at the gates of Vienna’ is still very much in the mindset of Europeans, and this has informed the attempt to create an identity through which the ‘Turk’ can be excluded. The present worldwide tensions between Islam and the West have extended these fears, and Europeans are more apprehensive about Islam than ever before.

These exclusion attempts are academically backed up by the ideas of Samuel Huntington. The Clash of Civilisations suggests that one of the major differences between Islam and the West, and therefore Turkey and the EU are the values by which each of them lives their lives. However, these misconceptions are based upon a lack of empirical facts. The WVS data has provided an opportunity to quantitatively identify the differences between Islamic and Western values, suggesting that the arguments that Turkey is too different from the EU is flawed, and based upon negative historical Orientalist visions. It is undeniable that there are differences between the two ‘civilisations’, but these are not as considerable as has been previously assumed. The fact is that the only values which differentiate Turkey from the EU are informed by social traditions and are influenced their distinctive religions. As Norris and Inglehart point out, the specific social values of gender equality and tolerance are the basis upon which the differences exist, not, as Huntington had based his argument, political values and not, as shown by analysis of Inglehart’s indicators, materialistic values. Turkey is far more aligned with current European values than has been assumed, and in many aspects, more aligned than some current EU member states. Turkey’s supposed differences with the EU have been exaggerated due to the Orientalist nature of European thinking.

If the EU were to accept Turkey, it would advance its position as the world’s premier civilian power. (Bull 1982) Not only would Turkey give the EU a significant economic boost, but it
could ignite its delicate common foreign policy and turn it into a real global player, with significant influence in the turbulent Middle-Eastern region. It would also “validate the claim that the EU is an open and inclusive community of nations, not a ‘closed Christian club, capable of drawing strength from cultural and religious diversity.” (Akçomak 2006: 3) The ‘United in Diversity’ motto has not in the past represented EU policy towards Turkey. It is important that these outdated misconceptions fuelled by ignorant, unfounded Orientalist reservations are overcome, not only for the case of Turkey’s EU accession, but in terms of the wider relationships between the Western and Islamic worlds.

References:


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