Turkish Religious Identity and the Question of European Union Membership

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Institute for Cultural Diplomacy: Ankara Conference on
Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution, April 17-19, 2012, Ankara Turkey.

Introduction

"Will it ever happen?" has become the common refrain when discussing the question of

Turkey's candidacy for full membership in the European Union (EU). The story is long with no

shortage of starts and stops. From initial application to the European Community in 1959 to full

candidate status and accession negotiations in 2005 Turkey's formal progress has been slow. As

a comparison Croatia began formal membership negotiations at the same time as Turkey, in

2005, and as of 2010 had closed 25 of the 33 chapters, Turkey on the other hand has closed just 1

(ESI 2010: 1). What has caused the formal negations to proceed at such a slow pace? What has

led some scholars to call this "the most difficult enlargement ever" (Grigoriadis 2006)?

Certainly there are a number of relevant factors from population, economics, political structure

and cultural differences that may be considered in analyzing the past, present and future of

Turkish-EU relations. The scope of this paper is limited to the role of Turkish religious

expression, secularism, and identity politics and is not an exhaustive treatment of the entire issue

of Turkey's accession to the EU.

These issues of religious identity are likely to play a significant role in Turkey's

accession process, especially in the arena of public perception which is proving to be of

significant concern. By taking up the consideration of identity and its use as a descriptive tool for

analyzing the perceptions and dealings of various states and actors this paper adopts a largely

constructivist approach (Kegley and Blanton 2011: 46-50). The question of identity is of crucial

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importance in understanding the actions of Turkey and its position within the global system (Bozdaglioglu 2003). The goal of this paper is to examine how the resurgent nature of religious expression in Turkey relates to the question of European Union accession. The focus of attention in the analysis of Turkish identity is on the place of religion in Turkish public life and politics. The question of the identity of the European Union is internally a topic of debate and made even more so when further expansion, especially the first majority Muslim country, is brought into the discussion (Casanova 2004: 88-90; Faltin and Wright 2007). In light of the recognition of the significance religion can play in shaping individual identity and influencing global politics its impact on this case may prove beneficial in understanding what the future will hold for the European Union and for Turkey.

Half a century ago to approach this question of Turkey-EU relations in this manner with serious consideration of the question of religion and cultural values would have seemed unthinkable. The global trend was one of progressive and pervasive secularism and world events seem to be in support of this thesis. The vision that most political scientists had of the future was one where religion of any stripe would be completely irrelevant in public life. Yet, the reality has proven to be something rather different and religion continues to be relevant in the public sphere (Fox 2008, 102). Thus before progressing to the issue of Turkey and EU relations we will first look at the condition of secularism in Europe and its relationship to democracy. Then we will consider the path that secularism and religious practice have taken in Turkey and the religious identity that is prevalent in the modern context. Then the various conceptions of identity within the EU will be examined. Finally, the article will conclude with the future prospects for Turkey's accession and recommendations for how some of the most salient questions of identity can be answered.

Condition of Secularism in Western Democracies

The prominent view among social scientists of the first 60 years of the 20th century was that religion was of little to no significance as a shaper of global politics (Stepan 2010). The road of modernity that countries were on would lead ultimately to the discrediting and removal of religion. This was not simply a 20th century construct but was informed by thinkers as far back as the Enlightenment. From Kant and Rousseau to Durkheim, Weber and Marx the understanding was that science and modern technology would replace man's need for religious beliefs (Fox and Sandler 2004, 10). Representative of this was Nietzsche who foresaw a world where the suprasensory was without any effective power. It no longer would be life giving. This is what he was articulating when through the voice of the madman he declares "God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him" (Heidegger 1977, 61). The general trend seemed to validate these beliefs. Yet the end of the 20th century and the opening years of the 21st century have appeared to tell a different story. Religion is making a comeback. The secularization thesis was not as final as people had thought.

In light of this backdrop the place religion takes in relationship to the state is interesting. Contrary to popular belief even in Western Europe, what might be considered the bastion of secularism, religion still holds a significant position. It has not been completely exterminated and remains a lively topic of debate (Halik 2007, 192-194). The idea rooted in modernization theory that a radical secularism, completely free of religion, is necessary for a modern democracy does not mesh with reality (Fox 2008, 13-19). Stepan identifies four religion-state arrangements in democratic countries. Despite the prevalence that has been given to the separatist tradition, of which France and the United States are representative, it is far from a normative arrangement for all democratic states. Stepan's four arrangements are: 1) "separatist" (France, United States,

Turkey), 2) "established religion" (Denmark, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom), 3) "positive accommodation" (Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland) 4) "respect all, positive cooperation, and principled distance" (India, Indonesia, Senegal) (Stepan 2010). There is not a particular state-religion institutional arrangement that is obligatory across democratic states.

As further example of the variety of religious practice, specifically within Western countries, of the 27states examined by Fox 9 have an official state religion, 13 support one or more religion and 1 regulates all religions. This means by his standards just 4 of 27 western governments neither endorse or are hostile in terms of the Government Involvement in Religion variable (*GIR*) (Fox 2008, 107). All Western democracies, with the lone exception of the United States, fund religious education. A significant number of them fund religious charities (9/27), use tax money for religious purposes (11/27), fund clergy (12/27), have a government religious affairs department (10/27), and require registration of some form (11/27) (Ibid., 128). In conclusion to his examination of Western democracies Fox notes that "religion is ubiquitous but manifests itself in different ways. Certainly the region has characteristics which differentiate it from other regions including a relatively low level of religious discrimination and particularly low levels of religious regulation" (Ibid., 139). So while an institutional pattern cannot be identified what can be drawn from this overview of the place of religion within Western democracies is that the particular arrangement may vary from state to state but there is a baseline commitment that should be ensured in the arrangement of religion to the state in a consolidated democracy.

While accounting for a variety of arrangements of religion and state specifically within the member states of the European Union certain common values can be identified. One arrangement is the safeguarding of the principle of autonomy for both church and state and the

fundamental right of the freedom of religion and conscience. (WRR 2004, 6) What is meant by this is the recognition of separate domains of authority. The state is free to operate without direct interference from religious communities. On the other hand the state is without direct authority over internal affairs of religious communities, so long as their actions remain in accordance with the principles of the law. Stepan frames this in his "twin tolerations." These are, first, the toleration of the religious actors to the state to be free to make laws and govern without being subject to the control of the religious actors. Secondly, it is the toleration from the state to religious actors to form institutions, to advance their ideas in public and private life and even to form political parties in keeping with the rule of law (Stepan 2000, 39). In the relationship between religion and the state the spheres of autonomy or tolerations are necessary, while total absence of religion or a particular arrangement is not.

The other underlying principle in the European Union is the assurance of freedom of religion and conscience. The individual of any, majority or minority belief, or no religious belief is assured their constitutional liberties. There is no restriction as a result of a particular belief (WRR 2004, 29).This allows for the freedom of exercise and expression of religious beliefs for all religions without restriction. These values, rather than a particular European model of religion and state relationships, are what the European Union member states hold in common. With this background of the arrangement of religion in western democracies and the baseline commitment common to these countries we can now turn our attention to the particular case of Turkey.

Religion and the State in Turkey

To examine the current place of religion in the Turkish Republic we must first return to the years immediately following World War I. After the final collapse of the Ottoman Empire the new Turkey that emerged under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk was one characterized

by radical changes from the Ottoman past and yet there was a certain amount of continuity as well. After examining the historical development of religion and state within the Republic of Turkey we can then consider the current arrangement and feelings towards religion. During the early years of the Republic of all the areas of concern for Ataturk the place of religion in society was among the foremost.

Historical Development of Religion and the State in Turkey

The particular historical and social setting of the founding of the Turkish Republic helps to illuminate some of the decisions that were made. By the turn of the 20th century the Ottoman Empire had lost much of its grandeur. Though there had been attempts to reform the Empire its greatness was significantly diminished. Then with the close of the World War I not only the lands of the empire but the heartland of Anatolia itself was in danger of being carved up and control handed to outsiders. So when following the War for Independence the chance came for elites who had been schooled in the capitals of the West to reshape society, they wanted to establish a radical break from the elements of the Ottoman Empire that they viewed as backward (Yilmaz 2005, 387). Chief among this was the place of religion in society. This had been on the agenda of the Young Turks during the later years of the Empire and throughout the 1920s-30s these reforms were carried to extremes (Zurcher 2004, 181). In reshaping the place of religion in society Mustafa Kemal Ataturk and the other Republican era leaders took a very strong approach.

The secularism that was adopted in Turkey has often been related to the French *laicite* tradition. While in some senses it may be accurate that some elements of secularism were borrowed from France, in actual practice the Turkish brand of secularism has taken on its own character. The French *laicite* looked at religion as something from which the state needed to be

protected, and the Anglo-American looked at religion as something that needed to be protected from the state, the Turkish secularism looked at religion as something that needed to be controlled by the state.

Murat Akan reflects that "Mustafa Kemal Ataturk's most explicit and repeated statement on religion in the 1920s and 1930s was on preventing religions from becoming a 'tool for politics'" (Akan forthcoming, 13-9). Rather than securing religion from the state (Anglo-American) or even establishing legislation to secure the state from religion (French), the Kemalists established direct control over religion[2]. Yavuz examines the control of religion by the state as a third mode of understanding secularism. In approaching religion in this manner he articulates three motivations the state was seeking. First, it intended to create an enlightened Islam that could be used in the modernization project; second, it was used in controlled ways to establish a national identity; third, it provided an element of legitimacy for the state (Yavuz 2009, 146). While in one sense the secularism process adopted was a break from the Ottoman period, at the same time it was shaped by and a continuation of the process started under Sultan Mahmut and advanced by the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) between 1913-1918 (Zurcher 2004, 187). Reforms in this area were understood as necessary steps of the modernization project. In early Republican era Turkey, the goal was to bring Turkey quickly to the level of modern civilization and this included dismantling the remnants of the Ottoman Empire that were considered impediments. The most noteworthy were the abolition of the Sultanate, the Caliphate, and the Sharia legal code in the 1920s. These served to disestablish the politically religious influence on the state (Akan forthcoming, 13-9; Haynes 2010, 314-317).

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[2]The logic of this seems self-contradictory but was the approach adopted by the Kemalists in their attempts to secure the state while also taking into account the potential that Islam had to be used as a political force. For more explanation on this see Ihsan Yilmaz. 2005. "State, Law, Civil Society and Islam in Contemporary Turkey." *The Muslim World* Vol. 95: 385-411.

The abolishment of the Caliphate and Sharia were not simply the end of government dealings with religion but they were accompanied by the establishment of the General Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet). Attached directly to the office of the Prime Minister it is authorized to oversee all affairs of Islam related to beliefs and rituals of worship. It includes the oversight of all mosques, appointment and dismissal of imams, and all other employees of a religious nature (Davison 2003, 337-338; Ulutas 2010). It became the location of the "official Islam" of the state or what has been labeled "Lausannian Islam," which served as a "helping hand" in accomplishing the goals of the state (Yilmaz 2005). So both the definitive acts of removing religion from the state, abolishing the Caliphate and Sharia, and the establishment of a new official religion of the state, managed through the Diyanet, were accomplished. This is one example of how rather than freedom of the state from religion Turkey better represents the states' control over religion.

Another reason for the adoption of the particular arrangement of state and religion in Turkey was the desire to create a single Turkish identity. Emerging out of the ashes of the Ottoman Empire there was a desire for the creation of a Turkish state for the Turks (Altinay 2004, 20-25). These feelings were driven in reaction to the fear of partition by the European powers, the "Sevres Syndrome" (Yavuz 2009, 205). The Kemalist vision of the state used strict and assertive secularism combined with nationalism to create a new national identity. In the early Republican years nationalism was intended to take the place of religion in many respects (Zurcher 2004, 181-82). The state filled the void it had created by eliminating religion from the national identity. Kemalism aimed to move into the space that Islam had once occupied replacing it with nationalism (Gulap 2005, 357). A new set of symbols and new institutions were

established to replace traditionally religious ones.[3] "Thus, Turkish secularism was radical in terms of its symbolic, political, and social disestablishment of religion and the strict control of religious knowledge by the state" (Yavuz 2009, 26). Religion was not fully eliminated but was utilized pragmatically for legitimatization or for cultural homogenization of the national identity (Sakallioglu 1996, 235). Also significant was the field of education. The traditional Islamic schools were shut down and all education was placed under the Ministry of Education. This provided the means and opportunity to shape the historical understanding – creating a national identity - and also the religious instruction of the youth giving them access to only the official state religion (Shively 2008, 684). It was recast as a tool for the state and incorporated under the control of the state. This allowed for the projection of a singular identity of a modern, secular, proud Turkish citizenry.

The preceding section provides some of the theoretical motivations behind the strict secularism and control over religion established during the early Republican period. It was a necessary step on the road to quickly modernizing the country. An official state control over religion was established that allowed for it to be used as a tool for the state. Finally, it was also a crucial part of the construction of a Turkish identity that was nationalistic and embraced the symbols of the state rather than religion. The following section will cover a brief survey of the implementation and progression of secularism in Turkey from the early Republican period to the present.

As has already been mentioned above, during the 1920s the Kemalists abolished the caliphate, replaced the sharia legal code with European civil and penal codes, changed to the

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[3]As an example of the way Kemalism filled the void of religion see Zurcher's discussion of the various aspects of Kemalism's six principles (*Alti Ok*) and also the personality cult that rose up around Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. Erik Zurcher. 2004. *Turkey: A Modern History*. 3rd Edition. New York: I.B. Tauris: 181-182. Also see Haldan Gulap. 2005. "Enlightenment by Fiat: Secularization and Democracy in Turkey." *Middle Eastern Studies* Vol. 41 No. 3: 362-367.

European calendar, as part of a radical program of secularization (Zurcher 2004, 172-173). These reforms were not imposed democratically but were top-down changes undertaken with the goal of bringing Turkish society into the modern world. This Kemalist legacy was directed by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk until his death in 1938 and then through his Republican Peoples Party (CHP) which remained in power until the 1950s (Akan forthcoming, 13-10). Following World War II there was a movement towards a multi-party system and the Democratic Party (DP) won power in 1950. In terms of its relationship to religion the DP maintained the commitment to modernization through secularism by controlling Islam. It did, however, allow for some opening up of Islam in areas that were safely considered cultural and not a challenge to the secular nature of the state system. The DP was also willing to utilize religion as a tool of the state when useful. Thus, while the policies of the DP did not appear as radical as the CHP to portray them as soft on Islam would be overstating the case (Sakallioglu 1996, 236-238). From the 1950s to the 1990s various groups with Islam-based ideology would gain influence and even at times rise to power. They articulated three views towards secularism: the *Liberal view* of many of the center-right parties with a desire to move towards a more passive secularism; an *Ascetic view* that remained silent and isolated from public or political life such as the Nur movement; and the *Islamist view* such as Necmettin Erbakan's parties that were politically active (Kuru 2006, 5-6). Whenever the political Islamists would gain too much influence the generals as the vigilant guardians of secularism would lead the army out of the barracks, overthrow the government and after a period of time would oversee a new civilian government's entrance into power and then return again to the barracks (Albion 2011, 1-2; Haynes 2010, 314-317). This has been attempted in one form or another during every decade since the opening of the multi-party system sometimes in violent forms and others more subtle in recent decades (1960, 1971, 1980, 1997, and 2007). Over time

there has been a shift in the aims and objectives of religious actors.[4] The Kemalist policy towards religion in general, and Islam in particular, continues to be characterized by a portrayal of religion as backward and something to be feared and therefore to be controlled and ultimately used as a tool for the state.

Current Arrangement of Religion and the State in Turkey

Despite the long history of aggressive secularism pursued by the state, religion remains an important part of Turkish life and culture. The current constitution written in 1982 (during the end of the military coup) provides an overview of the legal position of religion in the state. It explicitly states in the preamble that "*as required by the principle of secularism, there shall be no interference whatsoever by sacred religious feelings in state affairs and politics*" This is further expanded in the second article defining the characteristics of the Republic "The Republic of Turkey is a democratic, *secular*, and social state governed by the rule of law […] based on the fundamental tenets set forth in the preamble" [italics in source] (ARDA 2011). This article is reinforced as an irrevocable provision of the state (Article 4). The constitution explicitly provides for the "freedom of conscience, religious belief, and conviction." This is checked with a provision against the exploitation of religious feelings or beliefs for personal or political influence "or for even partially basing the fundamental, social, economic, political, and legal order of the state on religious tenets" (Article 24). The constitution is constructed to maintain the secular nature of the state and to guard against subversive attacks against it.

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[4]As an example of a studies highlighting the shift made by Islamic-based political actors see Ihsan Yilmaz. 2011. "Beyond Post-Islamism: Transformation of Turkish Islamism Toward 'Civil Islam' and Its Potential Influence in The Muslim World." *European Journal of Economic and Political Studies* Vol. 4 No.1: 245-280 or Menderes Cinar and Burhanettin Duran. 2008. "The Specific Evolution of Political Islam in Turkey and Its 'Difference.' In *Secular and Islamic Politics in Turkey: The Making of the Justice and Development Party* edited by Umit Cizre. New York: Routledge
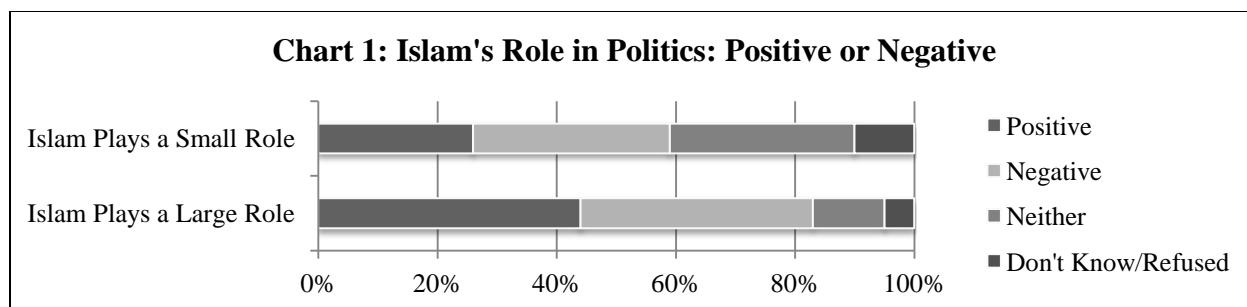
There are strong evidences to demonstrate that the role of religion in politics and public life – at least in terms of public perception is increasing. According to research carried out by the Pew Research Center the number of people who feel that Islam plays a large role in political life has increased by 25% from 2002 to 2010 (Table 1). The level of those who identify primarily as Muslims also appears to be on the rise. In a 2006 survey 51% think of themselves first as Muslims rather than Turks, only 19% identified first with nationality. Just one year prior only 43% identified primarily as Muslims (Grim and Wike 2007). Another study also demonstrates the strong feelings of religiosity. According to the World Values Survey, those who identify as a "religious person" increased from 74.6% in 1990 to 82.6% in 2005 (ARDA 2011).

Table 1. "How much of a role do you think Islam plays in the political life of our country?"

Year	Large role (%)	Small role (%)	Don't Know/Refused (%)
2002	45	44	11
2005	62	30	9
2010	69	19	12

Source: Pew Global Attitudes Project (Pew Research Center 2010).

The increasing role of religion might also be supported based on the strong levels of support shown to the ruling pro-Islamic AKP government (2007: 46.7 %; 2011: 49.9% of national votes Albion 2011, 3). While certainly pragmatic reasons such as economic performance have influenced the strong showing of the AKP in the past three elections, its religious views have not proven to be a roadblock for the majority of voters (Gol 2009, 802-808; Carkoglu 2008). The data also seems to support a certain level of caution in thinking that the public opinion has swung too far in favor of Islam's role in political life (Chart 1).

Chart 1: Islam's Role in Politics: Positive or Negative

Islam Plays a Small Role

Islam Plays a Large Role

■ Positive
■ Negative
■ Neither
■ Don't Know/Refused

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%

Source: Pew Global Attitudes Project (Pew Research Center 2010).

The overall feeling is mixed about the role of Islam in political life. It is taken as being a characteristic but whether it is positive or negative is not as clear cut as in many other Muslim majority countries (Pew 2010, 11).

In addition to the public perception concerning religion in political life the amount of government intervention in religious affairs should also be considered. The constitution in principle provides for religious freedom so long as the secular nature of the state is not in question. The practical ramifications of that however have been mixed when compared with prevailing global trends. According to the International Religious Freedom Reports of 2008 the government was rated with an overall rating of "low freedom." It was rated as having limited protection though mostly respecting the freedom of religion (ARDA 2011). As is shown in chart 2, Turkey scores higher than the world average in all three measures of religious regulation. For comparison, the chart also includes the five most populous countries of the European Union and Turkey has the highest amount in each of the measures with the exception of Spain in terms of government favoritism towards religion.

Chart 2: Composite Religious Freedom Indexes
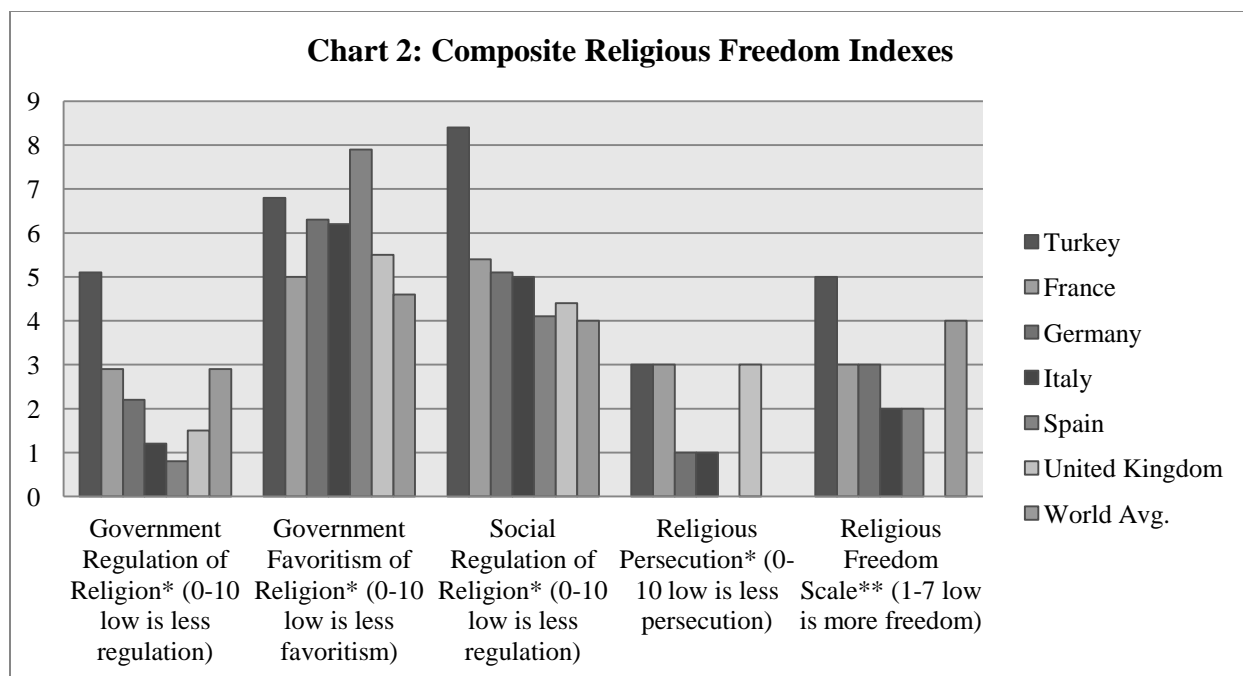
Source:*International Religious Freedom Reports, Coded by ARDA; **Center for Religious Freedom (ARDA 2011)

These findings demonstrate that secularism continues to be a core component of Turkey's state policies and the style of secularism continues to be through control of religion sometimes at the expense of individual freedoms.

The preceding studies have dealt with the overall place of religion in politics and politics in religion. An additional element of religion in society that should be included to help round out the overall picture is social, rather than governmental, regulations towards religion in general, especially minority or non-traditional religions. On a societal level when compared to EU countries of similar size Turkey does not stand out as an aberration in terms of regulation.

Table 2. Social Regulation of Religion

Social Regulation of Religion	Turkey	France	Germany	Italy	Spain	United Kingdom
Societal attitudes toward other or nontraditional religions.	Hostile	Hostile	Hostile	Some Negative	Isolated Discrimination	Hostile
Do attitudes and/or clerical edicts discourage proselytizing? (0=No, 1=Attitudes, 2=Clerics, 3=Both)	Attitudes	No	No	No	No	No
Do established or existing religions try to shut out new religions in any way? (0=No, 1=Yes)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Are citizens intolerant of "nontraditional" faiths, i.e., those perceived as new religions?	Yes, and more than one case	Yes, and more than one case	Yes, and more than one case	Yes, and more than one case	No	Yes, and more than one case
Citizens' receptivity to proselytizing by "nontraditional" faiths or faiths other than their own	Negative	Receptive /No problems reported	Negative	Receptive /No problems reported	Receptive /No problems reported	Receptive /No problems reported

Source: International Religious Freedom Reports, Coded by ARDA (ARDA 2011).

When considering the overall landscape of religion in Turkey a few conclusions can be drawn. As a whole the majority of individuals are demonstrably religious in terms of both identification and practice. The majority of individuals are Muslim and their religion is important to them. There is an increasing perception that religion is playing an influential role in politics but there is a measure of skepticism about whether it is positive or negative. In terms of societal regulation on religions the Turkish population does not vary widely from similar sized countries in the EU. In terms of state regulation on religion Turkey ranks above the world average in every measurement. This is consistent with the historical trend of the state exercising control over religion.

The following section will consider the concept of European Union identity to determine how it has been constructed and whether Turkey's religious identity is a factor in its membership process.

Conceptions of European Union Identity

The question of "What is Europe" and "Who is a European" are compelling questions which have eluded simple explanation for quite some time. The debate over Turkish membership in the EU has certainly had significant impacts on Turkish politics and domestic reforms.[5] Yet, "on the EU side, the debate on Turkey's membership has acted as a proxy for a larger and overdue debate on the future shape of the European Union" (Grigoriadis 2006, 147). To answer the question of what the future shape will be we need to consider the past shape of the EU as well. The following section will look at the development of the EU as an institution with particular attention to the cultural and religious identity and then will be followed by an examination of the future identity of the EU project in order to draw conclusions about Turkey's membership.

Development of the European Union

From the propsal for the pooling of French and German coal and steel resources on May 9, 1950 to the 27 member states who share a common market, 17 of whom share a common currency, and have combined GDP in excess of $15,000,000,000,000 the European Union has undergone major transformations (Europa 2011). The nature of the European Union has changed from a simple economic cooperation to one that encompasses an extensive amount of political, legal, cultural, as well as economic elements.

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[5]The potential accession to the EU has provided a valuable anchor for many of the democratizing reforms that have been attempted in Turkey in the past decade. For a consideration of the value of EU conditionality in relation to the Turkish case see Mehmet Ugur. 2010. "Open-Ended Membership Prospect and Commitment Credibility: Explaining the Deadlock in EU-Turkey Negotiations." *Journal of Common Market Studies* Vol. 48, No. 4: 967-991.

The roots of the European Union began with the formation of the European Coal and Steel Community that brought together six countires (Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands) in 1951. By the beginning of the following decade the community expanded to include the integration of all aspects of their economies and formed the European Economic Community. In 1973 the Community expanded from the original six to nine countries with the inclusion of Denmark, Ireland, and the United Kingdom. During the 1970s the first European Parliament was established with control over elements of the budget. By the end of the 1980s the European Communities had expanded to twelve with the addition of Greece, Spain and Portugal. The Schengen Agreement of 1985 began the process of abolishing checkpoints at the borders between member countries. In the early 1990s, the Maastricht Treaty laid the groundwork further allignment in areas beyond economics to include also cooperation in issues of security, justice, the potential of a single currency and other issues. By 1995 the single market had been established and the Union expanded to fifteen member states. The following decades saw the introduction of the Euro, the solidification of the charter of Fundamental Rights to lay the groundwork for further expansion to the now current 27 member states (Europa 2011). This is the historical development of the European Union from its beginning to present, but the story is more than just one of collective trading partners who share a common geographical space.

As can be evidenced by the opening lines of the Charter of the Fundamental Rights of the European Union it is concerned with more than simply open markets and free trade.

The Peoples of Europe, in creating an ever closer union among them, are resolved to

share a peaceful future based on common values.

> Conscious of its spiritual and moral heritage, the Union is founded on the indivisible, universal values of human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity; it is based on the principles of democracy and the rule of law. It places the individual at the heart of its activites, by establishing the citizenship of the Union and by creating an area of freedom, security and justice. (Charter of Fundamental Rights 2010, 391)

Central to the idea of the European Union is this common concept of values. These same principles are also found in the preamble to the Treaty of the European Union. "Drawing inspiration from the culutral, religious, and humanist inheritance of Europe" the Union is formed for the integration of communities and to create "firm bases for the future" (Treaty of the European Union 2010, 15). Part of what has contributed to the European Union project is its framework to transmit influences and pressures to affect the path of democratization of its member states. These pressures have been shaped by the assumption that they are beneficial for both the EU member states and the candidate states (Hughes 2008, 15).

Certain democratic credentials have been a prerequiste for EU membership since its inception and the emphasis on this identity has been increasing (Onis 2003, 10-12). Sener Akturk provides an interesting analysis for how identity has been framed within the European Union. He argues that there "the great majority of EU members, [...] have created a discursive frame wherein their national identities can be incorporated into a supra-nationalist European identity" (Akturk 2007, 352). The question of further expansion, has caused serious discussion to take place within Europe coorporately and more specifically within the individaul member states to determine what the "supra-nationalist European identity" truly means.
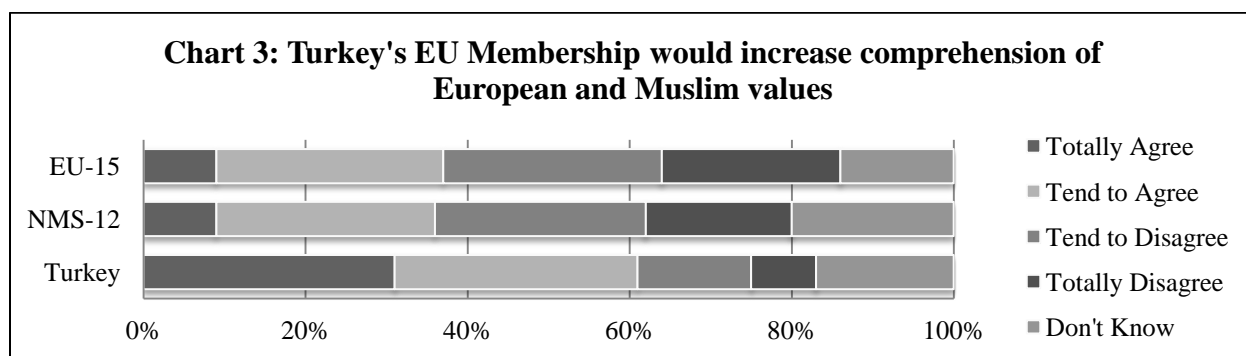
Europe's Identity: Thick or Thin?

The issue of what constitutes Europe's "cultural identity" is brought to the forefront by the debate over Turkey's membership, but the controversy is not caused by Turkey and exists independent of Turkey within Europe itself (Casanova 2004; Muftuler-Bac 2008). Jose Casanova approaches the topic from a sociological perspective and posits that the secularization thesis has become the lens through which European self-understanding has been shaped. This viewpoint sees a decline of religiosity as "normal" and "progressive." So when coupled with the "barely submerged Christian European identity" it makes serious issues of any religion at all, especially Islam in the form of Turkish accession and the increasing population of Muslim immigrants (Casanova 2004, 90). Two competing versions of European identity make this question particularly difficult. The two basic orientations are a "thick" Europe which shares cultural identity, sometimes equated with the idea of a "Christian Europe" or one that shares a common historical background, and a "thin" Europe sharing legalistic principles (rule of law, democracy, human rights, economic principles, etc.) that are attainable (Dostal, Akcali, Antonsich 2011, 167).[6] It is the internal debate over which version of European identity will prevail that may ultimately determine Turkey's place in relation to EU membership. The debate does not appear as if it will be finally determined by the political elite but rather by public opinion through the form of a referendum (Muftuler-Bac 2008, 202-203).

Dostal, Akcali, and Antonsich provide a helpful study by using principal component analysis to illuminate the public opinion data and determine how influential the identity question appears to be in the case of Turkey's accession. They use the data from the Eurobarometer surveys of 2005 and 2006 and isolate nine questions that most directly relate to the cultural

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[6]The cultural character and identity of Europe may be framed in a number of ways such as "national" vs. "post-national" but the "thick" and "thin" is adopted here in keeping with the terms used by Dostal, Akcali, and Antonsich in their study that particularly applies this question to the Turkish membership process.

identity question. Under this analysis Turkey is generally perceived as more of an issue than an asset. The negative feelings are also stronger in the older member states (EU-15) than in the newer member states (NMS-12). Interestingly, the one area where there was an absolute majority who perceived a commonality between Europe and Turkey was that Turkey partly belongs to Europe in terms of geography. In a question concerning how Turkey's membership would favor the comprehension of European and Muslim values (chart 3) nearly 2/3 in EU member states (both EU-15 and NMS-12) were unsure or skeptical of the value while Turks were largely optimistic (Dostal, Akcali, Antonsich 2011, 207-209).

Chart 3: Turkey's EU Membership would increase comprehension of European and Muslim values

	Totally Agree	Tend to Agree	Tend to Disagree	Totally Disagree	Don't Know

Source: Eurobarometer 64.2 in Dostal, Akcali, Antonsich 2011.

In their conclusion they see that the "thick" perception is such that membership would be opposed even if all conditions were met, especially among the older states (EU-15). This indicates there is a perception about "being" European versus "becoming" European and what would be necessary for full membership. It is the resolution of this identity question – both for Europe and for Turkey – that will ultimately determine Turkey's place in relation to the European Union.

Conclusion: Future Prospects

It is always dangerous to make prognostications, especially concerning a topic that has been as tenuous as Turkey's quest for European Union membership. However, certain topics can

be identified as crucial to reaching a final decision. These are areas that should be dealt with if the hope is to move towards an ultimate resolution rather than persisting in the game of diplomatic uncertainty. Among the first is a need for the clarification of the European Union's identity. If its membership is limited by certain terms, be they history, culture, geography, or even religion then this should be articulated and agreed upon by the member states. This would not necessarily limit the EU in terms of its impact or interaction with states which do not meet its criteria but it would alter the nature of the relationship from potential members to neighbors, valued partners, etc.[7] If the EU views itself as an organization constrained only by universal values then these values and the standards by which they are judged need to be clearly established. This concept of identity would need to be embraced by not only the candidate states but also by the member states as well. As the preceding section showed, European identity remains a contested issue that must be resolved in order for Turkey's membership to move forward.

While there is certainly a great amount of responsibility to be placed on the EU for its lack of clarity in relation to Turkey's membership, there are also changes to be made on the Turkish side as well. Specifically in terms of the relationship between religion and the state Turkey needs to reconsider its application of secularism. While joining the European Union does not necessitate a particular arrangement of church-state (as seen by the variety of relationships that exist) there are base commitments of freedom that must be respected. As Casanova draws

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[7] The idea of moving beyond simply a "member" vs. "non-member" discussion to considering the more variegated levels of relationship is a valuable step that should be considered in this discussion. Dostal, Akcali, and Antonsich (2011) look at six major zones of integration that exist in EU relationships. For one article that considers the variety of European institutions of which Turkey is already a member see Ziya Onis. 2003. "Domestic Politics, International Norms, and Challenges to the State: Turkey-EU Relations in the post-Helsinki Era." In *Turkey and the European Union: Domestic Politics, Economic Integration, and International Dynamics*, edited by Ali Carkoglu and Barry Rubin. London: Frank Cass and Company.

out, even if the state is based on modern secular republican principles but a majority of the population is not allowed public representation then it cannot possibly be a truly representative democracy (Casanova 2004, 92-94). The movement toward true democracy has been promising but it must continue to follow through on its promises. The religiously motivated actors must continue to demonstrate their commitment to democratic principles and that they are not a form of "creeping Islamism," just playing the democratic game as a cover of their real intentions. This will be done through ensuring a constitutional and institutional arrangement that preserves the secular nature of the state while allowing for the free and open exercise of religion in the public sphere. The potential incompatibility between the religious identity of Turkey and the EU is not Christianity versus Islam but freedom versus repression. As Turkey moves forward in its ability to allow the free expression of religion it will continue to bolster its own credentials as a state with a strong commitment to democratic values.

A final area that needs to be clarified is the accession process itself and Europe's capacity for further enlargement. There is a fear that Turkey will finally come ready with all of its obligations met only to be told it arrived too late or there is no more room. Also, there is ambiguity of whether acceptance will be based on adoption and implementation of the *acquis* and the Copenhagen criteria or if it will be ultimately a popular vote by the EU member countries. These questions lend an amount of uncertainty to the process of membership. While it may be beneficial to press for further clarification of the process until reforms are in place the answers will not be certain. However, the value of the reforms themselves, irrespective of final membership, should drive the process of change. Thus, Turkey as a both religious and strongly democratic state will be a valuable partner to the European Union whether full membership is realized or not.

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