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Deconstructing the EU's "Standards of Civilisation": The Case of Turkey

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ABSTRACT

Arguing that the European Union's (EU) imposition of its norms and values on Turkey is a continuation of the logic of "European standards of civilisation", this article offers a second reading of European discourses about Turkey. It regards enlargement conditionality as an apparatus through which the EU constructs its own identity as "ideal" and its others as imperfect. Thus, it attempts to deconstruct the EU's standards of civilisation through three major lines on which they are built: the authoritative application of standards, unequal treatment and a geopolitical approach – as set by Hartmut Behr in 2007.

Keywords: European Union, Turkey, Standards of Civilisation, Foreign Policy, Deconstruction

AB'nin "Medeniyet Standartları" nı Çözümlemek: Türkiye Örneği

ÖZET

Bu makale, Avrupa Birliği'nin (AB) norm ve değerlerini Türkiye'ye dayatmasının "Avrupa medeniyet standartları" mantığının bir devamı olduğunu savunarak, Türkiye hakkındaki Avrupa söylemlerinin ikinci bir okumasını yapmaktadır. Makale, genişleme şartlılığını AB'nin kendi kimliğini "ideal" ve ötekileri kusurlu olarak inşa etmekte kullandığı bir araç olarak görmektedir. Bu yüzden, AB'nin medeniyet standartlarını, üzerine kurulu oldukları üç temel hat üzerinden yapışöküme uğratmayı amaçlamaktadır. Hartmut Behr'in 2007 yılında ortaya koyduğu hatlar, standartların otoriter bir şekilde uygulanması, eşit olmayan muamele ve jeopolitik yaklaşımdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Avrupa Birliği, Türkiye, Medeniyet Standartları, Dış Politika, Yapışöküm

Introduction

EU-Turkey relations have recently lost their traditional track because they have been affected by various factors, such as some EU member states' reluctance for further enlargement, increasing populism and xenophobia in Europe, problems with democracy and human rights in Turkey, the 2016 failed coup in the country and the following state of emergency, and, the mass flow of refugees from Syria to Europe. It is necessary to investigate the different aspects of this relationship now, because EU policy on Turkey is no longer one which reflects the characteristics of a relationship between the Union and a candidate country.¹ The EU currently bases its policies concerning Turkey purely on security concerns and transactional relations rather than on economic and political transformation in the country – a manner, in which it treats its neighbours but usually not its candidates. The EU has also lost its conditionality credibility² and leverage in its relations with Turkey for several reasons, such as the ambiguity surrounding the country's membership prospects (mainly due to the use of the rhetoric of privileged partnership instead of full membership by some European leaders such as Sarkozy and Merkel), the Union's suspension of the opening of some chapters in the accession negotiations based on Turkey's decision not to extend its customs union with the EU to Cyprus³, and the Euro crisis. On the other hand, the exploitation of the possibility of Turkey's EU accession by the leave campaigners in the Brexit debates – through a deliberately exaggerated rhetoric hinging on disinformation⁴ – has manifested once again the importance of identity in EU-Turkey relations.

As the Brexit debates and rising right-wing populism have revealed, the identity aspect of the EU-Turkey relationship, which has been a salient topic especially among Christian Democrats/Conservatives for years, is now increasingly discussed in wider circles in Europe with reference to security (irregular/illegal immigration, the mass flow of refugees, etc.). However, this identity aspect has deeper roots that need to be revisited to understand the dynamics of EU-Turkey relations better.⁵ This article looks at a specific dimension of it, underlining the interplay between European foreign policy and identity in the Turkish case. It aims to provide a second reading; deconstructing the European standards of civilisation as employed in the case of Turkey.

Deconstruction, as taken up in this article, refers to a poststructuralist approach which traces the contradictions, tensions, and silences in the text, and reveals the binaries (civilised-uncivilised,

1 For a detailed account of the changed nature of EU-Turkey relations, see: Meltem Müftüler-Baç, "Turkey's Ambivalent Relationship with the European Union: To Accede or not to Accede", *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, Vol. 13, No 52, 2016, pp. 89-103; and Meltem Müftüler-Baç, "Remolding the Turkey-EU Relationship", *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Vol. 17, No 1, 2018, pp. 119-128.

2 On the credibility of the EU's conditionality, see: Beken Saatçioğlu, "Revisiting the Role of Credible EU Membership Conditionality for EU Compliance: The Turkish Case", *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, Vol. 8, No 31, 2011, pp. 23-44.

3 Turkey does not recognize the Republic of Cyprus as a state.

4 James Ker-Lindsay, "Turkey's EU accession as a factor in the 2016 Brexit referendum", *Turkish Studies*, Vol.19, No 1, 2018, pp.1-22; James Ker-Lindsay, "Did the unfounded claim that Turkey was about to join the EU swing the Brexit referendum?", *LSE Blog*, 15 February 2018, <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/unfounded-claim-turkey-swing-brexit-referendum/>, (Accessed 12 June 2018).

5 On the identity aspect of EU-Turkey Relations, see: Iver B. Neumann, *Uses of the Other – "The East" in European Identity Formation*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1999; Senem Aydın-Düzgüt, *Constructions of European Identity – Debates and Discourses on Turkey and the EU*, Hampshire and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012; Bahar Rumelili, "Turkey: Identity, Foreign Policy, and Socialization in a Post-Enlargement Europe", *European Integration*, Vol. 33, No 2, 2011, pp.235-249.

ideal-imperfect, etc.) that the text produces.⁶ The analysis here is directed towards disclosing these binaries rather than displacing them, with a view to manifesting the Euro-centric and exclusionary nature of the European discourse on Turkey.

EU conditionality functions through the imposition of a set of European standards on others. This usually cannot induce political transformation and internalisation of values such as respect for democracy and human rights in target countries, but rather remains an exercise in identity construction, reproducing EU-Europe's (EUrope's) "ideal" self vis-à-vis its "imperfect" others. Investigating how the EU's enlargement conditionality imposed on Turkey is a continuation of the standard of civilisation logic pursued by Europeans for accepting certain countries to the international society in the 17th-19th centuries; this article argues that the European standards of civilisation, as applied today, help the reproduction of the "ideal" European self vis-à-vis its Turkish other.

Over 90 public statements made on Turkey by EU officials, the Members of European Parliament (MEPs), and European leaders in the period 1999-2015 have been examined in this study – starting with the date of official EU candidacy of Turkey in 1999 and ending with December 2015; before the failed coup attempt of July 2016 and the following state of emergency changed the dynamics of EU-Turkey relations further. The examples selected from among the public statements are those which represent the three features of the EU's standards of civilisation as put forward by Hartmut Behr⁷:

“first, the general self-perception of European states as those who *authoritatively* define the standards; second, the regulations which define different steps and paces of cooperation between European and non-European states [*unequal treaties*]; and finally a *geopolitical model* projecting a world order with European states at the centre and zones of less politically developed states at the peripheries.”⁸

Within such a framework, this article first defines the concept of “the standards of civilisation” as a marker of difference (i.e. of European identity) and of ideal characteristics of the EU. Then, it moves on to an analysis of how the European standards of civilisation have been invoked in Europe's relations with Turkey, in history as well as today. Third, discourse of the European standards of civilisation as employed in EU-Turkey relations is deconstructed via a second reading.

The European Standards of Civilisation and the EU

The construction of Europe as “ideal” – i.e. *civilised*, normative, superior – is not new. It can be traced back to the 16th century, with the employment of the “standards of civilisation” discourse that made a “legal distinction between *civilised* and *uncivilised* peoples”⁹. The construction of the grand narrative

6 “First reading” gives the intended meaning of a text by its author. “Second reading” pertains to interpretation of the reader based on the tensions, contradictions, and silences in the text. For more on deconstruction, see: Maja Zehfuss, “Jacques Derrida”, Jenny Edkins and Nick Vaughan-Williams (eds.), *Critical Theorists and International Relations*, London and New York, Routledge, 2009, pp. 137-149.

7 Seeking only these three features in the data examined for this study has surely limited the selection of examples to a certain number. Because this is an interpretivist/poststructuralist study, only those examples which the author found the most relevant/representative were used.

8 Hartmut Behr, “The European Union in the Legacies of Imperial Rule? EU Accession Politics Viewed from a Historical Comparative Perspective”, *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 13, No 2, 2007, p. 240. Emphases added.

9 Brett Bowden, “In the name of Progress and Peace: The “Standard of Civilization” and the Universalizing Project”, *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, Vol. 29, No 1, 2004, p. 51.

of “international society” refers to a *one-way process* where *the core* (Europe/the West) influences the periphery.¹⁰ Just like the aim of the European international society in the 19th century to change non-European countries “which sought to enter it,”¹¹ the EU also attempts to transform the countries which seek membership in the Union. The relations between the “civilised” Europeans and the “barbarian/savage” others of the past are similar to those pursued between the “ideal”/“civilised” Europe and its “imperfect”/“uncivilised” others today: The aim of transforming the “uncivilised” into a “civilised” form is still on track, through EU discourse and practices.

The Standard of Civilisation as a Marker of (European) Identity

The practice of “standards of civilisation” is an identity-construction exercise, where the difference of the self from the other is made on the basis not only of “geography” or “history of interaction” but also of “cultural values that make insiders different from, and in many ways superior to, outsiders”¹². Gerrit Gong asserts: “Those who fulfil the requirements of a particular society’s standard of civilization are brought inside its circle of ‘civilized’ members, while those who do not so conform are left outside as ‘not civilized’ or possibly ‘uncivilized.’”¹³

“Civilisation” is also a marker of difference. It is “of considerable power that is used both to commend and condemn,”¹⁴ distinguishing between those who possess higher values and standards and those who do not. The “civilisation” speech act is utilized “both to describe and shape reality”¹⁵. Furthermore, it has been employed to legitimize the acts of those who intervene in the affairs of others that are deemed to lack the values and standards of “civilised” communities. The term was used “in the imperial context – as both endorsement and critique of the process of European expansion” and “[i]n the nineteenth century, ‘civilization’ was taken to represent a mission of homogenization and ‘improvement’”¹⁶. In “imperial ideology” this meant the ‘civilizing mission’¹⁷.

The concept of “civilisation” had especially been constitutive of European identity, as it was originally a *European* construct. The “civilization-barbarism dichotomy” rested “[t]o a large degree [...] upon the construction of a distinctive and cultural identity and lifestyle that was claimed for Europe and Europeans”¹⁸. The notion of “standard of civilisation” embodied “cultural and/or religious identity markers” for Europeans especially before 1945¹⁹. Furthermore, Salter argues:

10 Iver B. Neumann and Jennifer M. Welsh, “The Other in European self-definition: an addendum to the literature on international society”, *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 17, 1991, p. 327.

11 Gerrit W. Gong, *The Standard of “Civilization” in International Society*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1984, p.4. Gong defines a standard of civilisation as “an expression of the assumptions, tacit and explicit, used to distinguish those that belong to a particular society from those that do not”. *Ibid.*

12 Jack Donnelly, “Human rights: a new standard of civilisation?”, *International Affairs*, Vol. 74, No 1, 1998, p. 2.

13 Gong, *The Standard of “Civilization”*, p. 3.

14 Brett Bowden, *The Empire of Civilization: The Evolution of an Imperial Ide*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2009, p. 8.

15 *Ibid.*

16 Mark B. Salter, *Barbarians and Civilization in International Relations*, London and Sterling, Pluto Press, 2002, p. 15.

17 *Ibid.*

18 Edward Keene, “Social status, social closure and the idea of Europe as a ‘normative power’”, *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 19, No 4, 2013, p. 951.

19 Barry Buzan, *From International to World Society? English School Theory and the Social Structure of Globalisation*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 192.

"[Civilization] also came to represent European states as a group. European nations – as exemplified by the Covenant of the League of Nations – saw themselves as the 'civilized' world in stark contrast to the savage and barbaric worlds. Laws of warfare and the treaties of international organizations were based on the tacit or explicit value consensus which 'European civilization' represented."²⁰

This superior (civilised) identity constructed against the inferior "savage"/"barbarian" (uncivilised) others empowered the Europeans to set the standards of international politics. This also had a geopolitical aspect because the "rules about a 'standard of civilisation' [had generally been] spread from a sub-global core by a mixture of means in which coercion is often prominent"²¹. In Barry Buzan's view, such coercive practices, albeit less militarised, can still be observed today, and "can most clearly be seen in action in the operation of 'conditionality' imposed on periphery states by the core whether in relation to applications for NATO, EU or WTO membership or bids for loans from the IMF and the World Bank"²².

The Standard of Civilisation as a Marker of the "Ideal" Characteristics of the EU

The representation of Europe as model to be followed – an exemplar which has a claim to be inherently possessing universal values and norms – endows it with the legitimacy to project those values and norms onto others – i.e., the legitimacy to set the standards for others. Russell Foster asserts:

"And now we Europeans increasingly renounce universalism through maps which proclaim not only that there remains a barbaric wilderness lurking beyond our frontiers and that it is our duty and destiny to encompass a new *civitas orbis Europaeum*, but also that we must unite against the barbarians who will not be drawn into our orbit simply because *They* are not like *Us*: while *We* must impose our norms upon those deemed worthy of admission, because *We* are the standard by which *They* will be measured."²³

Referring to Europe's self-proclaimed "status as an exemplar and guardian of civilisation" Foster reveals how the EU draws new boundaries on civilizational lines through the construction of Europe in ideal terms²⁴. He argues that the EU "issues maps which proudly proclaim that it is inevitable, that it is good, and that like the Imperium of the Early Middle Ages, only the Union has the legitimacy, authority, prestige, and right of Empire"²⁵. The EU's self-proclaimed duty as the "guardian of civilisation" in Foster's terms is no different than the duty of the Western "white" man who colonized the non-Western parts of the world based on the belief that the *imperium* is "a protracted, almost metaphysical obligation to rule subordinate, inferior or less advanced peoples"²⁶. Reminding us of the distinction between the colonizer and the colonized and the reflections of their relationship

20 Salter, *Barbarians and Civilization*, 15. Stivachtis argues: "In the process of European expansion, non-European 'infidels' or 'savages' played a decisive role in the evolution of European identity and in the maintenance of order among European states. As the sense of the specifically European character of the society of states increased, so did the sense of its cultural differentiation from what existed beyond itself." Yannis A. Stivachtis, "Civilization and international society: the case of European Union expansion", *Contemporary Politics*, Vol. 14, No 1, 2008, p. 73.

21 Buzan, *From International to World Society?*, p. 150.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 105.

23 Russell Foster, *Mapping European Empire: Tabulae Imperii Europaei*, Oxon and New York, Routledge, 2015, p. 185.

24 *Ibid.*

25 *Ibid.*

26 Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, New York Vintage Books, 1994, p. 10.

today; the standards of civilisation logic also has “its bearing upon cultural attitudes in the present”²⁷. In other words, the representation of the EU as “ideal”²⁸ gives it the right to impose its own values and norms on others just as it had been the case in imperial times. This refers to a “hierarchical” relationship, an “inequality”, which is “once codified into the ‘standard of civilisation’ but persisted even after colonialism”²⁹.

The Standard of Civilisation as Practiced by the EU

Behr points to “strong commonalities” between the “accession politics of the EU and the ‘standards of civilization’ developed by European nations in the 19th century”.³⁰ Similarly, Yannis Stivachtis argues that EU “membership conditionality” constitutes “a historical continuation of [the old European practices associated with the standard of ‘civilization’]”.³¹ Edward Keene underlines the “prestige” attached to “the EU’s ‘normative difference’ in international relations” claiming that the EU “still draws on that legacy created in the 19th century”.³² In other words, the EU’s normative “international identity” is based on “a set of principles that had already been established as a central part of the structure of international society” and the Union uses “the cultural capital that was gradually accumulated over the two centuries before its foundation”.³³

Behr defines the three general features of the standards of civilisation which also constitute “an integral part of EU accession politics”, as follows³⁴: During a state’s candidacy and/or its accession negotiations, the EU *authoritatively* decides the standards that the candidate/negotiating country must adopt. This means that there is an asymmetrical relationship between the EU and the candidate countries. Second, the candidate countries are not subjected to the same criteria and they are offered different paces of integration with the Union. This amounts to *unequal treatment* if not unequal treaties. Finally, there is “a *geopolitical* projection of core EU member states and peripheral zones on the outside”³⁵.

It is possible to find similarities between the requirements for expanding the European international society in the 19th century and the EU’s enlargement conditionality. Gong lists the requirements of the 19th century as: guaranteeing basic rights, especially those of foreign nationals; having an organized political bureaucracy with the efficiency to run the state; general adherence to international law; and maintaining a domestic system of courts, codes and published laws which guarantee legal justice for foreigners and citizens alike, etc.³⁶ Another requirement which is underlined

27 Ibid., p. 17.

28 Münevver Cebeci, “European Foreign Policy Research Reconsidered: Constructing an ‘Ideal Power Europe’ through Theory?” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 40, No 3, 2012, pp. 563-583.

29 Pinar Bilgin, *The International in Security, Security in the International*. Oxon and New York, Routledge, 2016, p. 138.

30 Behr, “The European Union in the Legacies of Imperial Rule?”, p. 239. These commonalities are explained below.

31 Stivachtis, “Civilization and international society”, p. 80. Elsewhere, Stivachtis refers to the political conditionality in EU and NATO enlargements as a substitute for the “standard of civilization”. Yannis A. Stivachtis, “Democracy, the Highest Stage of ‘Civilised’ Statehood”, *Global Dialogue*, Vol. 8, No 3-4, 2006, p. 13, <https://www.worlddialogue.org/content.php?id=388>, (Accessed 1 September 2013).

32 Keene, “Social status”, p. 951.

33 Ibid., p. 952.

34 Behr, “The European Union in the Legacies of Imperial Rule?”, p. 240.

35 Ibid. Emphasis added.

36 Gong, *The Standard of ‘Civilization’*, pp. 14-15

by Gong is conforming “to the accepted norms and practices of the “civilized” international society”.³⁷ The EU also sets similar standards for accession. EU Treaties³⁸ and the Copenhagen Criteria³⁹, by naming the values on which the Union is founded and determining the conditions for entering it, all construct a specific identity for the EU. The Union is represented almost as an “ideal power” embracing and promoting universal values whereas its others are automatically/naturally regarded as failing to pursue them.⁴⁰ The EU is, thus, there to “help” others achieve normative standards. Diez argues: “[T]he values and identity necessary for normative power to operate are constructed through processes of othering that represent the EU as a force for the good, and others as deviant from this normative standard and therefore to be changed.”⁴¹

On the other hand, some EU member states themselves cannot achieve the standards that the candidates must fulfil for entering the EU. Respecting minority rights is an example in this regard. The EU itself does not still have a minority rights regime and some members, such as France and Greece, are reluctant to give minorities the rights that the Union asks from candidate countries⁴². Diez asserts that accession criteria “set explicit standards for new EU members” and “specified an identity of the EU that had not previously existed as such”.⁴³ In other words, the EU “had not only enlarged but also specified its own values in the process”⁴⁴. Turkey has been expected to fulfil political criteria, some of which the EU member states themselves were not willing or able to meet. In this practice, Turkey has usually been represented by the Europeans as a country which needs the EU’s guidance⁴⁵ for achieving European standards. This had automatically put the EU into a dominant/dictating position in their relationship, especially in the period between December 1999 (when it was officially declared as a candidate for membership) and December 2006 (when the EU Council blocked the opening of eight accession negotiation chapters).

37 Ibid., p.15. Gong gave the examples of suttee, polygamy, and slavery for “uncivilised”/unacceptable behaviour. Ibid. The content of “uncivilised” behaviour was decided by the “civilised” international society and anything that they found “different” could be listed as uncivilised and unacceptable. Ibid.

38 Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) defines the values on which the Union is founded: “respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities”. European Commission, “Consolidated versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union”, *Official Journal of the European Union* 2008/C 115/01, 9 May 2008. Reminding the definition of the international society in 19th centuries, the article stipulates: “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.” On the accession of new countries to the EU, Article 49 of the TEU states: “Any European State which respects the values referred to in Article 2 and is committed to promoting them may apply to become a member of the Union.” Ibid. Emphases added.

39 The three criteria for EU accession set by the Copenhagen European Council of 1993 are: stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities; the existence of a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union; and ability to take on the obligations of membership, including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union. Council of the European Union, “Conclusions of the Presidency, European Council in Copenhagen, 21-22 June 1993”, SN 180/1/93 REV 1, 21-22 June 1993, https://consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/72921.pdf, (Accessed 13 September 2013).

40 Cebeci, “European Foreign Policy Research”.

41 Thomas Diez, “The Paradoxes of Europe’s Borders”, *Comparative European Politics* Vol. 4, 2006, p. 244.

42 France and Greece have not signed the European Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) which was opened for signature in 1995 and Greece has not signed and France has not ratified (signed in 1999) the Charter on Minority and Regional Languages.

43 Diez, “The Paradoxes of Europe’s Borders”, p. 244.

44 Ibid., p. 245.

45 For an analysis of such construction, see, Aydın-Düzgüt, *Constructions of European Identity*.

Turkey and the European Standards of Civilization

Behr's three features of the European standards of civilisation can easily be observed in Turkey's relations with Europe, both in its history and at present. First, starting from the 17th century onwards, Europeans determined the rules of their relationship with the Ottomans *authoritatively* – in an asymmetrical way. Paul T. Levin argues that “[t]he *Sick Man* image” of the Ottoman Empire “was constitutive of” a European identity which “represented an order based on the emerging ‘civil’ code of conduct between ‘civilized’ states, or civilization in all the senses of the word”.⁴⁶ In his view, “one of these was an expansive and normative sense: civilization as a description of the ‘white man’s burden’”, and, “[t]he confident and inclusive/expansive European self-image at play here was part of a comic meta-narrative of progress in which Europe played the leading role as the protagonist who struggles to extend civilization to the barbarians”.⁴⁷

The Ottoman Empire could only be accepted into the European state system with the Paris Peace Treaty of 1856, on the condition that Sultan Abdülmecid I adopted a set of political and economic reforms – listed in the document entitled the Rescript of Reforms, the text of which was also included in the Treaty. With the Rescript, the Sultan granted equal rights to non-Muslim minorities and improved the ecclesiastical rights of the Christian communities in the Empire.⁴⁸ This asymmetrical relationship is not very different from EU-Turkey relations which are mainly based on enlargement conditionality pursued via the Copenhagen Criteria.

Second, the Ottoman Empire was subjected to *unequal treaties*⁴⁹ by the Europeans who sought commercial and juridical privileges for their citizens (especially merchants) from the Empire. Later, this took the form of additional privileges for non-Muslim minorities within the Empire, as the rivalry among European powers on promoting the rights of Christian communities grew. Turkey may no longer be subjected to unequal treaties, but it has suffered from *unequal treatment* by the EU. For example, the amount of financial aid provided to Poland during its candidacy for fulfilling accession criteria (such as democratization) far more exceeded the aid provided to Turkey in the same period.⁵⁰

Third, just like the Ottoman Empire, Turkey is regarded as Europe's periphery in geographical terms; forming a part of the outer circles around the core. Valéry Giscard d'Estaing's famous statement on Turkey is an example: “Turkey is a country that is close to Europe, an important country, [...] but it is not a European country. [...] Its capital is not in Europe, 95% of its population are outside Europe [.]”⁵¹

46 Paul T. Levin, *Turkey and the European Union – Christian and Secular Images of Islam*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, p. 163. Emphasis original.

47 Ibid.

48 For the text of the Rescript, see: Boğaziçi University, *Rescript of Reform – Islahat Fermanı* (18 February 1856), Atatürk Institute of Modern Turkish History, year n/a, <https://www.anayasa.gen.tr/reform.htm> (Accessed 19 May 2016).

49 On unequal treaties, see: Eliana Augusti, “From Capitulations to Unequal Treaties: The Matter of an Extraterritorial Jurisdiction in the Ottoman Empire”, *Journal of Civil Law Studies*, Vol. 4, No2, 2011, pp. 285-307.

50 Helene Sjursen, “Why Expand? The Question of Justification in the EU's Enlargement Policy”, *ARENA Working Papers*, WP 01/6, 2001, https://www.sv.uio.no/arena/english/research/publications/arena-publications/workingpapers/workingpapers2001/wp01_6.htm (Accessed 15 August 2014).

51 Arnaud Leparmentier and Laurent Zecchini, “Pour ou contre l'adhésion de la Turquie à l'Union européenne”, *Le Monde*, 8 November 2002, http://www.lemonde.fr/europe/article/2002/11/08/pour-ou-contre-l-adhesion-de-la-turquie-a-l-union-europeenne_297386_3214.html, (Accessed 25 June 2016).

The Ottomans were regarded as Europe's "dominant other in the history of the European state system".⁵² Even though the Ottoman Empire had been categorically placed in Europe with the Paris Treaty of 1856, European othering and unequal treatment continued, and, "Turkey [...] did not achieve full equality of rights within international society until the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923."⁵³ Since its 1959 application to the EEC to have an association agreement, Turkey has been subjected to unequal treatment again. The imposition of the European "standards of civilisation" on Turkey has continued through EC/EU conditionality; especially through criteria based on observance of democracy and human rights. Referring to such "historical continuity", Rumelili contends: "Turkey's present position in ERS [European regional international society] – an integral part of that society, yet not included in its core organization – bears strong historical parallels to the Ottoman Empire being in but not of Europe."⁵⁴

The EU's Standard of Civilisation and EU-Turkey Relations: A Second Reading

A typical example of the discourse used by the opposers of Turkey's EU membership (especially European Christian Democrats) is the following statement: "Turkey is not a part of Europe and will never be part of Europe [...] The universal values which are also fundamental values of Christianity, will lose vigour with the entry of a large Islamic country such as Turkey."⁵⁵ This statement clearly establishes Turkey as the other of Europe on religious lines and identifies universal values with Christian values. It also puts Turkey and its Islamic identity into an inferior position through the claim that universal values "will lose vigour" with the country's accession to the EU. It also refers to a positive construction of the European-self vis-à-vis its other.

There are two main strands of approaching Turkey in Europe: opposing Turkey's membership on the basis of its *difference* from Europe, and, supporting Turkey's membership on the premise that the EU "helps" "civilise" Turkey.⁵⁶ Although these may seem as different from each other, they are mainly drawn from the same belief that Turkey is backward, undemocratic, uncivilised, etc. – i.e. unequal and inferior. This builds on the construction of the country as the other of Europe, when the European standard of civilisation had first emerged in the 16th-17th centuries. Today, the European standards of civilisation logic is employed either to oppose Turkey's membership altogether or to support it through the logic of civilising the country.

52 Neumann, *Uses of the Other*, p. 39.

53 Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society – A Study of Order in World Politics*, 2nd ed, London, Macmillan, 1995, pp. 13-14. Pinar Bilgin asserts that setting the major goal of the Turkish Republic as reaching the level of contemporary civilization was a response to Europe's imposition of the standards of civilisation. Pinar Bilgin, "Securing Turkey through western-oriented foreign policy", *New Perspectives on Turkey*, Vol. 40, 2009, pp. 114-119. The Europeans made their "claim to better rule" through characterising themselves as "civilised" and in such "an unequal setting where the hierarchical binaries of western/eastern or civilized/less-than-civilised were defined by the powerful, feigning similarity, seemingly becoming and being modern, civilised, western often emerged as a primal form of response". Ibid., p.115. Also see: Pinar Bilgin, "The Securityness of Secularism? The Case of Turkey", *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 39, No 6, 2008, pp. 593-614.

54 Rumelili, "Turkey: Identity, Foreign Policy", p. 239.

55 Tony Barber, "Van Rompuy against Turkey membership", *Financial Times*, 19 November 2009, <https://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/11c93616-d4fb-11de-8ec4-00144feabdc0.html#axzz43MZJUBe> (Accessed 25 September 2015). Herman Van Rompuy made this speech just before he became the European Council President in 2009.

56 Senem Aydın-Düzgüt refers to "two main representations of Turkey in democratization debates": "as a statically undemocratic country incapable of [or resistant to] change", and, "as an undemocratic country capable of change under democratic assistance". Aydın-Düzgüt, *Constructions of European Identity*, p. 67.

Authoritative Imposition of Standards

The claim to possess higher/universal values and norms gives Europeans the right/legitimacy to impose their own standards on others.⁵⁷ These standards are defined and imposed *authoritatively* – through EU conditionality. This means “unilateral” definition and “hierarchical” and “unidirectional” enforcement of standards by the EU; marking a top-down/asymmetrical relationship between the Union and the candidate countries.⁵⁸ The discourse used by European officials and MEPs reflects such an authoritative approach. José Manuel Barroso stated in 2004, before he became the President of the European Commission:

“What is being discussed at the moment is the launch of (membership) negotiations. It is Turkey that has to adapt to the rules of the European Union, not Europe to Turkey’s rules. [...] That’s not interference (in its domestic affairs). A country wants to join. It has to accept the rules.”⁵⁹ The European Commissioner responsible for Enlargement in 2010, Olli Rehn, also put the EU in a dictating/authoritative position when he stated: “We also see developments that give reason for concern, and when this is the case, we raise these issues in a very serious manner with the Turkish authorities and we use those instruments that we have, thanks to the conditionality of the EU accession perspective.”⁶⁰

Naming the recognition of “inalienable principles and values” as “a prerequisite for the entry of any state” to the EU, Barbara Matera, a Christian Democrat MEP (European People’s Party) stated:

“This also applies to Turkey, which *must* implement those reforms that are necessary to guarantee democracy, the rule of law, and the protection of human rights and the rights of minorities. In particular, cultural, religious and political pluralism are the foundations of a democratic society, but recognising them is a difficult process which is intertwined with historical, ethnic and religious considerations.”⁶¹

Matera’s speech shows the EU’s authoritative approach, repeating the logic of standards of civilisation – a club mentality, in a sense. Reflecting on the Danish perceptions of Turkey’s EU candidacy, Dietrich Jung states: “it is Turkey as an applicant that wants to join a beneficial club and Brussels should carefully scrutinize that the country fully lives up to European standards before joining the EU.”⁶² The authoritative imposition of standards through a club logic – a club which possesses higher standards that are hard to fulfil – enhances the image of the EU as a normative/

57 Ian Manners argues that it is the EU’s “normative difference” which enables it to define what is “normal”. Ian Manners, “Normative Power Europe, A Contradiction in Terms?” *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 40, No 2, 2002, pp. 235-258.

58 Kalypso Nicolaidis, et al., “From Metropolis to Microcosmos: The EU’s New Standards of Civilisation”, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 42, No 3, 2014, p. 737.

59 “Barroso: Turkey must meet all EU criteria for entry”, *Hürriyet Daily News*, 22 September 2004, <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/barroso-turkey-must-meet-all-eu-criteria-for-entry.aspx?pageID=438&n=barroso-turkey-must-meet-all-eu-criteria-for-entry-2004-09-22> (Accessed 13 May 2016).

60 European Parliament, “Democratization in Turkey (Debate)”, *Debates*, Strasbourg, 20 January 2010, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=CRE&reference=20100120&secondRef=ITEM-014&format=XML&language=EN> (Accessed 30 September 2013).

61 European Parliament, “Democratization in Turkey (Debate)”. Emphasis added.

62 Dietrich Jung, “Danish Stakeholders in the EU-Turkey Debate”, Nathalie Tocci (ed.), *Talking Turkey in Europe: Towards a Differentiated Communication Strategy*, Roma, Istituto Affari Internazionali, 2008, p. 109.

civilising actor⁶³ vis-à-vis an imperfect Turkey. Matera's emphasis that embracing European values is a "difficult process" for Turkey because of its "historical, ethnic and religious" characteristics is a clear example in this regard.

Unequal Treatment

Unequal treatment refers, first, to the top-down/asymmetrical relationship between "standard-setters" (EU members) and "standard-takers" (candidate countries)⁶⁴. Second, unequal treatment, as suggested by Behr, also refers to the EU's differentiated approach towards candidate countries. Kalypso Nicolaidis et al. assert: "[p]rospective members' chances are ranked according to a scale of the EU's own (subjective) making. Not all candidacies for membership are created equal."⁶⁵

It is not easy to come across official statements comparing Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs) and Turkey and to trace the reflections of *unequal treatment* in the EU's discourse. Silences in the texts, rather than blatant comparisons, reveal the EU's differential treatment in this regard. For example, the "return to Europe" rhetoric⁶⁶, which was intensively used for the accession process of the CEECs, was totally absent in the Turkish case. To the contrary, the European debate on Turkey has mainly been shaped by the discourse on Turkey's being non-European. One of the very rare examples of speech comparing the case of Turkey with another accession country – Croatia – is by MEP Elmar Brok:

"Deficits still exist in both countries; however it is, [...], rather difficult to imagine that Turkey in the near future will be ready to enter the European Union. [...] Turkey doesn't fulfill the necessary vital criteria: Reforms need to be made in the fields of human rights, constitutional legality, [etc.]. Also the EU has to be ready to admit a country like Turkey. For this, there has to be a majority. In comparison, the accession talks with Croatia could be finalised by 2009."⁶⁷

When Brok made this statement in 2008, Croatia allegedly had wide-spread corruption, and, there were significant problems about minority rights (especially the rights of Serbs and Roma minority), as openly stated in the European Commission's Progress Report.⁶⁸ Brok was rather silent about them. In another and more revealing speech at a Parliamentary debate, Brok contended, opposing Olli Rehn: "The Commissioner's idea that Turkey's accession process should be made 'irreversible', oversteps the agreed negotiation framework which clearly states that negotiations with Turkey will be

63 On the receiving end of the EU's normative power, there is also "a certain segment" of Turkish society which embraces the "idyllic" representations of EUrope and still perceives the EU as representing "civilisation" and possessing higher standards, especially in terms of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Senem Aydın-Düzgüt, "Legitimizing Europe in Contested Settings: Europe as a Normative Power in Turkey?", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 56, No 3, 2018, pp. 621-622.

64 Nicolaidis, et al., "From Metropolis to Microcosmos", p. 737.

65 Ibid., pp. 737-738.

66 On the "return to Europe" rhetoric and Western Europe's feeling of "collective guilt" concerning the CEECs, see: Ainius Lasas, *European Union and NATO Expansion – Central and Eastern Europe*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

67 "Interview with MEP Elmar Brok", *Europe News*, 13 February 2008, <https://en.europenews.dk/Interview-with-MEP-Elmar-Brok-80684.html>, (Accessed 18 May 2016).

68 European Commission, "Croatia 2008 Progress Report, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2008-2009", COM(2008) 674, 5 November 2008, https://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/press_corner/key-documents/reports_nov_2008/croatia_progress_report_en.pdf (Accessed 24 August 2014).

held open-ended. [...] Rehn is destroying the trust in the enlargement process as such.”⁶⁹ Brok further asserted “that his criticism does not account for Croatia, which has made remarkable progress and shall therefore be a Member of the European Union as soon as possible.”⁷⁰ Croatia and Turkey started accession negotiations on the same day in 2005 and the EU’s claim was that all acceding countries were treated equally. However, this was not the case either in discourse or in practice.⁷¹

Geopolitical Approach

European supporters of Turkey’s EU membership and its opposers, all, use the language of geopolitics. They both underline Turkey’s importance “as geostrategic partner”; but, for the opposers, this should not overshadow Turkey’s cultural difference (in the case of Christian democrats) and its problems with democracy and human rights (in the case of socialists).⁷² The opposers further underline Turkey’s geographical difference which, in the view of rightists, also signifies a cultural difference. They refer to the country’s borders with Iran, Iraq and Syria to claim that Turkey’s EU accession would mean exporting the instabilities and insecurities of the Middle East into the Union.⁷³

The emphasis on Turkey’s Mediterranean-ness is especially significant in this geopolitical approach. Nicolas Sarkozy’s speech for introducing the Mediterranean Union plan openly reflects this:

“It is in view of this Mediterranean Union that we must consider the relationship between Europe and Turkey. Because Europe cannot expand indefinitely. Europe, if it is to have an identity, must have borders and, thus, limits. Europe, [...] cannot be diluted incessantly. [...] Turkey has no place in the European Union because it is not a European country. But Turkey is a large Mediterranean country with which Mediterranean Europe can advance the unity of the Mediterranean. This is the great common goal that I would like to propose to Turkey.”⁷⁴

Labelling Turkey as “a large Mediterranean country” locates it at the periphery which needs to be stabilized for European interests. The Southern and Eastern Mediterranean is highly securitised

69 EPP Group in the European Parliament, “Progress Reports: Rehn has overstepped his mandate - Elmar Brok MEP”, *Press Release*, 06 November 2008, <https://arc.eppgroup.eu/press/showpr.asp?prcontrolldoctypeid=1&prcontrolid=7991&prcontentid=13889&prcontentlg=en> (Accessed 24 August 2014).

70 Ibid.

71 The negotiating frameworks of the two countries, both, referred to the negotiations as “an open-ended process”, nevertheless, in Croatia’s document there was a disclaimer that “by their very nature” the negotiations were open ended. Aydın-Düzgüt interprets this as a sign of unequal treatment because “without the disclaimer”, this statement went “beyond a mere matter of rhetoric for the case of Turkey”. Senem Aydın-Düzgüt, *Seeking Kant in the EU’s Relations with Turkey*, Istanbul, TESEV Publications, 2006, p.6. Aydın-Düzgüt also underlines a statement in Turkey’s negotiating framework, which is absent in Croatia’s: “while having full regard to all Copenhagen criteria, including the absorption capacity of the Union, if Turkey is not in a position to assume in full all the obligations of membership it must be ensured that Turkey is fully anchored in the European structures through the strongest possible bond.” Ibid. See: European Commission, “Negotiating Framework” 3 October 2005, https://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/turkey/st20002_05_tr_framedoc_en.pdf (Accessed 30 September 2013).

72 Hanna-Lisa Hauge, “Germany”, *FEUTURE EU 28 Country Report*, March 2017, p.3. https://www.feuture.uni-koeln.de/sites/feuture/pdf/Germany_28_Country_Report.pdf, (Accessed 25 September 2018). See, also: Nicolas Monceau, “French Perceptions”, (ed.) Sait Akşit, Özgehan Şenyuva and Çiğdem Üstün, *Turkey Watch – EU Member States’ Perceptions on Turkey’s Accession to the EU*, Ankara, Centre for European Studies, Middle East Technical University, 2010, p.18.

73 Aydın-Düzgüt, *Constructions of European Identity*, pp. 52-63.

74 “Les discours des présidents Nicolas Sarkozy - Nicolas Sarkozy, Discours à Toulon”, *Discours*, 7 February 2007, <https://sites.univ-provence.fr/veronis/Discours2007/transcript.php?n=Sarkozy&p=2007-02-07> (Accessed 16 May 2015). Translated by the author. Emphasis added.

through a discourse of “instability and chaos”⁷⁵ and “threats”⁷⁶ such as illegal immigration, terrorism and conflicts. It is also portrayed as a region where problems with democracy and human rights caused by cultural traits prevail.⁷⁷ Therefore, locating Turkey in a region which is regarded as “the non-European” Mediterranean means constructing the country as part of a geography which “cannot” set the standards of civilisation but can only be subjected to them.⁷⁸

Supporters of Turkey’s EU membership also use the geopolitical approach. Gerhard Schröder states:

“[...] Turkey’s entry into the EU will be a gain for Europe [...] above all, in terms of security policy. [...] Turkey, in an important position on the interface between Europe and Asia, can also enhance Europe’s political standing in the world. But the vital point in considering the increased security resulting from accession is, that democratic Turkey, committed to European values, is a clear proof, that there is no contradiction between Islamic faith and a modern society. Turkey is a model for other Muslim countries in our European neighbourhood.”⁷⁹

To support Turkey’s membership, Schröder employs all markers of difference that are used by the opposers of Turkey’s EU accession; referring to Turkey as a country “on the interface between Europe and Asia” and using the dichotomy of “Islam versus democracy”. Furthermore, naming Turkey as a “model for other Muslim countries” inevitably constructs it as an anomaly to the Muslim world. Muslim countries are regarded as backward/undemocratic/conflictual (their otherness is sustained) by nature, whereas Turkey is (or “should be”) given the prospect of EU membership because it represents an anomaly to where it “actually” belongs. Thus, it is still represented as the other – albeit anomalous – that has the potential to become a part of the self – only if it accepts the standards set by the Europeans.

In 1999, European Commissioner Günter Verheugen supported Turkey’s candidacy also through a geopolitical approach: “there are the geopolitical and strategic arguments that make it imperative to support Turkey’s *affiliation* with Europe”⁸⁰. The employment of the term “affiliation”

75 Michelle Pace, “The Ugly Duckling of Europe: The Mediterranean in the Foreign Policy of the European Union”, *Journal of European Area Studies*, Vol. 10, No 2, 2002, p. 204.

76 Cf. Council of the European Union, *A Secure Europe in a Better World – European Security Strategy*, 12 December 2003, www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf (Accessed 30 August 2016); Council of the European Union, “Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy – Providing Security in a Changing World”, S407/08, Brussels, 11 December 2008, www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/reports/104630.pdf (Accessed 9 September 2017); European External Action Service, *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe – A Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy*, June 2016, http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf (Accessed 30 August 2016).

77 On how problems with democracy in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean are associated with civilizational/cultural traits, see: Raffaella A. Del Sarto, “Setting the (Cultural) Agenda: Concepts, Communities and Representation in Euro-Mediterranean Relations”, Michelle Pace and Tobias Schumacher (eds.), *Conceptualizing Cultural and Social Dialogue in the Euro-Mediterranean Area – A European Perspective*, Oxon and New York, Routledge, 2007, pp. 35-52.

78 During the debates on actively participating in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, Turkey also used the language of “civilizational geopolitics” to differentiate itself from the non-European Mediterranean others. See: Pınar Bilgin, “A Return to ‘Civilisational Geopolitics’ in the Mediterranean?”, *Geopolitics*, Vol. 9, No 2, 2004, pp. 269–291.

79 Gerhard Schröder, “The Future of Europe and the Transatlantic Partnership”, Speech at the German Historical Institute Washington, 5 October 2011, gerhard-schroeder.de/en/2011/05/10/washington-bucerus/ (Accessed 20 August 2014).

80 European Commission, “Speech by Günter Verheugen, Member of the European Commission, ‘Enlargement: Speed and Quality’ at the conference ‘The Second Decade towards a New and Integrated Europe’”, SPEECH/99/151, Den Haag, 4 November 1999, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-99-151_en.htm (Accessed 16 May 2018).

instead of “membership” is a clear indication of European reluctance to admit Turkey in the EU. Verheugen further contended: “I think we can all agree that we want a stable, Europe-oriented Turkey.”⁸¹ This means that even if Turkey fulfils all European standards, it may only become “Europe-oriented”. Candidacy is seen as a way to keep it with such an “orientation”; rather than as a promise for Turkey’s EU accession.

Reproducing Difference and Masking Exclusion

The depiction of Europe as representing civilizational standards (e.g., universal values and norms) inevitably locates Europeans in a “superior” position to their others. Such superiority also legitimates the EU’s imposition of its standards on its others through conditionality. In Turkey’s case, the European discourse revolves around a club logic, the major membership requirement of which is the fulfilment of the “higher” standards of the club. Furthermore, the European discourse on standards and conditionality mainly serves the purpose of holding Turkey at arm’s length, with a very vague process of accession to the EU, the result of which is left open. In other words, Turkey is constantly kept at the EU’s door without openly giving the impression that it is excluded. Diez argues:

“[...] the demands placed on Turkey not only serve the purpose to change Turkey, and in that context to reify the underlying norms and principles of the EU, but also to hold Turkey at bay, to characterize it as the Other that cannot be European, as the attempts to write an aim other than full membership into the agreement to open accession negotiations have made obvious.”⁸²

This proves the argument of the article that the EU’s imposition of its standards on Turkey first and foremost serves the reproduction of an ideal/superior/civilized European identity vis-à-vis the imperfect/inferior/yet-to-be-civilized Turkish one (a difference which is continuously emphasized on the Europeans’ part) just as it had been the case with the imposition of European standards of civilisation on the Ottoman Empire. Levin contends: “European Self-image that emerges [...] is reminiscent of nineteenth-century images of Turkey as the *Sick Man of Europe* and notions of a European *mission civilisatrice*: an Enlightened *EUtopia* whose mission is to defend the weak, rescue Turks from themselves, and ensure the spread of civilization to the dark corners of the world.”⁸³

Conclusion

This article has investigated how the “ideal”, “civilised” European identity vis-à-vis the “imperfect”, “less civilised” Turkish other has been produced and reproduced through the EU’s discourse and practice of imposing its standards on other countries. This had also been the case with the imposition of European standards of civilisation in the 17th-19th centuries. The article has revealed the continuity in European discourses in this regard and attempted to deconstruct the three characteristic ways in which the EU has projected the European standards of civilisation: authoritative imposition, unequal treatment, and geopolitical mentality.⁸⁴

Emphases added.

81 Ibid.

82 Thomas Diez, “The Paradoxes of Europe’s Borders”, *Comparative European Politics* Vol. 4, 2006, p. 245.

83 Levin, *Turkey and the European Union*, p. 198.

84 Behr, “The European Union in the Legacies of Imperial Rule?”, p. 240.

Poststructuralist texts inevitably reproduce and empower the discourse that they aim to deconstruct. The only way to keep this reproduction limited is not to feed into grand narratives or create new ones by offering remedies to the case at hand. Thus, this article does not offer any policy recommendations. For future research, it suggests looking into EU-Turkey relations through a critical lens which goes beyond the meaning ascribed to this relationship by EUrope. It is all the more important to be discussing the EU's relationship with Turkey today, because, this is a failed relationship and it carries all the markers of EUrope's Euro-centric and exclusionary approach towards its others. Deconstructing the European standard of civilisation through a second reading of EU-Turkey relations has been an attempt to contribute to such discussion.