# What is Driving the European Debate about Turkey?[1]

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### ABSTRACT

*This article explores the cultural politics of European opposition to Turkish accession to the EU. It argues that the foundations of secularism—the powerful a prioris that structure the debate in Europe regarding religion and politics—make it difficult for Europeans to cope with what is often described as an "Islamic challenge" to Europe, both internally and externally. Turkish candidacy makes these stumbling blocks explicit, as Turkey has become the symbolic carrier of domestic European angst about religion, particularly Islam, and politics. Turkish candidacy highlights unfinished business in the social fabric of the core EU members, including what it means to be secular and how religion, including but not limited to Islam, relates to European identity. These sticking points are what the debate over Turkish membership is really about, and it is for this reason that it is culturally—in addition to economically and politically—so contentious.*

What is the European debate over Turkish accession really about? The cultural and religious dimensions of this debate are often depicted as a disagreement between those who see the European Union (EU) as a Christian club and those open to a more religiously pluralistic European identity. Yet doubts about Turkish accession resonate with a larger proportion of the European population than the small minority who publicly defend the idea of an exclusivist Christian Europe. Both secularists and Christian exclusivists have expressed hesitations about Turkish membership:

> Opposition to Turkish accession is coming from secular as well as religious quarters in Europe. Some nonreligious Europeans worry that bringing a large Muslim country into the EU could endanger the Continent's tradition of gender equality and tolerance of alternative lifestyles, for instance. For traditionalists, Turkish accession threatens the very idea of Europe as a Christian civilization.[2]

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Explanations that rely upon the assumption that European opposition to Turkey is based exclusively upon support for a Christian Europe miss a crucial part of the story about the cultural foundations of this resistance. To fill in this story is the objective of this essay.

Opposition to Turkish accession is not only about defending the idea of a Christian Europe, though this remains a consideration in some quarters. The prospect of Turkish accession has stirred up a more fundamental controversy brewing within several European states concerning European identity and the politics of religion within the EU itself.[3] Turkish accession to the EU has become the symbolic carrier of domestic European angst about religion, particularly Islam, and politics. The powerful foundations and formulations of secularism—the *a prioris* that structure the debate in Europe regarding religion, secularism, and politics—make it difficult to cope with what is often described as an "Islamic challenge" to Europe, both internally and externally. Turkish candidacy for the EU makes these stumbling blocks in the European secularist imaginary explicit. It makes it evident that European approaches to religion and to religious minorities within its borders are not set in stone but must be constantly renegotiated, and that expanding the EU to include Turkey will force another renegotiation of those standards by introducing new forms of politics on the horizon. As José Casanova argues, "the public debates in Europe over Turkey's admission have shown that Europe is actually the torn country, deeply divided over its cultural identity, unable to answer the question whether European identity, and therefore its external and internal boundaries, should be defined by the common heritage of Christianity and Western civilization or by its modern secular values of liberalism, universal human rights, political democracy and tolerant and inclusive multiculturalism."[4]

To add another twist to the story, Turkey is experimenting domestically with different trajectories of secularism that conform neither to Kemalism nor to the more familiar trajectories of secularism in the dominant EU states: laicism and what I have described elsewhere as "Judeo-Christian" secularism.[5] This alternative, post-Kemalist movement poses a series of challenges not only to the Kemalist establishment but also to some European secularists for reasons described below.

Turkey's potential accession to the EU has propelled the question of what it means to be secular and European into the public spotlight. There is a sense in Europe that the religion/politics question and its relationship to an ever-evolving European identity be resolved before Turkey is admitted to the EU. The Turkish case is therefore controversial not only because it involves the potential accession of a Muslim-majority country to a historically Christian-majority (now arguably post-Christian-majority) Europe, but more fundamentally because it brings up long dormant dilemmas *internal* to Europe regarding how religion and politics relate to each other.[6] In other words, Turkey's candidacy destabilizes the European secular social imaginary.[7] It involves unfinished business in the social fabric of the core EU members, including what it means to be secular (both in Europe and in Turkey) and how religion, including but not only Islam, should relate to European public life. This cultural sticking point is what the debate over Turkish accession is really about, and it is for this reason that it is culturally, in addition to economically and politically, so contentious.

Even if economic and political obstacles to Turkish accession are lifted, even if Turkey is deemed to be in unambiguous conformity with the Copenhagen criteria and is eventually admitted to the EU, the question of full Turkish membership is likely to remain unsettled for some time on at least two counts: 1) how religion, and especially Islam, relates to European identity; and 2) whether alternative trajectories of secularism such as the current Turkish one which moves *away* from Kemalism and toward a different form of secularism will be considered fully European.

This is a more complex story than the assertion that the cultural foundations of European opposition to Turkey rest in the defense of a Christian Europe, which only explains a small part of the resistance. It helps to explain why opposition to Turkish accession is rising in countries like France, for example, even though the number of French inhabitants who self-identify as Catholic has plunged to historic lows (in 1981 70% of respondents self-identified as Catholic; by 2008 this had fallen to 42%) while the number of self-described non-adherents has risen dramatically.[8] A focus on the politics of secularism in both Europe and Turkey helps to explain why many laicists in Europe have expressed ambivalence and, in some cases, opposition to Turkish accession despite their opposition to the idea of a Christian Europe.

## The Cultural Politics of EU Opposition

On October 4, 2005 Turkey officially opened accession negotiations with the EU on the 31 chapters of the *acquis*. However, "even if the Council does agree to

start accession talks, that process will be long, and would only be completed if and when all EU members—and the EU parliament—were ready to take the revolutionary step of welcoming Turkey into the EU."[9] To accede to the EU, Turkey will need to be in formal compliance with the Copenhagen criteria, adopted at the EU summit in Denmark in June 1993, which stipulate that member countries must: 1) be a stable democracy, respecting human rights, the rule of law and the protection of minorities; 2) have a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with the competitive pressure and market forces within the Union; 3) adopt the common rules, standards and policies that make up the body of EU law (*acquis communitaire*).[10] Negotiations are expected to take more than a decade to complete, and have moved forward in fits and starts.

Both the EU and Turkish populations are divided regarding Turkish accession.[11] In both France and Germany, for example, 2004 polls suggested that nearly 60% of the population opposed Turkish membership in the EU.[12] A 2007 German Marshall Fund poll showed support for Turkish accession continuing to fall in France, Germany and the Netherlands. This same poll revealed that only 40% of Turks think EU membership would be a "good thing," down from 54% in 2006 and 73% in 2004.[13] A French Ifop poll released in August 2008 confirmed the German Marshall Fund's results, indicating a decrease in support for Turkish membership in the EU among French and Germans since 2004 but finding an increase in support among British, Spanish and Italian respondents. The totals for Europe were as follows: in favor: 22%, opposed: 45%; and no opinion: 33%.[14]

European "Turco-skeptics" cite a host of economic and political reasons for their opposition, which I mention only briefly because they have been analyzed at length in elsewhere. Economic concerns are paramount, including fear of a reallocation of scarce resources to Anatolia that would strain EU structural funds; concerns about Turkey's ability to successfully adapt to European common policies, including the common agricultural policy (CAP)[15] and the social market economic model; and fear of unwanted immigration and other demographic implications of admitting Turkey—whose population exceeds the populations of all ten of the new states admitted to the EU in 2004 combined.[16]

A second line of argument cites Turkish domestic political shortcomings including a lack of protection of minority rights, limited freedom of expression, including freedom of religion, the constrained independence of the judiciary, problematic civil-military relations and the failure to come to terms with the Armenian genocide in the early 20th century. Turkish relations with the "near abroad," including Turkish policy in Cyprus (depicted as an illegal occupation of EU ter-

ritory) is an important subset of these concerns, as is the issue of how the future borders of Europe would be patrolled should they extend into Asia Minor. EU foreign ministers suspended membership negotiations on eight of the 35 negotiating areas in December 2006 following the recommendation of the Commission to penalize Turkey for a trade embargo on the Republic of Cyprus, an EU member.

A third category of concern involves the geopolitical wisdom of further EU expansion, in particular in an era when a significant proportion of the population in France—one of the two founding nations of the EU—is questioning the viability of the European project.[17] Some argue that if Turkey is admitted, a long list of central Asian states such as Georgia, Armenia, Moldavia, Ukraine, Belarus and perhaps Russia will qualify for consideration for EU membership. Fourth, critics cite procedural issues and governance concerns within the EU as a reason to reject Turkey's candidature. According to this argument, if admitted Turkey would exercise an inordinate amount of voting power in the EU, particularly in the Council and the Parliament, due to the structure of the Constitution in which population size determines political representation and voting weight.[18] Others object that European negotiators have acted undemocratically and without transparency in decision-making procedures involving Turkish candidacy.[19]

Though each of these factors is significant in its own right, European resistance to Turkish accession is rooted differently and more deeply than is suggested by an exclusive focus on economic or political considerations. In 2002, former French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing observed that Turkey was "not a European country" and that admitting Turkey to the EU would mean "the end of Europe."[20] French President Nicolas Sarkozy reiterated this viewpoint in 2008: "Je veux être l'ami de la Turquie, mais je dis que la Turquie n'a pas sa place en Europe, tout simplement parce qu'elle est en Asie mineure."[21] Former West German chancellor and Social Democratic Party (SPD) leader Helmut Schmidt suggested that Turkey should be excluded from the EU due to its unsuitable civilization,[22] and that by opening the door to EU admission for other Muslim nations Turkey's accession could result "in the political union degenerating into nothing more than a free trade community."[23] Former EU internal market chief Frederik (Frits) Bolkestein stated in 2004 that "the American Islam expert Bernard Lewis has said that Europe will be Islamic at the end of this century. I do not know if this is right, or whether it will be at that speed, but if he is right, the liberation of Vienna in 1683 would have been in vain."[24]

Heightened emotions in several EU countries following a series of recent episodes have aggravated anxieties about Turkish accession and the place of reli-

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gion, and particularly Islam, in European public life. These include the debate over whether God would appear in the preamble of the European Constitution; the circumstances surrounding the murder of Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh; the dispute in France regarding the veil and the passage of the anti-headscarf law in 2004; the 3/11 terrorist attacks in Madrid; the failure of the French state and society to successfully integrate poor and marginalized citizens, many descended from immigrant families from former French colonies, as evidenced by the violence in France in late 2005;[25] and the controversy surrounding the publication of cartoons perceived as offensive to Muslims in several European newspapers in early 2006.

Given this politically charged environment, it is all too easy to ascribe cultural and religious sensitivities surrounding Turkish accession to support for a Christian Europe that finds itself in confrontation with "Islam." However, as is the case in analyzing the violence in the French *cités*,[26] this "clash of civilizations" framework allows for little analytical leverage over these developments. Cultural and religious opposition to Turkey is not simply about defending the idea of a Christian Europe from an outside threat. This opposition is the cultural and political manifestation of the unsettled nature of the relation between religion, politics and European identity. It goes beyond the debate over the Christian, multi-confessional, and/or post-Christian history and identity of the EU. Rather, the intensity of the controversy attests to the presence of unresolved issues concerning the politics of religion within EU member states themselves. By contributing to the unsettling of received notions of what it means to be "secular" and "European," Turkey's candidacy propels a series of difficult questions into the public spotlight and contributes to a sense of urgency among Europeans that they be settled before Turkey is admitted to the Union. The politics of secularism—the contestation and reconfiguration of dominant forms of European secularism—is at the heart of the debate over Turkish accession.

The next two sections fill in the content of this controversy by charting the influence of two competing discourses in Europe on the subject of religion and politics upon the debate over Turkish accession to the EU. Drawing on Bahar Rumelili's argument concerning two different dimensions of European identity—exclusive and inclusive—I show how these two trajectories of secularism have con-

ditioned EU-Turkey relations. I conclude that only when Europe acknowledges the historical particularism of its own forms of secularization, as well as the possibility of legitimate alternatives to them, will full Turkish integration become a possibility. Challenges to Kemalism, a Turkish form of secularism that shares some family resemblances with the laicist model

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familiar to many Europeans, are neither a "religious" threat to "secular" democracy that should be suppressed at any cost nor a retreat to archaic Muslim forms of political order. They are instead part of an alternative trajectory of secularization that protests the Kemalist attempt to monopolize what would otherwise be an ongoing public debate over what it means to be a secular Muslim-majority state. These challenges represent an attempt to legitimate Turkish public order as both modern and Ottoman, as both secular and Islamic, thereby distinguishing it from *both* Kemalism and from the particular forms of secularism that emerged out of historical Latin Christendom. It is only when the EU redefines itself such that the inclusion of Turkey no longer threatens the cultural and religious foundations of European identity will full Turkish integration become a possibility.

## "Judeo-Christian" Secularism and Turkish Accession

Charles Taylor describes a social imaginary as "the ways in which people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations."[27] Laicism and Judeo-Christian secularism are important components of the European social imaginary. Together with the economic and political factors discussed above, these two strands of political discourse have contributed to a climate of skepticism among some Europeans regarding Turkish accession.

I approach secularism as a series of inter-linked political projects that as Alev Çinar has written continually seek to "transform and reinstitute a sociopolitical order on the basis of a set of constitutive norms and principles."[28] What I refer to as Judeo-Christian secularism is a political project in which what are represented as Christian, or sometimes Judeo-Christian, religious values and modern secular politics are understood to commingle in a particular way, each strengthening the other. Secularization, in this narrative, is the realization of a Western religious tradition. Religion is part of the moral basis of Western civilization.[29]

One implication of this story is that the secularist separation of religion from politics and the democratic settlement of which it is a part is often, though not always, perceived as a unique Western achievement.[30] If particular Western religious traditions are understood as the foundation of secular democracy, and the separation of church and state is a unique achievement that evolved out of them, then the potential for "European-style" secularization may be tied to a particular cultural identity, civilizational history and geographic location.[31] Civilizational differences in the designation of the "secular" and the "religious" are fixed in this view rather than fleeting. They cannot be transcended or reformulated. This exclusivist approach to the cultural boundaries of democracy is a hallmark of strong forms of Judeo-Christian secularism.[32]

This tradition has had implications for the debate over Turkish accession. In *Vers un Islam européen*, for example, Olivier Roy argues that "Turkey will be rejected from the European Union not because the Turkish state fails to satisfy the EU's demands to democratize, which would be a good reason, but because Turkish society is not <European>, meaning that it does not share the fund of Christianity that serves as the foundation of laicism itself."[33] In other words, Turkey will not be admitted to the EU because although it is secular in some sense, key decision makers and much of the public do not believe it to be sufficiently secular in the "European" sense. This is because, according to this narrative, Turkey does not share the common cultural and religious ground that serves to anchor European forms of secularism, and, by extension, European forms of democracy. Samuel Huntington expressed this idea in *The Clash of Civilizations*: "Where does Europe end? Where Western Christianity ends and Islam and Orthodoxy begins."[34] This religio-secular formula for "Europe" rests upon the assumption that full secular democracy can *only* be fully realized in societies possessing this particular religious heritage. In this view, the Christian or Judeo-Christian foundation of European secularism and democracy, and of Europe itself, is the only foundation possible.

Turkish EU candidacy consolidates these tacit and sometimes conflicting assumptions regarding Europe's religious heritage and its relevance to European identity and propels them into the public spotlight.[35] The presumed connection between these so-called Christian or European values and European forms of democracy contributes to an aversion to the Turkish Islamic identity and a skepticism about Turkey's potential as a non-Christian-majority secular democratic member of the EU. In this view, Turkey is inherently different from Europe due to the existence of an exclusive European identity based on geography, culture and religion.[36] European identity is conceived in bounded, fixed and exclusive terms,

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"embodying a conception of difference that is based on inherent characteristics."[37] This may be contrasted with a more inclusive version of European identity emphasizing the possibility of a state *becoming* European by gradually acquiring a series of inclusive and (arguably) universal characteristics such as respect for liberty, human rights and secular democracy.[38]

As an example, consider the Judeo-Christian secularist response to the challenge to Kemalism in Turkey. From this perspective, this challenge confirms that secularization and democratization are unique to the West. Judeo-Christian secularists read resistance to Kemalism as proof of the futility of "liberal" attempts to incorporate a Muslim-majority society into a democratic, secular (read Christian or Judeo-Christian-majority, even if only historically) EU. From this vantage point, Turkey is and always will be unable to conform to the Copenhagen criteria due to its cultural and religious commitments, and is therefore unfit to become fully European. Distinctions between religious and political authority are historically absent not only from Turkey but also from the Islamic world in general, and are unthinkable due to the nature of Islam itself. In this view, Muslim-majority civilizations simply do not enjoy indigenous forms of secularism and insist upon

rejecting the secularism imported from the West. In this story secularism is ultimately incompatible with Islam and unlikely to be fully realized in Turkey or any other Muslim-majority society.

This opposition to Turkish accession on exclusivist grounds carries within it a position on the identity of the EU and the subordinate place of religious, and particularly Muslim, minorities within Europe itself. By positing a unique set of connections between a particular set of religious identifications, European identity and the potential for successful democratization, advocates of this narrative contribute to a particular idea and identity of Europe. The divide between religious identities becomes one among many fixed markers of civilizational difference. This carries implications not only for the EU's external relations but also for the range of minorities within EU member states who are more easily portrayed as "suspect citizens" and "potential enemies within."[39]

### Laicism and Turkish Accession

Laicism is another strand in the European social imaginary that contributes to a climate of skepticism in several EU member states regarding Turkish accession. Laicism refers to the attempt to purge religion from politics and is associated with intensive state control of religious institutions and expression.[40] The laicist model in France is distinct from the American secular separation of church and state.[41] The laicist tradition of secularism supports a vigorous role for the state in the regulation of religion and warns against religious infringements in public space. Any increase in or reconfiguration of the public role of religion is seen as an undesirable infringement upon would-be secular public life, a compromise of state authority and, in the French and Turkish cases in particular, a threat to national identity.[42] Andrew Davison for example defines Kemalism as "a structure of power in which Islam was separated from areas of governance in some respects within an overall and overarching integrated relationship of state control."[43]

In contrast to those who insist upon the fixed and exclusive nature of European cultural identity, many laicists would claim that the exclusion of Turkey from Europe on cultural and religious grounds *per se* is unjustified. Laicism therefore leads to a different set of conclusions regarding European identity and its relationship to Turkish accession. Devotees of this developmentalist narrative adopt a more inclusivist version of European identity and, as Rumelili argues, "construct Turkey as different from Europe solely in terms of acquired characteristics."[44] Accordingly, if Turkey conforms to European (laicist) norms regarding religion and politics, among other considerations, it should be admitted to the EU. The

problem from this standpoint is not that Turkey is constitutionally and culturally incapable of complying with European standards, but rather that it has not *yet* satisfactorily achieved a particular level of (political, economic, and/or religio-political) development, such that "if and when Turkey develops economic and political institutions in line with European values and standards, it will rightfully become a member of the EU, despite what others may claim to be its inherent differences."[45]

For those committed to the idea that Turkey is progressing incrementally through a series of stages of development, culminating in its full "Europeanization," there is a sense that contemporary Turkey is not "anti-Europe," but merely "less Europe," to borrow Ole Wæver's formulation. As he argues, "the dominant trend in European security rhetoric is that the Other is Europe's own past (fragmentation), and those further away from the center are not defined as anti-Europe, only less Europe. Europe has no clear border—it fades away as you move out over the Russian plains."[46] The laicist narrative equates Europe's past experiences with religion and politics with Turkey's present "struggles" with secularization.

Shared by both narratives is the fear that the challenge to the Kemalist settlement in Turkey may be sufficient to derail Turkish progress toward "Europeanization." While organized religion has declined rather precipitously in several European states in recent decades, Turkey is experiencing a revival of public religion that challenges European universalizing norms regarding the (laicist) division between religion and politics upon which Kemalism was at least in part modeled.[47] For some, this challenge is enough to question Turkey's qualification for EU membership. Kemalism, from this perspective, which incidentally corresponds with Kemalist self-representations, represents a laudable attempt to bring Turkey into a modern, laicist and European present. The revival of public religion—seen as a challenge to Kemalism—suggests that Turkey has not come far enough along the continuum of development. In this view, Turkey has not yet realized the progression out of a religious (Islamic) past into a laicist (European) present, and is at risk of "back-sliding" toward archaic practices involving the public presence of religion and its formal control of the state. This fear is expressed in regretful terms as the "loss of Atatürk's legacy"[48] and manifests in concern both in Turkey and abroad regarding the intentions of the Justice and Development party (AKP):

> Despite the AKP's continued popularity, some are skeptical of Erdogan's real intentions. Pointing to his more radical beginnings and recent AKP positions on women's rights and education, critics charge that the prime minister's commitment to secularism and liberalization is only superficial.[49]

From this viewpoint, a post-Kemalist (assumed to be "Islamist") Turkey is unfit to become fully European because it risks violating norms that are among the founding principles of European democracy. Resistances to Kemalism, expressed in Islamic terms, appear as a threat to the strictly separationist public/private divide and concept and practice of religious freedom.[50]

In the laicist account, as distinct from its Judeo-Christian secularist counterpart, the democratic shortcomings that accompany the presence of Islam in Turkish politics are not irremediable but can be overcome through the importation of Western-style democracy and the further secularization of politics and society. European identity is conceived in more inclusive terms and based upon a series of acquired characteristics rather than fixed cultural and civilizational traits. The solution proposed to counter Turkey's potential "back-sliding" in the domain of religion and politics is an increasingly militant commitment to Kemalism. Many European laicists as a result have found themselves uncomfortably supporting the heavy-handed approach of the Turkish state and military in their confrontation with the post-Kemalists. Both view religious individuals and groups active in the public sphere as threats to democratic order and consider state suppression of such groups legitimate and even warranted. As Kösebalaban points out, "while the European governments and human-rights organizations including the European Court of Human Rights have been very sensitive to Kurdish human rights, they have maintained a persistent indifference to political problems like the headscarf issue and the closure of Islamic-leaning political parties."[51] This makes for strange bedfellows, as laicists who would otherwise stand up for human rights and religious freedom find themselves unhappily aligned politically with the Turkish army. This state of affairs was reflected in American support for the army's ousting of the Welfare Party (RP) in 1997. As Erhard Franz argues, "the USA, who had feared that Turkey under Erbakan would drift into the anti-American Islamic camp, views the Turkish military as the guarantor of the country's loyalty to the Western alliance."[52]

A well-known 2004 decision by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) illustrates the role of laicist norms in European support for Kemalist regulations. The ECHR concluded that Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights had *not* been violated by the Turkish refusal to allow Leyla Sahin, a Turkish medical student, to wear a headscarf while pursuing her studies at the University of Istanbul. This decision reflects the ECHR's commitment to a laicist understanding of the relationship between religious expression and public space. The political potency of these beliefs, also exemplified in the 2004 French legislation restricting

certain forms of religious expression in schools, casts doubt upon the possibility that Turks who take an alternative approach to religious expression and public space, perhaps though not necessarily indebted to Islamic tradition, will be accepted, at least in the near-term, as European.

## Reassessing the European Project

Most EU-Turkey observers assume that Turkey needs to demonstrate its cultural, political and economic fitness to participate in European institutions and society, and that Europe will in time render judgment in accordance with its criteria. This is reflected in the Negotiating Framework of October 2005, which states that "in all areas of the *acquis*, Turkey must bring its institutions, management capacity and administrative and judicial systems up to Union standards, both at national and regional level, with a view to implementing the *acquis* effectively."[53] This article contests the assumption that Turkish compliance with the Copenhagen criteria will be sufficient to ensure a smooth incorporation of Turkey into the EU. The encounter between Turkey and Europe is a two-way street that is transforming both Turkish politics and the European project.[54] As I have shown, Turkish candidacy is challenging and changing European concepts and practices of secularism by propelling them into the spotlight and calling into question the secularist *a prioris* that have heretofore structured these debates. Before admitting Turkey to the EU, Europe will press Turkey to accept a variety of European legal, financial and political institutions, standards and practices. Yet paradoxically Turkish integration into the EU will be successful only insofar as the EU revisits its own assumptions about religion, politics, and the cultural foundations of European identity.

In short, Turkish candidacy obligates Europeans to reconsider what it means to be a secular European. Up to the present, for many this involved subscribing to some variation or combination of the two trajectories of secularism sketched out in this essay. The Turkish candidacy changes and challenges the "taken-for-grantedness" of the equation between European identity and these particular forms of secularism. It does so by introducing alternative modalities of religion and politics that draw upon non-Christian *and* non-post-Christian traditions, and by proposing that they be accepted as equally European. How Europeans respond to this challenge remains to be seen. As long as Brussels continues to insist upon the "one-way street" nature of the relationship between Turkey and the EU it will remain difficult for Turkey to fulfill the demands placed upon it to "modernize" along the lines of the European model as far as religion and politics are concerned. Turkey cannot be expected to follow in the footsteps of the multiple European trajectories of secularization, which emerged over the course of centuries largely out of a

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set of disputes within Latin Christendom and which remain highly diversified and hotly contested within and between EU countries.

Successful negotiations will require that the EU revisit its own collective assumptions about the relationship between religion, politics and European identity. It will have to acknowledge alternative cultural and religious formulations and foundations of secularism.

Within Europe this means coming to terms with the multiple sources and varieties of secularism. It means acknowledging that the role of religion in European collective identity is far from settled and that it may be best that it remain so. Between the EU and Turkey, it requires an acknowledgment of the complexity and democratic potential of the challenges to Kemalism, which represent neither simply religious threats to secular democracy, as some EU inclusivists suggest, nor a predictable retreat to pre-modern forms of "Islamic" political order, as EU exclusivists contend. Instead, these actors are protesting Kemalist attempts to monopolize the debate over what it means to be a secular Muslim-majority state. Challengers seek to refashion the Kemalist settlement into something different from both Kemalism and political Islamism as conventionally understood, thereby forging a new model that is distinctive from prevailing European modes of secularism. As Hakan Yavuz observes, the platform of Turkish Islamist parties does not amount to "an explicit program of Islamic revival but rather the reconstruction of Ottoman-Turkish norms and associations to challenge the alienating aspects of the Kemalist project."[55]

Charles Taylor writes that "we need to speak of *multiple* modernities, the plural reflecting the fact that non-Western cultures have modernized in their own ways and cannot be properly understood if we try to grasp them in a general theory that was originally designed with the Western case in mind."[56] Rather than a threat to secular democracy or a revival of religion in public life, modern variations of Turkish post-Kemalism are an example of how different forms of secularism emerge and are contested in different cultural and political contexts. As Göle has argued, "although the cultural program of modernity has a great capacity to influence and circulate, the encounter between the two cultural codes leads not to a simple logic of emulation or rejection but to improvisations in social practices

and cultural meanings."[57] Rather than a pre- or anti-modern attempt to resuscitate a pristine Islamic past, Turkish post-Kemalism is part of an attempt to reformulate "the borders and the meanings of the secular public sphere" itself, serving as a "destabilizing force" in secular, including secular European, social imaginaries.[58] This challenge to Kemalism, in Talip Kucukcan's words, involves no less than "the reconfiguration of religion and politics in the public sphere."[59]

Secularism is a contingent and contested social construction. It is "a terrain of contestation rather than a fixed ideological or behavioral understanding across time and space."[60] Different formulations of secularism exist both within the EU and outside of it. Turkish EU candidacy is politically inflammatory because it makes the implicit assumptions and historical contingencies of these different forms of secularism explicit. As Çinar concludes, "Islamist interventions served to reveal that secularism is neither natural nor a fact of public life, but indeed another forged and partial principle that is quite negotiable and contestable."[61]

Europeans hold no copyright on the separation of religious and political authorities. Turkey fails to conform to European secular standards only if Europeans define those standards in terms of their political and religious history and not the European present or future. The Negotiating Framework of 2005 stipulates that "negotiations will be based on Turkey's own merits and the pace will depend on Turkey's progress in meeting the requirements for membership." A significant decision for the EU in the next decade is whether to recognize the differing lived traditions of secularism both in Europe and in Turkey or to impose its own historical secularist expectations upon new and aspiring Europeans. As Talal Asad has observed, "if Europe cannot be articulated in terms of complex space and complex time that allow for multiple ways of life (and not merely multiple identities) to flourish, it may be fated to be no more than the common market of an imperial civilization, always anxious about (Muslim) exiles within its gates and (Muslim) barbarians beyond."[62] For Turkish integration to succeed, negotiations must encompass not only Turkish progress in meeting European standards but also a refashioning of those very standards to allow for multiple ways of life. The stakes are high.

## Endnotes

1. For an earlier and expanded version of this argument see my article "Negotiating Europe: the politics of religion and the prospects for Turkish accession to the EU," *Review of International Studies,* Vol.32, No. 3 (July 2006), pp. 401-418, © British International Studies Association, published by Cambridge University Press and reproduced with permission.

2. Luis Lugo, "Does 'Muslim' Turkey Belong in 'Christian' Europe?" *The National Press Club* (Washington, D.C., January 13, 2005).

3. Of course the situation varies greatly from one European state to another, as José Casanova underscores: "The explicit articulation of those "secular liberal European norms" may vary from country to country. Indeed, European societies have markedly different institutional and legal structures regarding religious associations, very diverse policies of state recognition, of state regulation and of state aid to religious groups, as well as diverse norms concerning when and where one may publicly express religious beliefs and practices." José Casanova, "The Long, Difficult and Tortuous Journey of Turkey into Europe and the Dilemmas of European Civilization," *Constellations* 13, no. 2 (2006), p. 241.

4. Casanova, "Long, Difficult and Tortuous Journey…," p. 241.

5. See Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

6. Bahar Rumelili argues that, "the EU is implicated in an identity interaction with its Turkish 'other' that makes the European identity more insecure." Rumelili, "Constructing Identity and Relating to Difference: Understanding the EU's Mode of Differentiation," *Review of International Studies,* No.30 (2004), p. 45.

7. Nilüfer Göle, "Islam in Public," *Public Culture* Vol.14, no. 1 (2002), p. 183.

8. Pierre Bréchon and Jean-François Tchernia, *La France à travers ses valuers* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2009).

9. Philip Gordon and Omer Taspinar, "Turkey's European Quest: The EU's Decision on Turkish Accession." US–Europe Analysis Series, Center on the United States and Europe, Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution (September, 2004), p. 4.

10. William Chislett, "Turkey's Membership in the European Union: A Rose or a Thorn?" Real Instituto Elcano de Estudios Internacionales y Estratégicos, http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/documentos/imprimir/101imp.asp.

11. On disagreements within the European Parliament concerning Turkish accession see Senem Aykin, "Views on Turkish Accession from the European Parliament," Center for European Policy Studies *Turkey in Europe* Monitor (Issue 4, April 2004) and Nathalie Tocci, "Turkey and the European Union: Preparing for the December 2004 European Council," Working Paper, Mediterranean Programme Workshop, "Brainstorming: Developments in EU-Turkey Relations," Robert Schuman Center for Advanced Studies, European University Institute (May 7, 2004).

12. Gordon and Taspinar, "Turkey's European Quest…," p. 4.

13. German Marshall Fund Poll, cited in James G. Neuger, "Turkish Support for Joining EU Plunges, Poll Shows," http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601085&sid=az3mrvNAaUFY&refer=europe.

14. See: http://www.ifop.com/europe/docs/Turquieue.pdf.

15. The argument is that the EU could not absorb Turkey's massive agricultural production into its subsidy program, which places limits on agricultural outputs to guard against overproduction.

16. See Ziya Önis, "Domestic Politics, International Norms and Challenges to the State: Turkey-EU Relations in the Post-Helsinki Era," *Turkish Studies,* Vol.4 (Spring 2003) and Önis, "Political Islam at the Crossroads: From Hegemony to Co-existence," *Contemporary Politics* 7 (December 2001), pp. 281-98.

17. See the debate surrounding the French referendum of May 29, 2005 on the European Constitution.

18. On the institutional consequences for the EU of Turkish accession see Seyla Benhabib and Türküler Isiksel, "Ancient Battles, New Prejudices, and Future Perspectives: Turkey and the EU," *Constellations* 13, no. 2 (2006), p. 229.

19. Corrado Pirzio-Biroli, Head of the Cabinet of former EU Commissioner Franz Fischler, "Does 'Muslim' Turkey Belong in 'Christian' Europe?" Discussion, *The National Press Club*, Washington, D.C., January 13, 2005.

20. Interview with *Le Monde*, November 8, 2002. Echoing the original language of the Treaty of Rome, the Maastrict Treaty prescribes that "any European State may apply to become a Member of the Union." Article 0 under the Final Provisions (Title VII) of the Maastricht Treaty (7 February 1992).

21. "I want to be Turkey's friend, but I am saying that Turkey does not have a place in Europe, quite simply because it is in Asia Minor." Speech of M. Nicolas Sarkozy, President of the French Republic, Convention sur l'Europe, January 30, 2008.

22. Hasan Kösebalaban, "Turkey's EU Membership: A Clash of Security Cultures," Middle East Policy Vol.9, No.2, (2002), p. 146, note 18, citing Helmut Schmidt, *Die Selbstbehauptung Europas, Perspectiven für das 21. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 2000).

23. Cited in Michael S. Teitelbaum and Philip L. Martin, "Is Turkey Ready for Europe?" *Foreign Affairs* (May/June 2003), p. 98.

24. Cited in Bruno Waterfield, "Bolkestein: EU faces 'implosion risk over Turkey," EUPolitix. com, http://www.eupolitix.com/EN/News/200409/0c501627-c886-4fc1-95c2-e49c1945898a.htm (September 7, 2004).

25. On the postcolonial cultural and historical context of the recent events in France see Paul Silverstein and Chantal Tetreault, "Urban Violence in France," *Middle East Report Online*, November 2005 (http://www.merip.org/mero/interventions/silverstein_tetreault_interv.htmhttp://www.merip.org/mero/interventions/silverstein_tetreault_interv.htm, and on Muslims in Europe more generally see the special issue on the subject of *Hagar: Studies in Culture, Polity and Identities,* Vol.6, No.1 (2005).

26. As Silverstein and Tetreault argue, "the rage expressed by young men from the *cités* does not spring from anti-imperialist Arab nationalism or some sort of anti-Western jihadism…but rather from lifetimes of rampant unemployment, school failure, police harassment and everyday discrimination that tends to treat the youths as the *racaille* of Sarkozy's insult—regardless of race, ethnicity or religion."

27. Charles Taylor, "Modern Social Imaginaries," *Public Culture,* Vol.14, No. 1 (2002), p. 106.

28. Alev Çinar, *Modernity, Islam, and Secularism in Turkey* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), p. 9.

29. Charles Taylor, "Walls of Separation: A Metaphor Which Has Outlived its Time?," Keynote Address, Conference on Theology, Faith & Politics, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois (May 13, 2005).

30. Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, "The Political Authority of Secularism in International Relations," *European Journal of International Relations,* Vol.10, No. 2 (June 2004), p. 247.

31. For an example see Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). For a trenchant critique of Lewis see Adam Sabra, "What is Wrong with 'What went Wrong?" *Middle East Report Online*, August 2003 (http://www.merip.org/mero/interventions/sabra_interv.html).

32. On the cultural boundaries of democracy see Alfred Stepan, "The World's Religious Systems and Democracy: Crafting the "Twin Tolerations," *Journal of Democracy,* No.11 (October 2000), pp. 37-57.

33. "On rejetera la candidature turque à l'Union européeene moins parce que l'Etat turc ne satisfait pas les exigences démocratiques, ce qui serait une bonne raison, que parce que la société turque

n'est pas <européeene>, c'est-à-dire ne partage pas le fonds de christianisme qui fonde sa laïcité meme." Olivier Roy, *Vers un Islam européen* (Paris: Editions Esprit, 1999), p. 10.

34. Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), p. 158.

35. Nilüfer Göle, "Negotiating Europeanism and Republicanism: The Turkish Question in France," Paper presentation, *Cultures of Democracy* conference, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois (April 21, 2005).

36. Rumelili, "Constructing Identity and Relating to Difference…," p. 44.

37. Rumelili, "Constructing Identity and Relating to Difference…," p. 39.

38. Rumelili, "Constructing Identity and Relating to Difference…," p. 39.

39. Silverstein and Tetreault, "Urban Violence in France."

40. On the origins of laicism and its implications for international relations see Hurd, *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations*, ch. 2.

41. As Andrew Davison has shown, secularism and laicism should not be conflated: "*secularism* and *laicism* are not two different words for the same institutional arrangement, but rather two distinct, complex, varied, contested, and dynamic possibilities in the range of nontheocratic politics." For Davison Turkey is laicist rather than secularist because the Kemalists did not seek to separate religion from the state and pursue a nonreligious state inasmuch as they sought to use the state to control, regulate and mix Islam and politics in a particular way. Davison, "Turkey, a "Secular" State? The Challenge of Description," *The South Atlantic Quarterly,* Vol.102, No. 2/3 (Spring/Summer 2003), p. 333.

42. An example is the French debate in late 2003 and early 2004 over the findings of the Stasi Commission and the passage of legislation restricting religious expression in public spaces. See John R. Bowen, "Muslims and Citizens," *Boston Review* (February/March 2004). On French secularism see the articles by Jean Baubérot and Yolande Jansen in Linell Cady and Elizabeth Shakman Hurd (eds.), *Remaking Religion: Comparative Secularisms in a Global Age* (New York: Palgrave, forthcoming, 2010).

43. Davison, "Turkey, a "Secular" State?" p. 344.

44. Rumelili, "Constructing Identity…," p. 44.

45. Rumelili, "Constructing Identity…," p. 44.

46. Ole Wæver, "Insecurity, Security and Asecurity in the West European Non-war Community," in Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett (eds.) *Security Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 100.

47. On Turkish secularism in a comparative perspective see Ahmet Kuru, *Secularism and State Policies toward Religion: The United States, France, and Turkey* (Cambridge University Press, 2009).

48. An example of the argument that "much of Atatürk's legacy risks being lost" in Turkey may be found in Robert L. Pollack, "The Sick Man of Europe—Again," *The Wall Street Journal* (February 16, 2005), p. A14.

49. David L. Phillips, "Turkey's Dreams of Accession," *Foreign Affairs* (September/October 2004), p. 89. Philips adds (p. 97): "although the U.S. government officially supports Erdogan, some Pentagon officials are uneasy about his Islamic orientation. They believe that the Turkish armed forces are far more reliable than the AKP in fighting terrorism."

50. Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, "The international politics of secularism: U.S. foreign policy and the Islamic Republic of Iran," *Alternatives,* Vol.29, no. 2 (March-May 2004), p. 119. Other Europeans express concern with the implications of the Kemalist model for democratization and religious freedom in Turkey.

51. Kösebalaban, "Turkey's EU Membership," p. 138.

52. Erhard Franz, "Secularism and Islamism in Turkey," in Kai Hafez (Ed.) *The Islamic World and the West: An Introduction to Political Cultures and International Relations* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), p. 173.

53. http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/docs/pdf/st20002_en05_TR_framedoc.pdf

54. Göle, "Negotiating Europeanism…"

55. M. Hakan Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 212.

56. Taylor, "Modern Social Imaginaries," *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (2002), p. 91. On multiple modernities see S.N. Eisenstadt, "The Reconstruction of Religious Arenas in the Framework of 'Multiple Modernities," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 29, No. 3 (2000), pp. 591-611.

57. Göle, "Islam in Public…," p. 175.

58. Göle, "Islam in Public…," pp. 173, 183.

59. Talip Kucukcan, "State, Islam, and Religious Liberty in Modern Turkey: Reconfiguration of Religion in the Public Sphere," *BYU Law Review* 2 (2003), p. 493.

60. Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*, p. 267.

61. Çinar, *Modernity, Islam and Secularism in Turkey*, p. 173.

62. Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 180.