The aim of this article is to portray the perspectives of the Europe-Turks on the EU and Europeanness in line with cultural/holistic and political/syncretic paradigms on Europe. The data used in the article were gathered in qualitative and quantitative research [1] held in Germany and France in 2003 and 2004. The premise of this article is that Euro-Turks’ perspectives foster the progressive ideal of a political Europe embracing diversity. Displaying identity formations of Euro-Turks, this work shall also reveal their perspectives on Turkey’s EU orientation, migration prospects, and religiosity.

**Europeanness: A constant process of being and becoming**

Both the qualitative and quantitative data gathered in our research point to the fact that a concrete understanding of Europeanness does not exist among the Euro-Turks. However, the same observation may be made with regard to the receiving societies. There is actually no doubt that a deep-rooted sense of Europeanness does not also exist among the majority of the public; and actually an identity is ideologically being gradually constructed by the political elite of the European Union through education, European citizenship, and common history and future. The European Union has clearly displayed a stronger political unity since the Tindemans Report (Leo Tindemans was Belgian Prime Minister at that time) submitted to the European Council at the end of December 1975, which prompted the member states to form a unified political entity with its own flag, anthem, myths, memories, peoples, regions, and rights and duties granted to its EU citizens. [2]

The definition of Europeanness is also dependent on class differences among the Euro-Turks. When members of the working class are asked about the term, their definitions usually accord with the dominant discourse in Turkey. These definitions include notions like values, democracy, equality, human rights, and modernization in creating the main framework of Europeanness. Thus, “Europeanness” addresses a teleological project emphasizing constant progress with a target to be reached. On the other hand, some of the middle class state that they are not concerned with being defined as “European”, that they are already experiencing such an identity without the need to reach any prospective target. Those who have such a discourse are the third and/or fourth generation youth,
mostly born in the country of settlement. Actually, the first and second generation middle class reproduce the dominant discourse in Turkey. But, the third/fourth generation youngsters have developed a cosmopolitan identity that underlines differences, diversity, and citizenship. A separate note is needed here to briefly summarize various discourses developed by the Euro-Turks in a retrospective way. Those first generation migrants in the 1960s and 1970s developed a discourse revolving around economic issues; the second generation in the 1980s generated an ideological and political discourse originating from issues related to the homeland; and lastly, the third generation has, since the 1990s, developed a culture-specific discourse stressing intercultural dialogue, symbolic capital, cultural capital, difference, diversity, tolerance, and multiculturalism.

A final distinction between the middle class and working class with regard to the definition of European identity is that the middle class in general equate Europeanness with science, scientific thought, reason, trust, rules, and rights, and the working class associate it with justice, law, and equality. Contrary to what is commonly and stereotypically believed in Germany and France, the tables below indicate that the Euro-Turks have rather generated different forms of identification with regard to nationality and Europeanness.

Figure 1. Which identifications suit you best?

Table 1 shows that Euro-Turks themselves confirm their hyphenated identities (Euro-Turks): 60 percent in Germany and 70 percent in France. Around 60 percent of German-Turks define themselves as either Turkish-European or (50 percent) European-Turkish (10 percent). This ratio is 59 percent (Turkish-European) and 10 percent (European-Turkish) in France. On the other hand, 37 percent of German-Turks and 24 percent of French-Turks define themselves as “Turkish”. These figures differ from those of Hakan Yilmaz (Bosphorus University, 2004) in his work entitled “Euroscepticism in Turkey”.

Crosstabulation 1: Which identification suits you best? And birthplace?

Crosstabulation 1 indicates that young Euro-Turks primarily identify themselves with hyphenated identities as in European-Turkish, or Turkish-European (75 percent in Germany and 85 percent in France).

Crosstabulation 2: Which identification suits you best? And social status?

Crosstabulation 2 shows that Euro-Turks of higher social status stick to the hyphenated identities underlining the European element. On the other hand, those of lower social status underline their Turkishness.

Table 1. European and national identity (Source Eurobarometer 2003+; Euroscepticism in Turkey**; and our research*)

Table 1 is comprised of the results of three different pieces of research held in 2003 and 2004. The research on Euroscepticism in Turkey done by Hakan Yilmaz indicates that 54 percent of Turks in Turkey identify themselves as only Turkish, 30 percent as first Turkish-European, 5 percent as European-Turkish, and 4 percent as European. Eurobarometer 2003 Surveys imply that 38 percent of Germans and 35 percent of French
identify themselves with their nationality, while around 60 percent of both Germans and French identify themselves with hyphenated identities such as German, or French/European, or European/German, or French. Euro-Turks do not differ from their fellow people in terms of their hyphenated identities underlining the European element.

**Euro-Turks’ Perspectives on the European Union**

Focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, and structured interviews show that Euro-Turks are in favour of Turkey’s participation in the European Union, although there are also a remarkable number of people who are against it.

**Figure 2. What does the European Union mean to you?**

While around 48 percent of German-Turks and 64 percent of French-Turks regard the EU as an economic integration, 21 percent of the German-Turks and 11 percent of the French-Turks regard it as a Christian Club. What is underlined by the Euro-Turks is the economic integration aspect of the EU.

**Table 2. Classification of the three most common replies as to what the EU means personally to EU citizens (Source Eurobarometer 2003)**

The results of the 2003 Eurobarometer Public Opinion Surveys also indicate that both Germans and French give priority to economic and financial aspects in defining the meaning of the EU. It is apparent that the euro has the greatest impact on both communities in one way or another, with the second most influential characteristic being freedom of movement.

**Figure 3. To what extent are you either positive or negative about the EU?**

Generally speaking, Euro-Turks are positive about the European Union. Approximately 32 percent of German-Turks and 54 percent of French-Turks are in favour of the EU idea; around 28 percent of German-Turks and 17 percent of French-Turks are not in favour. Twenty-nine percent of German-Turks and 23 percent of French-Turks have mixed feelings about it. Those German-Turks who are negative about the EU are likely to think that the EU has gained a lot from Germany’s prosperity, in other words, from their prosperity. On the other hand, those French-Turks who are positive about the EU are likely to think that the EU has given them more prosperity. This observation is also confirmed by the fact that 6 percent of German-Turks support the Euro, while 25 percent of French-Turks support it.

**Table 3. Image of the European Union (Source Eurobarometer 2003)**

The results of the Eurobarometer 2003 also comply with our results on the Euro-Turks. Both communities have rather a positive image of the European Union. However, French-Turks (16 percent) are less negative about the EU than the French (21 percent), and German-Turks (28 percent) are more negative than the Germans (16 percent).

**Figure 4. To what extent do you support Turkey’s membership in the European Union?**
The general trend is that Euro-Turks are in favour of Turkey’s entry into the Union. However, this tendency is clearer in France (57 percent) than in Germany (31 percent). The crosstabulations indicate that their reluctance in this regard originates from socio-economic problems prevailing over the two countries.

**Figure 5. What does Turkey's EU membership mean to you?**

The interviewees were asked what the EU meant to them, and given various items to comment on. Both German-Turks and French-Turks gave similar answers to the following questions: Turkey’s entrance into the EU does not really result in division in the country (53 percent German-Turks, 58 percent French-Turks); it won’t result in the end of independence (52 percent German-Turks; and 58 percent French-Turks); membership will bring more democracy to Turkey (63 percent German-Turks; and 67 percent French-Turks); membership will improve the implementation of human rights (70 percent German-Turks; and 79 percent French-Turks); and membership will result in migration from Turkey into the EU countries (71 percent German-Turks; and 69 percent French-Turks). On the other hand, there is a big discrepancy between German-Turks and French-Turks in answering the following questions: membership will cause moral breakdown in Turkey (52 percent German-Turks; and 36 percent French-Turks); membership will bring about exploitation of Turkey (52 percent German-Turks; and 34 percent French-Turks); and membership will increase job opportunities (61 percent German-Turks; and 83 percent French-Turks). These figures reveal that French-Turks seem to be more in favour of Turkey’s membership of the Union, and that they have fewer cultural, moral, and communal concerns than German-Turks.

**Figure 6. Do you think the EU will divide Turkey?**

**Table 4. Will full membership in the Union cause division in Turkey? (Source Euroscepticism in Turkey, 2004)**

The two tables above compare the views of Euro-Turks and Turks on the assumption that full membership in the Union may result in division within Turkey. Fifty-four percent of Euro-Turks indicate clearly their disagreement with such an assumption, while only 28 percent of Turks do likewise.

**Figure 7. To what extent are you positive or negative about the euro?**

The tables below also indicate the perceptions of the interlocutors about the positive and negative impacts of the Euro-Turks on the ‘hostland’. While a great proportion of people in Germany feel that Turks represent cultural richness and a labour force, a relatively lower proportion believe that Turks have a negative impact because of their incapacity to obey rules, closed community formations, and distinct values. The interviewees commonly believe that the Euro-Turks primarily provide the European countries with a labour force, followed by contributions such as “cultural richness”, “job opportunities”, and “familial and moral values”. What is remarkably different between German-Turks and French-Turks is that German-Turks place emphasis on symbolic contributions such as culture (53 percent) and morality (32 percent), and the French-Turks give priority to material contributions such as labour force (73 percent) and job opportunities (42 percent). The percentage of those who believe that Turks make no contribution is
relatively low (4-5 percent).

**Table 5. The euro: For or against? (Source Eurobarometer 2003)**

The results of the Eurobarometer Surveys also comply with the results of our research. The attitude of German-Turks is identical to that of Germans, and the French-Turks’ attitude is also identical to that of the French. Hence, the orientation of Euro-Turks to the euro is parallel with their fellow citizens.

**Figure 8. What kind of positive influences do the Turks have on the host society? (Multi-response)**

**Figure 9. What kind of negative influences do the Turks have on the host society? (Multi-response)**

Combining the two tables above, we see that the Euro-Turks believe their positive influence is greater than their negative influence. Approximately 32 percent of French-Turks and 25 percent of German-Turks believe that Turks make no negative impact on the host societies. Thirty-six percent of German-Turks state that Turks generally do not obey rules, and 25 percent believe that Turks misuse the social security system. Misuse of the social security system was one of the most debated issues by the young-generation German-Turks in the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. In parallel with the misuse of the social security system, 24 percent of German-Turks reported that Turks are inclined to be lazy. On the other hand, the lack of ability to adapt to local values (33 percent), the tendency to construct ethnic enclaves (33 percent) are the issues raised most by French-Turks in explaining the negative impact of the Turks. The ways in which different issues have been phrased by both German-Turks and French-Turks are also subject to the separate incorporation regimes applied by Germany and France vis-à-vis the migrants. The issue of constructing ethnic enclaves and communities raised by the French-Turks seems to be strongly linked to the Republican state tradition’s sensitivity to homogeneity and difference-blindness. However, in contemporary Germany, the liberal democratic regime’s recognition of differences means that ethnic and cultural enclaves are not problematized to the extent they are in France.

Apparently, Euro-Turks have gained much credit in terms of developing a democratic political culture highlighting human rights, democratization, participation, and reflexivity, rule of law, rights, equality, and trust. What is different in this picture compared to the picture in Turkey is that they have generated a rights-specific rather than a duty-specific political culture. Answers given to questions comparing rights, educational systems, police, democracy, human rights, social security systems, job opportunities, legal systems, respect for rules and regulations, value human capital, equality, freedom of faith, and cultural dialogue indicate that Germany and France are considered much more democratic than Turkey. All these answers, depicting the drastic difference between Germany/France and Turkey, clearly indicate deep-rooted democratic institutions and a high level of democracy in Germany/France. Turkey comes to the fore positively when interviewees were asked questions about mutual tolerance, and moral values.

**EU Membership and Migration Prospects**
One of the most commonly expressed concerns regarding Turkey’s membership in the Union is the possibility of huge immigration from Turkey into the EU countries. However, our qualitative and quantitative research reveals a contrasting picture. In the first place, those interlocutors we interviewed in the in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and structured interviews stated that they would not recommend Turks in Turkey to migrate to the EU countries if Turkey were to enter the Union (79 percent), the reason being the difficulties they face in the EU: rising unemployment, homesickness, low wages, disciplined working conditions, lack of tolerance, and depreciation in moral values. However, there is generally a strong belief among these people that there would be huge migration to the EU countries. This echoes a commonly held belief in EU countries. Hence, the experiences of Euro-Turks should be clearly communicated to Turks in Turkey. On the other hand, previous experiences with the integration of Spain, Italy, Portugal, and Greece to the Union did not result in great migration. In these cases, even reverse migration was experienced. It seems that the same could apply in the Turkish case. The proportion of those people who would consider going back to the homeland in the event of Turkey’s membership going ahead is more than 30 percent in both countries.

**Figure 10. Would you recommend those from Turkey to emigrate to Germany/France?**

**Figure 11. Would you consider returning to Turkey if Turkey joins the EU?**

Around 30 percent of Euro-Turks reported that they would consider returning to Turkey were Turkey to join the Union. This is an important challenge to the stereotypical judgment mentioned above. Furthermore, Euro-Turks do not recommend that Turks migrate to the West (80 percent German-Turks; and 61 percent French-Turks).

**Crosstabulation 1. Would you recommend that people living in Turkey emigrate to Germany/France? And birthplace?**

Crosstabulation 1 indicates that German-Turks born in Germany do not recommend people living in Turkey to immigrate to Germany when Turkey joins the union. However, for French-Turks born in France it is the opposite. It seems that young generations of French-Turks are rather more satisfied with the present situation in France, unlike the German-Turks in Germany.

**Crosstabulation 2. Would you recommend that people living in Turkey emigrate to Germany/France? And social status?**

Crosstabulation 2 implies that Euro-Turks of every social status do not strongly recommend that those in Turkey migrate to the EU when Turkey joins the Union.

**Euro-Islam: Symbolic religiosity**

Islamic diasporic groups in the West, alienated by the system and swept up in a destiny dominated by the capitalist West, no longer invent local futures; what is different about them is that they remain tied to their traditional pasts, religions, and ethnicities. Remaking, or recovering, the past serves at least a dual purpose for the diasporic
communities. Firstly, it is a way of coping with the conditions of the present without being very critical of the status quo. Secondly, it also helps to recuperate a sense of self not dependent on criteria handed down by others – the past is what the diasporic subjects can claim as their own. Hence, their growing affiliation with Islam, culture, authenticity, ethnicity, nationalism, and traditions provides Euro-Turks or Euro-Muslims with the opportunity to establish solidarity networks, bulwarks against the major clusters of modernity such as capitalism, industrialism, racism, surveillance, egoism, loneliness, insecurity, structural outsiderism, and militarism. Accordingly, Islamic revival emerges as a symptom, the outcome of certain processes of structural outsiderism.

Islam is, by and large, considered and represented as a threat to the European way of life in the West. It is frequently believed that Islamic fundamentalism is the source of the xenophobic, racist, and violent attitudes present. On the contrary, one of the main premises of this research is that religious resurgence is a symptom of illnesses brought about by various structural constraints such as unemployment, racism, xenophobia, exclusion, and sometimes assimilation. If so, then in order to tackle such constraints, discourse on culture, identity, religion, ethnicity, traditions, and past becomes essential for minorities in general, and migrant groups in particular. This is actually a form of politics generated by outsider groups. According to Alistair MacIntyre (1971), there are two forms of politics: politics of those within and politics of those excluded. Those within tend to employ legitimate political institutions (parliament, political parties, media) in pursuing their goals, and those excluded use culture, ethnicity, religion, and tradition to pursue their aims. It should be noted here that MacIntyre does not place culture in the private space; culture is rather inherently located in the public space. Thus, the quest for identity, authenticity, and religiosity should not be reduced to an attempt to essentialize the so-called purity. It is rather a form of politics generated by subordinated subjects.

Herbert Gans’ intervention on the rise of symbolic ethnicity and religiosity is quite explanatory in this regard. According to Gans (1979), symbolic ethnicity and religiosity is available to those who want to sporadically feel ethnic and religious, without being forced to act ethnically and religiously. The stress on ethnicity and religion is usually something adopted from parental culture as part of negotiation with the majority society. The way the Euro-Turks employ ethnicity and religion as a source of identity is quite removed from being essentialist. This is a form of what Herbert J. Gans (1979: 6) calls “symbolic ethnicity”, or symbolic religiosity:

[A]s the functions of ethnic cultures and groups diminish and identity becomes the primary way of being ethnic [and religious], ethnicity [and religiosity] take on an expressive rather than instrumental function in people’s lives, becoming more of a leisure-time activity and losing its relevance, say, to earning a living or regulating family life. Expressive behaviour can take many forms, but often involves the use of symbols – the symbols as signs rather than myths. Ethnic symbols are frequently individual cultural practices that are taken from the older ethnic culture; they are abstracted from that culture and pulled out of its original mooring, so to speak to become stand-ins for it.

Recently, some Islamic oriented movements, such as the Cojepiennes based in Strasbourg, have shown a determination to adapt to the Western way of life with their
own identities. Such modern interpretations of Islam prove that Islam does not actually pose a threat to Western values; its main concern is actually to incorporate itself into the mainstream.

Furthermore, Euro-Turks raised the issue of so many elderly people passing away in the summer of 2003 due to the extraordinary heat in both countries. Their common argument about these deaths is that contemporary Western societies lack some essential values such as solidarity, respect for the elderly, family, and warmth. They make it clear that Euro-Turks still maintain such values, which contributes to their difference vis-à-vis the majority societies.

**Figure 12. How do you define yourself with the following statements regarding your faith?**

Seven and a half percent of German-Turks and 10 percent of French-Turks define themselves as quite religious, a similar pattern to Turks in Turkey. Eighty-nine percent of German-Turks and 80 percent of French-Turks are reported to be relatively faithful. However, 2.4 percent of German-Turks and 10 percent of French-Turks seem to be either atheist or agnostic.

**Crosstabulation 1. How do you define yourself with the following statements regarding your faith? And birthplace?**

The Crosstabulation 1 displaying the correlation between birthplace and faith indicates that religiosity is still dominant among the German-Turks. Religious mobility is quite understandable in a country like Germany where religion is still a strong source of identification among the German people. Furthermore, German-Turks are primarily defined with their Islamic identity by the majority society. On the other hand, the secular and republican characteristics of French-Turks are prioritized by the French. However, religiosity among the Euro-Turks is not an essentialized one, but a symbolic one. Symbolic religiosity is available to those who want to sporadically feel religious, without being forced to act religiously. The stress on religion is usually something adopted from parental culture as part of negotiation with the majority society. The manner in which Euro-Turks, especially German-Turks, employ religion as a source of identity is quite distant from being essentialist.

**Crosstabulation 2. How do you define yourself with the following statements regarding your faith? And social status?**

The Crosstabulation 2 displaying the correlation between social status and faith indicates that religiosity increases among Euro-Turks of lower social status.

**Conclusion**

The idea of the European Union addresses at least two separate projects: a holistic project and a syncretic project. This work was an attempt to claim that there is almost no room for diversity in the former project, while there is a great potential in the latter to embrace that. Euro-Turks, Islam, and thus Turkey comply with the syncretic Europe in which diversity is recognized. This article has claimed that Euro-Turks are not as
essentialist as the European public have generally alleged. They are, on the contrary, as
European as their German and French fellows. As the tables above clearly indicate, they
are even less nationalist then their German and French counterparts. They have rather
invested in hyphenated identities in a way that bridges the two cultural traditions of their
countries of settlement and of origin. They also invest in the positive impact of the EU
perspective on Turkey with regard to the development of democracy, human rights, and
prosperity. However, they also address the fact that there is a rise of unemployment and
poverty in their countries of settlement. This is why they turn to being pessimistic about
the future of Germany and France, while they become more optimistic about Turkey’s
future. Their current pessimism even prompts some of them to consider return to
Turkey.

The research also reveals that Euro-Turks do not pose a threat to the political and social
system of their countries of settlement, but rather have the willingness to incorporate
themselves into the system. It is commonly known that modern Western states, generally
speaking, have the tendency to regard migrants and Islam as a threat to their national
security. Instead, the research uncovers that orientation to Islam among Euro-Turks may
be regarded as a quest for justice and fairness, originating from their reaction to
structural problems like poverty, racism and exclusion.

Bibliography

Verlag.
and A. Icduygu (eds.), Citizenship and Identity in a Globalizing World: European
Questions and Turkish Experiences (London: Routledge).
Kaya, A. and F. Kentel (2005). Euro-Turks: A Bridge, or a Breach, Between Turkey and
the European Union, Brussels: CEPS Publication.
presented in the Council for European Studies Conference, Chicago (11-13 March).
Schoken Books.

Footnotes

1. The research entitled "Euro-Turks: A Bridge, or a Breach, between Turkey and the
European Union" was conducted by Ayhan Kaya and Ferhat Kentel between September
2003 and March 2004. The research was held in Germany and France, and included both
qualitative (in-depth interviews and focus group discussions) and quantitative methods
(1065 structured interviews with 90 questions in Germany, and 600 in France). The
structured interviews were conducted in November 2003 by two local public poll
companies in Germany and France with the involvement of Turkish-speaking university
students fluent in either German or French. The interviews were made in three languages
(Turkish, German, and French) depending upon the choice of the interviewees. It should
be noted here that 21 percent of the interviews held among the German-Turks were
conducted in German, and 31 percent among the French-Turks in French. See Kaya and Kentel (2005).

2. For a detailed account of the Tindemans Report see, Tindemans (1975); see also Maas (2004).

3. For a detailed interpretation of hyphenated identities see Kaya (2005).

**Published 4 October 2005**

Original in **English**
First published in **Cogito 44 (2005) (Turkish version)**
Downloaded from eurozine.com (https://www.eurozine.com/european-union-europeanness-and-euro-turks/)
© Ayhan Kaya / Cogito (Turkey) / Eurozine