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MAPPING DYNAMICS AND TESTING SCENARIOS

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Five Phases of AKP Identity Politics and how it affects Turkey-EU Relations

Jakob Lindgaard

ABSTRACT

The main question of this paper is what direction the AKP's identity-politics is likely to drive Turkey-EU relations into the 2023 timeframe of the FEUTURE research project. Following a few initial methodological, conceptual and historical preliminaries, this paper traverses five phases of AKP identity politics with a view to identifying the underlying drivers that are likely to pertain into 2023. The upshot is that both common traits to all five phases and traits more particular to the most recent phases hold a conflictual potential for Turkey-EU relations. Elements of pragmatism embedded in AKP identity-politics and the possibility that identity-related drivers of Turkey-EU relations will see a drop of salience hold out a silver lining for the relationship. The paper concludes with a few initial recommendations.

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1. Introduction

To citizens of Europe and the US, understanding what Turkey is, who Turks are and what role identity plays in Turkey's approach to Europe, the US, and more generally international relations has more often than not been a function of particular roles Turkey has been called on to play to fulfil certain wants and needs of Europe and the US. As US President Truman launched his 'doctrine' in 1947, Turkey was pitched as a Western country, fending Europe (and the US) off from the Soviet Union. Up through the 50's and 60's Turkey was conceived of in academic circles as a case of how modernization and secularization walked hand-in-hand, also in a majority Muslim country. This was as exemplified in Bernard Lewis' subsequently disputed classic *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* from 1961 (Lewis, 1961). As the Cold War ended in the 1990's, Turkey was seen as a helpful bridge-head to the post-Soviet space in the Caucasus and South East Asia through outreach to Turkic populations in that geography.

Come 9/11 2001, and Turkey was a helpful moderately Muslim country vis-à-vis the violently jihadi Islamism of Al-Qaeda. Headlines out of the US and Europe soon read "Europe hails AKP victory" (CNN, 2002) and "The importance of backing Erdoğan – The Many Reasons for supporting a pivotal Muslim country" (Economist, 2004). As integration debates in Europe became more contested and right-wing parties emerged, majority Muslim Turkey and its EU-accession process became the scapegoat of rising anti-Muslim sentiments and the AKP an example of creeping Islamization. Come the 2011 Arab Spring, and Turkey was again pitched as a role model, this time as a majority Muslim country with a secular democracy, a booming market economy, and, again, with a moderate Muslim party at the helm.

As the meteoric rise of the Islamic State (ISIL) took everyone by surprise in 2014, Turkey was yet again a convenient Sunni Muslim ally—even a NATO-member—against ISIL, for the campaign against ISIL not to be misunderstood as one against Islam (or a support for Shia Muslims against Sunni). In recent years, Turkey has also been seen, as a country that is Eastward in its natural orientation, with 'East' first depicting the Muslim world and of late also Russia and China.

In short, European and American perceptions of Turkish identity have often mostly been a reflection, not of an informed understanding of what really drives Turkish identity politics but of the often short-term wants, needs, and fears of Europe and the US.[1] This trend is a challenge especially at times such as these where identity-based interests have assumed a front seat role in international affairs in general, as Francis Fukuyama has outlined in a recent volume on Identity (Fukuyama, 2018), and plays a key role in Turkish foreign policy, as e.g. Lisel Hintz has unfolded of

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[1] This should not be mistaken for a sweeping Edward Said style 'Orientalist' claim (Said, 1978). Rather, the conjecture is that conceptions of Turkish identity politics and its implications for Turkey's relations with Europe and the US often are shot through with particular wants and needs of also particular and often short term trends in European and American identity politics.

late in her *Identity Politics Inside Out – National Identity Contestation and Foreign Policy in Turkey* (Hintz, 2018).

This paper aims to turn this imagery on its head and explore how identity-related drivers have emerged from within Turkey to play a significant role concurrently and intertwiningly in both domestic Turkish identity-politics and in Turkey's relations with Europe. The particular focus will be the AKP's identity-politics, and with a specific focus on a shift that—as this paper will unfold— happened in the run-up to and immediately after the June 2015 General Elections in Turkey. The drivers of this shift are still both present and salient and are likely to affect Turkey-EU relations into the 2023 framework of the FEUTURE research project.

The paper proceeds as follows: Chapter 1 does the necessary preliminary work. It introduces the way the often elusive concept of Identity will be deployed here, including how this is being invoked and exploited for political purposes. It introduces two powerful narratives or founding myths that have driven AKP identity-politics, one pivoting on the year '1920' and the other on the year '1453'. And it introduces a couple of key socio-psychological facts about what the paper will refer to as Turkish 'network-society' and 'network-democracy' that pushes identity to play a key role in both domestic and foreign policy above and beyond the international trends outlined. This chapter 1 will include a digression on the relation between 'religion' in 'nation' in AKP identity politics, and how it has oscillated between an antagonistic relation and a version similar to what is known in Turkey as the 'Turkish-Islamic Synthesis'. This digression will include a brief historical perspective as well.

On the background of the Chapter 1 foundations, Chapter 2 outlines a five-phase trajectory of AKP's identity-politics with particular attention, as indicated, paid to the claimed significant 2015 transition. In abstract, Chapter 2 outlines the 2015 shift from the three previous phases that were marked by different aspects of a Neo-Ottoman identity politics to two subsequent phases where versions of Turkish nationalism claimed the ascendancy. It is possible to correlate the five phases of the AKP's identity-politics to five distinct phases of Turkish relations with other international stakeholders, both bilateral relations to other countries and relations to multilateral forums such as the EU, NATO, UN etc. Since one of the conjectures of the paper is that the AKP identity politics has developed concurrently and intertwiningly with developments both domestically and internationally, this chapter 2's parsing of the claimed five stages includes on each stage an outline of the both domestic and international context of the development. The Turkey-EU relations will be of primary concern here.

In order to gauge what role AKP-identity politics could come to play for Turkey-EU relations into the 2023 framework of the FEUTURE research project, the final Chapter 3 asks, in turn, what has driven AKP identity-politics, what salience and impact any of those drivers are likely to obtain in the near future, and how this is likely to impact Turkey-EU relations. To anyone privy to Turkey-EU relations in this field, it is hardly going to come as a surprise that the paper will conclude that identity is likely to hold a conflictual potential. What is perhaps less clear is the exact nature of it,

and whether or not identity-politics as a whole is likely to retain a salient role into 2023. Chapter 4 will conclude with a few reflections on these two questions.

The Conclusion presents a summary of the findings of the paper, and outlines a few initial recommendations for key stakeholders on how to understand and address the challenges and opportunities that AKP-identity politics holds for Turkey-EU relations within the 2023 timeframe of FEU-TURE.

2. Identity politics in Turkey between narratives and socio-psychology

Identity has always played a pivotal role in Turkish politics. Turkey's now President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his AK Party has been astutely aware of this, and has arguably excelled in invoking identity to serve particular purposes. Before we get to the details of this, however, it is necessary to outline the preliminaries of Turkish identity politics. This Chapter 1 aims to do that.

First, it is important to get a sense of how and why identity comes to play such a key role in Turkish politics. This rests on a mix of things, many of them of a socio-psychological nature, and all of them complex and intertwined in ways that make them elusive and difficult to pin down. One such thing is the fact that Turkey today rests on a complicated geography and history; one that is often depicted with terms such as 'crossroad', 'bridge', 'buffer', 'insulator' or the like between the West and the East, the North and the South; between Europe and the Middle East, and between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. As much as this is a resource for Turkey, it is also fact that constantly challenges the question of Turkish identity from all sides. Add to this historical dimension both as the centre of the two vast Byzantine and Ottoman empires, and as the location of almost complete collapse in the wake of WWI, and one begins to get a sense of how pressing the sense of identity --- or lurking lack thereof --- is.

Secondly, Turkey also boasts a both colourful and challenging diverse demography along both ethnic and religious fault-lines, where identity-borne subnational group-affiliations come to play a key role (see e.g. White, 2014, White, 2015, Lindgaard, 2017a). In a somewhat simplified 'ideal type' manner, the structural matrix of the identity-based fault-lines look something like this:

- Fault-lines based on 'nation' (or ethnicity, or language)
  - Turk(ish) vis-à-vis Kurd(ish)
  - Turk(ish) vis-à-vis Greek (Rum) or Armenian
  - Turk(ish) vis-à-vis Arab(ic)

- Fault-lines based on 'religion'
  - Muslim vis-à-vis non-Muslim (Christian, Jewish)
  - Conservative vis-à-vis Secular Muslims (also an intra-Kurdish fault-line)
  - Sunni vis-à-vis Alevi Muslims (also an intra-Kurdish fault-line)

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Leaving the host of details an outline like this calls for to the side here, the point is that Turkey's identity-based fault-lines add to the geographic and historical complexity to push identity into a prominent role in politics, whether or not identity is called upon to serve long-haul nation-building roles or more short term opportunist roles of angling for power. Just recall the massive population exchange and forced de- and re-naturalization officially of some 1,2 million Christian Greeks from the Asia Minor lands of today's Turkey as well as of some 300.000 Balkan Muslims formalized as part of the Lausanne Treaty of 1923—but which in fact counted many more on both sides—in the wake of WWI to get a sense of the calamitous implications identity-related traits have had. Identity in this context easily becomes both contested and susceptible to exploitation in the political sphere, as was also the case when Turkey's heralded founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk pursued a nation-building project of superimposing both a Turkification and secularization on a land of both Kurdish and conservative Muslim citizens. Kurds soon became 'separatists' and conservative Muslims 'reactionaries', and as such pitched as threats to Atatürks nation-building project.

As already noted—and as particularly Jenny White has argued—this has contributed to the emergence of a Turkish society where sub-national group identities are essential not merely for articulation of identity, but also for social survival and prosperity. This has construed a net-work society made up of high in-group cohesion and low out-group trust, and a society that has construed the political arena as a competition between the networks, a network-democracy where the strongest network will seek to take it all (White, 2014, White, 2015, Lindgaard, 2017).

Before moving onto how the AKP has picked up on identity-politics, three more brief preliminaries are in place. The first of these goes to the concept of 'identity' as deployed here. Identity is a both contested and multi-layered phenomenon. This paper will address merely the fourth of the following four layers that arguably make up identity:

1. Who or what people 'are' is a first layer. Scolded massively by many contemporary schools of constructivism, the idea here is along the lines of Weberian 'ideal types' that make up abstract or even hypothetical phenomena that manifest features or elements common to most; a bit like a family-resemblance.[2] People are not constructions all the way down, as it were. Or so it is assumed here.

2. A second, and arguably more interesting layer, is peoples' or communities' self-perceptions along the lines of Benedict Andersson's 'imagined communities' (Andersson, 1983) or Eric J. E. Hobsbawm's 'invented traditions' (Hobsbawn and Ranger, 1983). A twisted feature of this layer is that we can be delusional, be off about who or what we take us self to be. But the delusion is still a constitutive element of who we are. Also, as Hobsbawm argued, old traditions are often both recent and invented to suit a specific contemporary

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[2] The late philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein operates with an idea of 'family resemblance'. The use of this concept in the context of the present paper is not committed to a particular understanding of how it is deployed in Wittgenstein's often enigmatic writings. Rather it is invoked in an innocuous and deflated sense of resemblances between family members.

purpose. And as Anderson argued, the idea of a 'nation', for instance is often something that is constructed by people who feel part of a particular group.

3. Who we are and who we take ourselves to be might be necessary conditions of identity, but still not sufficient. What others in the form of other people, other groups or other nations take us to be also matters, as who we are contains a key relational component as well. Constituting our group or nation as different from others is a key component of constructing our group identity. But there is no escaping being the 'other' of societal or international 'self-other dynamics' either. Occupying a node or place e.g. in the great game of the multifaceted international self-other dynamics is a pivotal component of identity as well.

4. This leaves a fourth dimension, how the previous three layers are invoked and exploited for political ends. This is the main topic of this paper. However, it should be borne in mind that this component not merely invokes the previous three aspects for other ends; a salient and frequent use of such invocation is also a telling trait of identity.

The concept of identity, as addressed below is made up of all four of these layers, if the main focus will be the fourth.

The second of the further three brief preliminaries is the outline, in brief, of the two most powerful imageries or founding myths, as it were, that not only play deep and motivating roles in the lives of many Turks, but also have lend themselves to recurrent political invocation and contestation, not least by the AKP. For the purpose of simplicity, these imageries pivot on the years 1453 and 1920. To the AKP, 1453 and the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople has been cast in no less than three distinct versions and phases to make up a strongly enticing so-called 'Neo-Ottoman' nostalgia for Empire lost. As will be unfolded below, 1453 has been invoked to depict a liberal, multicultural pro-European path, e.g. invoking the Millet System of the Ottoman Empire as a model. But it has also been invoked to call for an arguably post-national pan-Islamic unity with Turkey as a natural leader based on historical and geographic grounds. And it has been invoked to support a pro-active stance on the side of Sunni-Muslim populations, first in a celebratory fashion in 2011, and then in support of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Sunni-Muslim insurgency groups in Syria, as the Arab Spring subsequently turned cold.

1920 has returned to centre in recent years, not least since the run-up to and following the mentioned summer 2015 general elections in Turkey. 1920 actually here covers a cluster of years and events in the Wake of WWI, including Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's 1915 Gallipoli campaign against Entente forces and the 1919-1922 Turkish War of Independence leading to the Lausanne Treaty and the founding of the Republic of Turkey in 1923. But 1920 is key here, because it is the year of the Sèvres Treaty. As Soner Çağaptay has depicted aptly, the dying years of the Ottoman Empire came with massive trauma to Muslims and Turks, with some 5,5 million Muslims killed in the now former Balkan territories of the Ottoman Empire, and another 7 million Muslim exiled to Anatolia (Çağaptay, 2006). Add to this pressure also from the British, French (and Russians!, see Trenin, 2018) through the infamous 1915 Sykes-Picot Agreement to carve up other parts of the Ottoman

Empire into French and British (and Russian) zones of influence, and Russian pressure from the East, then the Sèvres Treaty between the Entente Powers and representatives of the last Ottoman Sultan came to symbolize the fear of total implosion and collapse.
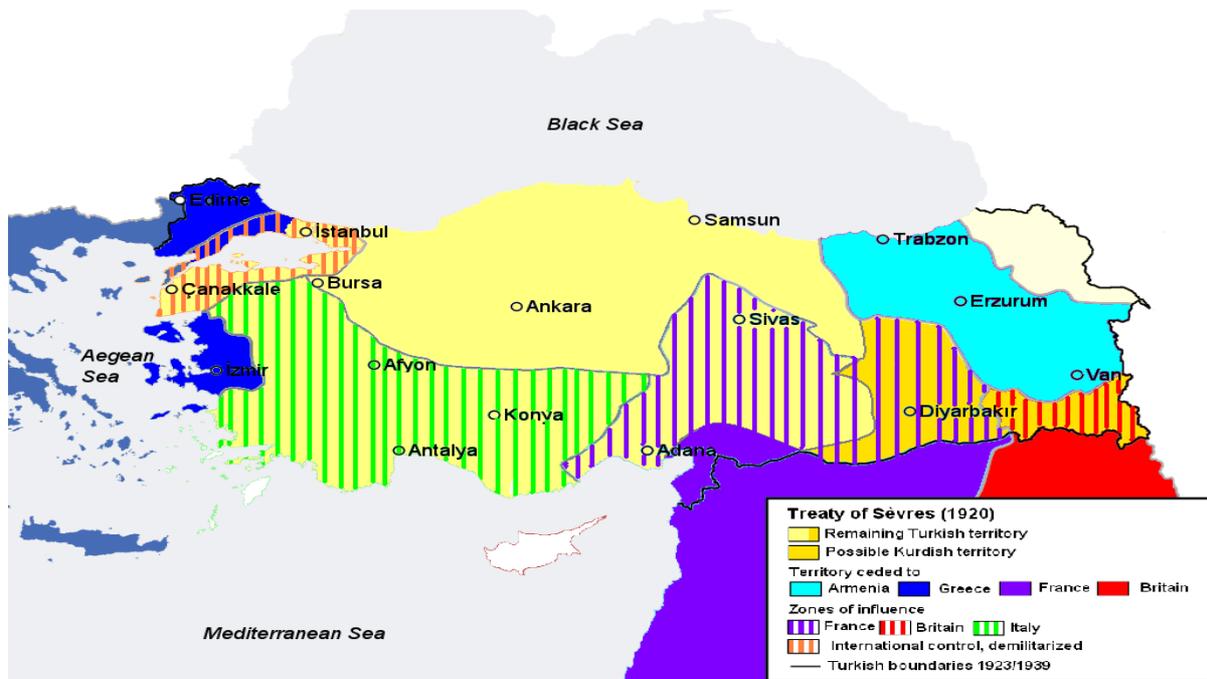
Though never implemented, the Sèvres Treaty ceded most of present-day Turkey to Greece, Armenia, France and Britain, or divided it into zones of influence to France, Britain, Italy, and an international demilitarized zone around the Bosporus and Dardanelles straits. Parts of the British and French zones of influence in today's southeast Turkey were even designated as possible future Kurdish territory. As this paper will return to below, Sèvres has come to represent an often both highly motivational and unifying fear of total collapse and implosion for Turks, popularly referred to as the 'Sèvres Syndrome'. In recent years, and at least since the mentioned June 2015 general elections, the AKP identity politics has tapped into this trope as well. The paper will unfold how that is.

A third necessary preliminary is the need for some clarification on the often convoluted relationship between 'religion' and 'nation' in Turkish identity politics. For the present paper, this is key since the early AKP tapped into the religious and historical tropes of '1453' often over and against the secular nationalist ones of the military, judiciary, and bureaucracy—or members and traits thereof in the so-called 'deep' or 'guardian' state. At that point in time, 'religion' and 'nation' were thus perceived as each other's opposites, as 'religion' in the early years—and especially as the AKP gained domestic strength—were able to move *Turkey Byond Nationalism: Towards Post-Nationalist Identities* as one key book collection of those earlier years is titled (Kieser, 2006) or consider

the idea of *The Nation-State's Blurred Borders: Erdoğan and the Emergence of Kurdistan in Turkey* (Öktem, 2014).[3]

This is no longer the case. And as recent Turkish history reveals, the relation between 'religion' and 'nation' has fluctuated. In very brief, Atatürk during the early troublesome 1919-22 years of the War of Independence heavily invoked the Islam of the fast increasingly exclusively Muslim demographics of Anatolia as a unifying and motivating factor. Hamit Bozarslan thus outlines three phases of Kemalism (Bozarslan, 2006) starting with a Socio-Darwinist nationalist-religious era of the War of Independence, a second phase of the later 1920's placing the secular nation first over and against the two primary adversaries of the state, the Kurdish separatists and the religious reactionaries, and a third phase of the 1930's adding an ideological super-structure to the secular nationalism, 'Citizen Speak Turkish' campaigns, publications of the Turkish Language and History theses, and announcement of the six Kemalist theses; all of which saw 'nation' assume hegemony over and against 'religion'.

Following WWII, Adnan Menderes briefly tried to reverse this order—or at least move 'religion' back into the centre of the Turkey's center-periphery relations as famously articulated by Şerif Mardin in 1973 (Mardin, 1973). But even if religion grew as a political motivator in the periphery in the 60-70's—following the 1960 coup against Menderes—religion only assumed a role at the center of power with the formulation of 'Turkish-Islamic Synthesis' [TIS] of Kenan Evren's 1980 Coup. As formulated by Ibrahim Kafesoğlu—founder and leader of the Aydınlar Ocağı (Intellectual's Hearth) (Kafesoğlu, 1977), the ideological foundation was that Western intellectual influence had corrupted Turkish intellectuals and that original Turkish culture—freed from Western taint—was somehow isomorphic to Islamic culture, and thus 'nation' and 'religion' were naturally in unison.

As invoked by Kenan Evren, however, the TIS saw 'religion' as a tool or means towards the end of 'national' unity, secularity and authoritarian rule needed to 'hold Turkey together' against the rising anarchy and sectarian clashes of the 1970's. Notably, Time magazine seemed to condone this project with this front page from 1980 (Time, 1980):

Mandatory Islam-classes were introduced into the school curriculum. But as it was the case for the changes made for the Directorate of Religious Affairs [DIYANET] in the 1982 Constitution, 'religion' was called upon to maintain the principles of secularlism, 'national' solidarity and integrity, and religion should exist removed from political views and ideas.

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[3] Being a survey-level study, this paper will merely touch on the most essential of the often highly convoluted semantic discussions of definitions e.g. of 'nation' in a Turkish context. Some will e.g. argue that the AKP's 'Milli Görüş' (national vision) roots were indeed a form of nationalism, if with a significantly more religious conception of the 'real' or 'authentic' Turkish nation than the Secularist, Kemalist opposition of the 70-90's. The use of 'Milli' with its religious connotations back to the Ottoman era religiously demarcated 'Millet System' arguably signal this. This paper will unfold what it will take to be 'deflated' and 'common sensical' conceptions of the key concepts of 'nation' and 'religion' and will unfold what these amounts to in the particular context.

Arguably, the advent of the AKP turned the tables on 'religion' and 'nation' by for the first time since the 1923 birth of the Turkish Republic—arguably with the exception of Menderes in the 1950's—of bringing 'religion' as an end in itself and driver of identity politics into the centre of political power over and against 'nation'. This paper now turns to key traits of how that was, and the way this walked hand-in-hand with the AKP's approach to Turkey-EU relations.

3. The five-phase trajectory of AKP identity politics and Turkey-EU relations

Approaching the relation of identity politics to both domestic and international relations as an integrated whole, as this paper does, five phases of AKP identity politics emerge. This chapter 2 presents and unfolds these five phases with a view to enabling the identification of key drivers thereof in Chapter 3.

First, it is highly likely that the origins of the AKP identity politics were conceived against the back-drop of identity- and power-related challenges Erdoğan's and his closest associates' experienced during the 1990's. During those years, Erdoğan and his political mentor, Necmettin Erbakan, publicly espoused views that compared democracy to a streetcar one could get off once the destination was reached, that separate busses should be assigned for men and women, and, as Erdoğan infamously put it, quoting the otherwise nationalist poet, Ziya Gökalp[4] that "our mosques are our barracks, the domes our helmets, the minarets our bayonets, and the faithful our soldiers". This was seen by the Kemalist establishment as a direct threat not merely to the secular nature of the Turkish nation and Republic, as they perceived it, but moreover as a threat to their hold on power. Thus, Erbakan was forced to step down as Prime Minister in the wake of the so-called 28 February 1997 'Post-Modern' coup—which consisted of a public announcement made by the military threatening Erbakan's more religious line of government—and Erdoğan was jailed briefly in 1998 and banned from participating in politics for five years.

The identity-induced foreign policy of the Kemalist elite of the 1990's was—asides from being both chaotic and in significant flux—characterized by being reactive (rather than pro-active), status quo-oriented, and isolationist on top of being both pro-American and pro-Israeli. This elite was largely pro-Western, but increasingly frustrated both by nationalist tensions with Greece and Cyprus as well as increasingly frustrated by the perception—turned out to be mostly true—that the EU would support the empowerment of the two perceived main enemies of the high-Kemalist ideology adhered to then, the conservative 'reactionaries' like Erbakan and Erdoğan and the 'separatists' of the Kurdish minorities. It was a difficult task for most people in Europe to grasp that the pro-Western Kemalist establishment were the most EU-sceptical around the turn of the millennium.

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[4] Gökalp was a nationalist of the early days of Kemalist Young Turk Nationalism. These early days, as outlined in Chapter 1, saw 'nation' and 'religion' tightly enmeshed at the core of the nationalism of the day. This adds an extra dimension to Erdoğan's invocation of Gökalp at a time in the 1990's when the nationalists and the islamists were direct opponents.

3.1 Phase 1 – The Liberal, Multicultural version of Neo-Ottomanism (2002-2007)

This brings us to the first of the five phases of AKP identity politics as it was developed concurrently and intertwiningly with key developments both at home in Turkey and in Turkey-EU relations. This phase is characterized by a restoration of the Ottoman narrative of '1453' at the centre of identity politics, but with a version thereof that internally focuses on its liberal and multicultural aspect through a benign version of the Ottoman Millet system, and externally focusses on Turkey at the centre of a distinct civilization, but with an active intent of working—pace Samuel Huntington's clash of civilizations scenario (Huntington, 2002)—towards the 'harmony' or 'alliance' of civilizations.

Domestically, these years were characterized by a politically cautious AKP that implemented no less than seven pro-European reform packages, whilst taking care to fare with ease at the beginning in relation to the Kemalist power bases in the military, in the judiciary and in the bureaucracy. The version of the Ottoman Millet-system nourished was one of liberal tolerance and multicultural outreach, as it was claimed to be the case for the religious minorities during the heyday of the Ottoman Empire.

In the domain of foreign policy 2002-2007 were characterized by a new both pro-active and outward foreign policy with outreach to key regions of the Ottoman past such as the Balkans (Öktem, 2012, 2013), the neighbouring Middle East and North Africa, but also to Europe and the US.

Pitched to fit the 'civilizations' discourse of the day, Erdoğan thus made a politically astute attempt to balance his thoughts about Turkey being the leader of an alternative 'civilization' with the promotion of a pro-European stance under the banner of an 'Alliance of Civilizations'. Statements such as this were thus ubiquitous: "Taking part in the EU will bring harmony of civilisations – it is the project of the century" (Erdoğan, 2004; the Independent, 2004).

This fit the bill of European liberals. Europe could mark the 'end of history' (Fukuyama, 1992) by portraying Europe as an inclusive liberal continent spacious enough to embrace a Muslim country such as Turkey, and Turkey could figure as a multicultural bridgehead to the Middle East. Former Foreign and Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's 'Zero Problems with Neighbours' (Davutoğlu, 2001) were a perfect match, also for the creation of a stable, peaceful and liberal neighbourhood for Europe to the Southeast.

This early multicultural version of Neo-Ottomanism also made for a Turkey that was less belligerent in relation to Cyprus and Greece than the Kemalist nationalism had been promoting (and which has returned of again of late). This was the case, even as Turkey was hugely disappointed when the Greek part of Cyprus was admitted into the EU in 2004, right after the Turkish part had favoured and the Greek part rejected the Annan peace plan for Cyprus.

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'Zero Problems' also meant a rapprochement between Turkey and Russia in these early years of Erdoğan's and Putin's shared pro-European stances, and it meant outreach and openings to Iraq, Syria, and, slowly, Iran. Even Turkey's and Russia's shared opposition to the 2003 invasion of Iraq was shared by many liberal minded people in Europe.

This early liberal, multicultural version of Neo-Ottomanism also saw the beginnings of an opening to the Kurdish minority in Turkey, another plus for Europe. Simplified somewhat, many Turkish Kurds were also conservatively Muslim; and as such they were easily included into the dawning conception of Turkey. This was in stark contrast to the sort of anti-Kurdish nationalism that the Kurds had been exposed to in the recent past, which had set Kurds apart from Turks on the basis of distinct conceptions of Turkish identity. As indicated, the AKP had to fare with care in this field, as the military establishment, the judiciary, and the power bases in the so-called 'deep state' ardently opposed any rapprochement with the Kurds.

As briefly noted, this development had the old Kemalist establishment worried in relation to the EU. If both secular and pro-Western in their orientation, the Kemalist establishment were sceptical of the EU. The reason why is, again, identity-based. The EU-process meant the advent to power of the number one and two perceived enemies of the Turkish state, as they saw it, the conservatively religious reactionaries of the AKP, and the separatist aspirations of the Kurds.

3.2 Phase 2 – the Pan-Islamic version of Zero Problems (2007-2011)

The AKP's piecemeal consolidation of public support and domestic power during the first phase coalesced with a number of challenges in Turkey's international relations to see the emergence of a version of the AKP's so-called Neo-Ottoman identity politics that displayed somewhat different traits from the first phase.

The mentioned inclusion into the EU of Greek Cyprus in 2004 was a tough pill for Erdoğan to swallow on the domestic front. But Turkish perceptions of a rising Islamophobia in Europe was even tougher, and was astutely invoked by Erdoğan and the AKP as an identity-based rallying point to ensure Muslim unity against Merkel, Sarkozy and other trends in Europe that conflated sceptical stances on Muslim integration into European countries with Turkey's EU accession process. Protruding examples here also count the European Court of Human Rights' (ECtHR) decision to turn down the hopes of many of the AKP supporters in a number of high profile case, especially the 1998-2005 case of Leyla Şahin vs. Turkey where the ECtHR went with the 1998 Turkish Government's right to deny Şahin her claimed right to take her exam at Istanbul University because Şahin was wearing the Muslim headscarf known in Turkey as the *türban* (Şahin v Turkey, 2005). The case out of Denmark in 2006 where a daily wanted to test the limits of free speech by having cartoonists

draw the Muslim prophet Muhammad only contributed to the turn to phase 2 (see e.g. the Telegraph Timeline, 2015).[5]

In marked contrast to the pro-activism on behalf of Sunni populations to rise to prominence with phase 3 in 2011, this phase 2 was characterized by a form of pan-Islamism. Still guided by Davutoğlu's idea of 'zero problems with neighbours', this phase involved the identification and building of strong relations particularly with the Shia regime heads to Turkey's southeast.

Starting with Iran, Erdoğan expressed his support for a civilian nuclear program in Iran in 2007, adopted a muted response to the Green revolution in 2009, and supported Iran against the US attempt at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in 2010 to introduce a fourth round of sanctions against Iran (Lindgaard, 2017b). Erdoğan also visited the Iraqi leader Maliki in Baghdad in 2008, the first visit by a Turkish leader to Iraq since 1990 (Jenkins, 2008), and the ruling Syrian Assad family famously vacated with the Erdoğan family in Turkey (se e.g. Volovych, 2017), leading Bashar al-Assad to pin Erdoğan as "Syria's new best friend" in 2009 (Guardian, 2009).

On the Israel-Palestine issue, the domestically emboldened AKP government moved on from the Phase 1 caution in relation to the strong especially military-to-military relations between Turkey and Israel to a more antagonistic stance against Israel. Beginning with the AKP support of the Hamas election victory in Gaza in 2006—and more generally e.g. recurrent participation of Hamas-leaders at AKP congresses in Turkey (for a brief background on this development, see e.g. Cağaptay, 2010)—the second phase saw Erdoğan walk out on a debate with Simon Peres in Davos in 2009 and even outright violence as the AKP supported the flotilla in May 2010 that was boarded by Israeli commandos, resulting in the deaths of ten Turkish activists; all members of the Turkish Islamist İHH relief organization, close to the AKP-government. This incident set off a protracted exchange of recriminations that gained Turkey significant support on the Arab street.

Though pan-Islamic, this arguably Eastern orientation away from the EU also meant the warming up of relations with Russia, something that has only recently gained more publicity. Turkey held a low profile during the 2008 Georgia crisis[6], held early conversations with Russia on having Russia build Turkey's first nuclear power plant as well as on Turkey buying the now so controversial S-400 missile defence system in 2009, set up a high level cooperation council with Russia in 2010, and sealed a visa-liberation agreement in 2009 (see Lindgaard, 2018).

And then Erdoğan and Putin shared a turn towards frustration with the US and Europe. Having gained domestic power, the EU was less of a necessity for the AKP government, and presenting Turkey as a leader of all of the Islamic world had a considerable appeal to the Turkish electorate.

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[5] The AKP government's support for Hamas in the 2006 elections in Gaza, the AKP proposal to criminalize adultery in 2007, etc. during phase 1 also counted to enforce the less than benign circle that identity-politics contributed to creating during these years.

[6] Turkey even supported Russia indirectly by doubling down on the restrictions set up by the 1936 Montreux Treaty restricting access to the Black Sea by non-littoral states; in this 2008 case against American presence in the Black Sea.

3.3 Phase 3 – Pro-Active support of Sunni-Muslim Populations (2011-2015)

Come the 2011 Arab Spring, and the AKP turned to phase three of its Neo-Ottoman identity politics. Having consolidated what most likely felt like almost complete domestic success both electorally and in relation to the powerbases in the military, judiciary and bureaucracy, the AKP was poised to unfold its true ideological traits in public. Still sensitive to the unfolding of events also on the international scene, the Arab Spring saw Turkey first capitalize on the street credits earned to support the voices of the Arab street against the autocratic regimes.

This was arguably the first and most crucial step away from the 'zero problems with neighbours' part of the Neo-Ottoman 'strategic depth' seemingly driving the AKP identity-politics during those years. Historically close to the Muslim Brotherhood, the AKP quickly joined in on the pressure on Mubarak to leave. Having received Gadhaffi's international prize for human rights in 2010, and being heavily invested in the construction business in Libya, Erdoğan took a bit of time to come around to the uprising there, but in the fall of 2011, Erdoğan toured the North African Arab Spring meeting with the popular Muslim group leaders such as the Muslim Brotherhood's Muhammad Morsi in Egypt and Ennahda's Rashed al-Ghannushi in Tunisia.

Syria and Iraq turned the novel pro-activism on behalf on Muslim populations against the autocrat leaders that Turkey had enjoyed good relations with during the earlier two 'zero problems' phases of the AKP identity politics into a pro-activism on behalf of Sunni-Muslim populations. Having supported Iran against the US at the UN in 2010, Iranian support for Shia-Alawite Assad in Syria saw Turkey turn on a plate and suddenly agree to the deployment of the NATO X-band radar against Iran in 2011. Erdoğan's personal relations with both Maliki in Iraq and Assad in Syria went from day to night in almost no time. And then Turkey soon came to provide either passive or active support for all sorts of Sunni insurgent groups in Syria.

Initially being pitched in Europe as a role-model to the Arab Spring—as outlined in the Introduction—this phase 3 soon turned Turkey into an ambivalent partner against Sunni extremist groups in Syria, especially as ISIL rose to prominence in 2014. The initial support of the Arab Spring also waned as e.g. the Muslim Brotherhood took over first Tahrir square in Cairo and then the government reigns, also with AKP support. Lack of European support for the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt angered the AKP government, especially as Europe kept its voices down when the military's Abdel Fatah el-Sisi crushed the Muslim Brotherhood in 2013. The AKP has even adopted and adapted the Rabia sign as a mainstay of their populous public appearances and even adapted it into its party programme, after the Rabia square in Cairo where hundreds of Muslim Brotherhood supporters were killed by Sisi's soldiers.

On the positive side in relation the EU this pro-active stance on behalf of the Sunni Muslim also meant historically good relations in the early parts of this phase 3 with Kurdish groups, many of whom are Sunni Muslim. Internationally, Erdoğan thus nurtured strong relations with Massoud Barzani in Iraq's Erbil. And domestically he went from secret negotiations with the PKK in Oslo

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from 2008 to overt negotiations with imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan from 2011-2015. Öcalan even bought into the prominence of the Islamic identity by referring to a historic coexistence between Kurds and Turks under Islam in a letter from him that was read out at the Kurdish Newroz celebrations in Turkey in March 2013 (Öcalan, 2013).

But the identity-based traits of Turkey-EU relations of this phase were primarily marked by a turn from bad to worse. The AKP were frustrated by Western unwillingness to take on Assad in Syria, and Europe were frustrated by Turkey's seeming ambivalent stance on Sunni extremist groups in Syria and Iraq. Also, Erdoğan's crackdown on the Gezi demonstrations of the summer of 2013 and the subsequent corruption cases against the AKP inner circles of 17 and 25 December 2013 saw the remaining pro-Turkish hopes of Europe's liberal segments turn sour and portray Erdoğan's AKP-government not primarily as too Muslim for Europe, but too autocratic and illiberal. The conflictual potential of the identity-based developments of this phase 3 were evident.

3.4 Phase 4 – Reactive turn to Turkish Nationalism (2015-2017)

The turn away from the more pragmatic 'zero problems' of phases 1 and 2 and towards a more ideological identity-based pro-activism in support of Sunni populations of phase 3 had an unintended and unfortunate consequence for Turkey, however, as it all but isolated Turkey completely in the region. This isolation has variously been described as a 'precious loneliness' (Kalın in Financial Times, 2015) and 'zero neighbours without problems' or 'zero friends' (Zalewski, 2013). Some of the reasons for this were a push-back from Shia countries against Turkey's Sunni activism, a push-back from Sunni Arab autocracies for Turkey's support for the rebellious populations, and more generally a push-back from the Arab world against the whole idea of the resuscitation of Turkish or Ottoman hegemony in the region.

This push-back meshed with a significant series of domestic and regional events to spark the most significant shift in AKP identity policy in 2015; a shift that also had significant ramifications for Turkey's international relations.

In the June 2015 Turkish general election, the AKP lost its accustomed majority in Parliament. Though then Prime Minister, Davutoğlu, and others within the AKP tried to reach out to the opposition to form a coalition, the AKP made a significant identity-borne shift that arguably allowed the AKP to reclaim its majority in a called November 2015 re-election. In short, it was a turn to a version of Turkish nationalism, and the centrepiece for starts was a turn from a historic outreach to the Kurds to an equally historic crackdown on the Kurds—in both cases the PKK in particular.

As a key driver of the Neo-Ottomanism were a reckoning with the felt repression amongst AKP core segments at the hand of the Kemalist nationalists of the past, a turn to nationalism could come across as a major surprise. As noted, books had even been written on the earlier years of AKP identity politics, depicting it as a move 'beyond nationalism' and a development 'towards

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post-nationalist identities (Kieser, 2006). That said, Jenny White seemed to have pre-empted this turn with an ear to the ground of developments with her *Muslim Nationalism and the New Turks* in 2012 (White, 2012). Rise to prominence of the Kurdish cause, international Kurdish success in Iraq and Syria—not least following the defeat of ISIL in the Syrian town of Kobanê in the fall of 2014—and the relative domestic success of the Kurdish HDP party and its popular leader Selahattin Demirtaş scoring an all-time high of over 13% at the June 2015 general elections had created a rise in Turkish nationalist sentiments and push-back against the Kurds in Turkey. The significant presence of millions of refugees from Syria also turned from being 'Sunni Muslim guests' to being Arabs with foreign cultural habits and alarmingly cheap labour; all of it a boost for nationalist sentiments.

Add to this a couple of key domestic developments. First, the seeming invincibility that followed the AKP electoral success of 2011 and regional claim as a 'role model' the same year got its first serious dent with the 2013 Gezi demonstrations and subsequent graft probe. Almost taken for granted before that, the 2013 events saw retention and expansion of political power rise to the fore of the AKP's political agenda. The fall-out between the AKP and the Gülen-movement also made Erdoğan release many of the generals and other claimed nationalists of the so-called Ergenekon and Balyoz cases early in 2014 for the AKP to gain its backing against Gülen. The Gülen movement was—as was the Kurdish success—pitched to have gained support from abroad, primarily Europe and the US. A growing paranoia with a more reactive and perceived defensive stripe had taken already taken a hold, only to culminate in the June 2015 electoral defeat and July 2016 failed coup attempt against Erdoğan.

What then are the main traits of this new nationalism? A number of recent surveys by the German Marshal Fund and Istanbul Bilgi University (Bilgi, 2018), by Istanbul Kadir Has University (Kadir Has, 2017) and by the US Center for American Progress (CAP, 2018a; CAP, 2018b; CAP, 2018c) reveal some of the most prominent traits. Remarkably, Turkey comes across as being deeply polarized on the general direction of the country, on the state of Turkey's economy, and especially on the leadership of the country. What seems to unite most Turks today, however, are something along the lines of the five following traits:

1. A steep increase in the importance of classically Turkish nationalist identity traits such as 'being Turkish', 'speaking Turkish', 'support for the Turkish military', etc.
2. Very low degrees of trust in the West broadly speaking, counting the US, the EU, NATO, the UN, and the so-called 'global elite' more generally; coupled with an increase in trust in countries such as Russia.
3. A relatively strong drive towards independence and isolation in relation to international actors, bus also on the production of industrial products and, especially, weapons.
4. A marked increase in the animosity towards Kurds.
5. A marked increase in support of returning the some 3,5 million Syrian Arab refugees to Syria.

Honing in on just a few aspects of these traits, the low degrees of trust in Europe and the West more generally is of course important for present purposes. As an example, 87,6% and 87,5% support for key aspects of the already mentioned and so-called 'Sèvres Syndrome' stands out:
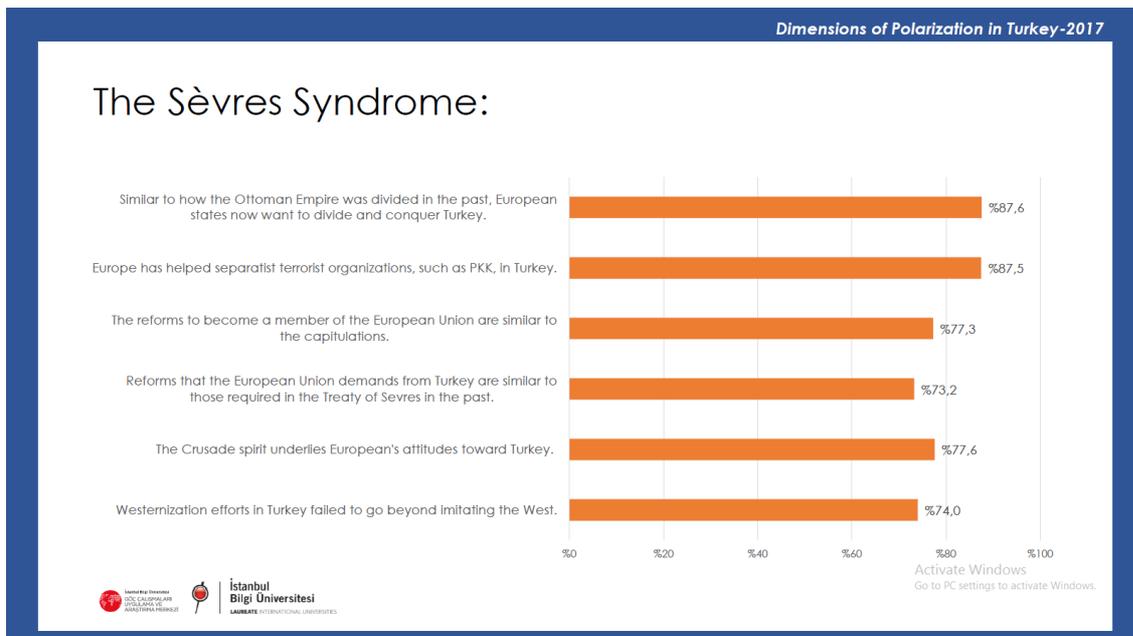
87,6% of those surveyed in December 2017 by Bilgi believe that "European states now want to divide and conquer Turkey" like Europe divided the Ottoman Empire in the past. 87,5% believe that Europe towards that end has helped separatist terrorist organizations such as the PKK (Bilgi, 2018). Similarly, the support for the AKP's handling of the Kurdish question rose markedly from a net support of minus 27,9% in 2012 and minus 22,7% in 2014—during the years of AKP outreach to the PKK—to plus 18% in 2017—following two years of hard crackdown on the PKK and Kurdish politicians—as there is a widespread support for the arrest of Kurdish (and pro-Kurdish) HDP politicians, and more generally to the AKP's handling of the PKK problem since medio 2015 (Kadir Has, 2017).

The AKP's 2015 change in identity politics taps into this image. So does Erdoğan's portrayal of the resistance against the failed coup against him and his AKP government in July 2016 as a second war of independence (Hürriyet, 2016), as the Gülen movement believed to be behind the coup attempt had gained support from forces in the US and Europe against Erdoğan's AKP government.

Anticipating the Chapter 3 analysis into the drivers both of the AKP identity politics and of the effect they have on Turkey-EU relations, then this nationalist turn arguably holds a more conflictual potential than did the more Islam-based Neo-Ottoman drivers of the recent past. Arguably, Erdoğan and the AKP now deploys a version of nationalism that is permeated with Islamic identity

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as well[7], and, unfortunately for Turkey-EU relations, a version of the Neo-Ottoman Islamic identity that is less hospitable to the bettering of Turkey-EU relations than it were the case for the early version thereof in Phase 1.

Another marked contrast to the outward and pro-active stances of the early phases of AKP identity politics is a reactive and inward orientation of this phase 4. There is a marked distrust in Western institutions, as displayed here (Bilgi, 2018):

But even if trust in Russia—especially compared to trust in the US has grown markedly, as outlined here below (CAP, 2018c), the most striking result across all of the surveys referenced is that a characteristic move inward and away from trust in anyone in the international arena is prominent.
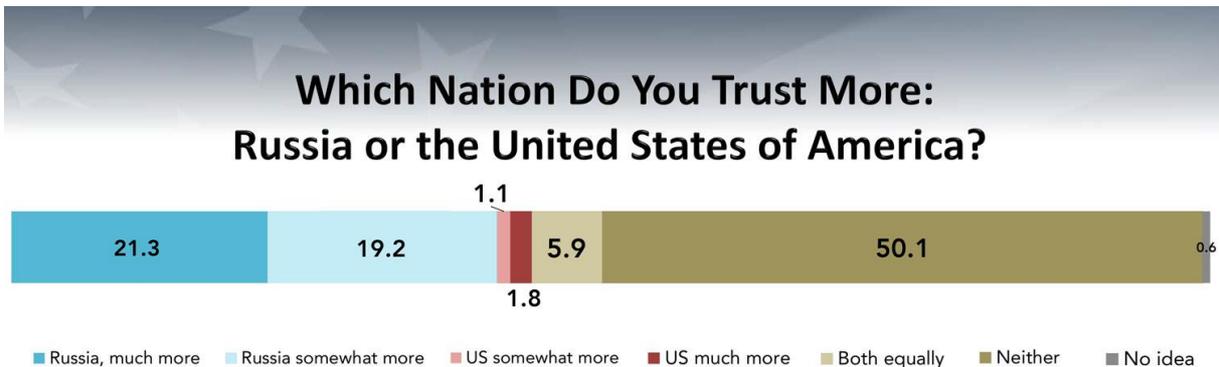
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3.5 Phase 5 – Pragmatic strongman Nationalism (2017-)

The trouble for Turkey is that it is an open economy, hardly has any hydro-carbon resources, fields a geography in the centre of a number of key interests of international actors, and has limited independent military means (even if support for domestic production of weaponry and a stated goal of becoming self-sufficient is in the ascendancy), so Isolation is not an option. Phase 5 thus resembles Phase 4 identity-wise, with one marked difference in the domestic arena and one in international affairs. Domestically, Erdoğan consolidated his power through a vote on constitutional change of April 2017 and a presidential election and implementation of the constitutional changes towards a presidential system with a limited set of checks and balances in June 2018. The Turkish Nationalist party, MHP, has helped shore up Erdoğan's further gains of power. If arguably already there in the making since at least 2013, this has consolidated what Jenny White perhaps somewhat polemically has phrased as a Turkish tendency towards 'spindle autocracy' (White, 2017). The strongest subnational network with the strongest and most charismatic leader has won power through a number of alliances first with liberals and Kurds and then with the staunchly anti-liberal and anti-Kurdish nationalists, and has reeled in checks on this power to an extent where it is difficult to see if anything or anyone can challenge this winning network.

But the willed perception of isolation and increasingly strained economic outlooks also grants Erdoğan and his AKP government a leeway to act as a negotiator on all international fronts to ensure Turkey's interests. As Turkey's number one priority in Syria changed significantly with the mid-2015 change in identity politics from support of all-sorts of insurgency groups against the Assad-regime and its Iranian and Russian backers towards a stated interest in national 'integrity' and 'sovereignty' (Yıldırım, 2016) against any Kurdish dreams of separation and independence, so did Turkey's relations with Russia and Iran into Phase 5.

The Shia-Muslim Hashd al-Shaabi militias of Iraq changed from being terrorist groups in the spring of 2017 to being helpful allies against first the Kurdish Regional Government of Northern Iraq's call for independence in September 2017, and then the take-over of the Oil-rich Kirkuk from the Kurdish Peshmerga forces. Arguably, this was the final breach of the Sunni-Muslim bond—in this case between Erdoğan and Barzani—against the Shia-Muslim forces of the region.

Initiated in December 2016, 2017 also saw the Astana Trio—Turkey, Iran and Russia—grow indispensable to the resolution of the Syrian civil war, effectively making Turkey cut down on its support for the Sunni-insurgency in Syria for concessions on interventions against the Kurds in Syria. Arguably this saw the advent of a more sustained Turkish engagement in the foreign arena completely independent of commitments to multilateral fora such as NATO and the EU, and on an ad hoc interest based foundation. The Astana Trio is illustrative in this respect. This is a trio of countries that have divergent interests in the region, but are tied together not merely by their distrust of US intentions there, but also by the recognition that their cooperation displays sufficient power to fulfil each member's national interests. The Astana Trio thus combines a strong mutual respect

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for each country's national security interests and a support for the other leaders' retention of autocratic power with pronounced disagreements and tough negotiations on specific issues such as, of late, developments in the Kurdish-held north-eastern Syria and the Idlib region.

Playing this field of strongman nationalists—also exemplified by the three Astana Trio countries' mutual support for Venezuela's embattled autocrat, Nicolás Maduro—grants Erdoğan the domestic leeway to compromise and change stances in the name of pragmatic interests even if such changes can appear at odds with the newfound nationalism. This is the second key aspect of this this Phase five of the AKP's identity-politics, as it meshes with other developments in Turkey's both domestic and international arena.

A couple of brief examples on how this bears on Turkey-EU relation will suffice here. Erdoğan has prioritized closer relations with Poland and Hungary, e.g. visiting and gaining Poland's support against Germany's attempt in the fall of 2017 to formally suspend Turkey's EU accession (Broniatowski, 2017). Hungary's Victor Orban was also the first European leader to congratulate Erdoğan on his electoral victory in June 2018, the only European top-leader to attend Erdoğan's inauguration (Hungary Today, 2018), and the only one to give Erdoğan a warm welcome in October 2018, in marked contrast to the cool response Erdoğan hat gotten a few weeks in advance in Germany (Euroactiv, 2018). Again, pre-empting the Chapter three analysis, it is worth noting the both Poland and Hungary are known as two of the European countries most critical of Islam in Europe; arguably telling of the identity-shift in Turkish foreign policy.

A second set of examples are also illustrative here. It is hardly news that the AKP government has sought to make the most of Europe's refugee predicament, with the March 2016 so-called refugee 'statement' to some even marking a blueprint model of future Turkey-EU relations. What is perhaps less clear is the changes that the AKP Government have made on a pragmatic basis on its stated intents in relation to the EU. As Trump drove the US knife into an already struggling Turkish economy in August 2018 by doubling the Tariffs on Turkish steel and aluminium—mostly as a punitive measure of Erdoğan's unwillingness to free the jailed American priest, Andrew Brunson— two Greek soldiers held on charges of spying and the Turkish head of Amnesty International, Taner Kiliç, were set free and the AKP suddenly displayed new signs of outreach to the EU. There is a recognition that Erdoğan must do whatever it takes to serve Turkish interests, and taking on both the US and the EU at the same time—however popular that might be—is likely to have dire consequences for Turkey's economy, sending it into the arms of IMF, another anathema to the newfound nationalism (Hürriyet, 2019).

In sum, this phase 5 of AKP identity-politics thus has added to Phase 4 a domestic consolidation of power and a recognition that the strongman front figure has a license to act pragmatically and interchangeably to serve the national will, as it were, even if these actions at times can seem to come across the immediate ideological traits of the driving identity politics.

4. Drivers, Challenges and Opportunities

As a contribution to the FEUTURE research project, the main question guiding this paper is in what direction, if at all, AKP identity politics is likely to drive Turkey-EU relations into 2023. This Chapter 3 breaks this question down into the two question of first what the drivers are that will enjoy salience and impact into 2023, and secondly what challenges and opportunities the consequences of the drivers give rise to. As noted in the Introduction, the upshot is that AKP identity politics will hold a conflictual potential. But, as it will become clear in what follows, it is not without a few minor opportunities if addressed prudently.

Drivers first. This is a Janus-faced question. It is a question of what has driven AKP identity politics, and what is likely to drive AKP identity politics into the 2023 timeframe of the FEUTURE project. And it is a question of how this identity politics in turn is likely to drive Turkey-EU relations.

It should be clear by now that the narratives pivoting on the years 1453 and 1920 have a massive rallying and mobilizing potential. One reflects the massive motivating potential of the nostalgia of Empire lost, the other the equally potent mobilizer in the fear of complete division and dissolution, and the ensuing sense of urgency of a fight for survival and independence. How these various tropes are invoked for political purposes vary considerably, however.

One common trait indicates a shared interest in Turkey as an independent actor demanding recognition of its distinct identity, rather than as a member e.g. of the EU. Whereas the Neo-Ottomanism of the early years of Phase 1 were more pro-European than what was to come, it also considered Turkey as a representative of an independently strong and distinct civilization. Also, the proactive and outward foreign policy of those early years were arguably still focussed on outreach to kindred spirits in the Ottoman territories of the imagined glorious past, and about re-establishing Turkey at the heart of a resuscitated Ottoman region. Also arguably, the turn to nationalism of Phases 4 and 5 mark a defensive posture in relation to a number of perceived external (and internal) challenges to this independence. Independence in one form or another can thus seem to be a strong and relatively permanent driver.

Another common trait seems to be the fact that shifts in public opinion mesh with a pointed interest in the achievement and retention of political power. Arguably this explained Erdoğan's shift from the identity politics of his Refah Party past—that saw his political mentor Necmettin Erbakan ousted by the military in 1997, himself jailed and banned from politics for five years in 1998, and more generally as unable to ensure sufficient support at the polls—to the pro-European liberal and multicultural stance of the Phase 1 AKP identity politics. And it saw the AKP distance itself from Davutoğlu's Neo-Ottomanism, irrespective of its version, and turn to more outright nationalist tropes at least since 2015. Also, the more cautious and liberal version of Neo-Ottomanism in Phase 1 likely reflects the fact that the AKP needed to ensure European support against the then still independently powerful Kemalist power-bases of the military, the judiciary, and the bureaucracy. More daring and outright ideological versions seem to follow a sense of relative existential

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security at the helm of Turkish government. The Phase 5 pragmatism—if in a distinctively strong-man nationalist manner—arguably seems to reflect a threat from Turkey's likely politically induced economic woes that sets Phase 5 apart from the massive electoral support Erdoğan enjoyed in Phase 4; especially in the wake of the failed coup against him.

Turning to the question of how the AKP-identity politics drives Turkey-EU relations, a couple of distinct features also stand out. First, it can seem to be the case that when more ideological and emotive identity-related narratives are the most outspoken and salient in relation to Turkey's international relations, then they also seem to hold the most conflictual potential. And vice versa. When other often pragmatic concerns mesh with ideology to influence the nature of the identity politics, such as it was arguably the case both for the liberal, multicultural Phase 1 version of Neo-Ottomanism and for the also arguably more pragmatic Phase 5 version of nationalism, opportunities for cooperation and even convergence seem to be in the offing. Many of the polls referenced in Chapter 2 above also display a pragmatic streak in the Turkish electorate that displays a higher interest e.g. in Turkish EU and NATO membership than the meagre trust-related figures seem to warrant. If not much more, this tacit pragmatism or realism can at least serve to dampen the conflictual potential of AKP identity politics. Looking ahead to 2023, relative relief for the tried Turkey-EU relationship thus could come from the loss of salience of the more conflictual ideological aspects of the AKP identity politics.

That said, a perhaps distinct finding of this paper in relation to the bearing of AKP identity politics on Turkey-EU relations is the finding not merely that the development through the three phases of Neo-Ottoman identity politics brought with it an increasingly conflictual potential, but also that it was the turn in 2015 to nationalism that has proven to hold the most conflictual potential to the relationship. To the nationalism, Europe is not merely a Christian continent with an Islamophobic stance on majority Muslim Turkey; rather Europe is perceived as actively engaged in supporting Turkey's perceived direct enemies such as the PKK and the Gülen movement. Also, a direct conflict with Greece and Greek Cyprus is also more at home in the context of the Nationalist narrative than in the Neo-Ottoman one. Finally, the back-paddling on liberal democratic values and human rights has both grown faster and found a more hospitable environment within Nationalism than within the Neo-Ottomanism of the past.

If Erdoğan decides to stick to his present Nationalist guns into 2023, and identity politics will retain salience and impact on Turkey-EU relations, more conflict is likely to follow. It is a mainstay of diplomatic circles that identity politics is at its most belligerent in the run-up to elections. If this is the case, then the relative slump in electoral campaigns following the 31 March 2019 local elections is perhaps likely to see a drop in antagonism and saliency of AKP identity politics when it comes to Turkey-EU relations.

A drop in salience and antagonism can easily be seen as an opportunity for Turkey-EU relations; as can the tendency towards pragmatism as Turkey's economic woes are likely to continue in the near future. Six of Turkey's top-10 export markets are European. And over two thirds of the much

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needed foreign direct investments in Turkey come out of Europe. If trade and credit ratings can somehow evolve to trump the more ideological aspects of AKP identity politics and bring out the more pragmatic aspects, then the significant identity-related challenges can still come with a silver lining of opportunity into 2023.

5. Conclusion and initial recommendations

The main question that has driven this paper is the question of what direction the AKP's identity-politics is likely to drive Turkey-EU relations into the 2023 timeframe of the FEUTURE research project. To that end the paper began with a number of initial clarifications. In the Introduction, the paper first reminded the reader that Turkish identity-politics should be distinguished from the European and more generally Western wants and needs that often pitch Turkey in a particular identity-related role to play. Instead the paper set off with the aim of first tracing AKP identity politics as it has grown out of a Turkish perspective and developed concurrently and intertwiningly with both domestic and international developments.

Chapter 1 outlined a few methodological and conceptual preliminaries, such as the concept of identity deployed here, the role of the years '1453' and '1920' in Turkish identity-related narratives, the historical, geographic, demographic and socio-psychological aspects of Turkish society that grant prominence to identity politics, and a brief digression on the relation between 'religion' and 'nation' in Turkish identity politics. Chapter 2 outlined the five phase trajectory of AKP identity politics, with a particular focus on the mid 2015 transition from three phases of variations over a Neo-Ottoman identity politics to two subsequent phases of a resuscitated Turkish nationalist identity politics. Chapter 3 then outlined three drivers of AKP identity-politics, three drivers of how the AKP politics affects Turkey-EU relations, a few of the challenges that come with the conflictual potential still deemed to be the most likely into 2023, and finally a few opportunities as a silver lining.

Identity-related challenges to Turkey-EU relations are as sensitive to address as they are elusive to grasp. As a consequence of this, the question of what to do by European decision makers is likely the most difficult question to answer. This paper will conclude with a few initial recommendations in this area.

Picking up on the opportunities outlined in Chapter 3 is an obvious place to start. The trajectory here seems to be twofold. On the one hand, the task is to stay as clear as possible of talking up identity-related issues. On the other hand, and as a possible concrete way forward also for the first aspect, it could be an idea to bring to the fore more pragmatic aspects of Turkey-EU relations, e.g. mutual economic interests. This path would be advised to stay clear of a host of identity-related pitfalls one could drop into such as airing overt support for the non-intervention of Turkish soldiers into the Kurdish controlled area of northern Syria today, and coming out in overt support of the Gülen movement or Gülenists in Europe against the AKP government. It would also require

a soft stance on human rights issues especially against Kurdish politicians or claimed Gülenists in Turkey, and a soft stance on the latest iteration of the Cyprus-related conflicts, the rights to exploration for natural gas off of the coast of Cyprus.

A middle of the road approach could be to focus on the repatriation of especially Syrian refugees as an area of joint interests. It has been clear since 2015 that Turkey holds some leverage over Europe in this regard. But the turn to nationalism in Turkey and the downturn of the Turkish economy has added a sense of acuteness and challenge to this issue in Turkey as well. Adding salience to cooperation on this could also address nationalist worries in both Europe and Turkey. Worthy of note, of course, is that this path risks coming with a considerable cost of human rights both of the Turkish opposition and of Syrian refugees.

If Europe is unwilling to bite the bullets of these softer approaches to Turkey to try and dodge the conflictual potential of AKP identity politics, a firmer stance is also an option, if one that is somewhat outlandish to the European decision maker. Tracing the relative successes in conflictual international contexts involving Turkey since around 2015, three firmer examples stand out with some arguable success. One is the tough Russian stance on Turkey following the November 2015 Turkish shoot-down of the Russian fighter jet. The other is the German rally over the summer of 2017—primarily in response to the arrest of the German human rights activist, Peter Steudtner—of German and European financial institutions to not get involved in further investments in Turkey (Bloomberg, 2017). The third is the mentioned doubling of steel and aluminium tariffs by Trump in response to the initial non-release of the then jailed American pastor Andrew Brunson. All three of these examples have arguably carried some success. Also, in a time and world of increasing salience of bilateral strongman exchanges in the international sphere, it could be argued that the traditionally softer EU runs the risk of being left aside with not much to say, also in relation to Turkey.

As it has been argued, this latter approach comes will all-sorts of possible counterproductive consequences. It risks further fanning the least constructive traits of the AKP identity politics. And it risks harming those very Turkish citizens who bear the daily brunt of this very identity politics. But alternatives might be in short supply, if the EU is unwilling to live with the consequences of the softer approaches outlined.

Save an unlikely complete drop of salience and impact of AKP identity politics, it is likely to hold a conflictual potential for Turkey-EU relations into 2023, something that decision makers will be forced to address.

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About the Author

Dr. Jakob Lindgaard is a researcher at Danish Institute for International Studies.

He contributes to the FEUTURE project research on the identification of drivers of the development of EU-Turkey relations within the fields of Politics, Identity and Security.

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ABOUT FEUTURE

FEUTURE sets out to explore fully different options for further EU-Turkey coop-
eration in the next decade, including analysis of the challenges and opportunities
connected with further integration of Turkey with the EU.

To do so, FEUTURE applies a comprehensive research approach with the follow-
ing three main objectives:

1. Mapping the dynamics of the EU-Turkey relationship in terms of their un-
   derlying historical narratives and thematic key drivers.
2. Testing and substantiating the most likely scenario(s) for the future and
   assessing the implications (challenges and opportunities) these may have
   on the EU and Turkey, as well as the neighbourhood and the global scene.
3. Drawing policy recommendations for the EU and Turkey on the basis of a
   strong evidence-based foundation in the future trajectory of EU-Turkey
   relations.

FEUTURE is coordinated by Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Wessels, Director of the Centre for
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Coordination Office at University of Cologne:
Project Director: Dr. Funda Tekin
Project and Financial Manager: Darius Ribbe
Email: wessels@uni-koeln.de

Website: **www.feuture.eu**

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