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Turkey-EU Relations and the Representation of AK
Party in the Western Political and Media Discourse

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	1
ABSTRACT	3
ABBREVIATIONS	4
INTRODUCTION	5
Literature Review	11
SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST FRAMEWORK	27
A Special Case: Turkey’s Negotiation Process	27
Background and purpose of this study	38
Mainstream Rationalist Materialist Literature on AK Party	43
Social Constructivist Framework	54
Ontological and Epistemological Position	57
Agents and Structure	62
Language, Identity and Interest	65
Methodology: Discourse Analysis	71
POST-9/11 INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL CONTEXT	77
9/11 Attacks: Unprecedented Shock	78
The United States after 9/11	83
The Fight against Terror and the War in Iraq	90
European Union and Transatlantic Relations after 9/11	92
Common Threat Discourses and Security Agendas	99

Rise of Islamophobia in Western Societies	103
“We Failed Multiculturalism”	113
Undermining Basic Values of EU	121
Restraining Religious Rights	126
A BUMPY ROAD FROM THE BEGINNING	131
What Makes Turkey’s Negotiations Different and Harder?.....	142
“Islamist” AK Party?.....	151
NEGOTIATIONS HIT THE ROCK BOTTOM:_WESTERN MAINSTREAM MEDIA AND POLITICAL DISCOURSE ON AK PARTY DURING GEZI PARK PROTESTS & AFTERWARDS	155
What Happened in Gezi Park?	160
Coalition of Supporters for the Protests	168
Social Media as the Driving Force behind the Protests.....	172
Erdoğan-phobia within Dominant Discourse in Mainstream Media.....	176
From the Government’s Perspective	182
Different Stories for the Same Event.....	190
Uneasy Relationship between AK Party and Media	195
CONCLUSION.....	208
BIBLIOGRAPHY	221

ABSTRACT

Turkey-EU relations have attracted high public attention and academic curiosity as a special case that has provided a fruitful environment for a wide-ranging group of study areas. This thesis is particularly interested in the way in which AK Party and specifically Recep Tayyip Erdoğan have been represented in the mainstream western media and political discourse, and how these representations have influenced specific encounters in Turkey-EU relations.

The changes in the dominant representations over time have a special place in this analysis. This thesis mainly claims that, although there is no linear or causal relationship between representations and policy choices, western media and political discourse on AK Party had decisive influence in limiting possible policy options for policy makers. Positive and praising discourse on AK Party and Turkey that dominated western political landscape enabled EU leaders to open the way for membership negotiations. Similarly, negative and even demonising discourse on AK Party became the biggest obstacle for the continuation of the negotiations.

This thesis claims that understanding the international social context is crucial in grasping the background of discourses and their influences on actors. Thus, it focuses on post-9/11 international social context with specific emphasis on western security discourses and the rise of Islamophobia in western societies, as crucial factors in shaping the international context during the relevant period.

Turkey-EU relations is at its lowest point since the beginning of accession talks in 2005. The prospects for Turkey's EU membership are looking bleaker than ever now, as is the representation of Erdoğan and AK Party in the mainstream western media and political discourse. By using discourse analysis method, this thesis analyses the representations of AK Party in western mass media and political landscape, especially in the political turmoil during and after infamous Gezi Park incidents in Turkey that highlighted the problems in Turkey-EU relations as a negative turning point.

ABBREVIATIONS

AK Party	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi – Justice and Development Party
BDP	Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi – Peace and Democracy Party
CDU	Christian Democratic Union of Germany
CHP	Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi – Republican People’s Party
CSU	Christian Social Union of Bavaria
DHKP-C	Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front
EU	European Union
İP	İşçi Partisi - Workers Party
LDPR	Liberal Democratic Party of Russia
MHP	Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi – Nationalist Movement Party
PKK	The Kurdistan Workers' Party
SPD	Social Democratic Party
TGB	Turkey Youth Union
TKP	Turkish Communist Party

INTRODUCTION

Turkey-EU relations have attracted high public attention and academic curiosity as a special case that has provided a fruitful environment for a wide-ranging group of study areas. The story of Turkey's EU membership journey, which dates back to 1959 in which it applied for associate membership for the then European Economic Community, has experienced many ups and downs at various stages. As undoubtedly the most contested EU candidate, Turkey has faced numerous barriers to achieving membership. Turkey's EU membership negotiation process has been subject to "lively, heated and sometimes acrimonious" debates.¹ This negotiation process is clearly not an issue that is dealt only by European and Turkish bureaucrats. Rather, it is something that even ordinary citizens are used to hear or read on the news.

There have been dramatic developments in this fluctuating relationship during Justice and Development Party (AK Party, *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) era that commenced in 2002 with an election that is generally accepted as a political earthquake in Turkish political history. Contrary to initial negative and cautious expectations, performance of AK Party's EU stance has been welcomed by the majority of observers in a short period of time. Especially the unexpected progress of Turkey-EU relations in the first years of the AK Party government and the

¹ Elie Podeh, "The Final Fall of the Ottoman Empire: Arab Discourse over Turkey's Accession to the European Union," *Turkish Studies* 8, no. 3 (September 2007): 317.

beginning of Turkey's EU membership negotiations confused the minds of those who expected AK Party, perceived as representative of political Islam, to be an obstacle on the way that leads Turkey to Europe. The dominant representation of AK Party and Turkey in the western discourse was highly positive in this time period.

AK Party was frequently praised as a 'model' that had to be exported to the rest of the Muslim world. Its leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was applauded in the mainstream western media as one of the rarest blends in the Islamic world and the champion of Turkey's westernisation reforms.² The European Union also praised the economic success of AK Party-ruled Turkey. Prime Minister Erdoğan has become "the darling of the international community" within this period.³ Western political and media landscape was dominantly talking about Turkey's success story under AK Party rule. It is argued in this thesis that this positive representation of AK Party rule was one of the main factors that has made Turkey's EU membership a possible and attractive enlargement policy for the EU members and opened the way for Turkey's membership negotiations.

However, beginning from the opening ceremony of the negotiation process that turned into a political crisis, the relations soured in a relatively constant pace. Likewise, it was possible to observe a sharp contrast in representations of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and AK Party in the western media narratives before and after the opening of negotiations. Interestingly, AK Party's representation in the majority of

² Andrew Purvis, "Recep Tayyip Erdoğan: Turkey's Builder of Bridges," *The 2004 Time 100*, 26 April 2004.

³ Daron Acemoglu, "The Failed Autocrat," *Foreign Policy*, 22 May 2014.

observers' discourses shifted from being anti-Western, to pro-Western and again anti-Western, consecutively, within a decade.

It is mainly claimed in this thesis that both positive and negative representations of AK Party have been central in re-shaping possibilities for the nature of the EU-Turkey relationship and Turkey's accession process. This does not mean that it seeks to find a single factor that explains everything about the ups and downs of the relationship or a scapegoat for the obvious failure of the negotiation process. Rather, it is an attempt to focus on an important factor that is generally neglected in the efforts to understand and/or explain Turkey-EU relations during AK Party era: mainstream media and political discourse.

It is claimed in this thesis that there are many factors at play and negotiation process and Turkey-EU relations are not happening between two unitary and rational actors. The actions and interaction are continuously influencing the outcomes alongside many other factors, including material ones. While the main focus in the literature is generally on what AK Party has or has not done while analysing the good and bad times of the relationship, the role of EU is generally neglected in influencing the possibilities of Turkey-EU relations both in positive and negative directions.

International context have been in continuous influx during Turkey's EU membership negotiations. New developments like Arab Spring, European economic crisis, and unexpected rise of tension between Russia and EU over Ukraine have complicated the already hot debate on AK Party's identity and foreign policy destination. Identity debates concerning AK Party-led Turkey have fluctuated within a wide spectrum of labels, including but not limited to European, Middle Eastern,

Asian, Eurasian, Muslim, model democracy or autocracy. In this era of fast change, the dominant categories defining identity of AK Party or Recep Tayyip Erdoğan during the good relations before the opening of EU membership negotiations have been considerably different from those that emerged along with the worsening of Turkey-EU relations.

There has never been a single factor that defines the pace and fate of Turkey's EU membership negotiations. From EU bodies to EU member states, from domestic political groups to the domestic and international media, from Turkish government to Turkish society, there are many actors at play. Sometimes an unresolved dispute (for instance, Cyprus issue), sometimes changes of governments in member countries (for instance, rise of Angela Merkel in Germany and Nicholas Sarkozy in France to power), sometimes unrelated requests of EU members (for instance, Austria's insistence on start of Croatia's EU membership negotiations in return for lifting its veto on Turkey), sometimes personal efforts of a political leader (for instance, Nicholas Sarkozy), sometimes EU's own problems (for instance, enlargement fatigue and Eurozone crisis), sometimes an international problem (for instance, Middle East turmoil or global economic crisis), sometimes changes in public opinions (for instance, considerable decrease in Turkish public support for EU membership and its influence in domestic political arena) and sometimes actions of the Turkish government (for instance, slowing pace of reforms) may influence the negotiations negatively. These factors may be involved directly in the process as in cases of vetoes against opening Turkey's specific negotiation chapters or indirectly through being part of wider debates as in cases of discussions about EU's enlargement and Europe's future.

There is no dispute that the current situation of the negotiation process cannot be explained solely by the performance of AK Party government in adopting the *acquis communautaire*. As underlined by Turkey's Minister of European Affairs and Chief Negotiator Volkan Bozkır, Turkey would have opened up to 28 chapters by the end of 2014 instead of 14 and closed about 14 instead of only one, if 17 chapters out of total 35 chapters were not blocked by various member states.⁴

It should be emphasised that, instead of directly causing foreign policy actions, this thesis claims that socially constructed representations “frame the context of the ‘perceived’ reality of decision-makers at any given time.”⁵ This conception obviously leaves an important room for agency. This highlights the importance of the concept of ‘logic of appropriateness’ that is referred as the behavioural logic emphasised by constructivist analysts. According to this approach “a certain course of behaviour is adopted because it is in agreement with the intersubjectively shared, value-based expectations of appropriate behaviour emanating from the actor’s social environment.”⁶

For instance, the actions and declarations of UK during its efforts to successfully open Turkey’s negotiations can be seen through this perspective. United Kingdom was carrying the EU Presidency when Turkey started its EU membership negotiations in October 2005. When there was a crisis because of Austria’s last-minute demands during the summit, a new possibility of deadlock and failure arose.

⁴ Volkan Bozkır, Quoted in "Turkey's EU Accession Blocked By Some Member States, EU Min. Claims," *Daily Sabah*, 12 November 2014.

⁵ Christopher Browning, *Constructivism, Narrative and Foreign Policy Analysis: A Case Study of Finland* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2008): 22.

⁶ Volker Rittberger, “Approaches to the Study of Foreign Policy Derived from International Relations Theories,” *Center for International Relations/Peace and Conflict Studies - University of Tübingen*, no. 49 (2004): 9.

However, that policy option was unthinkable according to UK Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, who said failure to open Turkey's negotiation process could harm relations between Christian and Muslim nations.⁷ He argued that keeping Turkey out of the EU would widen the "theological-political divide, which could open up even further down the boundary between so-called Christian-heritage states and those of Islamic heritage." According to Straw, "the heavy responsibility rest[ed] on all member states."⁸ His French, German and Greek counterparts have strongly supported these arguments. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was joining this line of argument by saying "Either [the EU] will show political maturity and become a global power, or it will end up a Christian club ... We will, however, be saddened that a project for the alliance of civilisations will be harmed."⁹

Within that framework, Turkey's supporters in EU welcomed the opening of negotiations as "truly historic for Europe and for the whole of the international community." And they hailed the deal as an important step in undermining "Islamist extremists by showing that the EU is not an exclusively Christian club" and helping "relations with millions of Muslims in today's EU."¹⁰ These discourses cannot be analysed out of their historical and social context (as will be done in the preceding chapter). It is claimed in this thesis that mainstream media discourse on AK Party in the relevant time frame was an important factor in shaping such policy possibilities for political leaders.

⁷ *BBC News*, "EU deadlocked over Turkish entry," 3 October 2005.

⁸ *BBC News*, "Deadlock delays EU Turkey talks," 3 October 2005.

⁹ Nicholas Watt, "Turkey EU talks deadlocked as Austria digs in," *The Guardian*, 3 October 2005.

¹⁰ Nicholas Watt, "Europe embraces Turkey as diplomatic deadlock is broken," *The Guardian*, 4 October 2005.

Within this framework, this thesis accepts the important role of mainstream media in shaping identity and policy narratives that are dominant among public and elites. It does not deal with discussions on whether politicians are sincere in their public discourses or they simply try to use it as a tool to achieve their hidden goals. It is assumed in this thesis that media texts are a significant target of discourse analysis because of their central role in the production and reproduction of dominant discourse.¹¹

Literature Review

The existing literature on Turkey-EU relations have widely focused on the situation of specific issue areas of the relationship, such as economy, foreign policy or democracy. Pros and cons of the relationship in the relevant issue areas as well as handicaps and advantages of Turkey as a candidate are largely covered in this group of literature.¹² Majority of this literature do not explicitly deal with theoretical concerns and they are descriptive in nature and they generally accept material factors as independent from interpretative processes.

An important amount of scholars have analysed Turkey-EU relations from an explicitly rationalist-materialist perspective. The first stimulus for this thesis arose from the observation that this dominant group of accounts have remained far from being enough in comprehending Turkey-EU relations. They not only depended on

¹¹ Julia E. Janes, Bonny Ibhawoh, Narda Razack and Nathan Gilbert, "The Trouble with Triumph: Discourses of Governmentality in Mainstream Media Representations of Urban Youth," *Journal of Progressive Human Services* 25, no.1, (2014): 55.

¹² For instance, Erdem Başçı, Sübidey Togan and Jürgen Von Hagen (eds.), *Maceoeconomic policies for EU accession* (Northampton: Edward Elgar Pub., 2007); Alison Burrell and Arie Oskam (eds.), *Turkey in the European Union: implications for agriculture, food and structural policy* (Cambridge, MA: CABI Pub., 2005); Esra LaGro and Knud Erik Jørgensen (eds.), *Turkey and the European Union: Prospects for a Difficult Encounter* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Reza Moghadam et al., *Turkey at the crossroads: from crisis resolution to EU accession* (Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund, 2005).

explanations based on presumed 'objective' material factors, but also ignored the role of social interactions in continuous construction of actors' identity and interest narratives, which they take as stable and pre-given. Essentialist efforts to "fixate a group identity through a definition"¹³ and "stereotypical and/or partially self-satisfying generalizations"¹⁴ about Turkey and AK Party have caused these approaches to increase confusion regarding Turkey's new ruling AK Party instead of explaining its behaviour; and to produce false predictions about its foreign policy actions. From their perspective, AK Party's identity, interest perceptions and foreign policy preferences were already clear from their very first day in office. For instance, some analysts were certain that Turkey would have to say "goodbye" to EU, if AK Party had won the election.¹⁵ Some of them though that the already reluctant EU "may take the AK Party's election as a pretext to refuse" Turkish bid for EU membership.¹⁶ However, many of their expectations and predictions, including this one, turned out to be wrong throughout time. Of course, not all analyses from rationalist materialist perspective have been this much pessimist about AK Party.

Identity and interests of actors are accepted to be given and exogenous by mainstream theories; i.e. neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism.¹⁷ For instance analyses that are "based on structural realist approach," assume that "a country's

¹³ Naomi Scheman, "Queering the Center by Centering the Queer," in Diana Tietjens Myers (ed.) *Feminist Rethinking the Self* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997): 124-162.

¹⁴ Anders Berg Sorensen, Nils Holtug, Kasper Lippert-Rasmussen, "Essentialism vs. Constructivism: Introduction," *Distinktion: Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory* 11, no.1 (2010): 39-40.

¹⁵ Tufan Türeç, "AKP ile AB'ye Elveda," [Goodbye to EU wih AK Party] *Hürriyet*, 14 September 2002.

¹⁶ Kemal Kaya, "Turkey's Elections: What Impact for Eurasia?" *The Central Asia-Caucas Analyst*, 6 November 2002.

¹⁷ John Gerard Ruggie, "What Makes the World Hang Together? Neo-utilitarianism and the Social Constructivist Challenge," *International Organization*, no.52 (Autumn 1998): 862.

national interest is derived from its position within the international system.”¹⁸ Generally, they describe Turkey as a “middle power” and derive conclusions from the conception of middle power within a realist depiction of international system. Such approaches do not accept Turkey as a unique case, but treat it simply as an example of many other middle powers. This view ignores all special characteristics of Turkey and prevents grasping the roots of all actions. It draws strict boundaries about what Turkey can and cannot do. This quotation provides a good example for such approach:

“A middle power is much stronger than the small nations but considerably weaker than the principal members of the system... Turkey can be classed as a middle power when placed within a hierarchy of states. Because of its weakness, it is greatly influenced by the actions of the major players. On the other hand, it exerts some influence in the region where it is located.”¹⁹

This kind of realist analysis does not leave room for alteration in Turkey’s foreign policy. It also takes the state body as a unitary rational actor. It takes interests as given and does not question how those interests are produced and how they may evolve in time.

Within this framework, analyses in this group claim that Turkey will seek EU membership to the extent that it helps Turkey to achieve its pre-determined national interests. According to this understanding, “The more Turkey is believed to benefit from the continuation of the Westernization/Europeanization process the longer it

¹⁸ Meltem Müftüleri-Bac, *Turkey’s Relations with a Changing Europe* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1997): 6.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

would be willing to pay the costs of becoming a Western/European country.”²⁰ In other words, they try to explain the relationship in terms of alleged rational cost-profit analyses of actors. Within this scope, they provide foreign policy prescriptions to meet some ‘real’ interests. However, their analyses and predictions have been among the victims of the fluctuating nature of Turkey-EU negotiation process.

Since actors adopt a cost-benefit calculus in developing their policies according to this approach, their position towards EU accession is highly predictable for a successful analyst. Analysts from this group claim to have found the rational reasons behind current and future actions of actors. They accept Turkey’s EU membership bid case as ‘hypothesis-generating case study.’ However, such generalisations fail to match with the developments on the field, especially when dramatic changes occur.

It is not possible to mention and analyse each and every hypothesis that was produced by analysts within this group. One example is enough to illustrate the major problem of this approach. For instance, in his article titled “Why It was Rational for an Islamist Party to be ‘Pro-European’ and a Secularist Party to be ‘Anti-European’,” Joerg Baudner produces a hypothesis that says “domestic actors who are disadvantaged in domestic resources embrace EU accession, whereas domestic actors who feel threatened in their domestic resources adopt an opposite strategy.”²¹ This hypothesis follows that political actors evaluate policies according to cost-benefit calculations. Yet, such hypotheses deeply suffer when actors do not follow the prescribed policy choices of this approach.

²⁰ Mustafa Kibaroglu and Tarik Oguzlu, “Is the Westernization Process Losing Pace in Turkey? Who’s to Blame?” *Turkish Studies* 10, no.4 (December 2009): 580.

²¹ Joerg Baudner, “The Politics of ‘Norm Diffusion’ in Turkish European Union Accession Negotiations: Why It was Rational from an Islamist Party to be ‘Pro-European’ and a Secularist Party to be ‘Anti-European’,” *Journal of Common Market Studies* 50, no.6 (2012): 922-938;

In that framework, this analysis fails when there is no major domestic actor that favours EU membership in the current Turkish political environment, including the 'Islamist party' of his analysis. Moreover, current studies show that the desire of all segments of Turkish society to join the European Union has cooled considerably over the past decade. The majority of this remaining support still comes from the supporters of the governing party that is claimed to have gained the control of domestic resources. Moreover, allegedly disadvantaged domestic groups are far from being the champions of Turkey's EU membership bid. Unless he claims that Turkey does not have any disadvantaged domestic actors anymore or that all rational actors suddenly started to act irrationally, this situation creates a breakdown for this hypothesis.

Some of these analysts within this group claim that historical and institutional factors have forced actors into specific policies, without leaving almost any room for change. For instance, some analysts claimed that "the historical and institutional trend of modernization has locked Turkey into a pattern of domestic and foreign policies which is difficult, if not impossible, for current policymakers to break or reverse."²² The governments are mere followers of specific policy choices, which are determined by forces that are mainly out of their reach and control.

This deterministic approach assumes the policymakers to have limited policy choices in Turkey-EU relations. For instance, starting from the observation of the existent historical data, some of them claimed to be better suited for explaining "why Turkey has not substantially diverted from the path to European integration under various governments that represented different social interest and values, and

²² Isa Camyar and Halit Mustafa Tagma, "Why Does Turkey Seek European Union Membership? A Historical Institutional Approach," *Turkish Studies* 11, no.3 (September 2010): 371-386.

in the face of numerous short and medium-term turbulence.”²³ The problems of such assertions become much more visible when a government suddenly and radically diverts from the asserted behavioural pattern.

Labelling and categorising AK Party and Turkey; drawing the boundaries for that pre-given identity; and making predictions about its foreign policy behaviours according to this identity narrative has been the common way of argument for this group. However, these types of approaches have faced serious failures in dealing with the continuous changing nature of the relationship in the relevant period of this thesis. For instance, claims about historical and institutional factors that had forced Turkey’s persistence for joining the EU crumbled with the dramatic drop of AK Party government’s desire and efforts for EU membership within a short period of time. Hence, although they have something to say in dealing with continuity and behavioural patterns, they hit the wall in handling ‘change’.

Another group of analyses focused on the reasons for some countries being prioritised over others.²⁴ In that framework, different types of reasons (i.e. pragmatic, ethical-political and moral) reasons behind this prioritisation are evaluated. For instance, “pragmatic” approach is accepted to justify action with reference to the output that is expected to produce. In an “Ethical-political” approach, justification would be based on particular perception of the collective ‘us’ and a particular understanding of the values of a specific community. On the other hand, according to “moral” approach, policy is not justified with reference to cost-

²³ Ibid. 383.

²⁴ Helene Sjursen, “Why Expand? The Question of Legitimacy and Justification in the EU’S Enlargement Policy,” *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40, no.3 (2002): 491-513; Helene Sjursen, “Introduction: Enlargement and the nature of the euro-polity”, in Helene Sjursen (ed.), *Questioning EU Enlargement: Europe in Search of Identity* (London: Routledge, 2006).

benefit analysis nor with reference to values, but with reference to universal standards of justice.²⁵

Comparative analysis of different enlargement waves are used for this purpose. In line with a tradition of “explanation through interpretation,” EU enlargement is explained by “making intelligible the goals for which it was undertaken.”²⁶ These social constructivist works treat identity and discourse as explanatory rather than constitutive factors.

Influenced by the downturn of Turkey’s EU membership negotiations and the serious decline of European public support for Turkish membership, a group of scholars have concentrated on the negative arguments in political debates in specific member countries.²⁷ While these discourse analyses produce valuable insight in understanding the problems in the negotiation process, they do not deal with differences in discourses in different time frames and do not reflect the changing nature of representations of Turkey and AK Party.

A considerable group within the existing literature have focused on a single aspect of the relationship: religion/culture. This trend gained momentum especially after the stalemate in the negotiation process and the increase of religious and cultural arguments used by European opponents of Turkey’s EU membership. Analyses that focused on religious/cultural aspects of Turkey-EU relations from this perspective

²⁵ Sjurson, “Why Expand? The Question of Legitimacy and Justification in the EU’S Enlargement Policy,” 494-507.

²⁶ Ibid., 507.

²⁷ For instance, Hakan Yılmaz, “Turkish identity on the road to the EU: Basic elements of French and German oppositional discourses”, *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans* 9, no.3, (2007): 293–305; Beyza Ç. Tekin, *Representations and Othering in Discourse: The Construction of Turkey in the EU Context* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2010).

provided very useful contributions to the literature, especially for analysing the problems of the relationship.²⁸

Within this group, opposition arguments that based on factors like the absorption capacity of the EU, Turkey's geographic location or Europeanness of Turkey are generally seen as "political tactics"²⁹ and excuses to hide the real argument, which says "a predominantly Muslim country has no place in the EU." Popularity of this approach increased after the rise of problems in the negotiation process in spite of Turkish reforms that has made EU membership a more "realistic prospect,"³⁰ in terms of meeting the relevant membership criteria.

Although religion is undeniably an important factor in analysing Turkey-EU relations, it is far from being the only relevant aspect of the relationship. Moreover, explanations based on Islamophobia or Christian identity of Europe without deconstructing the concepts and making comparative analysis fail to account for the shifts in discourses and actions of the same actors. For instance, such simplifications generally cause to miss out the fact that countries, which currently oppose Turkish membership, have unanimously decided to open the membership negotiations with

²⁸ Dietrich Jung and Catharina Raudvere (eds.), *Religion, Politics and Turkey's EU Accession* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); (Benefiting from theoretical insights of Constructivism and Realism) Giray Sadık, "Magic Blend or Dangerous Mix? Exploring the Role of Religion in Transforming Turkish Foreign Policy from a Theoretical Perspective," *Turkish Studies* 13, no.3 (September 2012): 293-31; (Descriptive) R. Quinn Meacham, "From the Ashes of Virtue, A Promise of Light: The Transformation of Political Islam in Turkey," *Third World Quarterly* 25, no.2 (2004): 339-358; Valerie Amiraux, "Breaching the Infernal Cycle? Turkey, the European Union and Religion," in Aziz Al-Azmeh ne Effie Fokas (eds.), *Islam in Europe: Diversity, Identity and Influence* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007): 183-207; Erik Jones, "Review Essay: Turkey, Islam and Europe," *Survival* 51, no.5 (October-November 2009): 163-172; Selcen Öner, "Turkey's Membership to the EU in Terms of 'Clash of Civilizations'," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary Economics* 20 (2009): 245-261.

²⁹ Ingmar Karlsson, "Turkey's Historical, Cultural and Religious Heritage: An Asset to the European Union?" in Christiane Timmerman, Dirk Roelants and Sara Mels (eds.), *European and Turkish Voices in Favour and Against Turkish Accession to the European Union* (Brussels, P.I.E Peter Lang, 2008): 100.

³⁰ Fraser Cameron, *An Introduction to European Foreign Policy*, Second Edition (London: Routledge, 2012): 167-168.

Turkey that is ruled by ‘Islamist’ AK Party only a few years ago. Using ‘Muslim’ identity of Turkey and ‘Christian’ identity of EU as explanatory and pre-determined/fixed rather than constitutive and fluxional factors open the way for (mostly negative) essentialist assumptions like “EU hates Turkey” or “Turks hate EU” and leads to questionable predictions about foreign policy actions of actors. Additionally, this approach generally causes to overlook the differences and varieties of the meanings of concepts like ‘Islam’ or ‘Europe’, and to assume that everybody implies and understands the same meanings while using these concepts.

Another important group of literature shows a special interest to the concept of “identity” since ‘Europeanness’ of Turkey has become a dominant theme in political debates and media coverage of Turkey’s EU membership bid. A segment of this literature takes “European identity” at the centre of their analysis, especially after the increasing debates about “what Europe is and where it ends?” following the last enlargement waves and discussions on prospective candidates.³¹

Studies in this category predominantly treated ‘identity’ as a more or less coherent independent variable that has generally hindered Turkey’s membership process.³² Most of them take concepts like “Islamist” as given without feeling the necessity to deconstruct such labels. Some of them acknowledge the “historicity and evolutionary potential” of identity politics for criticising the usage of identity related

³¹ Feyzi Baban and Fuat Keyman, “Turkey and postnational Europe: Challenges for the cosmopolitan political community,” *European Journal of Social Theory* 11, no. 1 (2008): 107–24; Thomas Risse, *A Community of Europeans? Transnational Identities and Public Spheres* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2010); Paul T. Levin, *Turkey and the European Union: Christian and Secular Images of Islam* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2011).

³² For instance, Ziya Öniş, “Turkey, Europe and paradoxes of identity: Perspectives on the international context of democratisation,” *Mediterranean Quarterly* 10, no.3 (1999): 107–36; Meltem Müftüleri-Baç, “Through the looking glass: Turkey in Europe,” *Turkish Studies* 1, no.1 (2000): 21–35; Çiğdem Nas, “Turkish identity and the perception of Europe,” *Marmara Journal of European Studies* 9, no.1 (2001): 222–33.

opposition as “a cover for racist arguments that are based on an understanding of identity as something set in stone and inalterable over time.”³³

Some of the analyses within this group have focused on specific aspects of identities of actors. For instance, some studies examined “differences between Turkey and the EU in terms of their security identities and foreign policy behaviour.” However, they start from an assumption about existence of “distinctive security identities”³⁴ of Turkey and EU. Alterations in Turkey’s security discourse and increasingly visible divisions in security discourses of EU member-states create serious problems for such assumptions and explanatory efforts.

Poststructuralist scholars Like Neumann, Rumelili and Diez have provided valuable contributions to the literature by focusing on the discursive construction of identity.³⁵ They have mainly showed interest in analysing the construction of European identity through difference. They analysed various constitutive dimensions along which self/other relationships vary to produce or not to produce relationships of Othering. They have emphasised that “constitution of identity in relation to difference... does not necessarily lead to behavioural relationship based on the perception and representation of the other as a threat to self’s identity.”³⁶

³³ Dimitris Keridis, “Turkey and the Identity of Europe: Contemporary Identity Politics on the European Frontier,” in Constantine Arvanitopoulos (ed.), *Turkey’s Accession to the European Union: An Unusual Candidacy* (Springer, 2009): 155-156.

³⁴ H. Tarik Oğuzlu, “Turkey and the European Union: The Security Dimension,” *Contemporary Security Policy* 23, no.3 (December 2002): 61 and 79.

³⁵ Iver Neumann, *Uses of the Other: The East in European Identity Formation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); Thomas Diez, “Europe’s Others and the return of geopolitics,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 17, no.2 (2004): 319–35; Bahar Rumelili, “Constructing Identity and Relating to Difference: Understanding the EU’s Mode of Differentiation,” *Review of International Studies*, 30 (2004) 27-47.

³⁶ Rumelili, “Constructing Identity and Relating to Difference: Understanding the EU’s Mode of Differentiation,” 46.

Analysts within this group have focused on the roles of factors such as Europe's relations with the 'East' or EU's enlargement policy. Some poststructuralist analysts like Düzgit, focused specifically on the role of EU official discourses on Turkey in constructing European identity.³⁷ She has used discursive data from official debates and documents of EU bodies and member state parliaments as well as interviews with politicians in her analysis.

Majority of the studies mentioned above contribute to the analysis of Turkey-EU relations with different degrees. There are many factors, including material factors and unexpected developments like the recent crisis in Ukraine that are at play in this relationship. Thus, no single study is exclusively enough in grasping all aspects of Turkey-EU relations. Standing closer to the poststructuralist approach, my thesis analyses the changing nature of competing representations of AK Party in the western mainstream media and political discourse, which is widely neglected in spite of its importance in the process. My thesis rejects rationalist materialist assumption on natural and pre-given identity understanding. Within that framework, it deconstructs concepts and labels like Islamist or secular, which are taken for granted within debates. It analyses dominant discourses on AK Party and Turkey's identity, as well as foreign policy predictions emanating from these discursive positions. Thus, it highlights the changes and interactions among different sources of discourses during the relevant period, benefiting from the latest discursive data, especially during the Gezi Park incidents in Turkey that has caused Turkish-EU relations to hit rock bottom.

My thesis takes Turkey-EU relations as the policy area to analyse the relationship

³⁷ Senem Aydın Düzgit, *Constructions of European Identity: Debates and Discourses on Turkey and the EU* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

between discursive representations and policy choices. If one only analyses the material factors in Turkey and EU, that has no use in understanding the changes in Turkey-EU relations. Although there have been some developments that caused negative reactions from the West, changes in material conditions of Turkey in meeting the membership criteria do not reflect the dramatic negative change in Turkey's EU membership destination. Although, the pace has been criticised, new reform steps have been taken in addition to already existent reforms that hardly anyone in Turkey and abroad denies. Moreover, there have been considerable positive developments about the reasons that were used to support Turkey's membership bid, such as good performance of Turkish economy or its importance in terms of Europe's energy security.

This qualitative research claims that the dominant rationalist materialist and essentialist analyses in the literature and media fell short of understanding Turkey, its new governing party and Turkey-EU relations. It challenges the plausibility of essentialist arguments like "they hate us", "they will not take us", "they are not like us," or "they will ruin us." Moreover it argues that these dominant approaches have had decisive influences on western actors' perceptions and actions related to AK Party and Turkey under its rule. As it underlines "the power of incomplete, ambiguous, and contradictory discourses to produce a social reality that we experience as solid and real,"³⁸ this thesis examines how language constructs phenomena and how that influences policy choices. Since "discourse is not produced without context and cannot be understood without taking context into

³⁸ Nelson Phillips and Cynthia Hardy, *Discourse Analysis: Investigating Processes of Social Construction* (London: Sage Publications, 2002): 1-2.

consideration,”³⁹ it pays special attention on the role of social context during the relevant period.

Moreover, this thesis argues that material elements have a secondary status, because they gain meaning only through intellectual processes. As has been pointed out by Kevin Dunn, reality “is unknowable outside human perception, and there is never only one authority on a given subject.”⁴⁰ In Friedrich Nietzsche’s words, “There are no facts in themselves. It is always necessary to begin by introducing a meaning in order that there can be a fact.”⁴¹

This is what enables constructivists like Martha Finnemore among many others to believe in the possibility of *change* in the social world and to reject a constant, pre-given, and natural-like ‘social world’ perception.⁴² Actions of social beings depend not only on physical constraints or individual preferences and rational choices, but also on shared knowledge, collective meanings and rules, legitimacy of self, institutions, practices and even creativity.⁴³ From this perspective, human beings “make” our social world “from the raw materials that nature provides, by doing what [they] do with each other and saying what [they] say to each other.”⁴⁴

This thesis accepts the important role of mainstream media in shaping identity and policy narratives that are dominant among public and elites. Differently from other

³⁹ Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak, “Critical Discourse Analysis,” in T.A. van Dijk (ed.), *Discourse as Social Interaction: Volume 1* (London: Sage, 1997): 277.

⁴⁰ Kevin C. Dunn, “Historical Representations,” in Audie Klotz and Deepa Prakash (eds), *Qualitative Methods in International Relations: A Pluralist Guide* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008): 79.

⁴¹ Cited in Roland Barthes, “The Discourse of History,” *Comparative Criticism*, no. 3 (1981): 16.

⁴² Martha Finnemore, *National Interest in International Society* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1996).

⁴³ Emanuel Adler, “Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics,” *European Journal of International Relations* 3, no.3 (1997): 321.

⁴⁴ Nicholas Onuf, “Constructivism: A User’s Manual,” in Vendulka Kubalkova, Nicholas Onuf and Paul Kowert (eds.), *International Relations in a Constructed World* (New York: ME Sharpe, 1998): 59.

negotiation processes, public opinion has always been a substantial part of Turkey's membership debate. Contrary to the formal discourse, the process has been much more than a technical procedure. Turkish membership has been an important subject of various national election campaigns in EU member states. New laws that required national referendum in some of these members (i.e. France and Austria, both of which are among the countries with the least public support percentages in polls about Turkey's EU membership) regardless of the success of Turkey's negotiations increased the role of media and public opinion in the process.

It is possible to claim that "the EU appears to have reached the limits of a top-down, elite-driven Project."⁴⁵ What people on the street think is becoming more and more important especially after the rise of public resentment in numerous member countries against the policies of EU. This trend has become much more visible after the last European Parliament elections that increased the pressure on the mainstream political parties and EU bodies, while providing an increasing voice for anti-EU and anti-enlargement actors.

Within that framework, this thesis is particularly interested in the way in which AK Party and specifically Erdoğan have been represented in the Western media discourse, and how these representations have influenced specific encounters in Turkey-EU relations. The changes in the dominant representations over time have a special place in this analysis. It is claimed that western media and political discourse on AK Party had decisive influence in limiting possible policy options for policy makers. Positive and praising discourse on AK Party and Turkey that dominated

⁴⁵ Ziya Öniş, "Contesting for Turkey's Political Centre: Domestic Politics, Identity Conflicts and the Controversy over EU Membership," *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 18, no.3 (September 2010): 362.

western political landscape enabled EU leaders to open the way for membership negotiations. Similarly, negative and even demonising discourse on AK Party became the biggest obstacle for the continuation of the negotiations.

As has been done in the works like Roxanne Doty's *Imperial Encounters*⁴⁶, Cynthia Weber's *Simulating Sovereignty*⁴⁷ and *Faking It*⁴⁸, Kevin Dunn's *Imagining the Congo*⁴⁹; this thesis puts emphasis on the contested meanings of AK Party and Erdoğan and traces how the dominant representation has shifted over time. Because, as has been argued by Iver Neumann, when "a discourse maintains a degree of regularity in social relations, it produces preconditions for action."⁵⁰ It is claimed that the changes in representations of AK Party and Turkey under its rule defined the limits of possible policy choices both for the EU and Turkey. Analysing these changes reveal important clues in understanding how the opening of negotiations emerged as a political option, how other options were shunted aside at that time, and how those options became dominant after some time.

Assuming that identities are constructed discursively, how is the representation of AK Party is constructed in mainstream Western media and political discourses? How did labels like "Islamist" that is commonly used for AK Party in the literature and Western political discourse influence the debates, in the post-9/11 social context? How did these discourses change during AK Party's rule in a continuous interactive way within the context of Turkey-EU relations? How did differences in

⁴⁶ Roxanne Doty, *Imperial Encounters* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

⁴⁷ Cynthia Weber, *Simulating Sovereignty: Intervention, the State, and Symbolic Exchange* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁴⁸ Cynthia Weber, *Faking It: U.S. Hegemony in a 'Post-Phallic' Era* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

⁴⁹ Kevin Dunn, *Imagining the Congo* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

⁵⁰ Iver B. Neumann, "Discourse Analysis," in Audie Klotz and Deepa Prakash (eds.), *Qualitative Methods in International Relations: A Pluralist Guide* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008): 62.

these discourses shape actors' policies and positions about Turkey's EU accession?

In an attempt to provide answers to these questions, this thesis analyses the representations of AK Party in western mass media and political landscape, especially in the political turmoil during and after infamous Gezi Park incidents in Turkey that highlighted the problems in Turkey-EU relations as a negative turning point.

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST FRAMEWORK

A Special Case: Turkey's Negotiation Process

As European Commissioner Olli Rehn rightly points out “every time the EU accepts new members, it changes.”⁵¹ However, Turkish membership, contrary to other ones, seems to force Europeans to question their identity and interest discourses at unprecedented levels. Many things that had been taken for granted were questioned. In the words of David Phillips, Turkey's membership will not only change Turkey but also “transform what it means to be European.”⁵² As Jose Torreblanca puts it, the process showed that “to be European in Turkey is quite different from being European in Paris, Stockholm or Dublin.” But this is the case, he continues, for every member country. It is not only Turkey, which is different.⁵³

Thus, identity-related and civilisational arguments seem to dominate the opposition against Turkey's EU membership. For instance, former French president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing argues that “Turkey's capital is not in Europe; 95 per cent of its

⁵¹ Olli Rehn, “Foreword,” in European Commission, *Understanding Enlargement: The European Union's Enlargement Policy* (Brussels: Directorate General for Enlargement, 2007): 1.

⁵² David L. Phillips, “A Crescent among Stars,” *Foreign Affairs*, 22 December 2004.

⁵³ Jose I. Torreblanca, “Europe's Reasons and Turkey's Accession,” *Real Instituto Elcano*, no. 199/2004 (2004): 3.

population lives outside Europe; it is not a European country.”⁵⁴ However, his real concern is the identity and Muslim population of Turkey. Although Turkey is officially accepted by the Union to share the European values that are known to everybody, some Europeans like Edmund Stoiber, the Bavarian prime minister, believe that “Turkey is not part of Europe’s community of values,”⁵⁵ without specifying what these values are. Looking at these examples, many commentators believe that there is at least a certain amount of hostility to Turkey in some EU member countries.⁵⁶

The reasons for objections have sometimes become harsh as in the example of Dutch European commissioner, Frits Bolkestein, who warned that Turkey’s membership will mean “the Islamisation of Europe” without hesitating to claim that it will mean “the relief of Vienna in 1683 will have been in vain.”⁵⁷ For Turkish public, nothing can be more awkward than using this argument to oppose Turkey’s membership to a Union that arose from the ashes of the most brutal war the world has ever seen. This seemd to show a problem of understanding even at commissioner level about the logic behind the establishment of the Union on the basis of cooperation of two recent enemies, namely France and Germany.

The role of media is crucial to mention at this point. After a general survey on the news related to Turkey in the European press, Ellen Svendsen concludes that the most important characteristics is “negativity.” By focusing only on negative things

⁵⁴ Quoted in Anthony Browne, “We can strengthen Brussels, says Turkey,” *The Times*, 5 March 2004.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ For Norman Barry, there is “definite hostility” to Turkey in France. See Norman Barry, “Turkey and the European Union,” *Today’s Zaman*, January 30, 2007

⁵⁷ Quoted in *The Spectator*, “Open the gates of Vienna,” September 18, 2004. Also see, Ian Traynor, “In 1683 Turkey was the Invader, in 2004 Much of Europe Still Sees It That Way,” *The Guardian*, 22 September 2004.

like bomb attacks, catastrophes, violations of human rights and ignoring all positive developments the news coverage create a negative image of Turkey⁵⁸, especially after the downturn of Turkey-EU negotiation process. Another important aspect of media coverage is the emphasis on Turkey as a Muslim country. With influences of negative image of Islam after 9/11 in the eyes of European citizens, this became one of the reasons of opposition to Turkish membership. In Svendsen's words, "throughout European history, Turks have persistently been associated with violence, sexual perversion and stupidity." Combined with the historical 'otherness' of Ottoman Empire in shaping European identity, it became more common to argue that Turkey is culturally different than other Europeans whatever the developments are. It also became commonplace to hear European politicians asking for opening a debate about European Union's identity when they are asked about Turkish membership. However, the same politicians do not refrain from giving long speeches about the success of European Union, although they claim that they do not know what it really is. For those who cannot tell what Europe is, says Ellen Svendsen, Turkey plays a crucial "role of the convenient *other* that can tell us who we are."⁵⁹

One interesting argument of those who oppose Turkish membership like Wolfgang Schauble, deputy head of the CDU/CSU group in German Bundestag, is that Europe has made a crucial mistake by "postpon[ing] for too long a discussion about the ultimate limits of EU extension and about the meaning of European identity."⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Ellen Svendsen, "The Turks Arrive! European Media and Public Perceptions of Turkey," *ZEI EU-Turkey-Monitor* 2, no. 3 (November 2006): 3.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁶⁰ Wolfgang Schauble and David L. Phillips, "Talking Turkey," *Foreign Affairs* (November/December 2004), <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/europe/2004-11-01/talking-turkey> (Accessed 14/02/2013).

Although David Phillips criticises him in the same article for reflecting the view of Europe's older generation, Schauble asserts that Europe should stop lying to Turkey and be "honest" enough to say that it will never be a full member.⁶¹ This perspective is well reflected by a speech of another CDU member in the Bundestag who claimed they are the honest ones by saying Turkey can only have a privileged partnership, while SDU is giving wrong hopes (or lying) to Turkey about full membership.

Turkish public is becoming increasingly indignant towards the EU because of the perception that Europeans are not keeping their promises and applying double-standards against Turkey. This anger is making it harder for the government to introduce reforms and slowing down the negotiation process. This point was emphasised by European Commission Vice-President Günter Verheugen, in an interview when he warned that "Europe is sending Turkey almost exclusively negative signals." He continued that "we are focusing on the weaknesses of the country and not encouraging them to change. This is feeding a reluctance to make the reforms we are asking for, which in turn leads Europe to the view that the Turks simply can't manage it." According to him, this "is a dangerous spiral that threatens to lead to a global political failure of the highest order."⁶²

International context have been in continuous influx during Turkey's EU membership negotiations. New developments like Arab Spring, European economic crisis, and unexpected rise of tension between Russia and EU over Ukraine have complicated the already hot debate on AK Party's identity and foreign policy destination. Identity debates concerning AK Party-led Turkey have fluctuated within

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Günter Verheugen, cited in *EUobserver*, "Verheugen defends Turkey's EU membership," 9 October 2006.

a wide spectrum of labels, including but not limited to European, Middle Eastern, Asian, Eurasian, Muslim, model democracy or autocracy. In this era of fast change, the dominant categories defining identity of AK Party or Erdoğan during the good relations before the opening of EU membership negotiations have been considerably different from those that emerged along with the worsening of Turkey-EU relations.

Turkey's EU membership negotiation process is different and more problematic than the previous ones. It took less than one year after the start of the negotiations for the Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn to warn the parties about a potential "train crash."⁶³ Following intellectual problems, practical obstacles arose in the process. In December 2006, the European Council decided to provisionally suspend eight chapters from the accession negotiations with Turkey as a reaction to Turkey's refusal to apply the additional protocol to the agreement on the EU-Turkey Customs Union to Cyprus. Austrian Foreign Minister was emphasizing that decision to suspend chapters is "a clear break in the negotiations." According to her, "'tailor-made partnership, say in the form of a European-Turkish Community'" is more realistic option than full membership.⁶⁴

During German presidency, France pushed hard to block opening one of the three negotiation chapters that were ready to be opened. That chapter was the key area of economic and monetary policy. The only reason for Sarkozy to lobby hard to prevent opening that negotiation chapter was the political, economic and symbolic importance of the chapter by giving a full membership perspective. In the words of a German official, not opening that chapter "was a political decision emanating from

⁶³ *Deutsche Welle*, "EU Warns Turkey to Step Up Reforms to Avoid "Train Crash," 4 October 2006.

⁶⁴ Austrian Foreign Ministry, "Plassnik on negotiations with Turkey: proceeding on sight has proved its worth," *Press Release*, 12 December 2006.

Paris.” Turkish side reacted to this decision by claiming that, for the first time ever, a negotiation chapter is not opened “on the grounds that it would bring Turkey closer to full membership.”⁶⁵ More important point is the fact that it has not been the last time. One of many other blows came when France and Austria accepted to hold referenda for Turkey’s membership.

There are various arguments used by those who oppose a potential Turkish membership. Its identity, geographical location, religion, culture, large and agricultural population come among the most popular ones. However, the tension in the debates dramatically increased when the opposition about Turkey’s EU membership became based on arguments with identity and civilisational basis. It is generally accepted that economy or any other material criteria will not be the real concern in deciding about Turkey’s full membership. This argument is supported with the relative success of Turkey about these criteria. Very few Europeans deny the fact that Turkey’s situation, in measurable material terms, is similar to the two newcomers in the Union, namely Bulgaria and Romania, and at least as good as Spain and Portugal when they applied.⁶⁶

The prospects for Turkey’s EU membership are looking bleaker than ever now, as is the representation of Erdoğan and AK Party in the mainstream western media. Turkey’s relatively independent foreign policy choices and domestic developments that started with Gezi Park protests and continued during the power struggle between Turkish government and Gülen Movement made things worse. Many EU countries and EU bodies have increased their criticisms about the AK Party

⁶⁵ Dan Bilefsky, “Sarkozy blocks key part of EU entry talks on Turkey,” *International Herald Tribune*, 25 June 2007.

⁶⁶ Norman Barry, “Turkey and the European Union,” *Today’s Zaman*, 30 January 2007.

government and its leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Political leaders from various EU member states are much more frank in their opposition to Turkey's EU membership by saying that Turkey is not part of Europe.⁶⁷

In continuous interaction process, Turkish government's discourse has shown a parallel downturn in terms of Turkey's EU membership prospects. For instance, in his statement that marked Turkey's first high-level acknowledgement that its decades-long bid for membership may never be successful, Egemen Bağış, Minister of EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator at the time, said Turkey will probably never become a member of the European Union because of stiff opposition and "prejudiced" attitudes from the bloc's current members.⁶⁸ Haluk Ilıcak, Turkey's undersecretary of the Ministry of EU Affairs reflected mental preparations for the possibility of ultimate failure in negotiations by saying "The process means more than the accession. Once the necessary levels are achieved, Turkey is big enough to continue its development without the accession."⁶⁹

Public opinions show a similar trend. According to the "Transatlantic Trends 2013" public opinion survey released by the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF), the desire of Turks to join the European Union has cooled considerably over the past decade and only 44% of Turkish respondents favoured joining the European Union in 2013, down from 73% in 2004. 34%, up from 9% in 2004, said that it would be bad for Turkey to join the EU. Citizens of EU member states are much less enthusiastic about Turkey's EU membership, since only 20% of EU respondents

⁶⁷ For instance, German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble cited in *Russia Today*, "Turkey may 'never be EU member' – Ankara negotiator," 22 September 2013.

⁶⁸ Cited in Alex Spillius, "Turkey 'will probably never be EU member'," *The Telegraph*, 21 September 2013.

⁶⁹ Haluk Ilıcak, His speech at the conference of the Turkish Ministry of EU Affairs, İstanbul, 7 June 2013.

said that Turkey's accession would be good, while 33% said it would be bad and 37% said that it would be neither good nor bad.⁷⁰

Contrary to the official discourse, Turkey's membership negotiation process is much more than a technical procedure that is dealt only by European and Turkish bureaucrats. This thesis rejects the analyses, which assume that membership negotiations have opened or halted upon objective cost-benefit calculations of rational actors. It argues that, alongside other factors like the performance of Turkish government, AK Party's positive representation in the western mainstream media within the immediate post-9/11 social context provided an environment for supporting Turkey's EU membership in European identity and interest discourses. Moreover, changing conditions and representations created considerable obstacles for Turkey's membership later on by producing sources of fear and confusion in the minds and hearts of Europeans. This has been reflected well in the fact that "the more Europeans have begun to see Islam as an existential threat in post-September 11 era, the more they tend to define Turkey as one of the potential 'others' of the EU's emerging identity."⁷¹ Later on, 'autocracy' allegations about Erdoğan, who seems to have the political power to rule Turkey in the foreseeable near future, have created a scarier blend. The representation of AK Party and its leader in the western media has played a key role in this discursive interaction and change.

"Islamist" has become the single dominant adjective used for AK Party and Erdoğan, especially after the downfall of Turkey-EU relations and the increase of active foreign policy choices of AK Party government that are relatively more

⁷⁰ The German Marshall Fund of the United States, "Transatlantic Trends: Key Findings 2013," 46.

⁷¹ Tarkan Oğuzlu, "Middle Easternization of Turkey's Foreign Policy: Does Turkey Dissociate from the West?" *Turkish Studies* 9, no.1 (2008): 13.

independent from its traditional western allies. Personal attacks against Erdoğan have become more common firstly in the pro-Israeli and neo-con segments of the western media. For instance, *Bloomberg View* columnist and *The Atlantic*'s national correspondent Jeffrey Goldberg, who was named as "the most influential journalist/blogger on matters related to Israel"⁷² by *Columbia Journalism Review* contributing editor Michael Massing, has said that: "It's time to call Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan what he is: a semi-unhinged bigot."⁷³ Gideon Rachman, the chief foreign affairs commentator for the Financial Times was joining the group by saying "I'm beginning to think Erdogan may actually be quite stupid."⁷⁴

Especially after the anti-government Gezi Park protests in 2013, it has become much more commonplace in the mainstream western media to call Erdoğan *autocrat*⁷⁵ and even *dictator*.⁷⁶ There has been close relationship and even cooperation between domestic anti-government groups and considerable number of authors in the western media to enhance this representation of Erdoğan.⁷⁷ His policies like banning Twitter until it recognises Turkish court decisions, while emphasising that he does not care what others (especially western media) would say about him, accelerated this

⁷² Michael Massing, "The News about the Internet", *New York Book Review* 56, no.13, 13 August 2009.

⁷³ Jeffrey Goldberg, "Turkey's Erdogan: A Smart Man with Jews on the Brain," *Bloomberg View*, 21 August 2013.

⁷⁴ Gideon Rachman, His official Twitter account @gideonrachman, 20 August 2013.

⁷⁵ *Washington Post*, Editorial, "Prime Minister Erdogan's strongman response to Turkey's protests," 3 June 2013.

⁷⁶ Robert Fisk, "Has Recep Tayyip Erdogan gone from model Middle East 'strongman' to tin-pot dictator?" *The Independent*, 10 April 2014; Fulya Ozerkan, "Erdogan Says 'I'm No Dictator'... But Is He?" *Agence France Presse*, 6 March 2013.

⁷⁷ Among many examples, Simon Tisdall, "Recep Tayyip Erdogan: Turkey's elected sultan or an Islamic democrat?" *The Guardian*, 24 October 2012; Simon Tisdall, "Turkish opposition leader condemns 'dictator' Erdogan," *The Guardian*, 15 February 2013; *Today's Zaman*, "Erdoğan will become 'dictator' with de facto presidential system," 4 May 2014; *Press TV*, "Erdogan Turkey's 'new dictator': Republican People's Party leader," 31 July 2014.

trend.⁷⁸ This was followed by the widespread criticisms in the mainstream Western media about increasing number of AK Party supporters for not seeing the *reality* (!) and “rewarding” Erdoğan for his wrongdoings. In addition, political tactics were provided for Erdoğan’s critics to beat him up in the next elections.⁷⁹

While Erdoğan’s long-time opponents are welcoming this change by claiming that “western depictions of Turkish politics have finally begun to catch up with the authoritarian reality,”⁸⁰ Merve Şebnem Oruç from *Daily Sabah* summarises this radical change in Erdoğan’s representation in the Western media discourses by saying:

“Almost all the stories on Turkish politics penned by Western or West-obsessed Turkish writers start with the same cliché: "Once upon a time, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was a moderate, successful, exemplary Islamist democrat. Oh, we loved him so much. When the Arab Spring spread, many pointed to Erdoğan-led Turkey as a model for guiding the transformation of the Middle East. But those days are over. Suddenly - yes, suddenly - Erdoğan became an autocrat - no wait, he became more evil: a dictator. He became "the dark one" in the Middle East. He somehow ruined the country; now, Turkey is a mess. And it all started with the holy Gezi Park." Their code is simple, actually.”⁸¹

⁷⁸ For instance, Chris Taylor, "Dear Dictators: Yes, Please Try to Block Twitter," *Mashable*, 21 March 2014; Andy Kessler, "The Autocrat-and-Mouse Censorship Game" *The Wall Street Journal*, 2 April 2014; Jonathan S. Tobin, "Twitter and Turkey’s Slide Into Dictatorship," *Commentary*, 21 March 2014.

⁷⁹ *Bloomberg View*, "Turkey's Erdoğan Tightens His Grip," *Bloomberg Businessweek*, 3 April 2014.

⁸⁰ Erik Meyersson and Dani Rodrik, "Erdogan's Coup," *Foreign Affairs*, 26 May 2014.

⁸¹ Merve Şebnem Oruç, "How Has Erdoğan Suddenly Gone From Role Model to Dictator?" *Daily Sabah*, 14 April 2014.

Although the public opposition in Turkey towards EU membership and the downturn of AK Party government's efforts for reforms in line with *acquis communautaire* are important factors in determining the pace of negotiations, they are not what make Turkish membership negotiations different than others. Because, the character of that public opposition and governments' reluctance in reform efforts in the absence of a clear membership perspective are not too much different than what can be observed in other candidate countries. On the other hand, the major challenge comes from the scale of opposition in the EU against Turkish membership, which is unprecedented in enlargement history.

The reasons behind the difficulties in the negotiation process are mainly based on identity and interest discourses among Europeans that are shaped within the new international structure after September 11. Non-material factors play a considerable role even in those cases that might be argued to be material factors such as geographical location or Turkey's big population. The debates on the borders of the Union or the debates about the labour force requirements of Europe in the future show the importance of constructivist perspective in understanding such issues. As mentioned by Antonio Missiroli, "it is extremely difficult to base the debate [about Turkey] on an objective assessment" because of the fact that "where one stands depends on what one sees" in this case. Turkey's characteristics like its population, size, and geographical location are perceived as "strategic assets" by some, while they are seen as "structural liabilities" by others.⁸²

⁸² Antonio Missiroli, "Foreword," in Amanda Akçakoca, "EU-Turkey relations 43 years on: train crash or temporary derailment?" *EPC Issue Paper*, no.50 (November 2006): 5-6.

Background and purpose of this study

This qualitative research analyses the changing nature of competing representations of AK Party in the western mainstream media discourse. The aim of this thesis is to illustrate how the options available for Turkey's EU membership orientation have emerged in the processes that construct AK Party's representation in the western mainstream media narrative. Although it accepts that, as has been put by Wendt, "brute material factors have some effects on the constitution of power and interest;"⁸³ it rejects rationalist materialist assumption on natural and pre-given identity understanding. It claims that identities are "endogenous, malleable and intersubjectively frame the reality which rationalist materialist approaches take for granted."⁸⁴ Within that framework, it deconstructs concepts and labels like Europe or Islamist, which are taken for granted within debates. It focuses on dominant western media discourses on AK Party and Turkey's identity, as well as foreign policy predictions emanating from these discursive positions. Thus, it highlights the changes and interactions among different sources of discourses during the relevant period.

It takes Turkey-EU relations as the policy area to analyse the relationship between discursive representations and policy choices. It has no use in understanding the changes in Turkey-EU relations if one only analyses the material factors in Turkey-EU relations or treat identity as pre-given and as one of many factors that influence cost-benefit analysis of rational actors. Although there have been some developments that caused negative reactions from the West, changes in material

⁸³ Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999): 96.

⁸⁴ Browning, *Constructivism, Narrative and Foreign Policy Analysis*, 21.

conditions of Turkey in meeting the membership criteria do not reflect the dramatic negative change in Turkey's EU membership destination. Although, the pace has been criticised, new reform steps have been taken in addition to already existent reforms that hardly anyone in Turkey and abroad denies. Moreover, there have been considerable positive developments about the reasons that were used to support Turkey's membership bid, such as good performance of Turkish economy or its importance in terms of Europe's energy security.

This qualitative research claims that the dominant rationalist materialist analyses in the literature and media fell short of understanding the dynamics and nature of Turkey-EU relations. It challenges the plausibility of arguments like "Turkey is not European," "Islamist AK Party is the real problem," "They are not like us," or "Erdoğan has his own hidden agenda." Moreover it argues that these dominant approaches have had decisive influences on western actors' perceptions and actions related to AK Party and Turkey under its rule. As it underlines "the power of incomplete, ambiguous, and contradictory discourses to produce a social reality that we experience as solid and real,"⁸⁵ this thesis examines how language constructs phenomena and how that influences policy choices. Since "discourse is not produced without context and cannot be understood without taking context into consideration,"⁸⁶ it pays special attention on the role of social context during the relevant period.

Moreover, this thesis argues that material elements have a secondary status, because they gain meaning only through intellectual processes. As has been pointed out by

⁸⁵ Nelson Phillips and Cynthia Hardy, *Discourse Analysis: Investigating Processes of Social Construction* (London: Sage Publications, 2002): 1-2.

⁸⁶ Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak, "Critical Discourse Analysis," in T.A. van Dijk (ed.), *Discourse as Social Interaction: Volume 1* (London: Sage, 1997): 277.

Kevin Dunn, reality “is unknowable outside human perception, and there is never only one authority on a given subject.”⁸⁷ In Friedrich Nietzsche’s words, “There are no facts in themselves. It is always necessary to begin by introducing a meaning in order that there can be a fact.”⁸⁸

This is what enables constructivists like Martha Finnemore among many others to believe in the possibility of *change* in the social world and to reject a constant, pre-given, and natural-like ‘social world’ perception.⁸⁹ Actions of social beings depend not only on physical constraints or individual preferences and rational choices, but also on shared knowledge, collective meanings and rules, legitimacy of self, institutions, practices and even creativity.⁹⁰ From this perspective, human beings “make” our social world “from the raw materials that nature provides, by doing what [they] do with each other and saying what [they] say to each other.”⁹¹

It is possible to claim that “the EU appears to have reached the limits of a top-down, elite-driven Project.” What people on the street think is becoming more and more important especially after the rise of public resentment in numerous member countries against the policies of EU. This trend has become much more visible after the last European Parliament elections that increased the pressure on the mainstream political parties and EU bodies, while providing an increasing voice for anti-EU and anti-enlargement actors.

⁸⁷ Kevin C. Dunn, “Historical Representations,” in Audie Klotz and Deepa Prakash (eds), *Qualitative Methods in International Relations: A Pluralist Guide* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008): 79.

⁸⁸ Cited in Roland Barthes, “The Discourse of History,” *Comparative Criticism* 3 (1981): 16.

⁸⁹ See Martha Finnemore, *National Interest in International Society* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1996).

⁹⁰ Emanuel Adler, “Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics,” *European Journal of International Relations* 3, no.3 (1997): 321.

⁹¹ Nicholas Onuf, “Constructivism: A User’s Manual,” in Vendulka Kubalkova, Nicholas Onuf and Paul Kowert, (eds.), *International Relations in a Constructed World* (New York: ME Sharpe, 1998): 59.

Within that framework, this thesis is particularly interested in the way in which AK Party and specifically Erdoğan have been represented in the Western media discourse, and how these representations have influenced specific encounters. The changes in the dominant representations over time have a special place in this analysis. It is claimed that western media discourse on AK Party had decisive influence in limiting possible policy options for policy makers. Positive and praising discourse on AK Party and Turkey that dominated western political landscape enabled EU leaders to open the way for membership negotiations. Similarly, negative and even demonising discourse on AK Party became the biggest obstacle for the continuation of the negotiations.

Since it has been the dominant political force in Turkey for over a decade and it still remains as the main power in the foreseeable future, the negative representation of AK Party limits the possible policy options for European policy makers. Positive and praising discourse on AK Party and Turkey that dominated western media landscape enabled EU leaders to open the way for membership negotiations. Similarly, negative and even demonising discourse on AK Party became the biggest obstacle for the continuation of the negotiations.

As has been done in the works like Roxanne Doty's *Imperial Encounters*⁹², Cynthia Weber's *Simulating Sovereignty*⁹³ and *Faking It*⁹⁴, Kevin Dunn's *Imagining the Congo*⁹⁵; this thesis puts emphasis on the contested meanings of AK Party and Erdoğan and traces how the dominant representation has shifted over time. Because,

⁹² Roxanne Doty, *Imperial Encounters* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

⁹³ Cynthia Weber, *Simulating Sovereignty: Intervention, the State, and Symbolic Exchange* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁹⁴ Cynthia Weber, *Faking It: U.S. Hegemony in a 'Post-Phallic' Era* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

⁹⁵ Kevin Dunn, *Imagining the Congo* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

as has been argued by Iver Neumann, when “a discourse maintains a degree of regularity in social relations, it produces preconditions for action.”⁹⁶ It is claimed that the changes in representations of AK Party and Turkey under its rule defined the limits of possible policy choices both for the EU and Turkey. Analysing these changes reveal important clues in understanding how the opening of negotiations emerged as a political option, how other options were shunted aside at that time, and how those options became dominant after some time.

Assuming that identities are constructed discursively, how is the representation of AK Party is constructed in mainstream Western political and media discourses? How did labels like “Islamist” that is commonly used for AK Party in the literature and Western political discourse influence the debates, in the post-9/11 social context? How did these discourses change during AK Party’s rule in a continuous interactive way within the context of Turkey-EU relations? How did differences in these discourses shape actors’ policies and positions about Turkey’s EU accession?

In an attempt to provide answers to these questions, this thesis analyses the representations of AK Party in western mass media in two different time frames: one is from the first election victory in 2002 to the beginning of EU membership negotiations in 2005; second is the political turmoil during and after infamous Gezi Park incidents in Turkey that highlighted the problems in Turkey-EU relations as a negative turning point.

The rest of the chapter evaluates the constructivist framework used in this thesis in order to tackle the role of ideational factors in understanding highly debated identity

⁹⁶ Iver B. Neumann, “Discourse Analysis,” in Audie Klotz and Deepa Prakash (eds.), *Qualitative Methods in International Relations: A Pluralist Guide* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008): 62.

of AK Party, with special concentration on continuous interaction between identity narratives and policy practices. In that framework, it unfolds objections against the dominant rationalist materialist approaches. Secondly, it clarifies the type of constructivism used in this thesis. Ontological and epistemological standpoint of this study is explained in that respect. Other constructivist tools used in this study are evaluated subsequently. Then the methodological toolkit, namely discourse analysis, is explicated.

Mainstream Rationalist Materialist Literature on AK Party

AK Party's foreign policy is generally described as "a significant break with the past" in terms of "foreign policy parameters and practices."⁹⁷ Turkey's changing foreign policy and the interesting nature of Turkey's relations with the outside world under the so-called 'Islamist' AK Party is the puzzling situation that gave rise to not only this research but also other academic studies and political debates.

This study arose from the observation that the dominant rationalist materialist accounts and approaches that take identity as a pre-given factor have remained far from being enough in comprehending AK Party and Turkey-EU relations. They not only depended on explanations based on presumed 'objective' material factors, but also ignored the role of social interactions in continuous construction of AK Party's identity and its interest narrative, which they take as stable and pre-given. Efforts to "fixate a group identity through a definition"⁹⁸ and "stereotypical and/or partially

⁹⁷ Seyfi Taşhan, "Foreword," in Ali L. Karaosmanoğlu and Seyfi Taşhan, (eds.), *The Europeanization of Turkey's Security Policy: Prospects and Pitfalls* (Ankara: Foreign Policy Institute, 2004): 7.

⁹⁸ Naomi Scheman, "Queering the Center by Centering the Queer," in Diana Tietjens Myers (ed.), *Feminist Rethinking the Self* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997): 124-162.

self-suffiling generalizations”⁹⁹ about AK Party have caused these approaches to increase confusion regarding Turkey’s new ruling AK Party instead of explaining its behaviour; and to produce specific policy options for outsiders in their relations with AK Party-ruled Turkey. From their perspective, AK Party’s identity, interest perceptions and foreign policy preferences were already clear from their very first day in office.

Although decision-making approaches have a considerable difference from structural rationalists by acknowledging the importance of decision makers, they still share a common ground by treating decision-makers as “hollow, faceless and interchangeable... rational utility-maximisers with exogenously framed interests.”¹⁰⁰ Changing the level of analysis and involving the role of domestic actors in the process does not prevent these approaches from relying on similar assumptions about the behaviours of decision-makers as rational utility maximisers.¹⁰¹

Cognitivist approaches within rationalist materialist group take ideational factors into consideration as tools to strengthen their materialist-oriented explanations. Although these approaches accept that what people think matters, they defend a rational choice approach, once beliefs about a given situation are observed.¹⁰² Moreover, they tend to assume ideational factors as “intervening variables with the potential to distort the actors’ true perception of reality and of his objective rational

⁹⁹ Anders Berg Sorensen, Nils Holtug, Kasper Lippert-Rasmussen, “Essentialism vs. Constructivism: Introduction,” *Distinktion: Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory* 11, no.1 (2010): 39-40.

¹⁰⁰ Browning, *Constructivism, Narrative and Foreign Policy Analysis*, 31.

¹⁰¹ Andrew Kydd and Duncan Snidal, “Progress in the Game-Theoretical Analysis of International Regimes,” in Volker Rittberger and Peter Myer (eds.), *Regime Theory and International Relations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993): 128-129.

¹⁰² Adler, “Seizing the Middle Ground,” 322.

interest.”¹⁰³ It is possible to see the tendency of this group to attribute a ‘legitimising’ role for ideas as an instrument. Krasner openly reflects this tendency by claiming,

“In the efforts to construct sovereignty ideas have been used to codify existing practices rather than to initiate new forms of order. Ideas have not made possible alternatives that did not previously exist; they legitimated political practices that were already facts on the ground. Ideas have been among several instruments that actors have invoked to promote their own, usually mundane, interests.”¹⁰⁴

Identity and interests of actors are accepted to be given and exogenous by mainstream theories; i.e. neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism.¹⁰⁵ Works like Meltem Müftüleri-Bac’s *Turkey’s Relations with a Changing Europe*, which are “based on structural realist approach,” assume that “a country’s national interest is derived from its position within the international system.”¹⁰⁶ Generally, they describe Turkey as a “middle power” and derive conclusions from the conception of middle power within a realist depiction of international system. This approach does not accept Turkey as a unique case, but treats it simply as an example of many other middle powers. This view ignores all special characteristics of Turkey and prevents grasping the roots of all actions. It draws strict boundaries about what Turkey can and cannot do. This quotation provides a good example for such approach:

¹⁰³ Henrik Larsen, *Foreign Policy and Discourse Analysis: France, Britain and Europe* (London: Routledge, 1997): 7.

¹⁰⁴ Stephen Krasner, “Wsetphalia and All That,” in Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane (eds), *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions and Political Change* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993): 238.

¹⁰⁵ John Gerard Ruggie, “What Makes the World Hang Together? Neo-utilitarianism and the Social Constructivist Challenge,” *International Organization* 52 (Autumn 1998): 862.

¹⁰⁶ Meltem Müftüleri-Bac, *Turkey’s Relations with a Changing Europe* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1997): 6.

“A middle power is much stronger than the small nations but considerably weaker than the principal members of the system... Turkey can be classed as a middle power when placed within a hierarchy of states. Because of its weakness, it is greatly influenced by the actions of the major players. On the other hand, it exerts some influence in the region where it is located.”¹⁰⁷

This kind of realist analysis does not leave room for foreign policy alteration through agency or through changes in ideational factors. Change in Turkish foreign policies may only occur because of changes in the structure of the balance of power according to this approach. It also takes the state body as a unitary rational actor. It takes interests as given and does not question how those interests are produced and how they may evolve in time.

According to rationalist materialist approaches, there is a deterministic relationship between the distribution of material capabilities in the international structure and the behaviours of states. Obtaining correct (!) information about the material capabilities of an actor is enough to predict the foreign policy choices of that actor, since “material capabilities are considered the defining characteristics” of a particular structure of the international system.¹⁰⁸ Structural Rationalist theories base their explanations on what Ringmar calls “the logic of situation”¹⁰⁹ and they emphasize the causal impact of material factors and structures on state actions. According to these theories, a state’s behaviour is quite predictable as long as enough information is gathered about the international system.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 7.

¹⁰⁸ Ronald L Jepperson, Alexander Wendt and Peter J. Katzenstein, “Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security,” in Peter J. Katzenstein, (ed.), *The Culture of National Security- Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996): 43.

¹⁰⁹ Erik Ringmar, *Identity, interest and action: a cultural explanation of Sweden's intervention in the Thirty Years War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 13.

Some realist materialist accounts, which could not deny the “attractive[ness]” of identity-based arguments, insist that their approach is still necessary in totally grasping what is going on. For instance, in his article on Turkey-Israel relations, Tarik Oğuzlu makes structural realist analysis, which he claims to be complementary to the ones focusing on domestic and identity-related factors. Although, he accepts that identity features like AK Party’s “Islamist tendencies... *might* have affected” (emphasis added) the relations between these two states, he adheres to the assumption that domestic, identity-related and structural factors are three separable “explanatory variables.”¹¹⁰ Within this perspective, he emphasises the importance of “systemic and exogenous factors (that) leave states with no option but to follow the dictates of *realpolitik*.”¹¹¹ However, as in many similar bold rationalist analyses, the structural causes mentioned in explaining Turkish-Israeli relations as well as predictions for future developments in this article proved to be highly contradictory and questionable, if not wrong, especially with the contrary developments after the publication of the article.

Traditional rationalist materialist approaches were fuelled by hard-line Kemalists, Turkish and Kurdish ultra-nationalists, who obsessively claimed that AK Party has a pre-given “Islamist” identity, despite its leaders’ continuous refutations and contrary policy practices. This group even refused to use the Party’s official short name (i.e. AK Party), since AK means white and clean in Turkish. Instead of those legal initials, they used AKP, which is simply something they made up. They accused anyone, including academics, who use the official short name to be pro-government or even advocate of AK Party. This approach has been strikingly reflected in the

¹¹⁰ Tarik Oğuzlu, “The Changing Dynamics of Turkey-Israel Relations: A Structural Realist Account,” *Mediterranean Politics* 15, no. 2 (July 2010): 274-275.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 273.

practices of media outlets associated with Gülen Movement, which used the name “AK Party” while the Movement’s relations were good with AK Party and suddenly started to use “AKP” in its coverage after the rise of tension between the government and the movement. This unofficial short name has become more common in international literature, mostly due to the fact that it is shorter and easier to use than the original one.

This group, including some segments of civilian and “military bureaucracy” alongside “main opposition party” and “the media associated with it,” remained “highly suspicious of the AK Party and believe that it has a hidden agenda to use EU reform process as a tool to transform Turkey into an Iranian style *Sharia*-based Islamic theocracy.”¹¹² Interestingly, “their arguments overlap with many arguments of those who are against Turkey’s EU membership in Europe.”¹¹³ When the actions of AK Party were different from what they expected and predicted; and because AK Party’s policies have not fit into their framework expected from an ‘*Islamist*’ political party, they started to search for some mysterious secret intentions.

Zeyno Baran, Director of the Center for Eurasian Policy at the Hudson Institute, is one of the many in this camp, who warn about AK Party’s alleged plan to introduce Islamic Sharia (code of law based on the Koran). She warns, alongside many other “threats,” that Turkey is “moving towards the Russia-Iran axis.”¹¹⁴ She asserts that AK Party “has worked hard *privately*” (emphasis added) as well as publicly to improve cooperation with Iran, without mentioning how she obtained knowledge

¹¹² Ergun Özbudun and Ömer Faruk Gençkaya, *Democratization and the Politics of Constitution-Making in Turkey* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009): 24.

¹¹³ Kemal Kirişçi, “Religion as an Argument in the Debate on Turkish EU Membership,” Dietrich Jung ve Catharina Raudvere (ed.), *Religion, Politics, and Turkey’s EU Accession* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008): 22-23.

¹¹⁴ Zeyno Baran, “Fighting for Turkey’s Soul,” *International Herald Tribune*, 10 June 2008.

about those *private* activities.¹¹⁵ Baran defines AK Party leaders as “Islamists.”¹¹⁶ In a Hudson Institute panel, without mentioning AK Party’s name, she claims “Islamists cannot be democrats.” Because, in her words, “they hate Jews, Christians, Hindus and other Muslims who are not like them.” In continuation she asks, “If you bring that kind of mentality to leadership, what is going to happen to Israel?”¹¹⁷

Similarly Soner Çağaptay, Director of the Turkish Research Program at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, claims that ‘Islamist’ AK Party has maintained its good relations with European Union since that “is good for its PR image.” Because, in his words, derailment in EU process “would be a confirmation of the assessment that it does not really want the EU and it is not sincere about it.” In addition, he continues, in *reality* AK Party is viewing Middle East “not as a region of nations, but as a region of religions.” Party leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan “has sympathies for regimes in the region with Islamist ideologies.” Thus “under his rule, Turkey established good links with Sudan, which is run by an Islamist dictator. Also with Iran and Qatar. But not with Egypt, Jordan, and Tunisia, which are *secular, moderate, pro-Western regimes*” (emphasis added).¹¹⁸

Such scary rationalist *predictions* about AK Party’s foreign policy, which are identified by Jose Casanova simply as “preposterous,”¹¹⁹ widely ranged from turning Turkey into a theocratic regime like Malaysia or Iran, to selling Cyprus to

¹¹⁵ Zeyno Baran, *Torn Country: Turkey Between Secularism and Islamism* (California: Hoover Institute Press, 2010): 4.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹¹⁷ Zeyno Baran, Speech at Panel Discussion on “Future of Democracy,” Hudson Institute, Washington D.C., 10 December 2008.

¹¹⁸ It should be noted that the dictators in these countries were still in power and Arap Spring was out of sight, when Çağaptay gave this speech. Soner Çağaptay, Lecture speech given at Florida International University, “Between East and West: Turkey’s Role in the Middle East and EU Accession Efforts, 17 November 2009.

¹¹⁹ Jose Casanova, “The Long, Difficult, and Tortuous Journey of Turkey into Europe and the Dilemmas of European Civilization,” *Constellations* 13, no.2 (2006): 241.

Europeans in return for EU membership.¹²⁰ AK Party became possibly the only governing party on earth that managed to be accused for being pro-American, pro-Iran, pro-EU, pro-Hamas, pro-Assad and pro-Muslim Brotherhood in different times during its rule. Due to their relative domination in the mainstream media, this type of rationalist materialist and essentialist approaches convinced many foreign observers, at least, to suspect the real intentions of AK Party.

Some like Iranian author Amir Taheri even claimed that its opponents “fear that AKP may be a wolf disguised as a lamb to confuse its opponents while waiting to make its final deadly move.” In continuation to this argument, it is argued that “even some of those who express sympathy for AKP admit they cannot be sure that the party does not have a hidden agenda.”¹²¹ Texas Governor Rick Perry, in a broadcasted debate between Republican presidential candidates, went so far as to argue that Turkey “is being ruled by what many would perceive to be Islamic terrorists.” Not surprisingly, in the same speech applauded by a cheerful audience he continued; “it is time for us to have conversation about whether or not [Turkey] belongs to be in NATO... There should be no space between United States and Israel. Period! And we need to send powerful message to countries like Iran, Syria and Turkey.”¹²²

Labelling and categorising AK Party, even naming it the way they wish; drawing the boundaries for that pre-given identity; making predictions about its foreign policy

¹²⁰ Debates on Malaysia-type regime started right after AK Party’s second election victory in 2007, with claims of a famous Turkish professor Şerif Mardin about possibility of this *danger* in his interview published at Turkish daily *Hürriyet* known for its Kemalist tendency. These threat claims kept their place in Kemalist TV channels and newspapers for some time and were given up later. Ayşe Arman, “Türkiye ne Malezya Olur Diyebilirim ne de Olmaz” [I cannot Say whether Turkey will or will not become like Malaysia], *Hürriyet*, 16 September 2007.

¹²¹ Amir Taheri, “AKP’s Hidden Agenda for Turkey,” *Gulf News*, 4 July 2007.

¹²² *Fox News*, Republican Presidential Debate, South Carolina, 16 January 2012.

behaviours and producing foreign policy prescriptions for European politicians according to this identity narrative has been the common way of argument for this approach. As Ruggie underlies, by taking state interests as identical, this approach rejects the importance of the particular cultural and historical features of individual states and specific self/other conceptions emanating from those features in the foreign policy making processes.¹²³

Rationalist materialist approaches to foreign policy analysis are “preoccupied with positing universal laws of rational behaviour.” They take agents and their preferences “as given prior to social action, which means that question of how particular subjectivities (nations, states, individuals) and identities are constituted is excluded from analysis.” In other words, “actors and their identities and interests can be taken as pre-given, rather than as being constituted in social interaction and requiring investigation and explanation.”¹²⁴ Within this framework, AK Party’s identity has been mainly described with labels like ‘pro-Islamist,’ ‘Islamist leaning,’ ‘mildly Islamist,’ or ‘moderate Islamist.’

For almost all analyses on AK Party-led Turkey, Islam is accepted as an inseparable and generally the most preponderant element of Turkish identity. This approach gained more popularity after the end of Cold War and reached its peak with AK Party governments. One of the first controversial examples was Huntington’s highly debated and cited work *The Clash of Civilizations*, which depicts the hegemonic description of Turkish identity as a Muslim state. In his words, Turkey is “historically the most obvious and prototypical torn country” that “rejected Mecca”

¹²³ Ruggie, “What Makes the World Hang Together,” 863.

¹²⁴ Browning, *Constructivism, Narrative and Foreign Policy Analysis: A Case Study Of Finland*, 18.

and that is “rejected by Brussels.”¹²⁵ He is confident that Turkey will not become a member of the Christian EU because of its Muslim identity.

At this point, the important role of post 9/11 international context on how inferences are drawn from this “Islamist” label should be mentioned. This concept has become a keyword to define anything that is from the Muslim world. For instance, BBC’s usage of the title “Islamist” as the single adjective to define different actors within the very same week ranges from Egypt’s President Mohammed Morsi¹²⁶ to Somalia’s Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys (considered a terrorist by the UN and the United States)¹²⁷, from a ‘militant network’ in Germany¹²⁸ to ‘Al-Qaeda-linked militants’ in Syria¹²⁹ and the rebels ousted by France from Northern Mali¹³⁰, from Afghanistan’s Taliban¹³¹ to Erdoğan and AK Party.¹³²

Many analysts have given reference to work’s like Huntington’s book in the aftermath of 9/11 attacks. This increased the enthusiasm in western circles about the prospective ‘other’ for the West, namely the Islamic world. However, prejudices and misunderstandings have prevailed in the western world, especially with the negative influences of terrorists with the ‘Islamist’ banner. Yet, it is important to mention that this problem is not a new development. In his book written in 1981, well-known scholar Edward Said criticises the West for taking Islam as the scapegoat for everything that seems to be wrong in the world system. He believes that there is almost unanimity in the West about the guilt of Islam about the problems that world

¹²⁵ Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?,” *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 42.

¹²⁶ *BBC News*, “Egypt protest: Crowds gather for big anti-Morsi rally,” 30 June 2013.

¹²⁷ *BBC News*, “Top Somali Islamist flown to Mogadishu 'after split',” 29 June 2013.

¹²⁸ *BBC News*, “German police reported to have raided Islamist network,” 25 June 2013.

¹²⁹ *BBC News*, by Jim Muir, “Syria sides head for neither victory nor defeat,” 25 June 2013.

¹³⁰ *BBC News*, “Mali displaced reluctant to go home,” 24 June 2013.

¹³¹ *BBC News*, by Frank Gardner, “Qatar: A country of seemingly ironic contrasts,” 30 June 2013.

¹³² *BBC News*, “Turkey profile,” 25 June 2013.

faces today. In his words, “for the right, Islam represents barbarism; for the left, medieval theocracy; for the center, a kind of distasteful exoticism.” Thus, instead of starting by telling what Islam is, Said starts his book by saying that “Islam is not what it is generally said to be in the West today.”¹³³

This study claims that understanding the post-9/11 international context is crucial in grasping the background of discourses and their influences on actors’ behaviours. Moreover, the flaws of rationalist materialist predictions are embedded within the “truth” claims related to this context. Thus, transformation of security discourses, rise of Islamophobia and xenophobia in the West that are fuelled by economic crisis are evaluated in the next chapter as the important components of post-9/11 international context. In addition, identity labels like ‘Islamist’, ‘conservative’ or ‘secular’ that are used commonly in defining actors’ in Turkish politics are questioned in following chapters, instead of taking them for granted.

At this point, it is also crucial to emphasise that this study does not reject the existence of material facts. It is undeniable that some material factors like economic productions and military capabilities of Turkey and EU have changed during the relevant period in this analysis. There is always possibility for changing material factors to influence the course of Turkey-EU relations. For instance, changes like finding new energy resources in the Mediterranean or energy crisis due to straining relations with Russia may have considerable influence in the direction of the relationship. However, even these material facts gain meaning only through intellectual processes and, as has been mentioned by Lene Hansen, they need “human and discursive agency” in order to “influence the production and

¹³³ Edward W. Said, *Covering Islam* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981): 163.

reproduction of foreign policy discourse.” Moreover, “neither ideas nor materiality have meaningful presence separate from each other.”¹³⁴ Thus, this thesis rejects the competency of rationalist materialist approaches in understanding and *explaining* AK Party and its foreign policy behaviours. Instead, it argues that constructivist analysis has necessary tools in comprehending them. The next section details the type of constructivist approach applied in this study.

Social Constructivist Framework

Social constructivism arose in 1980s and became a challenging alternative way of thinking in international relations literature against orthodox rationalist theories. However, its roots can be traced back to the 18th century with the works Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico with his belief in the historical world as the product of Man, while the natural world is made by God. Immanuel Kant is another ancestor of constructivism with his belief in the subjectivity of the human beings’ knowledge about the world that is filtered through human consciousness. Another forerunner of constructivism is Max Weber, who argues that “subjective understanding is the specific characteristic of social knowledge.”¹³⁵

Especially after the end of Cold War, constructivism gained popularity and has been seen by many as the new rival of the mainstream theories. It was celebrated as the new party of the third grand debate in IR theory against rationalism.¹³⁶ Its biggest contribution to the literature is generally argued to be its success in shifting the

¹³⁴ Lene Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War* (New York: Routledge, 2006): 22 and 32.

¹³⁵ Robert Jackson and Georg Sorensen (eds.), *Introduction to International Relations Theories and Approaches*, 3rd edit. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006): 164.

¹³⁶ Peter Katzenstein, Robert Keohane and Stephen Krasner, (eds.), “International Organization at Fifty: Exploration and Contestation in the Study of World Politics,” *International Organization* 52 (1998): 687.

attention from material factors to ideational factors in understanding and explaining the social world. It is generally described as a theory that emphasises the importance of subjective and commonly held (intersubjective) ideas and beliefs in shaping the social world that human beings are living in. By this way, it was seen as a challenging view, which rejects any truth claim that can be applied in all times and places. It also opened the way for analysing the active interaction between humans as agents and the social world as the structure. In foreign policy analysis realm, it became the greatest rival of rationalist materialist approaches, which “lack dynamism and are unable to account for the processes through which social reality and foreign policy are generated and change over time.”¹³⁷ As a result, it was perceived as a new way to analyse the mutual construction process between agents and structures.

All this being said, however, it is still very hard to talk about clarity and consensus on constructivism’s “nature and substance.”¹³⁸ Confusion and debate seem to prevail in the literature about the characteristics and the place of constructivism in International Relations (IR) theory. Different authors use the term in different meanings and this makes it more difficult to understand what social constructivism really is. For instance, although Wendt insists on the need for clearly separating constructivism from postmodernism, Jackson and Sorensen list postmodernists among the critical wing of constructivism, while Adler identifies them as a wing of radical constructivism.¹³⁹ Moreover, constructivist scholars themselves support

¹³⁷ Browning, *Constructivism, Narrative and Foreign Policy Analysis*, 19.

¹³⁸ Emanuel Adler, “Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics,” *European Journal of International Relations* 3, no.3 (1997): 320.

¹³⁹ Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999): 2; Jackson and Sorensen, *Introduction to International Relations Theories*, 167; Emanuel Adler, “Constructivism and International Relations,” in Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse

different views in the name of constructivism. Thus, scholars like Colin Hay argue that constructivists are “unified more by what they distance themselves from than what they share.”¹⁴⁰

Emanuel Adler defines constructivism as “the view that *the manner in which the material world shapes and is shaped by human action and interaction depends on dynamic normative and epistemic interpretations of the material world.*”¹⁴¹ However, this is only one of the various definitions of constructivism. Thus, with reference to Hay’s criticism, it seems more efficient to analyse what constructivists distance themselves from in the first place, in order to grasp the core characteristics of constructivism.¹⁴² As can be inferred from its widely used portrayal by Adler as the “middle ground,” constructivism seeks to distance itself from the opposing sides in IR theory, namely materialists versus ideationalists, rationalists versus relativists, individualists versus structuralists.¹⁴³ However, the middle ground chosen by each constructivist is somewhere on a wide spectrum in between these poles. Thus, a basic distinction is made between thin constructivists and thick constructivists. Yet, there are no clear boundaries to classify them with strict labels.

As an example of the many categorisation attempts in the literature, Jeffrey Checkel divides constructivism in three main groups: conventional, interpretative and critical/radical.¹⁴⁴ In his words, conventional constructivist, mostly based in USA, focus on the role of norms. They prefer positivist epistemology and use qualitative,

and Beth A. Simmons, (eds.), *Handbook of International Relations* (London: Sage Publications, 2002): 95.

¹⁴⁰ Collin Hay, *Political Analysis* (Palgrave: Macmillan, 2002): 25.

¹⁴¹ Emphasis original, Adler, “Seizing the Middle Ground,” 322.

¹⁴² Hay, *Political Analysis*, 25.

¹⁴³ Adler, “Seizing the Middle Ground,” 321.

¹⁴⁴ Jeffrey T. Checkel, “Social Constructivism in global and European politics: a review essay,” *Review of European Studies*, no.30 (2004): 229.

process-tracing case study as methodology. Their “theoretical inspiration” arises mainly from sociology and institutional/organisational theory. Interpretative and critical/radical types of constructivism, he continues, are more popular in Europe. Interpretive constructivists ask “why” questions, using discourse analysis techniques, with special emphasis on the role of identity. Critical scholars, on the other hand, focus more on the “power and domination inherent in language” with discourse-theoretical methods. Even he, in the same paper, accepts that such categorisation is oversimplification.¹⁴⁵

Although theoretical framework of this thesis can be identified as a “critical” one in Checkel’s categorisation, considering the difficulties in finding a common classification and labelling for constructivists, instead of naming the “type of constructivism” in this thesis, constructivist elements that are used in this analysis are evaluated below:

Ontological and Epistemological Position

The first major issue that should be addressed is the position held in this study about *ontological* matters. It is fair to claim that the constructivist position held in this thesis is relatively closer to poststructuralist approach, on the wide spectrum between rationalist materialist and poststructuralist poles. Such attitude gained ground among constructivists, as constructivists like Wendt started their works with a special criticism of neorealism. Its role as the ‘other’ in the constructivist analysis is so important that Jackson and Sorensen argue that neorealism is still the main rival of constructivism while there is a considerable room for cooperation with

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. 230-231.

neoliberalism, international society theory and even some versions of neo-Marxism.¹⁴⁶ This unique role of neorealism can be easily observed in Wendt's widely cited book *Social Theory of International Politics* as he clearly states that he positions himself according to Waltz's structural realism, namely as a critique of it.¹⁴⁷ The most important reason for this seems to be the dominant position of neorealism in IR theory. It should be mentioned that despite its different place because of its belief in the causal power of norms and social learning, neoliberalism is in the same camp with neorealism for sharing its materialist ontology and core assumptions.

In short, its ontology is the main departure point of this thesis from this mainstream camp (i.e. neorealism and neoliberalism). In other words, its answer to a question like "What is out there in social world?" is different from mainstream rationalist materialist theories. While a mainstream theorist's answer includes only 'objective' material factors that are completely outside of human control with its own laws, this research claims that there are both intellectual and material elements in the social world and all elements are dependent on human mind. In this respect, in Adler's words, it is "mediativist" in the sense that it accepts the existence of reality out there and believes that this reality is "not determined solely by material reality" and is "also socially emergent."¹⁴⁸

Moreover, this thesis argues that material elements have a secondary status, because they gain meaning only through intellectual processes. As has been pointed out by Kevin Dunn, reality "is unknowable outside human perception, and there is never

¹⁴⁶ Jackson and Sorensen, *Introduction to International Relations Theories*, 175.

¹⁴⁷ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 2-47.

¹⁴⁸ Adler, "Seizing the Middle Ground," 324.

only one authority on a given subject.”¹⁴⁹ This is what enables constructivists like Martha Finnemore among many others to believe in the possibility of *change* in the social world and to reject a constant, pre-given, and natural-like ‘social world’ perception.¹⁵⁰ Actions of social beings depend not only on physical constraints or individual preferences and rational choices, but also on shared knowledge, collective meanings and rules, legitimacy of self, institutions, practices and even creativity.¹⁵¹ From this perspective, human beings “make” our social world “from the raw materials that nature provides, by doing what [they] do with each other and saying what [they] say to each other.”¹⁵²

The most famous declaration of constructivism’s different ontology is Wendt’s claim that “anarchy is what states make of it.”¹⁵³ This claim challenges the mainstream from its roots by showing that even the most commonly-accepted concept in our social world is not given, natural and material. Although, Wendt himself accepts that there is anarchy in the international system, he argues that “it is the interaction and intersubjective understandings of states which gives rise to the condition of anarchy.”¹⁵⁴

Another outcome of constructivism’s different ontology is its emphasis on the role of non-material factors, like norms, in shaping the social world. In the mainstream,

¹⁴⁹ Kevin C. Dunn, “Historical Representations,” in Audie Klotz and Deepa Prakash (eds), *Qualitative Methods in International Relations: A Pluralist Guide* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008): 79.

¹⁵⁰ For instance, see Martha Finnemore, *National Interest in International Society* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1996).

¹⁵¹ Adler, “Seizing the Middle Ground,” 321.

¹⁵² Nicholas Onuf, “Constructivism: A User's Manual,” in Vendulka Kubalkova, Nicholas Onuf and Paul Kowert, (eds.), *International Relations in a Constructed World* (New York: ME Sharpe, 1998), 59.

¹⁵³ Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics,” *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (1992): 391.

¹⁵⁴ Hay, *Political Analysis*, 24.

realists argue that norms do not have a causal power, while neoliberal regime theory argues that norms have some influence in certain areas. However, even neoliberals believe that norms are parts of the “superstructure built by agents on a material base and have only regulative function.” On the other hand, constructivists claim that norms have not only regulative but also constitutive effects on identities, interests and behaviours of agents.¹⁵⁵

Although its rejection of purely materialist ontology is mentioned above, it should be emphasised that ontological stance held in this thesis is also different from postmodernism’s strictly idealist ontology that ignores the material elements in the social world and takes the “world *only* as it can be imagined or talked about.”¹⁵⁶ As a “middle ground,” it believes in the coexistence of both material and social factors in the social world.

This brings us to the second point to be clarified about theoretical framework in this thesis: *epistemology*. Its epistemological stance again closer to poststructuralism on the wide spectrum between rationalist materialist and poststructuralist poles. It shares cynicism of poststructuralism to a certain extent about truth claims of social scientists, yet it does not reject social scientific knowledge. In other words, its answer to a question like “What can we (hope to) know about social reality?” is slightly closer to postmodernism’s answer than mainstream’s reply. Postmodernists reject the possibility of objective knowledge and thus, scientific study about social world. Moreover, they believe that “truth claims cannot be adjudicated

¹⁵⁵ Jeffrey T. Checkel, “The Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory.” *World Politics* 50, no.2 (1998): 327.

¹⁵⁶ Emphasis original, Adler, “Constructivism and International Relations,” 95.

empirically.”¹⁵⁷ Hansen describes poststructuralism’s rejection of causal relationship between identity and foreign policy as follows: “Poststructuralists conceptualize identity and policy as ontologically inseparable and this inseparability is enacted through discourse, and they cannot therefore adopt an epistemology documenting the causal effects of identity on foreign policy.”¹⁵⁸

Social world is so complex and foreign policy decisions necessitate that complexity to be reflected in decision making processes. If having vast amount of information and blueprints, even rules, for action was enough for taking a good (!) decision, one could have easily argued that in the near future high-technology computers will decide about the fate of countries soon. New supercomputers can store and analyse enormous amount data, and make accurate calculations at speeds of nanoseconds, which is well beyond beyond human comprehension. Nobody has yet listed Tianhe-2 among the top players of Chinese foreign policy making process, although it is the fastest supercomputer in the world as of June 2014. Tianhe-2, a supercomputer developed by China’s National University of Defence Technology, is the world’s fastest system with a performance of 33.86 Pflop/s (quadrillions of calculations per second).¹⁵⁹ It is not a coincidence that nobody has ever proposed to upload countless number of rules and scenarios for foreign policy actions alongside any available (historical, economic, social etc.) data, and let the supercomputer to decide what China’s foreign policy should be on a specific issue area.

Although this thesis shares the scepticism of post-modernists about the universally

¹⁵⁷ Hay, *Political Analysis*, 227.

¹⁵⁸ Hensen, *Security as Practice*, 27.

¹⁵⁹ 43rd edition of the twice-yearly TOP500 list of the world’s most powerful supercomputers was published during International Supercomputing Conference (ISC’14) in Leipzig, Germany, 23 June 2014, <http://www.top500.org/lists/2014/06> (Accessed 21/08/2014).

applicable law-like truth claims in social sciences and about the attempts to discover a ‘final truth’ about the world which is true across time and place, it accepts the possibility of scientific analysis. This scepticism does not prevent it from making “truth claims about the subjects [it] ha[s] investigated...while admitting that [its] claims are contingent and partial interpretations of a complex world.”¹⁶⁰

For some scholars, like Steans and Pettiford, this acceptance of science comes from constructivists’ desire to “say something meaningful about the (social) world.”¹⁶¹ Whatever their desires are, constructivism, Adler argues, has an epistemology “that makes interpretation an intrinsic part of social science and that stresses contingent generalizations,” which does not try to fasten up the understandings about social world.¹⁶² In line with this argument, this thesis does not reject all truth claims and accepts the possibility of explaining social world in some certain ways as well as understanding it.¹⁶³

Although possibility of science is accepted, this thesis rejects mainstream’s claim to find the ‘truth’ for everyone and explain the social world in the same way with a scientist working on the laws of material world. Wendt underlines this difference by arguing that constructivism’s “propositions are *conditional* rather than universal.”¹⁶⁴

Agents and Structure

One of the most important points that should be taken into consideration in

¹⁶⁰ Richard Price and Christian Reus-Smit, “Dangerous Liaisons? Critical International Theory and Constructivism,” *European Journal of International Relations* 4, no. 3 (1998): 272.

¹⁶¹ Jill Steans and Lloyd Pettiford, *Introduction to International Relations: Perspectives and Themes*, 2nd edition (Pearson: Longman, 2005): 189.

¹⁶² Adler, “Constructivism and International Relations,” 101.

¹⁶³ Alexander Wendt, “On the Via Media: a response to the critics,” *Review of International Studies* 26, no.1 (2000): 165-180.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 174 (emphasis original).

understanding constructivism is its position in the debate over the relationship between agents and structure. As Onuf defines, structure is a “stable pattern of rules, institutions, and unintended consequences.”¹⁶⁵ It is also identified as “a set of constraints on the behaviour” of agents.¹⁶⁶ According to Wendt, social structure includes three basic elements: shared knowledge, material resources, and practices; and these three elements are interrelated. In this analysis, “material resources only acquire meaning for human action through the structure of shared knowledge in which they are embedded,” and it is their intersubjectivity what makes the ideas and structure social. He also emphasises that “social structure exists, not in actors’ heads nor in material capabilities, but in practices. Social structure exists only in process.”¹⁶⁷

From a constructivist perspective, as Wendt mentions, agent-structure debate arises from the fact that “human agents and social structures are, in one way or another, theoretically interdependent.”¹⁶⁸ Especially with the rise of constructivism, this debate began to attract the attention in the literature on the nature of the relationship between agents and structures. In his influential article, Wendt analyses the perspectives of influential theories (namely, neorealism and world-system theory) that claim to make structural explanation of how states behave in the international system and defines constructivism’s approach.

In his analysis, Wendt argues that there are two possible ontological positions about

¹⁶⁵ Onuf, “Constructivism: A User’s Manual,” 61.

¹⁶⁶ Ted Hopf, “The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory,” *International Security* 23, no.1 (Summer 1998): 172.

¹⁶⁷ Alexander Wendt, “Constructing International Politics,” *International Security* 20, no. 1 (1995): 73-74.

¹⁶⁸ Alexander Wendt, “The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory,” *International Organization* 41, no.3 (1987): 338.

the issue: one of them is to accept either structure or agents are “ontologically primitive,” while the other one is to give them “equal and therefore irreducible ontological status.” He continues that both neorealism and world-systems theory choose the first option. Neorealism accepts the agents, while world-systems theory takes the system as ontologically primitive. Wendt’s solution to the problem is to see agents and system as “co-determined” or “mutually constituted.”¹⁶⁹

Wendt borrowed the concept of ‘structuration’ from Anthony Giddens in his study. Giddens uses the concept of ‘structuration’ to describe an interactive relationship between agents and structure. According to him, structures (i.e. the rules and conditions that guide social action) do not determine what agents do in a mechanical way, or *vice versa*.¹⁷⁰ Rather, there is a continuous interaction between them that shapes both sides. In other words, Giddens’ agents are not “structural idiots.” Instead, they consciously have their own constructed identities, structures and practices.¹⁷¹ However, it should not be ignored that there is no full independence for any agent. Thus, “full independence is a... fiction, and sovereignty is a matter of degree.”¹⁷² In other words, “people make society, and society makes people” in a continuous two-way process.¹⁷³

This perception of ‘mutual constitution’ became one of the foundation stones of constructivism. Thus, constructivism is known for its criticism of mainstream not only for its materialism, but also for its methodological individualism.¹⁷⁴ Methodological individualism is described by Rhoads to be based on “the belief that

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, 339.

¹⁷⁰ Jackson and Sorensen, *Introduction to International Relations Theories*, 163.

¹⁷¹ Adler, “Seizing the Middle Ground,” 325.

¹⁷² Onuf, “Constructivism: A User’s Manual,” 65.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 59.

¹⁷⁴ Checkel, “The Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory,” 326.

society consists solely of its members.” In this view, the members “alone are real” and “individualism rules out social structures as supra-individual causes and traces causal inferences to particular individuals in general.”¹⁷⁵

In continuation to this understanding, Adler argues that the main aim of constructivism is “to provide both theoretical and empirical explanations of social institutions and social change, with the help of the combined effect of agents and social structures.” By this way, constructivism tries to establish a bridge between individual agency and social structure.¹⁷⁶ This thesis analyses AK Party as an agent within a specific international and domestic structure. Instead of taking it as an independent actor with pre-given identity and interests, this research underlines continuous mutual construction of AK Party with an evolving international structure.

Language, Identity and Interest

The connection between language, identity and interest has been a central issue for constructivist research agenda. Jutta Weldes argues that “national interest... is created as a meaningful object, out of shared meanings through which the world, particularly the international system and the place of the state in it is understood.”¹⁷⁷

Within that framework, Iver Neumann claims that human beings “sort and combine sensory impressions of the world through categories (or models or principles).”

Language, she continues, “as a social system with its own relational logic, produces

¹⁷⁵ John K. Rhoads, *Critical Issues in Social Theory* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991): 117.

¹⁷⁶ Adler, “Seizing the Middle Ground,” 325-326.

¹⁷⁷ Jutta Weldes, “Constructing National Interest,” *European Journal of International Relations* 2, no.3 (1996): 277.

reality for humans by mediating these sense data.”¹⁷⁸ Derrida claims that language is a system of differential signs, and meaning is established not by the essence of a thing itself but through a series of juxtapositions, where one element is valued over its opposite.¹⁷⁹

Kevin Dunn emphasises that representations in language are historically and contextually contingent. In his words, “representations are inventions based on language, but they are not neutral or innocuous signifiers. Because they enable actors to ‘know’ the object and to act upon what they ‘know,’ representations have very real political implications. Certain paths of action become possible within distinct discourses, while other paths become unthinkable.”¹⁸⁰ In continuation to this understanding, the central aim of actors who are making and influencing foreign policy is to present their choice as legitimate and enforceable, by establishing “a link between policy and identity that makes the two appear consistent with each other.”¹⁸¹

There is a strong link between language and identity of actors. States’ identities and interests are shaped by the “norms, institutions, and other cultural features of domestic and international environments.”¹⁸² As Hansen puts, “it is only through the construction in language that ‘things’ –objects, subjects, states, living beings, and material structures- are given meaning and endowed with a particular identity.”

There is also an important interdependence between identities and practices. Hansen

¹⁷⁸ Iver B. Neumann, “Discourse Analysis,” in Audie Klotz and Deepa Prakash (eds.), *Qualitative Methods in International Relations: A Pluralist Guide* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008): 61.

¹⁷⁹ See, Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976); Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978).

¹⁸⁰ Dunn, “Historical Representations,” 80.

¹⁸¹ Hansen, *Security as Practice*, 28.

¹⁸² Jepperson, Wendt, and Katzenstein, “Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security,” 37.

underlines this interdependence by claiming “identities are articulated as the reason why policies should be enacted, but they are also (re)produced through these very policy discourses: they are simultaneously (discursive) foundation and the product.”

183

This continuous interaction and evolution is well reflected in the changing nature of discourses. “It is impossible for discourses ever to reach absolute fixity and stability, thus on the one hand no policy-identity links or articulations of identity are ever completely stable.” However, these fluctuations do not prevent emergence of identities with a certain level of stability. Since, “identities are constructed through an articulation of a larger number of signs in process of differentiation and process of linking, it is possible to analyze the relative ability of a discourse to present a construction of identity which is not (seen as) highly internally unstable.”¹⁸⁴

In addition to social identities, Alexander Wendt claims that states have corporate (pre-social) identities that are self organising, without a need for a particular ‘other’ to which the self is related.¹⁸⁵ In her poststructuralist critique of Wendt, Lene Hansen points out the necessity of drawing and maintaining boundary between self and other in order to constitute an actor as a physically distinct being. She also emphasises that “discursive epistemology makes a pre-social, corporate and intrinsic identity an impossibility, and vice versa.”¹⁸⁶ This analysis chooses poststructuralist relational conception of identity over Wendtian intrinsic one and claims that no identity is constructed in isolation from others, and AK party was not an exception.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 18-21.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 29.

¹⁸⁵ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Relations*, 225.

¹⁸⁶ Hansen, *Security as Practice*, 24.

Emphasising the importance of national roles or identity perceptions in defining foreign policy choices of states is neither a new practice nor unique to constructivists. In his article that dates back to 1970, Kal Holsti talks about and criticise IR theorists who make “references to national roles as possible causal variables in the operation of international systems, or in explaining the foreign policies of individual nations.”¹⁸⁷ However, it was after the rise of constructivism, when attention has dramatically shifted in the literature from material factors to non-material factors, like identity, in explaining national interests and foreign policy actions. As Finnemore puts it, constructivists opened a new way of scholarship by “developing a systemic approach to understanding state interests and state behaviour by investigating an international structure, not of power, but of meaning and social value.”¹⁸⁸

Identities play three main roles in a society: “they tell you and others who you are and they tell you who others are.” As Ted Hopf correctly points out, identities are necessary parts of both domestic and international societies for establishing a basic level of order. In that framework, “durable expectations between states require intersubjective identities that are sufficiently stable to ensure predictable patterns of behaviour.”¹⁸⁹

Intersubjective beliefs, ideas, conceptions and assumptions that are widely shared among people have precedence over subjective ones. In other words, “ideas need to be widely shared to matter; nonetheless they can be held by different groups such as

¹⁸⁷ Kal Holsti, “National Role Conception in the Study of Foreign Policy,” *International Studies Quarterly* 14, no. 3 (September 1970): 234.

¹⁸⁸ Martha Finnemore, *National Interest in International Society* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1996): 2.

¹⁸⁹ Ted Hopf, “The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory,” *International Security* 23, no.1 (Summer 1998): 174-175.

organisations, policymakers, social groups and etc.”¹⁹⁰ It should be emphasised that “intersubjective meaning is not simply an aggregation of the beliefs of individuals who jointly experience and interpret the world.” Instead, it exists “as a collective knowledge that is shared by all who are competent to engage in or recognize the appropriate performance of a social practice or range of practices.”¹⁹¹ The life of this kind of knowledge is much longer than individuals’ lives and is “embedded in social routines and practices as they are reproduced by interpreters who participate in their production and workings.”¹⁹² Intersubjective meanings have structural characteristics that do not only constrain actors but also define their social realities.

Identities are relational, meaning a necessity for *other* in understanding *self*. In other words, “one’s identity is relevant only in relationship to other individuals or groups.”¹⁹³ Thus, in order to reveal identities through discourse analysis, the main questions to be asked are “who is the ‘we’ in these texts and who are the ‘others’ with or against whom we identify?”¹⁹⁴ As has been suggested by Ole Waever, an actor’s *other* can be spatial (external) other as well as temporal (internal) other of its own past.¹⁹⁵

Contrary to mainstream rationalist theories, this study rejects constant, pre-given identity understanding. From this constructivist framework, it adheres to Wendt’s claim that “interests and identities of actors emerge only in an interactive

¹⁹⁰ Jackson and Sorensen, *Introduction to International Relations Theories*, 166.

¹⁹¹ Ira Cohen, “Structuration Theory and Social Praxis,” in Anthony Giddens and Jonathan Turner (eds.), *Social Theory Today* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 287.

¹⁹² Adler, “Seizing the Middle Ground,” 327.

¹⁹³ Ted Hopf, “Identity Relations and the Sino-Soviet Split,” in Rawi Abdelal, Yoshiko M. Herrera, Alastair Iain Johnston, and Rose McDermott (eds.), *Measuring Identity: A Guide for Social Scientist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009): 281.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 289.

¹⁹⁵ Ole Waever, “European Security Identities,” *Journal of Common Market Studies* 34, no.1 (1996): 122.

process.”¹⁹⁶ In this process, identity has an important role in defining states’ interests. States, from this perspective, “do not have a ‘portfolio’ of interests that they carry around independent of social context; instead, they define their interests in the process of defining situations.” The actors may face some unprecedented situations that force them to re-construct their interests by constructing the meaning of their new environment. “The absence or failure of roles makes defining situations and interests more difficult, and identity confusion may result.”¹⁹⁷

Bukovansky argues that “analysis of the social construction of state identities ought to precede, and may even explain, the genesis of state interests.”¹⁹⁸ In other words, state identity is the basis of interest. Thus, state identity is argued to precede state interests because “actors often cannot decide what their interests are until they know what they are representing- ‘who they are’ which in turn depends on their social relationships.”¹⁹⁹

In terms of identity studies, Ted Hopf divides constructivism into three categories: *systemic constructivism* concentrating on the role of interactions among states; *societal constructivism* focusing on intersubjective domestic sources of identity discourse; and *norm-centric constructivism* working on the relationship between norms and state identities. He also makes a distinction between constructivist discourse studies focusing on domestic societies (i.e. *intersubjectivist* theory which is structural and social) and those focusing on elites (i.e. *subjectivist* theory which is

¹⁹⁶ Naeem Inayatullah and David L. Blaney, “Knowing Encounters: Beyond Parochialism in International Relations Theory,” in Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwill, (eds.), *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory* (Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996): 71.

¹⁹⁷ Wendt, “Anarchy is What States Make of It,” 396-398.

¹⁹⁸ Mlada Bukovansky, “American Identity and Neutral Rights from Independence to the War of 1812,” *International Organization* 51, no.2 (Spring 1997): 209.

¹⁹⁹ Jepperson, Wendt, and Katzenstein, “Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security,” 59.

individualistic and personal).²⁰⁰

Even systemic constructivists do not reject the importance of domestic factors in shaping the identities of states. For instance Alexander Wendt, as a leading systemic constructivist, accepts the importance of domestic factors by arguing that the way a state satisfies its corporate interests (namely, physical and ontological security, recognition as an actor, and development) is determined by the way it identifies itself in relation to others, “which is a function of social identities at both domestic and systemic level of analysis.” Wendt also accepts that “some state identities and interests” arise “primarily from relations to domestic society,” while others stem from international society. Thus, he agrees that “the content of national interest” is only partly shaped by “structurally constituted identities.”²⁰¹ However, he refrains from getting into domestic realm in his studies.

Methodology: Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis gained popularity among constructivists as a way to “illustrate how... textual and social processes are intrinsically connected and to describe, in specific contexts, the implications of this connection for the way we think and act in the contemporary world.”²⁰² This interest arose from two characteristics of discourse: “it enables the actors’ understanding of the social world of which they are part, and it constitutes and defines the social parts and practices of this world.”²⁰³ As Roxanne Dotty asserts, discourses “produce meanings and in doing so actively

²⁰⁰ Hopf, “Identity Relations and the Sino-Soviet Split,” 284-286.

²⁰¹ Wendt, “Collective Identity Formation,” 385-386.

²⁰² Jim George, *Discourses of Global Politics: A Critical (Re)Introduction to International Relations* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1994): 191.

²⁰³ Amir Lupovic, “Constructivist methods: a plea and manifesto for pluralism,” *Review of International Studies* 35, no.1 (2009): 202.

construct the ‘reality’ upon which... policy is based.”²⁰⁴ In that framework, Nelson Phillips and Cynthia Hardy claim that discourse analysis goes “one step further” than other methods “in embracing a strong social constructivist epistemology.”²⁰⁵

Paltridge illustrates the interactive nature of discourses in *social construction of reality* as follows:

“The texts we write and speak both shape and are shaped by [social and cultural] practices. Discourse, then, is both shaped by the world as well as shaping the world. Discourse is shaped by language as well as shaping language. It is shaped by the people who use the language as well as shaping the language that people use. Discourse is shaped, as well, by the discourse that preceded it as well that which might follow it. Discourse is also shaped by the medium in which it occurs as well as it shapes the possibilities of that medium. The purpose of the text also influences the discourse. Discourse also shapes the range of possible purposes of the texts.”²⁰⁶

In this approach, discourse is accepted to provide a “degree of regularity in social relations” by producing “preconditions for action.” In Neumann’s words, it “constrains what is thought of at all, what is thought of as possible, and what is thought of as the ‘natural thing’ to do in a given situation.” On the other hand, it should be emphasised that discourse only provides alternative policy options, instead of a single determined one.²⁰⁷ This aspect of discourse analysis prevents it from reaching short cut answers to ‘why?’ questions.

²⁰⁴ Roxanne Lynn Dotty, “Foreign Policy as Social Construction: A Post- Positivist Analysis of U.S. Counterinsurgency Policy in the Philippines,” *International Studies Quarterly* 37, no.3 (1993): 303.

²⁰⁵ Phillips and Cynthia, *Discourse Analysis*, 2.

²⁰⁶ Brian Paltridge, *Discourse Analysis: an Introduction* (London: Continuum, 2006): 9.

²⁰⁷ Neumann, “Discourse Analysis,” 62.

Discourse analysis “examines how the use of language is influenced by relationships between participants as well as the effects the use of language has upon social identities and relations. It also considers how views of the world, and identities, are constructed through the use of discourse.”²⁰⁸ As Hansen maintains, “the strategy of discourse analysis is to ‘incorporate’ material and ideational factors rather than to privilege one over the other... The analytical intent is not to measure the relative importance of ideas and materiality but to understand them as constructed through discourse which gives materiality meaning by drawing upon a particular set of identity constructions.”²⁰⁹

The theoretical claims of discourse analysis, according to Jennifer Milliken, can be categorised in three groups. The first one is to accept “discourse as structures of signification which construct social realities.” The second commitment of such analysis is to assume “discourses as being productive (or reproductive) of things defined by discourse.” In this framework, “discourses define *subjects authorized to speak and to act...* [and] also define *knowledgeable practices* by these subjects towards the objects which discourse defines. [Moreover] discourses produce as subjects *publics (audiences) for authorized actors*, and their *common sense* of the existence and qualities of different phenomena.”²¹⁰ Final aspect of discourse analysts’ “theoretical commitment” is the involvement in “studying dominating or hegemonic discourses, and the structuring of meanings as connected to implementing practices

²⁰⁸ Paltridge, *Discourse Analysis: an Introduction*, 2.

²⁰⁹ Hansen, *Security as Practice*, 23.

²¹⁰ Italics in original, Jennifer Milliken, “The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods,” *European Journal of International Relations* 5, no. 2 (1999): 229.

and ways of making these intelligible and legitimate.”²¹¹

Discourses are generally accepted to function as “background capacities” for human beings “to differentiate and identify things, giving them taken-for-granted qualities and attributes, and relating them to other objects.”²¹² One important characteristic of discourses is that discourses interact with each other and they are in continuous change within themselves while changing the hierarchy of discourses at the same time. Roxanne Doty points this out by arguing discourse’s “exterior limits are constituted by other discourses that are themselves also open, inherently unstable, and always in the process of being articulated.”²¹³ Within this interactive and changing nature, focusing on the relations between hegemonic discourses and the suppressed ones has a significant place for critical discourse analysis.

Lemke emphasises the principle of *intertextuality* among all texts, by claiming we “make sense of every word, every utterance, or act against the background of (some) other words, utterances, acts of a similar kind.”²¹⁴ In continuation to this understanding, Cameron and Kulick claim that “we cannot understand the significance of any word unless we attend closely to its relationship to other words and to the discourse (indeed the competing discourses) in which words are always embedded.” Constant changes in discourses make it a requirement to keep in mind that “words and their meanings are never settled once and for all.”²¹⁵ Thus, this thesis does not take terms like ‘Islamist’ for granted, which are commonly used in

²¹¹ Ibid., 230.

²¹² Ibid., 231.

²¹³ Roxanne Doty, “Foreign Policy as Social Construction: A Post-Positivist Analysis of US Counterinsurgency Policy in the Philippines,” *International Studies Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (1993): 6.

²¹⁴ Jay L. Lemke, *Textual Politics: Discourse and Social Dynamics* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1995): 23.

²¹⁵ Deborah Cameron and Don Kulick, *Language and Sexuality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003): 29.

identity discourses related to AK Party. Since they have great influence on predictions and expectations about AK Party, which is defined mainly as an ‘Islamist’ movement, such concepts are questioned within their relevant domestic and international contexts.

Choosing some people or sources over others is not immune from “objectivity” criticisms. However, a discourse analysis needs to be based on “a set of texts by different people presumed (according to the research focus) to be authorized speakers/writers of a dominant discourse or to think and act within alternative discourses.”²¹⁶

Both primary and secondary resources are used in this study. Discourse data is delimited to mainstream conventional media and related social media discourses produced by mainstream politicians and media members. As has been put by Hansen, “the emphasis in discourse analysis on the importance of language makes knowledge of a particular language and its codes essential.” One of the solutions in meeting this requirement is to “shift the focus of the analysis to texts that were aimed at an international, usually English speaking, audience.”²¹⁷ English-language mainstream media that target a more general audience has been the main resource. Mainstream American and British media are included in this group in addition to English-language mainstream media outlets like *Der Spiegel*, *France 24* and *RT News*. Since they are part of debates in western political discourse by being followed by a considerable amount of western elite audience and by being contributed by western authors, English-language media outlets like *Al Jazeera* and *Haaretz* are also included.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 233.

²¹⁷ Hansen, *Security as Practice*, 83.

Moreover, mainstream western media publications in other languages were used by benefiting from various online translation services when they are referenced in Turkish and English language media. Mainstream Turkish media was also extensively used as a source, since its interaction with the rest of the western media is key in understanding AK Party's representation in western political/media discourse. This thesis used only publicly available information and data. It is not intended to uncover some hidden agendas or find the so-called 'real' motives behind discourses and behaviours.

POST-9/11 INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL CONTEXT

It is crucial to contextualise all data, that is, “they must be related to, and situated within, the social environment in which they were gathered, in order to understand their meaning.”²¹⁸ Within that framework, the evolution of representations can only be understood by taking historical, political and social contexts into consideration. Moreover, “social and political events change our vocabulary, and linguistic ambiguities and rhetorical innovations facilitate the advancement of new political strategies and projects.”²¹⁹ That is why this chapter analyses the international social context with special focus on relevant political developments, in order to provide a background for the positive representation of AK Party that have enabled the opening of Turkey’s EU membership negotiations and the negative representation of AK Party in the mainstream western media that came along the worsening of Turkey-EU relations.

There are two preponderant keywords in representations of Turkey and AK Party in the mainstream western media during the relevant time period of this thesis: *security* and *Islam*.

Firstly, security debates have dominated the world agenda in the post-9/11 social context. Turkey’s position in these security concerns has been the most prominent theme in debates on AK Party-led Turkey. These debates and foreign policy choices of AK Party played a determinant role in shaping the developments related to “Turkey-EU” and “Turkey-US” relations.

²¹⁸ Hopf, “The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory,” 182.

²¹⁹ Jacob Torfing, “Discourse Theory: Achievements, Arguments, and Challenges,” in David Howard and Jacob Torfing (eds.), *Discourse Theory in European Politics: Identity, Policy and Governance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005): 5.

Secondly, there is almost a consensus in the current literature and debates in describing AK Party's identity mainly with labels like 'pro-Islamist,' 'Islamist leaning,' 'mildly Islamist,' or 'moderate Islamist.' For almost all analyses on AK Party-led Turkey, Islam is accepted as an inseparable and generally the most dominant element of Turkish identity. This thesis draws attention to the important role of post 9/11 international context on how inferences are drawn from this "Islamist" label.

Justice and Development Party was established on 14 August 2001, less than one month before the September 11 attacks. As in the cases of important turning points in the history, 9/11 terror attacks opened a new era in international relations. It was also significant in shaping the international environment AK Party was born into. Due to the dramatic impact of the event on changes in identity discourses of Western and Middle Eastern actors, it is covered in the following pages. Moreover, rise of Islamophobia and xenophobia in western societies, as crucial factors in shaping the international context during the relevant period, are evaluated in this chapter.

9/11 Attacks: Unprecedented Shock

After 9/11 terrorist attacks, some emotional reactions followed that nothing will be the same anymore. Some cautious observers claimed that time is necessary to calculate the impacts of the event.²²⁰ However, there was almost a consensus on the fact that the event is much more than a mere terrorist attack and will have long-term consequences. As has been mentioned before, 9/11 signalled the beginning of a new era within which international norms are interrogated, East-West perceptions are

²²⁰ For instance see Anas Malik, "Selected Reflections on the Muslim World in the aftermath of 9-11," in Gökhan Bacık and Bülent Aras, (eds.), *September 11 and World Politics* (İstanbul: Fatih University, 2004): 155-174.

reconsidered and identities are reconstructed. In this new environment, more people started to believe that Islam is in conflict with the West and western values. Perceptions of foreign actors about the establishment and the rise of so-called *pro-Islamist* AK Party have not been immune from the influences of this new ideational environment.

As has been said by British Prime Minister David Cameron in an interview about its 10th anniversary, September 11 attacks “has been one of the defining events of this century.”²²¹ In this thesis, 9/11 is taken as a “system level development,” which is defined by Bülent Aras as an event that is “an international happening which does produce direct conclusions on the founding principles and institutions of the whole system that... includes several well-known issues such as power hierarchy in the system, the role and policies of hegemon, general trends etc...” In this sense, 9/11 is analysed in this study as a unique event in its influence on world politics in the post-Cold War world that “raised many questions” about “the structure and agents of world politics.”²²² However, it should be emphasised that, contrary to realist analysis of systemic change, this research does not focus on “the alteration of power in the international order,” with special emphasis on “the rise and decline of the dominant states that govern the particular international system.”²²³ Rather, it takes the system level changes in non-material social world into consideration, including discourses and representations.

²²¹ David Cameron, interview for TV program named “Frost Over the World – 10 Years after 9/11” broadcasted on *Al-Jazeera English*, 10 September 2011.

²²² Bülent Aras, “Introduction,” in Gökhan Bacık and Bülent Aras, (eds.), *September 11 and World Politics* (İstanbul: Fatih University, 2004): 3-4.

²²³ Müftüler-Bac, *Turkey's Relations with a Changing Europe*, 6-7.

There are various studies on this kind of systemic events. For instance, in a study about this topic, Robert Gilpin argues that systemic change occurs within the system rather than a change of the system itself and refers to the “changes in the international distribution of power, the hierarchy of prestige, and the rules and the rights embodied in the system.”²²⁴ In their article on the changing world after the collapse of Soviet Union, Koslowski and Kratochwil talk about “fundamental changes” in the international system that occur “when actors through their practices, change the rules and norms constitutive of international interaction.” In continuation, they add that these kinds of changes occur when beliefs and identities of domestic actors and the rules/identities that are constitutive of their political practices are adjusted.²²⁵ This seems to be exactly what happened after September 11 attacks.

According to Aras, one can talk about a “change in the imagination of world politics and international relations” after September 11 attacks. In this respect, he insists that 9/11 at least changed “our conceptual understanding of world politics” and forced us to find “new analytical methods and tools to have a better understanding of its transforming nature.”²²⁶ In this world, one can talk about a new set of meanings and symbols that are created after the attacks and influenced our perceptions about the event.

On September 11, 2001, with the help of the advanced communication technologies, billions of people received enormous amount of information about the attacks in real

²²⁴ Robert Gilpin, *War&Change in the World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981): 42.

²²⁵ Rey Koslowski and Friedrich V. Kratochwil, “Understanding Change in International Politics: the Soviet Empire’s Demise and the International System,” *International Organization* 48, no. 2 (Spring, 1994): 215.

²²⁶ Aras, “Introduction,” 5.

time. However, at the end of the day, everybody had their own story to tell about the event. A value-free description of the 9/11 may probably be as follows:

On the 11th of September 2001, several people took four airplanes under control on the Northern part of American continent. Two of these planes crashed into two tall buildings in the city named New York, one of them crashed into another building in the city named Washington, and the other one crashed into the ground. Two tall buildings collapsed and nearly 3.000 people died.

Any contribution to this story is very likely to be influenced by ideas, values and perceptions of the storyteller and reflect a constructed intellectual background. One possible version of such a story may start as follows:

On the 11th of September 2001, the black day for the humanity, several Middle Eastern radical Islamist terrorists hijacked four civilian planes in the U.S. airspace. In order to achieve their evil plans, they consciously crashed two planes into the World Trade Center towers that represent the economic power of U.S. and one plane to Pentagon that represents the American military might. The other plane crashed into the ground as a result of heroic efforts of the passengers before it reached to its target. Over 3000 innocent human beings died in the attacks, many of whom were American citizens. This terrorist act is not merely an attack to the American people; rather it is a dangerous blow to the free and civilized world and a declaration of war to democracy-loving peoples of the world.

On the other hand, another possible story may be as follows:

On the 11th September 2001, a group of heroes in the *jihad* against infidels successfully took control of four U.S. planes. They crashed the planes to their targets: World Trade Center, the symbol of western imperialism and exploitation, and Pentagon, the centre of cruelty of American evil plans all over the world. Some infidels and their allies died in the attacks. This day is an important step in our war against the infidels and their unjust order. This day is just an example of the consequences that infidels have to face as a result of their actions.

There are limitless numbers of various stories about the day, most of which are less emotional and less ideological than the ones above. However, one fact is important to mention at this point: the behaviours of the actors in post-9/11 international context were mostly shaped by these differences in stories. How people perceived the event shaped the subsequent events and developments to a great extent.

In one sense, it is important to note that this single incident was not enough on its own to explain the post-9/11 world. There are various cultural, sociological, economic, historical, political, and even psychological reasons behind the attacks that might be the subject of scholarly work. However, in this thesis, the focus is on the impacts of the attacks as a systemic development and the reactions of the actors.

Through constructivist lenses explained in the previous chapter, this study is based on the assumption that international environment and actors shape each other in a continuous process of construction. Thus, the interaction between agents and the structure is crucial. Discourses of the agents about themselves, the attacks and the international system have played a decisive role in shaping the post-9/11 world. Firstly the situation in the USA is evaluated, since it has been one of the main actors

that played an active and important role in Turkey's EU bid with its "mounting pressure on the European Union member countries to include Turkey in the enlargement process."²²⁷ In the words of Günter Verheugen, the European Commissioner for Enlargement from 1999 to 2004, USA applied "too much pressure" on the EU for starting Turkey's membership talks.²²⁸

Moreover, as the biggest player in the current system, United States' reaction necessitates special attention in this respect. Its perceptions and reactions have had decisive impacts in forming the international environment after the attacks. Thus, many observers believe that 9/11 "has so fundamentally transformed America and its relations with the rest of the world that it ... either directly or indirectly impact[ed] every corner of the globe."²²⁹ Another actor whose discourses and actions should be taken into consideration in evaluating post-9/11 world is the European Union. The first part of this chapter evaluates these actors within this new international environment by focusing mainly on their security discourses.

The United States after 9/11

It was shocking to see the attacks on TV for U.S. citizens who felt safe in their territories, which had not been attacked by a foreign power since the American War of 1812. However, there was confusion about the possible reaction of U.S. administration in response to the attacks. There were some observers who expected 9/11 to provide the necessary stimulus for U.S. to soften its conduct of diplomacy.

²²⁷ Vedat Yücel and Salomon Ruysdael, *New Trends in Turkish Foreign Affairs: Bridges and Boundaries* (New York, Writers Club Press, 2002): 87.

²²⁸ Günter Verheugen, cited in Nathalie Tocci, *Turkey's European Future: Behind the Scenes of America's Influence on EU-Turkey Relations* (New York, New York University Press, 2011): 179.

²²⁹ Thomas Friedman, *Longitudes and Attitudes* (London: Penguin Books, 2003): IX; also see Andrew Cottey, "September 11th 2001: A New Era in World Politics?," in Gökhan Bacık and Bülent Aras, (eds.), *September 11 and World Politics* (İstanbul: Fatih University, 2004): 40.

For instance, in his article written before the American invasion in Afghanistan, Steve Smith argued that a more multilateral US foreign policy should be expected in post-9/11 world.²³⁰ Yet, the formal reaction was harsh and composed of a mixture of shock, sadness, and anger. September 11, 2001, was officially described as “a day of unprecedented shock and suffering in the history of the United States.”²³¹ American policymakers and media pundits almost immediately described the attacks as an act of war.

Bush administration found dramatic and mainly emotional reasons for Americans to be attacked by terrorists: In President Bush’s words, “America was targeted for attack, because [Americans] are the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world.”²³² However, many do not believe that this was the real reason that lies behind the attacks. Believing in this reason has led to a considerable level of misperception about the roots of global terror and became an important obstacle in the fight against it. However, this perception has been one of the main arguments that has been widely used by U.S. policymakers after 9/11. In the immediate aftermath of the attacks Colin Powell declared: “Once again, we see terrorists, people who don’t believe in democracy...”²³³ Brian Roehrkaase, spokesman for Homeland Security, argued in a similar way that “terrorists hate our freedoms. They want to change our ways.”²³⁴

The post 9/11 world according to the official American discourse was not safe for

²³⁰ Steve Smith, “The end of the Unipolar Moment: September 11 and the Future of World Order,” www.ssrc.org/sept11/essays/smith.htm.

²³¹ National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report*, (22 July 2004): 1, <http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/index.htm>.

²³² Cited in Robert Fisk, “Bush is walking into a trap,” *The Independent*, 16 September 2001.

²³³ *Miami Herald*, 12 September 2001.

²³⁴ *Washington Post*, 1 August 2003.

anybody. There were two clear-cut groups of people in this world: the good ones and the bad ones. If you are among the good ones, you are the target of terrorists. George W. Bush made this point clear by arguing that “the threats we face are global terrorist attacks. That’s the threat. And the more you love freedom, the more likely it is you’ll be attacked.”²³⁵ If you are among the bad ones, you are the target of the world’s biggest power and its good allies. Thus, nobody was immune from threat and insecurity in post-9/11 world from this perspective. In his speech to the Joint Session of Congress on 20th September 2001, President Bush declared that everybody has to make a choice in the new war on terror by presenting his famous options: “Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.”²³⁶ By defining Iran, Iraq and North Korea as an axis of evil, Bush reinforced this image of a world divided between good and evil.

This kind of analysis became so popular that some observers even started to think that the rhetoric of American, British and Israeli experts about 9/11 has become as dangerous as the terror itself.²³⁷ Within this environment, the new official U.S. policy regarding post-9/11 world was shaped with the influence of neo-cons in the Bush administration. Their belief in the importance of *military power* and *unilateralism* in maintaining the superpower role of USA in the international system, determined the reaction of U.S. after the attacks.

Conservatives have traditionally been highly involved in influencing U.S. foreign policy discourse and policy-making processes either directly through their members in the administrations or indirectly by means of influential think tanks. The Project

²³⁵ *Agence France Presse*, 19 November 2002.

²³⁶ George W. Bush, “Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People,” Washington, DC, 20 September 2001.

²³⁷ Rana Kabbani, “Terror has come home,” *The Guardian*, 13 September 2001.

for the New American Century is a good example for such involvement. As can be guessed from its name, it was established in 1997 with the aim of promoting American identity as the global leader by applying “Reaganite policy of military strength and moral clarity.”²³⁸

Its first considerable action was the letter written by its members to President Bill Clinton on Iraq in 1998, three years before the 9/11 attacks. In the letter, members suggested that removing Saddam Hussein by using military force should have “become the aim of American foreign policy.” Moreover, they claimed that the administration should have given up its insistence on diplomacy that, in their words, “is clearly failing.” They argued that there was no need for a new UN resolution or a decision from UN Security Council in order to take military steps in the region.²³⁹

Influential intellectual figures like Francis Fukuyama and Robert Kagan were also among the authors. The interesting fact about the letter is that seven out of eighteen authors of the letter took important seats in Bush administration and led the creation of U.S. interest discourses and foreign policy choices after the attacks. This gave them a better position in voicing their discourse more strongly. These authors and their positions in the Bush administration are as follows:

Donald Rumsfeld	Secretary of Defence
Paul Wolfowitz	Deputy Secretary of Defence
Richard Perle	Pentagon Policy Advisor
Zalmay Khalilzad	Special Presidential Envoy of Afghanistan
Richard L. Armitage	Deputy Secretary of State
Elliott Abrams	National Security Council
John Bolton	Under Secretary Arms Control & International Security

²³⁸ The Project for the New American Century Project, “Statement of Principles,” 3 June 1997, <http://www.newamericancentury.org/statementofprinciples.htm> (Accessed 22/01/2011).

²³⁹ The Project for the New American Century, “Letter to the President Clinton on Iraq,” 26 January 1998, <http://www.newamericancentury.org/iraqclintonletter.htm> (Accessed 22/01/2011).

The Project members were among the first ones who congratulated President Bush for his “admirable commitment to lead the world to victory in the war against terrorism.”²⁴⁰ They claimed that any strategy against terrorism should be determined to remove Saddam Hussein from power, “even if evidence does not link Iraq directly to the attack.” They also argued that U.S. administration should “fully support [USA’s] fellow democracy,” Israel. Moreover, they warned the administration not to hesitate “in requesting whatever funds for defense are needed.”²⁴¹

Project Members consistently insisted on three main points that established the basis of post-9/11 foreign policy priorities of neo-cons: removing Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq, fully supporting Israel and increasing the defence budget and enlarging the armed forces.²⁴² This insistence was so high that Robert Kagan and William Kristol even suggested their “old friends” Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz to resign for not being able to convince the White House to increase defence budget.²⁴³

In their analysis, Schmitt and Donnelly claim that the Bush Doctrine, which is highly influenced by the ideas mentioned above, is based on three main elements. Firstly, he advocated an active American global leadership that fights against its enemies in all corners of the world. Secondly, he prioritised regime change in rogue regimes, namely Iraq, Iran and North Korea. Finally, he saw “in the war [against global terror] not just danger but an opportunity to spread American political principles, especially into the Muslim world.” In addition to describing what Bush Doctrine is, the authors also explain what it is not. For them, Bush’s doctrine is

²⁴⁰ The Project for the New American Century, “Letter to President Bush on the War on Terrorism,” 20 September 2001, <http://www.newamericancentury.org/Bushletter.htm> (Accessed 22/01/2011).

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² See the official web site of the project, <http://www.newamericancentury.org> (Accessed 22/01/2011).

²⁴³ *Weekly Standard*, 23 July 2001.

neither close to “multilateralism of Clinton that cares a lot about UN system and expects too much from peace processes. Nor is it his father’s balance of power realism.”²⁴⁴

National Security Strategy documents of the United States prepared in 2002 and 2006 by Bush administration revealed the ongoing importance of September 11 in the outlook about the threats to national security. The latter document demonstrated its spirit in the following words: “America is at war. This is a wartime national security strategy required by the grave challenge we face – the rise of terrorism fuelled by an aggressive ideology of hatred and murder, fully revealed to the American people on September 11, 2001.”²⁴⁵

Many analysts, like John Judis, argue that not only Bush administration and neo-cons but also conservative Republicans in general have “an unbroken record of failure” in terms of foreign policy decisions.²⁴⁶ The most popular criticism in this respect is about Bush administration’s ignorance of international community and legitimacy concerns. This ignorance arose mostly from the over-confidence about the ability of USA in acting on its own. For instance, in his televised interview Richard Perle claimed that the “U.S. did not need any coalition to win the war against terrorism” and he added it is better for the U.S. to “act alone” rather than being “held back by the requirement to hold the coalition together.”²⁴⁷

During its war against terror, Bush administration refused any help even from

²⁴⁴Gary Schmitt and Tom Donnelly, “The Bush Doctrine,” *Project Memorandum*, 30 January 2002.

²⁴⁵George W. Bush, “Foreword,” in The White House, 2006 *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nss/2006> (Accessed 11/10/2013).

²⁴⁶ John Judis, “State of Rejection,” *The New Republic Online*, 23 August 2006.

²⁴⁷ Richard Perle, His interview on *BBC*, 8 October 2001.

NATO that invoked its Article V for the first time ever and accepted 9/11 as an attack on all of its members. Wolfowitz said that this help is not necessary because “the mission would define the coalition.”²⁴⁸ This approach, as Aras mentions, is criticised for “de-legitimiz[ing] the UN system and international law, and most of all, consolidat[ing] the widespread idea of a Western double standard toward the rest of the world.”²⁴⁹ In this respect, Hirsh argues that the new Bush Doctrine was “used to justify a new assertiveness abroad unprecedented since the early days of the Cold War.” By this way, he continues, it “redefined U.S. relationships around the world.”²⁵⁰

During its term, Bush administration was also highly criticized for its unconditional support for Israel. For many analysts, it is almost impossible to establish stability in the Middle East without finding a fair solution to Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Bush’s plan to transform the region “through the fire of violence” seemed to fail in Iraq and did not work anywhere else. On the contrary, his vision worsened the situation in the Middle East and strengthen terrorist organizations by creating a fruitful environment for them.²⁵¹ Seeing only one side of the coin and perceiving Israel as a “fellow victim of terrorist violence” that “is targeted in part because it is [America’s] friend, and in part because it is an island of liberal, democratic principles - American

²⁴⁸ Cited in Michael Hirsh, “Bush and the World: the Need for a New Wilsonianism,” *Foreign Affairs* 18, no. 5 (September/October 2002): 18-43.

²⁴⁹ Aras, “Introduction,” 6.

²⁵⁰ Hirsh, “Bush and the World,” 18.

²⁵¹ See, John Judis, “Apocalypse Now: Bush’s Failed Israel Strategy,” *The New Republic Online*, 2 August 2006.

principles - in a sea of tyranny, intolerance, and hatred”²⁵² disabled the U.S. administration from being part of the solution.

The Fight against Terror and the War in Iraq

Threat narratives have had a crucial importance in shaping the reactions of international agents in the post-9/11 world. It became common among observers, especially in the USA, to argue that September 11 attacks proved the existence of a new type of threat that has been mentioned for various times before: “a truly global terrorist group, engaged in an all-embracing conflict with the USA and its allies.”²⁵³

However, even in this environment, there were some opposing voices that put the blame on U.S. and its previous policies rather than taking some fanatics as the scapegoats. Some commentators like Kabbani argued that U.S. has a considerable responsibility in the process that created the so-called Islamist terrorism. And the most obvious proof for this responsibility was its support to Afghan *mujahedeen*, including Osama bin Laden himself, against Soviets.²⁵⁴ Some analysts even warned U.S. Administration that “retaliation” is a “trap” that was laid down by Osama bin Laden for George W. Bush.²⁵⁵

However, the Bush administration was determined to retaliate with military force and declared that a war is going to be waged. However, reasons for the war and tactics planned by the U.S. administration turned out to be wrong. Although, the quick success in Afghanistan helped to create an image of a strong American supremacy and the early stages of Iraqi war seemed to support this image, the

²⁵² The Project for the New American Century, “Letter to President Bush on Israel, Arafat and the War on Terrorism,” 3 April 2002, <http://www.newamericancentury.org/Bushletter-040302.htm> (Accessed 22/01/2011).

²⁵³ Cottey, “September 11th 2001,” 31.

²⁵⁴ Kabbani, “Terror has come home.”

²⁵⁵ Robert Fisk, “Bush is walking into a trap,” *The Independent*, 16 September 2001.

obvious failure in Iraq turned out this image at the end. After a decade since President Bush declared the end of major combat operations in Iraq in front of a “mission accomplished” banner, there is still no room to speak about a clear success in Iraq. Al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations seem to be more powerful than ever in the region where American troops claimed to bring democracy.

For some analysts, after U.S. actions “the world is a more dangerous place, not safer.”²⁵⁶ The Iraq Study Group started its report in 2006 with the following sentence: “The situation in Iraq is grave and deteriorating.”²⁵⁷ After this failure in the war against global terror, especially in Iraq, reasons and the tactics of the war became extremely questionable.²⁵⁸ Finally, in 2007, General David Petraeus, the U.S. commander in Iraq, admitted “there is no military solution to a problem like that in Iraq, to the insurgency of Iraq.”²⁵⁹ All these facts raised questions about the perceptions of U.S. administration about the post-9/11 world. Stephan Waltz reflects the current common public feeling about the invasion as follows:

“In the Iraqi case, it is obvious to anyone who isn’t a diehard neo-con or committed Bush loyalist that the (dubious) benefits of that invasion weren’t worth the enormous price tag. There were no WMD and no links between Saddam and al Qaeda, and the war has cost over a trillion dollars (possibly a lot more). Tens of thousands of people died (including some 4500 Americans), and millions of refugees had to flee their

²⁵⁶ John L. Esposito, “The war on terrorism: Implications for US foreign policy,” *Today’s Zaman*, 8 February 2007.

²⁵⁷ The Iraq Study Group, *The Iraq Study Group Report: The Way Forward - A New Approach* (United States Institute of Peace, 6 December 2006): 6.

²⁵⁸ For instance, see Lawrence Korb and Brian Katulis, *Strategic Redeployment 2.0: A Progressive Strategy for Iraq* (Center For American Progress, May 2006).

²⁵⁹ Moises Naim, “America’s Learning Disability in Iraq,” *PostGlobal*, 6 April 2007.

homes. And for what? Mostly, a significant improvement in Iran's influence and strategic position."²⁶⁰

The place of international norms in the eyes of neo-cons also necessitates special attention. Although international values may have a place in their analyses, at the end of the day, they are seen merely as burdens that USA should get rid of, if necessary. For instance, one of the most prominent supporters of the war in Iraq, Robert Kagan, accepts that international legitimacy matters. However, he believes that U.S. administration did the right thing by not really caring about such legitimacy. Because, in his view, U.S. would have never acted, if it had searched for this legitimacy. Yet, even Kagan accepts that "there are many legitimate criticisms to be made about America's conduct of the war."²⁶¹

European Union and Transatlantic Relations after 9/11

In the immediate aftermath of the attacks, Europeans did not hesitate from fully supporting the USA and condemning disastrous terrorist act.²⁶² They indicated a strong solidarity to heal the wound created with the attacks. Even the French public that is well-known for its anti-American sentiments declared its wholehearted support to their American fellows. The monumental sentence that became the symbol of this support came from the popular French newspaper *Le Monde* in its front-page editorial: "We are all Americans now."²⁶³

Threat narratives of the Union have become similar to that of the USA after the

²⁶⁰ Stephen M. Walt, "Twilight for Qaddafi," *Foreign Policy*, 13 May 2011.

²⁶¹ Robert Kagan, "Anti-Americanism's Deep Roots," *The Washington Post*, 19 June 2006.

²⁶² For a list of statements against terrorism that condemn the 9/11 attacks by various well-known Muslim figures, see <http://www.unc.edu/~kurzman/terror.htm> (Accessed 29/10/2011).

²⁶³ Quoted in "You Can Be Warriors Or Wimps; Or So Say the American," *The Economist*, 10 August 2002.

attacks. Like U.S. administration, EU officially defined terror as the biggest global challenge that Europeans have to face.²⁶⁴ Thus, without any doubt, EU expressed its willingness for solidarity with the American people in their fight against terror after the attacks and supported the military operation under NATO command in Afghanistan, where Al Qaeda established bases. However, the crisis in transatlantic relations came with the discussions about an operation in Iraq, possibly without any mandate from any international organisation including NATO.

The tension increased with the reciprocal official declarations that blamed the other side. It reached its peak with U.S. Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld's briefing within which he named those European countries that did not support an invasion in Iraq, mainly France and Germany, as the "old Europe."²⁶⁵ The EU was divided in two groups when Spain, Italy, Denmark, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Portugal accepted UK's proposal for supporting U.S. actions in Iraq.

The rapid success in Afghanistan increased the courage of USA in its ability to act alone, if it is necessary. Astonished with the early success of U.S. troops, some analysts warned the European leaders that Europe's importance in the eyes of American policy makers is much less after 9/11 than its level in the last half century. This, according to Wallace, forced Europeans to accept the fact that they have no more choice than supporting American policies without being involved in the

²⁶⁴ See European Council, European Security Strategy – A Secure Europe in a Better World, Brussels, 12 December 2003.

²⁶⁵ For the transcript of the briefing see Donald H. Rumsfeld, "Briefing at the Foreign Press Center," 22 January 2003, <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=1330> (Accessed 22/07/2010).

processes that lead to those policies.²⁶⁶

In the early stages of Iraqi war, as in the example of Robert Kagan, some analysts believed that US proved its ability to “respond to the strategic challenges around the world without much help from Europe.”²⁶⁷ Kagan went further in this belief and argued that the opinions and statements of the EU do not have more importance in the eyes of Americans than those of other groups of states like ASEAN or the Andean Pact. With confidence, Kagan warned American leaders to “realize that they are hardly constrained at all, that Europe is not really capable of constraining the United States.”²⁶⁸

Many Europeans argue that U.S. administration became blind with the American power and fallen into a trap of unilateralism that is characterised by an “instinctive refusal to admit to any political restraint on its action... placing itself above international law, norms and restrains when they do not suit its objectives.”²⁶⁹

As it is observed more obviously after the war in Iraq, Europeans criticise Americans for overemphasizing the importance of political and military dimensions of international issues, while Americans criticize Europeans for caring too much about the role of diplomacy and economic aid packages in international politics.²⁷⁰

As Akşemsettinoglu mentions, the disagreements between USA and EU has not been limited to issues related to Iraqi war. Rather, the list is much longer: “Kyoto

²⁶⁶ William Wallace, “Living with the Hegemon: European Dilemmas,” in Eric Hershberg and Kevin W. Moore (eds.), *Critical Views of September 11: Analyses From Around the World* (New York: The New Press, 2002): 106-7.

²⁶⁷ Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the World Order* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004): 98.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 100-2.

²⁶⁹ W. Bruce Jentleson, *American Foreign Policy: The Dynamics of Choice in the 21st Century*, 2nd Edition (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 2004): 366

²⁷⁰ Wallace, “Living with the Hegemon,” 105.

Global Warming Treaty, the International Criminal Court, the Multilateral Land Mines Treaty, relations with Iran, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and a number of international trade issues.”²⁷¹ What Iraqi War did was to put light on the cracks that already existed in transatlantic relations.

While some observers believe that big cracks became visible in Western world (namely transatlantic community) after 9/11, some others believe that such a world never existed as it is imagined. The former group argues that the disagreement between U.S. administration and European leaders on the Iraqi issue is the “biggest surprise after 9/11.”²⁷² On the other hand, the latter group claims that 9/11 awakened those who wished to see a united West and showed that “strategic perceptions of the two sides of the Atlantic Ocean differ considerably.”²⁷³

As an example, Kagan starts his book with a strong assertion that “It is time to stop pretending that Europeans and Americans share a common view of the world, or even that they occupy the same world... On major strategic and international questions today, Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus.” Kagan believes that transatlantic partners differ from each other in terms of their “national priorities, determining threats, defining challenges, and fashioning and implementing foreign and defence policies.”²⁷⁴

According to Kagan *Muslim fundamentalism* cannot be compared with the Soviet threat as a motive that forced Americans and Europeans to “prove (themselves)

²⁷¹ Gökhan Akşemsettinoglu, *Transatlantic Relations: A Political Appraisal* (Ankara: Foreign Policy Institute, 2005): 91-92.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 89.

²⁷³ Aras, “Introduction,” 7.

²⁷⁴ Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power*, 3-4.

unified and coherent.”²⁷⁵ He adds that whereas “once the United States risked its own safety in defence of a threatened Europe’s vital interests, today a threatened America looks out for itself in apparent and sometimes genuine disregard for what many Europeans perceive to be *their* moral, political, and security interests.”²⁷⁶

Neo-cons do not seem to have learned any lessons from the situation in Iraq. They believe that solution is sending more troops to Iraq and spending more on defence. They do not accept any criticism about the legitimacy of the war in Iraq or the actions of the U.S. administration. They harshly criticize reports that raise questions about the U.S. foreign policy after the September 11 attacks. For instance, they do not approve the September 11 Commission’s Report that does not provide enough reasons to legitimize the war in Iraq. Daniel McKivergan, deputy director of the Project for the New American Century, argues that “sloppy September 11 Commission staff report... and biased media coverage” prevented people from seeing the “unquestionable” ties between Saddam regime and terrorist organizations.²⁷⁷

However, after the war in Iraq each party has to pass through a period of reflection within which they can make calculations about their previous interests narratives and related actions. For the part of U.S. administration, the failure in finding a solution for the situation in Iraq seems to have shown the importance of diplomacy, as in the cases of its approach towards Iran and North Korea. It also shows the importance of establishing a coalition like the one in the first Gulf War in 1991.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 81

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 116-7.

²⁷⁷ Daniel McKivergan, “September 11 Commission Staff Report,” 18 June 2004, <http://www.newamericancentury.org/iraq-20040618.htm> (Accessed 23/01/2011).

Moreover, its discourse about the roots and causes of global terror and the ways to fight against it became questionable.

For the European part, the negative results of its failure to achieve integration in political and military matters became very obvious after its inability to influence post 9/11 developments, especially U.S. actions in Iraq. This situation also led to a new process within which EU questions its identity and the role it wants to play in the future.

As the former French President Jacques Chirac puts it, many in each side seem to have understood that world crises cannot be addressed “by one nation acting alone on the basis of its own interests and judgments... Any crisis situation, regardless of its nature, in any part of the world, is of concern to the whole international community.”²⁷⁸ The situation in the Middle East proves the failure of combating terrorism and other problems solely with material means.

In spite of all disagreements in the transatlantic relations, it is still fair to talk about a community that is comprised of European and Northern American countries what Schimmelfenning calls “Western international community,” while Flockhart names “Euro-Atlantic community.”²⁷⁹ This community seems to survive the problems faced after 9/11. Both parties try to heal the severe wounds of the crisis situation in the relations. Commonalities, instead of differences, have become more prevalent in the speeches of the leaders on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. It has become common again to give reference to “democracy, individual liberty and the rule of

²⁷⁸ Jacques Chirac, His televised interview, 14 July 2003, <http://www.ambafrance-us.org/news/standpoint/stand26.asp> (Accessed 17/05/2012).

²⁷⁹ Schimmelfenning, “International Socialization in the New Europe;” Trine Flockhart, “Complex Socialization!: A Framework for the Study of State Socialization,” *European Journal of International Relations* 12, no. 1 (2006): 89-118

law” as the basic principles that “the freedom, common heritage and civilization” of the peoples of transatlantic community are founded on.²⁸⁰ Opposition in Europe against comments that describe the USA as a force for good, instead of evil has decreased. Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair has become less marginal in claiming that “for all their faults, and all nations have them, the US are a force for good; they have liberal and democratic traditions of which any nation can be proud.”²⁸¹

Yet, there is still considerable opposition against “the rhetoric of shared values” that is seen as “an exploitation of history for present purposes, deployed by one side or another as circumstances dictate.”²⁸² However, after the disappointment in both Europe and USA about the current situation in the international system, it has become relatively common to argue that transatlantic relations have no alternative or substitution. Figures such as Javier Solana asserted that Europe is the only global partner of USA, and vice versa.²⁸³ Likewise, in his *2010 National Security Strategy*, President Obama claimed that United States cannot carry the burdens of the century alone, while confessing the fact that “America has not succeeded by stepping outside the currents of international cooperation.”²⁸⁴ Jose Manuel Barroso, European Commission President, argued “EU-US relations have strengthened considerably

²⁸⁰ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *The North Atlantic Treaty*, Washington D.C., 4 April 1949, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_17120.htm (Accessed 13/08/2013).

²⁸¹ Tony Blair, His address to British ambassadors in London, 7 January 2003.

²⁸² Alex Danchev, “How Strong Are Shared Values?” in Samuel Wells and Ludger Kühnhardt, eds., *The Crisis in Transatlantic Relations*, Discussion Paper C143 (Bonn: Center For European Integration Studies, 2005): 11.

²⁸³ Anna Balletbo, “Diverging Systems of Governance?” in Samuel Wells and Ludger Kühnhardt (eds.), *The Crisis in Transatlantic Relations*, Discussion Paper C143 (Bonn: Center for European Integration Studies, 2005): 27.

²⁸⁴ Barack H. Obama, *2010 National Security Strategy*, The White House (2010): 11.

[in] address[ing] common economic, political and environmental challenges... with shared values and interests.”²⁸⁵

Common Threat Discourses and Security Agendas

One important point that has been widely neglected in analyses about the transatlantic tension is the similarity between American and European discourses related to global threats that should be dealt with in the new international environment. Although their language and the solution suggestions were different, it does not seem wrong to argue that the EU capitals have been sharing similar concerns with Washington about the challenges that should be addressed in the post-9/11 world. Official declarations revealed this considerably wide basis related to their views on the way to fight against these threats. One of the most obvious examples of this approach was the *European Security Strategy* adopted by the European Council on December 12, 2003. This strategy paper has become a milestone in determining the EU’s common foreign policy after 9/11 by reflecting the threat discourses of the Union and defining its security priorities.

Both sides seem to have understood that they need each other in this effort. More analysts emphasize the need to combine American hard power with the European soft power in order to be successful. European leaders already took concrete steps by declaring their willingness to “share in the responsibility for global security and in building a better world.”²⁸⁶ This offer has been something that most Americans cannot reject, especially after the failure they have faced as a result of American unilateralism in Iraq and in the war against global terror. This has been reflected

²⁸⁵ Jose Manuel Barroso, His address in the EU-US Summit, Vienna, 21 June 2006.

²⁸⁶ European Council, *European Security Strategy*, 1.

well in the American official calls for help and cooperation in coping with recent popular uprisings in the Middle East region.

Moreover, American and European leaders agree on the belief that the challenges in the post-9/11 world are different from traditional threats they faced during the Cold War. They commonly claim that “the first line of defense will often be abroad” and the “best defense is a good offense” in this new world.²⁸⁷ Last but not the least; they share similar views about the importance of the type of governance in the third world countries, especially in the Middle East. In order to fight with the root causes of the threats arising from these countries, they both believe in the vitality of promoting stable and democratic regimes.

Questioning identities has become an important part of the new international environment. Within this novel environment, major agents in the structure, mainly the EU and USA, entered a period of reflection about their and other agents' identities and roles in the international system. This process in the USA attracted more attention because of the far-reaching impacts of its actions after the September 11 attacks. After a short period of vacillation between aggressively maintaining its role as the only superpower and securing itself by means of isolation from the threatening regions of the world, U.S. administration showed its determination to reinforce its role as the leader country in the international system by mainly using its hard power. In other words, incredible amount of American resources have been committed to engaging the world and proactively protecting its own security. It introduced itself as the leader of free democratic world that will fight against those who challenge the core principles of the civilized world. In this framework, Islamist

²⁸⁷ Respectively, European Council, *European Security Strategy*, 7; The White House, *2002 National Security Strategy*, 6.

fanaticism gained a prominent role as “the perversion of a proud religion” with its main characteristics like “intolerance, murder, terror, enslavement, and repression.”²⁸⁸

Although they have not attracted the same level of attention within this framework, Europeans have entered a much more profound period of reflection about their identities and the place of the EU in the international system. It has become common to emphasize the negative impacts of being an economic giant and remaining a political dwarf. The desire for making the Union a global player is mentioned by Europeans more frequently and more emphasis is put in the EU’s international achievements in this respect.²⁸⁹ Failure to take any initiative in the Middle East for securing its interests that were ignored by Washington showed the importance of ability to act together in foreign policy issues.

The discourses of the Europeans and Americans about the Muslim world have also had considerable influences in shaping their actions and the East-West relations, in general. This caused transatlantic partners to prioritise efforts to promote democracy and liberal values in the world, especially in the regions with Muslim populations. The EU has tried to use enlargement processes, its Neighbourhood Policy and aids, while the USA has attached importance to the Greater Middle East Project, in this respect. Moreover, they prepared plans to stabilise regions like the Middle East by integrating them into the global economic system.²⁹⁰

Transatlantic partners have also determined supporting moderate actors in the

²⁸⁸ The White House, *2006 National Security Strategy*, 1.

²⁸⁹ For instance see European Commission, *A World Player- The European Union's External relations* (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2004).

²⁹⁰ See, Thomas Barnett, *Blueprint for Action: A Future Worth Creating* (Putnam Publishing Group, 2005).

Islamic world against radical groups as a crucial part of their strategy in the new environment. They have increased their efforts to find successful examples or models, which are moderate and liberal Muslims in this world that can provide a better alternative for Muslims than armed struggle or terror. Preventing a possible clash of civilizations in any sense has become one of the top issues in their agenda.

Last but not the least, transatlantic allies strongly agreed on the importance of Turkey as an asset in their strategy in the post-9/11 world. For them, a stable and prosperous Turkey became a desirable target to reach in order to cope with new threats and to secure their interests in regions where Turkey is politically, economically, culturally and historically involved to. This has opened the way increasing calls both in Europe and USA for closer integration of Turkey into the European Union.

In the process that brought the opening of Turkey's negotiation press in 2005, AK Party was frequently praised as a 'model' that had to be exported to the rest of the Muslim world.²⁹¹ Its leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was applauded in the mainstream western media as one of the rarest blends in the Islamic world and the champion of Turkey's westernisation reforms.²⁹² The European Union also praised the economic success of AK Party-ruled Turkey. Prime Minister Erdoğan became "the darling of the international community" during this period,²⁹³ a period when the Western political and media landscape mainly viewed Turkey as a success story under AK Party rule.

²⁹¹ Cihan Ziya Tugal, "Towards the End of a Dream? The Erdogan-Gulen Fallout and Islamic Liberalism's Descent," *Jadaliyya*, 22 December 2013.

²⁹² Andrew Purvis, "Recep Tayyip Erdoğan: Turkey's Builder of Bridges," *Time 100*, 26 April 2004.

²⁹³ Daron Acemoglu, "The Failed Autocrat" *Foreign Policy*, 22 May 2014.

However, social world is in a continuous flux. This positive environment dramatically changed alongside the changes in discourses of the western actors. Rise of Islamophobia in the west has played a decisive role in the EU membership negotiation of Turkey, which has been ruled under the single party government of ‘Islamist’ AK Party. Thus, Islamophobia is analysed in the following pages with various examples from different western countries.

Rise of Islamophobia in Western Societies

“Turkey does not belong to Europe, because it has a backward Islamic ideology that does not fit with European values. Islam and freedoms cannot coexist.”²⁹⁴
Dutch PM Barry Madlener

The European Union project opened the way for an unprecedented era of peace and prosperity among European countries for over five decades. In spite of this achievement, the roots of concepts such as racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia reach deep into the history of Europe. Indeed, these dangerous ideologies gave some of its bloodiest fruits on the European territory, with cases like colonialism, religion wars and the slaughter perpetrated by the German Nazis based on the belief about supremacy of Aryan race. The seeds of these ideational bases that prepare the ground for such cruel practices have fallen asleep in the cultural memories of some marginal segments of European societies. When they have found a fertile social and political environment in recent years, these seeds have re-sprouted alongside the rise of far-right political parties all around Europe.

²⁹⁴ Barry Madlener said this during a meeting of the European Union-Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee. Helene Flautre, co-chair of the EU-Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee, replied: “Discriminating against Islam as it was done today only aims for propaganda for national political purpose. I would like to remind Mr. Madlener of the current situation of the Arab Spring and the brave and pacific demonstrations of the people [in Arab countries] for dignity and human rights,” *Today’s Zaman*, “Minister goes ballistic against far-right MEP in caricature row,” 28 November 2011.

This situation has been among the most important sources of intellectual obstacles impeding Turkey's EU accession talks. In spite of Turkish state policy of denial about Ottoman past during a large part of the republican era, Turkey has been seen as continuation of the Ottoman Empire by majority of Europeans. Since Ottoman Empire had been the spearhead of Islam in Europe for centuries, Turkey comes to many Europeans' mind first when Islam is mentioned. In other words, its Muslim population has been seen as the most decisive character of Turkey's national identity. Therefore, the rising Islamophobia in Europe has directly instigated Turcophobia. Moreover, due to around five million Turkish migrants all around Europe, Turkey has been one of the main targets of European xenophobic indignation.

As has been pointed out by Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, Islamic concepts like *jihad* were generally equated with terrorist acts in western discourses: "Jihad is a sacred concept for us as Muslims" Davutoğlu says, and continues: "It also means helping other humans and is the name given to the fight of a person against himself/herself. But the concept has been ruined and equated with terror by neocons and pro-Israeli groups [with the influence of terrorists acting in the name of Jihad]." In order to show the damage done by this flawed discourse, Davutoğlu gives an example: "Cihad (Turkish version of the word Jihad) is a commonly used male name in our culture. One of my advisors whose name was Cihad²⁹⁵ went to USA after September 11 attacks. He says everybody laid on the ground, when his colleagues called his name loudly to catch his attention in the airport."²⁹⁶ According

²⁹⁵ Cihad Erginay, Turkey's current Ambassador to Czech Republic.

²⁹⁶ Ahmet Davutoğlu, Speech during a meeting titled "Turkey in Light of International Developments" organised by Independent Industrialists and Businessmen's Association (MÜSİAD), İstanbul, 17 February 2013.

to Davutoğlu, this reaction is a result of a conscious campaign against Islam and Islamic concepts after 9/11 terror attacks.

This trend gained speed with rhetoric that associated terrorism with Islam in general. All types of hostility, including physical attacks, against Muslims living in Europe has increased. For example, more than 300 attacks against Muslims took place in UK alone, in the immediate aftermath of September 11. According to a poll held during this period, 26 percent of Britons thought that Islam is a threat to Western values.²⁹⁷ In some other European countries, the situation was even worse.

The first large-scale social explosion of this attitude that had been rising beneath the surface happened because of a short film titled *Submission* by Dutch producer and director Theo van Gogh in 2004. The film consisted of stories told by a woman, who prays naked with the *Qur'an al-karim* verses written on her body. Ayaan Hirsi Ali, the film's script writer, was a female Dutch politician who claimed to have abandoned Islam after 9/11 terrorist attacks. This has increased the provocative tone of the film's message.

While depicting Islam as a bad religion, the film was attributing the actions of terrorists to all Muslims. Thus the film caused outrage in Muslim countries, with protests on the streets. Film's director Gogh was killed by a terrorist, who was a Dutch citizen of Moroccan descent. Thereupon, 47 mosques were set on fire and 106 other buildings owned by Muslims were attacked in the same month, according to the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia. Besides, it has become commonplace to insult Muslims on the streets, in public transport vehicles and even

²⁹⁷ Alan Travis, "Attack on Afghanistan: ICM Poll," *The Guardian*, 21 October 2001.

during sport events. Anti-Islam leaflets were distributed in various parts of Netherlands. As a result, the film played into the hands of radical groups on both sides and led to the outbreak of intense violence. *The Washington Times* labelled these incidents as “mini-clash of civilizations.”²⁹⁸

Another incident happened when Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* published insulting cartoons depicting Prophet Muhammad as a terrorist on 30 September 2005. As has been pointed out by BBC Arab Affairs analyst Magdi Abdelhadi, “the association of the Prophet with terrorism [has been very] offensive to the vast majority of Muslims.” The newspaper claimed that it was doing this in order to criticise Islam. Despite reactions from different parts of Muslim world, cartoons were re-released in various European countries in an inflammatory manner. This further aggravated anger in countries with Muslim populations. Various buildings owned by Western institutions were attacked in these countries. Danish embassies were set on fire in Syria, Lebanon and Iran. In Abdelhadi’s words, these reactions were linked to “America’s war on terror,” since it “is still largely perceived in the Arab world as a war on Islam.”²⁹⁹

Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen described the situation as the biggest international crisis for Denmark since the Second World War. But he refused to apologise as had been asked by Muslim societies, claiming cartoons are within the boundaries of press freedom. However leaders like French President Jacques Chirac stated that the cartoons were clear sources of provocation and opposed their publication. Yet some other politicians were keen to add fuel to fire. For example, Italian Minister Roberto Calderoli was wearing t-shirts with these cartoons printed

²⁹⁸ Arnaud de Borchgrave, “Mini Clash of Civilizations,” *The Washington Times*, 14 November 2004.

²⁹⁹ Magdi Abdelhadi, “Cartoon Row Highlights Deep Divisions,” *BBC News*, 4 February 2006.

on.

Controversial Regensburg lecture of Pope Benedict XVI became another source of tension between Muslim and Christian worlds. During his speech delivered at the University of Regensburg in Germany on 12 September 2006, the Pope quoted an unfavourable remark about Islam, which was made at the end of the 14th century by the Byzantine emperor Manuel II Palaiologos: "Show me just what Muhammad brought that was new and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached." Muslim politicians and religious leaders immediately protested against what they perceived as an insulting mischaracterization of Islam.

The Organization of the Islamic Conference declared it "regrets the quotations cited by the pope on the Life of the Honorable Prophet Muhammad," and continued: "The attribution of the spread of Islam around the world to the shedding of blood and violence, which is 'incompatible with the nature of God' is a complete distortion of the facts, which shows deep ignorance of Islam and Islamic history."³⁰⁰ Thousands of Muslims rallied in protest at the comments in various countries.

Leaders from Muslim countries have called on the pope to apologize for his remarks. For instance, Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said "The pope must not take lightly the spread of outrage that has been created," and urged the Pope to apologize and withdraw his controversial comments.³⁰¹ Pakistan's parliament issued a statement saying "The derogatory remarks of the Pope about the philosophy of jihad and Prophet Muhammad have injured sentiments across the

³⁰⁰ *CNN*, "Pope's Islam comments condemned," 15 September 2006.

³⁰¹ *CNN*, "Muslim fury grows at pope remarks," 16 September 2006.

Muslim world and pose the danger of spreading acrimony among the religions."³⁰²

Muhammad Hamid Ansari, Vice-President of India, said: "The language used by the Pope sounds like that of his 12th-Century counterpart who ordered the crusades."³⁰³

As a reaction to what Michael Hirst from *The Telegraph* describes as "apparently disparaging remarks about Islam,"³⁰⁴ Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan also said "I believe it is a must for (the Pope) to retract his erroneous, ugly and unfortunate remarks and apologise both to the Islamic world and Muslims. ...I hope he rapidly amends the mistake he has made so as not to overshadow the dialogue between civilizations and religions." In Hirst's words, Erdoğan's "comments were a milder version of the angry outpourings from Muslim leaders around the world."³⁰⁵

After angry reactions from throughout the Muslim world, the Pope apologised and said the medieval text which he quoted did not express his personal opinion. He also added a footnote to his controversial quotation: "In the Muslim world, this quotation has unfortunately been taken as an expression of my personal position, thus arousing understandable indignation. I hope that the reader of my text can see immediately that this sentence does not express my personal view of the Quran, for which I have the respect due to the holy book of a great religion."³⁰⁶ However, the damage of the controversy over the relations between Muslim and Christian societies has been considerably high at the end of the day.

³⁰² *BBC*, "Muslim anger grows at Pope speech," 15 September 2006.

³⁰³ *BBC*, "In quotes: Muslim reaction to Pope," 16 September 2006.

³⁰⁴ Michael Hirst, "Pope must withdraw his ugly remarks," *The Telegraph*, 17 September 2006.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁶ The Pope Benedict XVI, "Lecture of the Holy Father - Faith, Reason and the University Memories and Reflections", Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 12 September 2006.

Another Islamophobic provocation came with a short film titled *Fitna*, by Dutch politician Geert Wilders released in 2008. The film presents the *Qur'an* verses alongside images of terrorist attacks and suggests tearing apart some pages of the holy book. The film ends with the following call to all Europeans: “In 1945, Nazism was beaten in Europe. In 1989, Communism was defeated in Europe. Now the Islamic ideology has to be defeated. Stop Islamisation.”³⁰⁷ Wilders should be satisfied with the fame he earned with this film, since he announced that he will produce a sequel, which is prone to include further heavy insults to Prophet Muhammad. He blatantly went so far as to say that *Fitna II* would be about “the barbaric life and the sick mind of Muhammad.”³⁰⁸

Another agitation in recent years took place in the United States. Terry Jones, a pastor in Florida, became the focus of global attention when he threatened to burn a copy of the *Qur'an* on the ninth anniversary of the September 11 attacks. This unknown pastor of a small church, who is also the author of a book titled *Islam is of the Devil*, became famous throughout the world after this provocative proposal. He was directly addressed by the most senior officials, including U.S. President Barack Obama, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Defense Secretary Robert Gates. He appeared in major media channels. General David Petraeus, commander of coalition forces in Afghanistan, warned that such a provocative action could jeopardize the lives of American soldiers working in foreign offices. In response to threat, protests were organised in various countries like Afghanistan and Indonesia. Finally, under pressure from the American administration, priests and his small community abandoned this plan.

³⁰⁷ Amarnath Amarasingam, “Film Review: *Fitna*,” *Journal of Religion & Film* 13, no.1 (April 2009), <http://www.unomaha.edu/jrf/vol13.no1/reviews/Fitna.htm> (Accessed 27/10/2013).

³⁰⁸ *Radio Netherlands Worldwide*, “Wilders Announces Anti-Muhammad Film,” 1 April 2011.

But a few months later, in March 2011, the same priest burned a copy of the *Qur'an* after a symbolic self-organized court hearing. This ignited demonstrations in Afghanistan, which lasted many days, causing more than twenty-five casualties. American officials claimed that the priest's action is not contrary to the law and within the scope of freedom of expression. Thus, they rejected taking any legal action against him. However, this has been perceived as a provocative act by Muslims all around the world, which clearly reflects hatred against Islam. South African journalist Tony Karon was drawing attention to similarities between media strategies used by *al-Qaeda* and this priest. In his words, Terry Jones managed to become famous by this "well-timed provocation, [which was] designed to stoke the fires of Muslim-Christian enmity like Osama bin Laden tried to do."³⁰⁹

Since there has not been any legal sanction against such insults, similar examples have repeated in several other places. In France, a blogger named Ernesto Rojas Abbate filmed himself burning a copy of the *Qur'an* and urinating on it to put out the flames. In the video he was using pages of the *Qur'an* "as a prop in a simulation of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks." He published these images on his website in order to strengthen his action's impact. Islamic Council of France filed a criminal complaint about this person for "insulting the religious feelings" of Muslims. However, the court did not find the defendant guilty on the grounds that his action was within the boundaries of freedom of expression, although it confirmed that the video was "wilfully outrageous and deliberately provocative."³¹⁰

Western media broadly questioned such acts only when U.S. Ambassador to Libya

³⁰⁹ Tony Karon, "Koran Burning: Taking a Cue from Osama bin Laden?" *Time Magazine*, 8 September 2010.

³¹⁰ *Agence France-Presse*, "Court confirms acquittal of Frenchman who burned, urinated on Quran," 25 October 2011.

Chris Stevens and three other Americans in the Libyan city of Benghazi were killed after publication of another provocative film named “Innocence of Muslims.” In *CNN*’s words, the film was portraying Prophet Muhammad as “thug, womaniser, child molester, homosexual and ruthless killer” while depicting Islam “as a fraudulent religion.”³¹¹

In this 14 minute trailer, the last words of a Jew, who is supposedly killed by Prophet Muhammad is asked. He turns to his wife and says: “Sofia, this is my will: God remembers the Jews and brings them together in the Holy Land. I hope the He won’t forget our bones. And I wish Muhammad’s sons are given a restitution for their grandfather’s blood for the rape of our women for our children and our riches.” As has been put by Professor John Esposito from Georgetown University, the film played “plays right into the hands of extremists in the region who are using anti-American sentiment to advance their own goals.”³¹² And extremists did not miss the chance to exploit such provocations to advance their own goals through violence.

UN Secretary General Ba Ki Moon described the film as “hateful and disgusting” and added: “It is shameful to exploit the fundamental right to free expression by deliberately provoking bigotry and bloodshed. It is also wrong to exploit the anger; this only feeds the cycle of recrimination and senseless violence.”³¹³

“Such a demonization in a post-9/11 world” also resonated in comments of people

³¹¹ *CNN*, “Actress from anti-Islamic film: ‘This makes me sick to my stomach’,” 12 September 2012.

³¹² Cited in Kari Huus, “Why films and cartoons of Muhammad spark violence,” *NBC News*, 13 September 2012.

³¹³ Ban Ki Moon, “Secretary-General’s remarks to Opening Session of the General Assembly High-Level Forum on the Culture of Peace,” New York, 14 September 2012.

like Brigitte Gabriel, “a potent public speaker”³¹⁴ who was addressing a cheerful crowd in the Tea Party convention in fall of 2010 and warning them by saying: “America has been infiltrated on all levels by radicals who wish to harm America. They have infiltrated us at the C.I.A., at the F.B.I., at the Pentagon, at the State Department. They are being radicalized in radical mosques in our cities and communities within the United States.”³¹⁵

As the founder of *ACT! for America*, an organisation with 150.000 members who claim to be “self-appointed terrorism detectors,” Gabriel was describing their motivation by claiming that there is a “cancer” infecting the world. In her words, “This cancer is called Islamofacism. This ideology is coming out of one source: The Koran.”³¹⁶

Mainly as a result of such incidents in the post-9/11 world, hostile and xenophobic opinions on Islam were normalized in the eyes of the public by assessing them within the scope of freedom of expression. It has become more common to hold immigrants responsible for problems within the society. This opened the way to insult them, while degrading Islam and Muslims in public. First, some marginal parties have sought to exploit this inclination for the sake of short-term political interests. And then, broad-based political parties that are afraid of losing the votes of masses participated in this trend. By this way, mainstream political parties enabled these ideas to reach wider audiences. Rising economic problems in European

³¹⁴ Michael Welch, “Foreword,” in George Morgan and Scott Poynting (eds.), *Global Islamophobia: Muslims and Moral Panic in the West* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2012): xi.

³¹⁵ Laurie Goodstein, “Drawing U.S. Crowds With Anti-Islam Message,” *The New York Times*, 7 March 2011.

³¹⁶ Brigitte Gabriel, *Because They Hate: A Survivor of Islamic Terror Warns America* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2006): xxv.

countries exacerbated this process by strengthening xenophobic attitudes.³¹⁷

Calamities like Charlie Hebdo attacks only worsened the situation.

As a result, such hostile rhetoric and attitudes created a suitable environment for the sprouting seeds of hatred in European societies. This process is not only an important factor in feeding anti-Turkey sentiments in Europe, but also a threat for the inner peace and future of Europe. As a sociologist, Welch uses “moral panic theory” in order to explain this trend: “moral panic over Muslims is understood as a popular demonology that produces folk devils at the local and national as well as international levels.”³¹⁸ From a similar perspective, George Morgan and Scott Poynting were observing that “in the global ‘West’, the radicalized ‘Muslim Other’ has become the pre-eminent ‘folk devil’ of our time.” Although they accept that this process did not begin with 9/11, Morgan and Poynting argue that this process has “expanded rapidly to reshape the politics of multiculturalism” in Western societies since then.³¹⁹

At this point, some examples may help in explaining this troublesome trend in some European countries:

“We Failed Multiculturalism”

In recent years, it has become an increasingly prevalent attitude in Germany, like many other European countries, to speak and write against immigrants, especially Turks. For example, politicians like Horst Seehofer argue that immigrants from Turkey and Arab countries have difficulties in integrating Germany. Top-level

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Welch, “Foreword,” xi.

³¹⁹ George Morgan and Scott Poynting, “Introduction: The Transnational Folk Devil,” in George Morgan and Scott Poynting (eds.), *Global Islamophobia: Muslims and Moral Panic in the West* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2012): 1.

figures like Volker Kauder, chairman of the parliamentary group of the ruling Christian Democratic Party, claim that “Islam is not part of [German] tradition and identity... and so does not belong to Germany.” According to Interior Minister Hans-Peter Friedrich, who believes that Germany's identity has been "shaped by Christianity and the Enlightenment," says “That Islam is part of Germany is a fact that cannot be proven by history.”³²⁰

Similar views have been expressed in a much more severe tone by Thilo Sarrazin, a Social Democratic Party (SPD) member and former board member of the Bundesbank. With over 1.5 million copies sold, his controversial book titled “Germany Abolishes Itself” (*Deutschland schafft sich ab*), which attacked post-war immigration policy and multiculturalism efforts of Germany, became the best-selling non-fiction book of a German policy-author of the decade.³²¹ According to Sarrazin, Muslims have more problems assimilating in Europe than other immigrants. He also thinks that Turkish and Arab immigrants are overly dependent on the state and are making Germany “dumber.”³²² These sentences summarise his attitude towards immigrants:

"Integration requires effort from those that are to be integrated. I will not show respect for anyone that is not making that effort. I do not have to acknowledge anyone who lives by welfare, denies the legitimacy of the very state that provides that welfare, refuses to care for the education of his children and constantly produces new little headscarf-girls. This holds true for 70 percent of

³²⁰ Cited in Bernhard Zand, “A Mecca in Europe: Why Islam Is an Integral Part of Germany,” *Der Spiegel Online*, 8 June 2012.

³²¹ *Der Spiegel*, “Sarrazin bricht Verkaufsrekord,” [Sarrazin breaks sales record], 29 October 2010.

³²² Cited in Jana Randow and Christian Vits, “Weber to Debate Next Sarrazin Steps as Merkel Condemns Comments,” *Bloomberg*, 1 September 2010.

the Turkish and 90 percent of the Arab population in Berlin."³²³

In return for such views, the neo-Nazi party NPD offered him presidency of the Party in Berlin.

His book's sale success showed that his ideas are far from being in German society. In fact, a public survey conducted by the Emnid polling institute on behalf of the *Bild am Sonntag* newspaper found that almost every fifth German would (18 percent) vote for a new party under Sarrazin's leadership. The survey also showed that 51 percent of Germans supported Sarrazin's views.³²⁴ Klaus-Peter Schöppner Emnid CEO said, for these respondents Sarrazin was someone "who finally speaks what many think."³²⁵

Mainstream politicians, who are influenced by the growing public support for such ideas, started using a similar dangerous rhetoric, instead of opposing them. German Chancellor Angela Merkel was amongst them. In a gathering of younger members of her conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) party on 16th October 2010, Merkel told that "the approach [to build] a multicultural [society in Germany] and to live side-by-side and to enjoy each other... has utterly failed." Merkel's this comment was one of the many contributions from mainstream politician to inflame the rising anti-immigration feeling in Germany. As a matter of fact, a recent survey was suggesting more than 30% of Germans believed the country was "overrun by foreigners". Another public opinion poll by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation was

³²³ Cited in Lia Petridis Maiello, "Astonished by German Astonishment Over Nazi Attacks," *Huffington Post*, 22 November 2011.

³²⁴ *Berliner Morgenpost*, "18 Prozent der Deutschen würden Sarrazin wählen," [18 percent of Germans would vote for Sarrazin], 6 September 2010.

³²⁵ *Die Welt*, "Jeder fünfte Deutsche würde Sarrazin-Partei wählen," [Every fifth German would choose Sarrazin party], 5 September 2010.

showing that 30 percent of the population believed that "immigrants came to Germany in order to abuse the possibilities of the welfare state."³²⁶

Hatred against the Turks in Germany did not remain only rhetorical, but also turned into action many times. In fact, there are many horrific attacks of neo-Nazi terrorist groups on Turks living in Germany. Many Turks, including women and children, were killed brutally in 1992 Mölln, 1993 Solingen and 2008 Ludwigshafen arson murders, 2004 Cologne Turkish street bombing, and a variety of unsolved murders, just to name a few.

One of the most recent examples was revealed by chance in November 2011, after discovery of a neo-Nazi cell whose members were responsible for a crime wave reaching back more than a decade that includes the murders of nine immigrants, eight of whom were of Turkish origin. The killings, in the words of German Interior Minister Hans-Peter Friedrich, were signs of "a new form of right-wing-extremist terrorism." Allegations surfaced in German newspapers that cell members "may have worked as confidential informants for Germany's domestic intelligence service." Chancellor Angela Merkel said the crimes revealed "structures that we never imagined."³²⁷

Investigators found a hit list of 88 political targets, most of whom were from Germany's Turkish and Islamic communities. Vice-President of Turkish-Islamic Union in Europe (*Avrupa Türk İslam Birliği*) Mahmut Aşkar, who was also amongst the 68 Turkish names in the list, expresses his frustration as follows:

³²⁶ *BBC News*, "Merkel says German multicultural society has failed," 17 October 2010.

³²⁷ Nicholas Kulish, "Neo-Nazis Suspected in Long Wave of Crimes, Including Murders, in Germany," *The New York Times*, 13 November 2011.

“What concern me most are not these murders. As long as the hatred in the minds against Muslims and Turks continues, other versions of these events will happen. Blaming the neo-Nazi political party (National Democratic Party of Germany, NPD) for everything that has been happening in this country is wrong. All public opinion surveys show that there is prejudice against the Turks from up to 80 percent of the society. Neo-Nazi cells are known addresses. What scare me most are the unknown sources of this hatred.”³²⁸

Fully aware of the damage caused by its bad reputation about Hitler's racist massacres, German authorities entered a race to make statements expressing their grief after the outbreak of the scandal. Angela Merkel acknowledged that German police made many mistakes about preventing these murders and arresting the neo-Nazi killers. During her speech at Bundestag, she confessed that they were “horrified by the extent of this hatred and racism,” while acknowledging that it was “a shock” for Germany and “a danger to [its] standing in the world.”³²⁹

Federal Interior Minister Hans-Peter Friedrich and Justice Minister Sabine Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger also apologized for their failure in preventing neo-Nazi terror and promised to investigate the events thoroughly. All political parties in German parliament issued a joint declaration, which states “We are deeply ashamed that, following the monstrous crimes of the Nazi regime, right-wing extremist ideology has spawned a bloody trail of unimaginable acts of murder in our country.”

Bundestag President Norbert Lammert underlined the parliament's grief, shock and

³²⁸ Cited in *Focus Haber*, “Hükümet ırkçı teröre en iyi cevabı, göçmenlere eşit haklarla verebilir,” [The best answer of the government against racist terror is to give equal rights to immigrants], 4 November 2012.

³²⁹ Erik Kirschbaum, “Merkel says neo-Nazi killings damage Germany's image,” *Reuters*, 23 November 2011.

dismay at the murders, and said "We are ashamed that the federal and state law enforcement authorities were unable to uncover or prevent the crimes that were committed over a period of years."³³⁰ Alongside many others, Sigmar Gabriel, chairman of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), was criticising the double standards against Turkish and Muslim immigrants by saying, "All the streets would be closed down; all the top officials would take action immediately [if Islamists had attacked Germans]. But none of this was done [in the present case]."³³¹

Hajo Funke, a German political scientist from the Free University of Berlin, support this claim by saying that the German authorities "trivialise" right-wing violence. He claims that the authorities worry more about so-called 'Islamist terrorists' than far-right groups that have done much more damage to German society with their crimes.³³² Public figures also show the imminence increasing threat from these groups. For instance, figures from Berlin based Amadeu Antonio Foundation show that more than 1400 people in East Germany were subjected to racist violence in a single year in 2010.³³³ According to The Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, the domestic intelligence service, there are around 25,000 people within far-right groups, of whom 9,500 could be violent.³³⁴

As a result of these attacks, debates arose in the media and German society about closing neo-Nazi party, NPD, which is actively operating in some regional councils. In fact, there was an application to German Federal Constitutional Court for NPD's closure in 2001. However, the court had rejected the application on the grounds that

³³⁰ *Der Spiegel Online*, "German Parliament Condemns Neo-Nazi Terror," 22 November 2011.

³³¹ *Hürriyet Daily News*, "Turkish killings draw wider neo-Nazi probe," 17 November 2011.

³³² *The Economist*, "Neo-Nazi crimes in Germany: A horror from the past," 19 November 2011.

³³³ Fulya Canşen, "Aşırı Sağ Nasıl Hortladı: Görmedim, Duymadım, Bilmiyorum," [How did extreme right arise: I have not seen or heard and I do not know], *Ntvmsnbc*, 18 November 2011.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*

there are large numbers of German secret service agents among party leadership, and thus it cannot be determined which policy of NPD is shaped by them.

After a Workforce Acquisition Agreement, which was signed among Turkey and Germany in 1961, hundreds of thousands of Turkish workers were welcomed by German authorities with flowers. But a considerable portion of Turkish migrants feel as unwanted foreigners now. Some of them think that they have not faced the current social pressure ever in the past. Gravity of the threat has been accepted by Chancellor Angela Merkel herself, when she confessed that multiculturalism efforts have utterly failed in Germany. This increased the pace of negative developments in terms of legal difficulties and social pressure faced by immigrants. European leaders who claimed to achieve EU's main motto (i.e. United in Diversity) on European continent, seemed to have hardships in applying this principle even within their countries. Admitting this failure at such levels did nothing but damage the hopes about Europe's future.

Rising concerns of immigrants reflect this pessimism. Tayfun Keltek, founder and chairman of the democratically elected umbrella organisation for migrants in North Rhine-Westphalia (LAGA NRW) and board member in Cologne Branch of Social Democratic Party of Germany SPD, is only one of the examples. Keltek is a leading figure among German citizens with Turkish descent, who actively promoted the integration of immigrants to German society. Yet, his name was on the hit list of the Neo-Nazi terrorist cell that was revealed in 2011. He expresses his disappointment about the German official response to these extremist groups by saying "I had full trust on German state until now. But this trust has been damaged by the latest incidents and recent developments. We observe racist tendencies among all

segments of German society, including but not limited to teachers, police officers, doctors and politicians. The West has been looking for an enemy since the collapse of Soviet Union and it has discovered Islam as a potential candidate. Perceptions about Muslims have changed after September 11 attacks. The approach of politicians and media provoke this enmity.”³³⁵

Concrete results of this disappointment among immigrants have been observed in terms of labour mobility. Considerable amount of highly skilled Turkish migrants have left Germany in this framework. There are around 3 million people of Turkish origin in Germany and 700.000 of them carry a German passport. The number of Turks with German passport dropped for the first time in 2008, after steady growth for decades. This trend continued in the consecutive years. This alerted German authorities, who are aware of the possible dangers of this situation. For instance, German State Minister for Integration Maria Böhmer warned that “given the shortage of skilled labour, [Germany] cannot afford to lose the knowledge and qualifications of skilled immigrants.” Hans Heinrich Driftman, President of The Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry, said that Germany will end up with a labour shortage of five million within the next 15 years, if it does not change the way it integrates its immigrants.³³⁶

³³⁵ Cited in *Zaman*, "Neonazilerin cinayet listesindeki 88 ismin 68'i Türk," [68 out of 88 Names in Neo-nazi hit list are Turks], 27 November 2011.

³³⁶ Kirsten Grieshaber, "Skilled Turkish immigrants leaving Germany," *The Associated Press*, 13 April 2011.

Undermining Basic Values of EU

“My country, France, my homeland, my land is again invaded by an overpopulation of foreigners, especially Muslims... I am fed up with being under the thumb of this [Muslim] population which is destroying us, destroying our country and imposing its acts”³³⁷ French Actress Brigitte Bardot

France has been another EU country that suffered from increasing xenophobia. It has been quite famous for its traditional opposition against Turkey’s EU accession. Yet its discriminatory policies against other minority groups in recent years extended the fronts in its fight against *others*. The infamous French Roma repatriation programme was one of the recent examples, which was called by the EU Justice Commissioner Viviane Reding as “disgrace.”³³⁸ The deportation programme came after the riots that arose in retaliation for the killing of a 22-year-old French Romani man by French police in July 2010.

French government's answer was gradually hardening its stance by demolishing illegal Roma camps and sending thousands of Roma residing without authorization back to their countries. In his Grenoble speech, Former President Nicholas Sarkozy said that he had asked the interior minister to “put an end to the wild squatting and camping of the Roma.” As president, he promised that half of 539 illegal Roma camps in his country would be gone within three months.

Although Paris has the legal right to require Romanian and Bulgarian citizens to obtain resident permits for stays of more than three months until 2014, under the transition conditions set when both countries joined the EU. Applying systematic deportation policy against a specific ethnic group raised an international outcry.

³³⁷ Brigitte Bardot was convicted in 1997, 1998, 2000, 2003 and 2008 for inciting racial hatred in various written articles and comments. Statements above are cited in *Daily Mail*, "Brigitte Bardot fined £12,000 for racial hatred after claiming Muslims are destroying France," 3 June 2008; and *Reuters*, "Brigitte Bardot on trial for Muslim slur," 15 April 2008.

³³⁸ Cited in *BBC News*, "EU may take legal action against France over Roma," 14 September 2010.

Some pundits like German journalist Ullrich Fichtner thought that what was happening in France “would most likely be referred to as ‘ethnic cleansing’ in less prestigious countries.”³³⁹

One French MP even said, “the dismantling of camps and deportations were reminiscent of Nazi round-ups in France in the Second World War.”³⁴⁰ United Nations Human Rights Council expressed its concern about “political speeches of a discriminatory nature in France,” and urged French authorities to “avoid” such grouped deportations and “strive for lasting solutions.”³⁴¹ Pope Benedict XVI criticized deportation of Roma migrants and called upon acceptance of people of all origins and nationalities.

Viviane Reding, Vice-President of the European Commission responsible for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, said that she was “appalled” by French deportation policy and warned the French government about its legal consequences:

“This is a situation I had thought Europe would not have to witness again after the Second World War... Discrimination on the basis of ethnic origin or race has no place in Europe. It is incompatible with the values on which the European Union is founded. National authorities who discriminate ethnic groups in the application of EU law are also violating the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, which all Member States, including France, have signed up to. I therefore find it deeply disturbing that a Member State calls so gravely into question, by the actions of its administration, the common values and the

³³⁹ Ullrich Fichtner, "Driving out the Unwanted: Sarkozy's War Against the Roma," *Spiegel Online International*, 25 September 2010.

³⁴⁰ Henry Samuel, "UN warns France over Roma deportations," *The Telegraph*, 27 August 2010.

³⁴¹ *BBC News*, "UN urges France to avoid Roma deportations," 27 August 2010.

law of our European Union.”³⁴²

José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, told the European parliament that the rights of the 12 million-strong Roma community had to be protected and warned European leaders to steer clear of the racism and discrimination of the past.³⁴³ Romanian Foreign Minister Teodor Baconschi asked French politicians not to use Roma as scapegoats for political advantage, and expressed his concern “about the risks of populism and xenophobic reactions.”³⁴⁴

These criticisms were not enough to convince French authorities to stand back. On the contrary, during presidential election campaign, politicians raced for having the most anti-immigration stance. Nicolas Sarkozy targeted freedom of movement, a basic EU value, and claimed that France would exit Schengen visa area, if the EU fails to clamp down on illegal immigration. Increase in the pace of immigrant influx as a result of social disruptions caused by the Arab Spring, worsened the situation. This augmented the Islamophobic tone in anti-immigration rhetoric. The French Interior Minister Claude Gueant, who was responsible for immigration, claimed that “all civilisations are not of equal value,” while stressing the need to “protect [French] civilisation” from foreign intruders.³⁴⁵

Political debates during the presidential election campaign, showed how deep the impact of post-9/11 security discourses on shaping western public opinion is. When Muhammad Merah, a 23-year-old French-Algerian, killed seven people, a few

³⁴² Viviane Reding, Press Release "Viviane Reding Vice-President of the European Commission responsible for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Statement on the latest developments on the Roma situation," Reference: SPEECH/10/428, Brussels, 14 September 2010.

³⁴³ Ian Traynor, "Barroso makes veiled criticism of French anti-Gypsy campaign," *The Guardian*, 7 September 2010.

³⁴⁴ Bruce Crumley, "France Deports Gypsies: Courting the Xenophobes?" *Time*, 19 August 2010.

³⁴⁵ *Al-Jazeera English*, "Sarkozy ally says all civilisations not equal," 5 February 2012.

months before the elections, political arguments immediately focused on 'Islamist' threat. Sarkozy likened Toulouse shootings to 9/11 by saying, "trauma caused by the killing in Toulouse are somewhat comparable to the (trauma) caused by the September 11 attacks in the United States."³⁴⁶ This opened the way for several police raids at different locations, more social pressure on Muslims. Some Muslim leaders were banned from entering France for a conference, on the basis that they do "not share the country's values."³⁴⁷ However, opposition parties described these moves as "a public relations stunt... and an electoral manoeuvre" by Sarkozy.³⁴⁸

In its editorial titled 'Mr. Sarkozy on the Low Road', *The New York Times* criticised Nicholas Sarkozy for "pander[ing] to racism and xenophobia" by "assailing foreign immigrants, foreign imports and even the dietary laws of French Muslims" in order to earn far-right votes.³⁴⁹ Other presidential candidates also used similar anti-Muslim discourses in their campaigns. For instance, Marine Le Pen, the presidential candidate of "the unabashedly xenophobic"³⁵⁰ National Front, complained that non-Muslims in Paris were unwittingly eating halal meat. And suddenly "halal meat" became one of dominating issues during the French presidential campaign. Not to be overshadowed by Le Pen, Sarkozy called for stricter meat labeling and linked the issue to civilisational concerns: "We have to consider our holidays, the church and cathedral towers in our villages and towns, our eating habits, our morality, as aspects of our civilisation not just our religion: the civilisation of the French Republic."³⁵¹

Based on findings of a poll, he even claimed that halal meat was "the No. 1 worry of

³⁴⁶ *Agence France Presse*, "Sarkozy likens Toulouse shootings to 9/11 as crackdown on Islamist militants nets 19 arrests," 30 March 2012.

³⁴⁷ CNN Wire Staff, "19 arrested in French police raids, Sarkozy says," *CNN*, 30 March 2012.

³⁴⁸ *Agence France Presse*, "Sarkozy likens Toulouse shootings to 9/11," 30 March 2012.

³⁴⁹ *The New York Times*, "Editorial: Mr. Sarkozy on the Low Road," 14 March 2012.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁵¹ Daniel Flynn, "Sarkozy Courts French Far-Right Talking About Immigration, Halal Meat, Christian Roots," *Reuters Blogs*, 4 March 2012.

the French people.”³⁵² Prime Minister Francois Fillon intensified the debate by suggesting that Muslims and Jews alike should abandon their slaughtering traditions, which he claimed did not “have much in common with today's state of science or hygiene.”³⁵³

Sarkozy intensified his anti-immigration rhetoric, by promising to cut immigration by half during in five years. He openly said that there are “too many foreigners” in France.³⁵⁴ Marine Le Pen, immediately replied by promising to cut legal immigration by 95 percent. This xenophobic and Islamophobic approach soon turned into anti-EU rhetoric in political campaigns.

At a giant rally, Sarkozy threatened to pull the country out of the Schengen passport-free zone, unless other EU members did more to control immigration from outside the area.³⁵⁵ He also attacked EU trade rules, which he said had unleashed “savage” competition and he also threatened to act unilaterally, if the EU does not take necessary steps to protect European economies from the negative influences of foreign competitors. As has been put by political analyst Roland Cayrol, this kind of ultimatum pose a serious threat to the future of the European Union. Because, “rather than saying that France can only work in Europe, it's almost saying the contrary, that Europe must do what France tells it to, otherwise France will do so anyway.”³⁵⁶

Far-right leaders like Marine Le Pen, who got nearly one fifth of French votes in the

³⁵² Edward Cody, "In France, halal meat drama enters election campaign," *The Washington Post*, 6 March 2012.

³⁵³ Eleanor Beardsley, "In France, Politicians Make Halal Meat A Campaign Issue," *NPR*, 15 March 2012.

³⁵⁴ Gabriel Borrud, "Sarkozy intensifies anti-immigration rhetoric," *Deutsche Welle*, 12 March 2012.

³⁵⁵ *The Economist*, "The French election: An inconvenient truth," 31 March 2012.

³⁵⁶ Emmanuel Jarry and Yann Le Guernigou, "France's Sarkozy defies Europe with protectionist push," *Reuters*, 11 March 2012.

last presidential election and also the highest French vote in the last EP elections in 2014, are against EU membership from the very beginning. Le Pen describes the European Union as “a totalitarian structure and a rootless ... impotent empire.” She names it as “the European Soviet Union” and promises to fight it with all her strength.³⁵⁷ The popular support for such views in various European societies, keep sending worrying signals about the future of the EU. The defeat of Sarkozy because of the lack of support from Le Pen in the second round of presidential elections, reminds that its supporters can be the first victims of this rising xenophobic politics.

Restraining Religious Rights

Problematic situation in Europe about tolerance for religious rights of Muslims have become more prominent in the post-9/11 world. Several popular examples showed the magnitude of the decline in sympathy towards Muslims residing in European countries. One of the prominent incidents was the *minaret referendum* in Switzerland in 2009. A Turkish cultural association applied for permission to construct a minaret on the roof of its Islamic community centre in 2005. The first step towards controversy was taken by right-wing politicians mainly from the Swiss People's Party and the Federal Democratic Union on 1 May 2007 by the launch of a popular initiative that sought a constitutional ban on minarets.

The Federal Council opposed the initiative and recommended that initiative "against the construction of minarets" be rejected as inconsistent with fundamental principles and rights in the Federal Constitution. Justice Minister Widmer-Schlumpf declared that the minaret initiative was contrary to core human rights and was endangering the religious peace. Federal Councillor Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf said that a ban on

³⁵⁷ Cited in *Euronews*, “Interview: Marine Le Pen next French President?” 18 February 2011.

minaret would be clearly contrary to the core values of Switzerland, while reminding that all other religious communities could build their buildings as they wish.³⁵⁸

Article 18 of *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* says "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom... to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance." It was problematic in itself to go to referendum about a human rights issue, since normally these are rights are not subject to public vote in democratic countries. Their boundaries cannot be constricted with any excuse including public vote. Human rights are commonly understood as "inalienable fundamental rights to which a person is inherently entitled simply because she or he is a human being."³⁵⁹

Although it was controversial enough to go to referendum on this subject; the issue became more complicated with attacks by far right groups on some mosques during the propaganda process. Some anti-minaret groups published online *minaret attack games* on the websites. The main target of the players was to shoot minarets in the game, in order to prevent the muezzin's call to prayer. Anti-minaret groups also distributed fliers that "feature a veiled woman against a background of a Swiss flag pierced by several minarets resembling missiles." These posters were denounced by The Federal Commission against Racism on the grounds that they "defame Switzerland's peaceful Muslim population, feed prejudice and portray the Muslim community as wanting to dominate Switzerland, oppress women and trample on

³⁵⁸ *Schweizer Radio DRS*, "Bundesrat: Minarett-Initiative widerspricht Verfassung", [Federal: minaret initiative contradicts Constitution], 15 October 2009.

³⁵⁹ Magdalena Sepúlveda, Theo van Banning; Guðrún Guðmundsdóttir, Christine Chamoun; Willem J.M. van Genugten, *Human Rights Reference Handbook*, 3rd edition (Ciudad Colon, Costa Rica: University of Peace, 2004): 3.

fundamental rights."³⁶⁰

Figures like Ayaan Hirsi Ali, author of the screenplay for Theo van Gogh's movie *Submission* and a former member of the Dutch House of Representatives, interestingly claimed that "Swiss ban on minarets was a vote for tolerance and inclusion." While equating minarets with "political symbols used by Communists and Nazis" and mentioning "a wider international confrontation between Islam and the West" Ayaan Hirsi Ali showed that at least a group within the minaret ban supporters were seeing this issue as some sort of a battle and said, "In the battle of ideas, symbols are important."³⁶¹

In spite of all warnings from the Swiss government, parliament and NGOs about the possible negative ramifications of a ban, the constitutional amendment banning the construction of new minarets was approved by 57.5% of the participating voters. Only four of the 26 Swiss cantons opposed the initiative. Article 72 of the Swiss Federal Constitution now says: "The building of minarets is prohibited." In Ian Traynor's words, "banning minarets in a country [with a population of around 400,000 Muslims] that has only four mosques with minarets and no major problems with Islamist militancy, stunned the Swiss establishment,"³⁶² alongside Muslims all around the world.

Traynor, Europe editor of *The Guardian*, was not alone in having difficulty in understanding this ban. As expressed by Amila Buturovic, associate professor of religious studies at York University in Toronto, the minaret ban has been perceived

³⁶⁰ *CNN*, "Swiss vote to ban minaret construction," 29 November 2009.

³⁶¹ Ayaan Hirsi Ali, "Swiss ban on minarets was a vote for tolerance and inclusion," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 5 December 2009.

³⁶² Ian Traynor, "Swiss vote to ban construction of minarets on mosques," *The Guardian*, 29 November 2009.

by Muslims as "an unfortunate exhibition of Islamophobia."³⁶³ It was a serious warning about the xenophobic and Islamophobic tendencies among European nations. And the result of the referendum was a crushing defeat for the supporters of religious freedoms, since "the government, mainstream political parties, the churches, the main newspapers, the national president, the powerful business lobby, and the Vatican all opposed the ban."³⁶⁴

Professor John Bowen from Washington University in St. Louis, Mo., said "The Swiss campaign played on people's fears," and added: "Just look at the posters that were used, with images of minarets, burkas and missiles. It was a phony association. The minarets have nothing to do with terrorism or political Islam or the maltreatment of women."

Apart from these examples, anti-EU far-right and far-left parties have gained strong ground all across the European Union. Such parties reached a peak performance in May 2014 European Parliament elections by winning considerable share of the votes in countries like France, U.K., Italy, Greece, Denmark, Austria, Hungary and Lithuania. Both François Hollande and David Cameron were "humiliated after their parties were trounced into third place by anti-EU parties of the right."³⁶⁵ In January 2013, British Prime Minister David Cameron promised an "in/out" referendum on British membership of the EU in 2017, after a period of renegotiation with the EU, if the Conservative Party wins an outright majority at the 2015 general election. Anti-EU Ukip's sweeping victory in the European Parliament elections in May 2014 became a historic blow for established political parties since it was the first time

³⁶³ Cited in Charles Lewis, "Swiss vote to ban minarets a warning to Europe's Muslims," *National Post*, 30 November 2009.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ *The Economist*, "The Eurosceptic Union," 31 May 2014

since the general election of 1906 that a party other than Labour or the Conservatives has topped a national election.³⁶⁶

As has been mentioned earlier, this study claims that understanding the international social context is crucial in grasping the background of media discourses and their influences on actors. Moreover, the flaws of rationalist materialist predictions are embedded within the “truth” claims related to this context. Since the worsening of Turkey-EU relations came alongside the rise of Islamophobia, developments in Turkey’s EU membership negotiations after the start of the process in October 2005 are evaluated in the next chapter. The reasons for opposition against Turkey’s membership is analysed with a specific focus on religious arguments.

³⁶⁶ Claire Phipps Andrew Sparrow and Ben Quinn, "European election results 2014: Ukip sweeps to victory in the UK," *The Guardian*, 26 May 2014.

MEMBERSHIP NEGOTIATIONS: A BUMPY ROAD FROM THE BEGINNING

After a positive Commission report on Turkey, EP Foreign Affairs Committee declared that the negotiations should start. However, like other bodies, they felt the necessity to strongly re-emphasise the open-endedness of the process in various places of their decision.³⁶⁷ The expectation was a smooth beginning for a long and tiring journey. However, in spite of all formal promises given unanimously by all member states and official documents declaring positive results about opening the negotiation talks, the ceremony about opening negotiation process was thrown into crisis and turmoil by Austria's last minute "hostility" towards Turkish membership.³⁶⁸ Austria "raised last-minute objections to opening entry talks with Turkey," suggesting that the EU should consider the option of a "privileged partnership" status for Turkey. More interestingly, Austria asked the opening of negotiations with Croatia in return for lifting its objection against Turkey and Austria's chancellor claimed "that if the EU trusts Turkey to make progress, it must trust Croatia too."³⁶⁹ Svetlana Milevska from European Stability Initiative was drawing the following conclusion from this incident: "Unless you have very powerful friends inside the EU you are not going to make progress. It is not enough just to meet the standards. Croatia started negotiations because one EU member state, with the support of others which were less visible but there, made this a

³⁶⁷ European Parliament, "Turkey: yes to negotiations but no guarantee of membership," *News Report*, 30 November 2004, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?language=EN&pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+PRESS+NR-200411301+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN#SECTION1> (Accessed 21/03/2011).

³⁶⁸ *The Guardian*, "EU and Turkey Agree Terms," 3 October 2005.

³⁶⁹ *BBC News*, "EU deadlocked over Turkish entry," 3 October 2005.

condition.”³⁷⁰

José Manuel Barroso declared in the opening ceremony that he can “guarantee, on behalf of the European Union, that Turkey will be treated in the same way as all other candidates.”³⁷¹ But, this promise became questionable from the very first day. The difficulties experienced in taking the decision to open negotiation process gave strong signals about the nature of the issue. The insistence of France on a future referendum and the demand of Austria to open talks with Croatia in return of dropping its opposition to Turkish membership talks showed that some member states have some other plans in their minds. More interestingly some pundits did not hesitate to refer to Austria’s battles against Ottoman Empire and its strong Roman Catholic roots to explain its opposition.³⁷²

Moreover, the negotiation framework disappointed many Turks with its emphasis on open-endedness, absorption capacity, potential long transitional periods, derogations, specific arrangements or permanent safeguard clauses.³⁷³ For instance, the difference in *open-endedness* issue is the fact that any result other than successful completion of the negotiations would be seen as a failure for both the candidates and the Union in previous cases, especially the one in 2004, while this kind of failure is seen as an openly desired result by many Europeans, including the French president and the German Chancellor, in the Turkish case. Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Jansa explained the logic behind this emphasis on open-endedness

³⁷⁰ Svetlana Milevska, "On the lessons from the EU decision to open negotiations with Turkey and Croatia," Interview with Gerald Knaus, *SEE TV Exchanges*, 30 September 2005.

³⁷¹ José Manuel Barroso, "Declaration of the President of the European Commission on the opening of accession negotiations with Turkey," IP/05/1219, 3 October 2005.

³⁷² Graham Bowley, "A standoff threatens EU-Turkey negotiation," *International Herald Tribune*, 30 September 2005.

³⁷³ See European Commission, "Negotiating Framework," (Luxembourg, 3 October 2005).

with the aim of preventing everybody from having “the illusion that everything will go smoothly.”³⁷⁴

Another problematic concept in terms of Turkey’s membership hopes is *absorption capacity*. Proponents of the crucial importance of this concept especially in terms of Turkish membership, like Chairman of the European Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs Elmar Brok, openly argue that this criterion is more than enough to prevent Turkey’s membership even if it fulfils all requirements.³⁷⁵ Although it is argued that the criterion has been valid for all previous candidates, the effort to determine what ‘absorption capacity’ means came only in 2006 with a Commission report.³⁷⁶ In other words, it was not even clear what the concept means during previous enlargement waves.

On the other hand, some analysts like Professor Ludger Kühnhardt, Director of The Center for European Integration Studies at University of Bonn, believe that the debate on the absorption capacity of the Union is used as a tool by “those who are afraid of the effects of their own [acts] and curse European integration for things which in fact their own national governments and the leftovers of their respective sovereignty have caused.”³⁷⁷ Likewise, Vural Öger, member of the Socialist Group in the European Parliament, also claims that this debate is used “to formulate a new criterion to be imposed to candidate countries, especially to Turkey.”³⁷⁸

³⁷⁴ Government Communication Office of Slovenia, “EU Summit: Slovenia Supports EU Talks with Croatia and Backs Turkey Negotiations Compromise,” Brussels, 17 December 2004, <http://www.ukom.gov.si/eng/slovenia/publications/slovenia-news/1520/1525> (Accessed 19/06/2013).

³⁷⁵ Elmar Brok, “Absorption Capacity as Criterion to Join the EU: The Negotiations with Turkey,” *ZEI EU-Turkey-Monitor* 2, no. 2 (August 2006): 3.

³⁷⁶ European Commission, “Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges.”

³⁷⁷ Ludger Kühnhardt, “Editorial,” *ZEI EU-Turkey-Monitor* 2, no. (August 2006): 1.

³⁷⁸ Vural Öger, “EU’s Absorption Capacity: A Condition by the Candidate Countries to the EU?” *ZEI EU-Turkey-Monitor* 2, no. 2 (August 2006): 5.

Although he agreed that the absorption capacity is a criterion, then-EU Commissioner for Enlargement Olli Rehn cautioned that Europeans have to “avoid making enlargement hostage to a theological debate on the final borders of Europe” and wanted European politicians not to disrupt the negotiation process irresponsibly, “for the sake of Europe.”³⁷⁹ For some observers, rather than being a result of enlargement, the debate about the absorption capacity arose with confusion in the minds of Europeans about their identity and a loss of confidence after the failure of the ratification process of the Constitution. At this point there is a general agreement that discussions about further enlargement are highly influenced by a number of problems and fears, real or imagined, some of which have nothing to do with enlargement.³⁸⁰

Although such status does not exist in the Union *acquis*, some members, including Germany and France, started proposing a *privileged partnership* to Turkey. This caused serious reaction from Turkey and was totally rejected from the very beginning. Turkish side claims that there is an obvious fact that many refrain from mentioning: not any single EU member state will accept giving away their membership rights and simply adopting what other EU members do even if they believe that what EU does is “good” for everybody. Set aside membership rights, it is not secret that all member states debate for long days or months to agree on their voting weights or on a commissioner chair that is supposed to be non-national. The reaction of member states towards decreasing the number of commissioners shows how sensitive the issue is.

Renaming failure in membership negotiations by inventing concepts like “privileged

³⁷⁹ *Euractiv*, “EP seeks clarity on Union’s absorption capacity,” 16 March 2006.

³⁸⁰ Graham Avery, His interview in *ZEI EU-Turkey-Monitor* 2, no. 2 (August 2006): 8.

partnership” does not change the essence of the issue in the eyes of Turks. For the Turkish government, it is not really easy to convince the Turkish public to try to adopt all EU *acquis* while European leaders keep offering Turkey a status, i.e. privileged partnership, which does not even exist in the *acquis*. Another point that necessitates attention is the frequency of usage of this term by European leaders *only* for Turkish membership negotiations.

There is also a misunderstanding that the customs union between Turkey and the EU is a good basis for establishing a privileged partnership status. However, the customs union is seen by Turkey as a step towards full membership. That’s why it accepted to apply those customs also towards third parties even though it has no power in the decision making mechanisms. It is impossible for Turkey to continue this one-sided relationship that favours the EU if it loses the full membership perspective.

Olli Rehn, European Commissioner for enlargement, also warned that “the regular talk of privileged partnership only undermines the EU’s credibility and weakens the conditionality in Turkey.” He highlighted the fact that this kind of behaviours only reduce “the political incentive for reforms and causes political backlash among ordinary Turks.”³⁸¹

The Commission has been favouring the continuation of negotiations without artificial interference from member states. Commission officials, like the president Jose Manuel Barroso, repeatedly reminded the fact that the process is handled by them “on the basis of a mandate handed down unanimously by the member states.”

³⁸¹ Judy Dempsey, “Merkel visit to Turkey complicates life at Home,” *International Herald Tribune*, 4 October 2006.

³⁸² However, later developments proved that those who expect a highly problematic process were right. Although, as has been clearly mentioned by the former president of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, in his speech at the Turkish Grand National Assembly, “the fact that Turkey belongs to Europe was recognised already in [the] Association Agreement of 1963,” Turkey’s Europeanness became questionable for many Europeans after the opening of the negotiations.³⁸³

Following such verbal oppositions, practical obstacles arose in the process. In December 2006, the European Council decided to provisionally suspend eight chapters from the accession negotiations with Turkey as a reaction to Turkey’s refusal to apply the additional protocol to the agreement on the EU-Turkey Customs Union to Cyprus, which was supposed to expand the agreement to cover all the new Member States that acceded to the Union on 1 May 2004. However, Turkish government insists that the Union should first keep its promises given to Turkish Cypriots in 2004 after the rejection of Annan Plan by the no votes of Greek Cypriots. The EU seems to be unable to keep that promise because of the veto of Cyprus as a member state. This issue turns out to be a deadlock for the time being. Austrian Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik emphasizes that decision to suspend chapters is “a clear break in the negotiations.” According to her, “tailor-made partnership, say in the form of a European-Turkish Community” is more realistic option than full membership.³⁸⁴

³⁸² *Euractiv*, “EU-Turkey Relations,” 23 September 2004.

³⁸³ Romano Prodi, “Speech of the President of the European Commission, at the Turkish Grand National Assembly,” Ankara, 14 January 2004.

³⁸⁴ Austrian Foreign Ministry, *Press Release*, “Plassnik on negotiations with Turkey: proceeding on sight has proved its worth,” 12 December 2006. <http://www.bmeia.gv.at/en/foreign-ministry/news/presseaussendungen/2006/plassnik-on-negotiations-with-turkey-proceeding-on-sight-has-proved-its-worth.html> (Accessed 29/05/2013).

During German presidency, France pushed hard to block opening one of the three negotiation chapters that were ready to be opened. That chapter was the key area of economic and monetary policy. The only reason for Sarkozy to lobby hard to prevent opening that negotiation chapter was the political, economic and symbolic importance of the chapter by giving a full membership perspective. In the words of a German official, not opening that chapter “was a political decision emanating from Paris.” Turkish side reacted to this decision by claiming that, for the first time ever, a negotiation chapter is not opened “on the grounds that it would bring Turkey closer to full membership.”³⁸⁵ More important point is the fact that it has not been the last time.

Most of the difficulties came with the transformation of official discourses after the changes in governments of some member states, especially Germany and France. It is not a secret for anybody that French President Nicolas Sarkozy was firmly opposed to Turkish membership. He based his arguments on geographical and cultural elements by claiming that the EU is not only an idea but also a geographical entity. Although he seemed to accept the fact that the EU should keep its promise to continue negotiations, his strongest comment on Turkey came in 2007 when he claimed that “Turkey has no place inside the European Union.” Although he does not show any reason for that argument, he claims that accepting Turkey will mean “enlarging Europe with no limit” and can lead to risk “destroying European political union.”³⁸⁶

During the process, France used every chance to block negotiations. Even though it

³⁸⁵ Dan Bilefsky, “Sarkozy blocks key part of EU entry talks on Turkey,” *International Herald Tribune*, 25 June 2007.

³⁸⁶ *EU Business*, “Turkey has no place in EU: Sarkozy,” 14 January 2007.

was symbolic, it was seen as a victory of France when French officials prevented their European colleagues from using the words “accession” or “membership” in a foreign ministers’ statement on EU enlargement strategy concerning Turkey. Volkan Bozkır, then Turkish ambassador to the EU and now Foreign Minister of Turkey, reflected the situation in Ankara by saying “we are heartbroken and tired of waiting.” He also warned the European politicians that EU is losing its influence on Turkish people by such acts. In his words, in a very short period of time “the EU has lost its leverage on Turkey. It has used up all its ammunition except for stopping the negotiations totally.”³⁸⁷ In reaction to Turkish complaints about French discontent with the word ‘accession,’ Olli Rehn advised the Turkish government to “focus on reforms instead of words.”³⁸⁸

Other blow came when France accepted to hold referendum for new enlargements. The initial aim was to hold referendum only for Turkey by mentioning only those candidate countries with populations over 5% of the Union’s entire size. Desmond Dinan pointed out that “when Chirac promised a referendum in France on future EU enlargements, he “clearly had Turkey in mind.”³⁸⁹ As clearly mentioned by Andrew Duff, vice-chairman of the EU-Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee, this French law is “an unfortunate example of French xenophobia towards Turkey.” His proposal for solving this problem is to transform France into “a more mature parliamentary democracy” instead of “a place where populism and plebiscites rule.”³⁹⁰

³⁸⁷ Javno, “France Wins Symbolic Victory Over Turkey EU Bid,” 10 December 2007.

³⁸⁸ Euractiv, “Turkey bids to assuage EU critics,” 29 May 2008.

³⁸⁹ Desmond Dinan, *Ever Closer Union: An Introduction to European Integration*, Third Edition (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005): 157.

³⁹⁰ Euractiv, “French Parliament strikes blow to Turkish EU bid,” 30 May 2008.

Spanish scholar Jose Torreblanca criticises French and Austrian politicians for their populist decision to hold referendum about Turkey's membership by boldly asking them to "imagine" what could have been the result "if Spain's membership in the European Union had been subjected to referendum in 1981."³⁹¹ This situation also clearly undermines the credibility of decisions taken by the Council in all other areas. Because it shows that elected governments' unanimous decisions are not really legitimate or enough; and they should be subject to public vote, especially on important topics. However, this is not the case. This kind of approach was not applied for any crucial decision, including all previous enlargement decisions or treaties. This causes questions to arise whether Turkish membership issue is more important than all actions taken by the Union to date, including the constitution making process of the Union or all other enlargements with 22 more member states from original 6 members of the Union.

The European Commission tried to answer the questions in the minds of Europeans after the big enlargement wave in 2004 by publishing a paper named *Myths and Facts about Enlargement*.³⁹² In that document the Commission argues that the enlargement was done in a democratic way because of the consent of all member governments in the Summit. However, it is a serious question how this explanation can be legitimised while some member states insist on the necessity to take Turkish issue to public vote.

Turkey is pretty reactive against the behaviour of the European politicians at this point of the process. This was reflected well when the French initiative to establish a

³⁹¹ Torreblanca, "Europe's Reasons and Turkey's Accession," 5.

³⁹² European Commission, *Myths and Facts about Enlargement* (Luxembourg Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2006).

Mediterranean Union was not seen in Ankara as a sound plan. Rather, after the general image that “Sarkozy indicated that joining such a club may be a better course for Turkey to follow than joining the EU,” it has been perceived as a trap. It became possible for Turkey to participate in the project only after the assurances from other member states and the Commission about the plan that it is “not directed against Turkey, nor is it aimed at diverting the focus away from Turkey’s EU accession talks.”³⁹³

This physiological situation is also reflected in declarations of Turkish leaders. As a reaction to special partnership offers, Tayyip Erdoğan, then Turkish prime minister, claimed that no country, except Turkey, “has ever been offered a conditional or a special membership, or a conditional or special negotiation period.” These types of behaviours, he continued, are perceived by Turkey as “ugly” ones.³⁹⁴

Turks are assured by officials from the highest levels that “there will be no new conditions.”³⁹⁵ What Turkish representatives asked from their EU counterparts is to respect the basic principle of international law, as has been said by German Chancellor Angela Merkel who is also against Turkish membership: *pacta sunt servanda*. As mentioned by a Swedish diplomat, “anyone who ignores this principle with regard to Turkey loses political credibility and flouts official EU policy.”³⁹⁶ Turkey also draws attention to the fact that although it is argued that the Union’s absorption capacity has always been relevant, the report on the EU’s capacity to

³⁹³ *Euractiv*, “Commission further waters down Med Union proposal,” 21 May 2008.

³⁹⁴ Susan Sachs, “Turkey Insists on Equal Terms in European Union,” *The New York Times*, 3 October 2004.

³⁹⁵ Romano Prodi, “Speech of the President of the European Commission”.

³⁹⁶ Ingmar Karlsson, Consul General of Sweden, “Turkey’s Cultural and Religious Heritage— An Asset to the European Union,” *CEPS Turkey in Europe Monitor*, no. 10, (October 2004): 2-4.

integrate new members came only in 2006.³⁹⁷

Turkish side consistently emphasised the importance of keeping the goal of full membership firmly in place is essential to “keep the reform process alive.” Thus, it criticised the EU for slowing down the negotiations. In a press conference, then Foreign Minister Ali Babacan asked why the technical reports on 11 of the 35 negotiating chapter were not completed by the Commission.³⁹⁸

Another criticism from Turkey is the double-standard applied by the Union in terms of membership criteria. The argument follows that the Union actors and public is closely monitoring the developments and the reforms process in Turkey. The conditionality principle is strictly applied in Turkish case. However, the EU is criticised for not showing the same sensitivity and not really caring about the fulfilment of the membership criteria in the last enlargement wave. It is believed that the Union accepted those countries with political decisions. The decisions to close the negotiation chapter often seemed to be arbitrary.³⁹⁹

The latest developments in Bulgaria proved that these arguments are not baseless. Although high attention is paid on criticising Turkey and problems about implementations, the real crisis came in 2008 from Bulgaria, a member state, which was punished for wasting the Union funds with corruption. Commission spokesman, Johannes Laitenberger, did not hesitate from saying that “the fight against high-level corruption and organised crime is not producing enough results” in Bulgaria.

³⁹⁷ See European Commission, “Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2006 – 2007, Including annexed special report on the EU's capacity to integrate new members,” COM (2006) 649 (8 November 2006).

³⁹⁸ *Today's Zaman*, “EU urges reform, Babacan wants membership commitment,” 28 May 2008.

³⁹⁹ Katinka Barysch, “Some Advice for Turkey,” *Center for European Reform Bulletin*, 1 December 2005.

Commission Report on Bulgaria confessed that “institutions and procedures look good on paper but do not produce good results in practice.”⁴⁰⁰

Transparency International's 2012 Corruption Perceptions Index gathered views on 176 countries worldwide. According to this global survey based on expert opinion, Greece is perceived to have the most corrupt public sector of all EU countries, mainly due to the country's continuing economic turmoil and widespread tax evasion. The Index also revealed that Turkey has a much better score in terms of public sector transparency than EU countries like Italy, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria and Greece.⁴⁰¹ While majority of Eurozone countries states were failing to stay within the confines of the Maastricht criteria and were thrown into economic turmoil, Turkey enjoyed both a balanced budget and a healthy environment for investment.⁴⁰²

What Makes Turkey’s Negotiations Different and Harder?

Turkey’s EU membership negotiation process has attracted unprecedented level of attention all around the world. Thus, it has been subject to “lively, heated and sometimes acrimonious” debates.⁴⁰³ Even those who are not really interested in EU related issues are keen to talk about Turkey-EU relations. Because of the popularity of the issue, it became almost impossible to escape from emotional and ideational perspectives. This negotiation process is no more an issue that is dealt only by European and Turkish bureaucrats. Rather, it is something that even ordinary

⁴⁰⁰ *BBC News*, “EU suspends funding for Bulgaria,” 23 July 2008. Also see, *The Economist*, “Bulgarian corruption: Brussels busts Bulgaria,” 17 July 2008; *Euractiv*, “Keeping EU money away from the mafia,” 18 July 2008.

⁴⁰¹ Transparency International, *Corruption Perceptions Index CPI*, 2012.

⁴⁰² Erdal Tanas Karagöl, “The EU Debt Crisis and Economic Growth in Turkey,” *SETA*, 26 October 2012.

⁴⁰³ Elie Podeh, “The Final Fall of the Ottoman Empire: Arab Discourse over Turkey’s Accession to the European Union,” *Turkish Studies* 8, no. 3 (September 2007): 317.

citizens are used to hear or read on the news.

Turkey's negotiation process is different and more problematic than the previous ones. It took less than one year after the start of the negotiations for the Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn to warn the parties about a potential "train crash."⁴⁰⁴ Contrary to the formal discourse, the process is much more than a technical procedure. Although, post-9/11 social environment provided some arguments for supporting Turkey's EU membership in interest calculations, it also created considerable obstacles at the same time by being source of the fear and confusion in the minds and hearts of Europeans. This has been reflected well in the fact that "the more Europeans have begun to see Islam as an existential threat in post-September 11 era, the more they tend to define Turkey as one of the potential 'others' of the EU's emerging identity."⁴⁰⁵

Although the opposition in Turkey towards EU membership is a factor in determining the pace of negotiations, it is not what makes Turkish membership different than others. Because, the character of that opposition is not too much different than what can be observed in other candidate countries. On the other hand, the real challenge comes from the scale of opposition in the EU against Turkish membership, which is unprecedented in the enlargement history.

The reasons behind the difficulties in the negotiation process are mainly based on identity and interest discourses among Europeans that are shaped within the changing international context. Non-material factors play a considerable role even in those cases that might be argued to be material factors such as geographical location

⁴⁰⁴ *Deutsche Welle*, "EU Warns Turkey to Step Up Reforms to Avoid Train Crash," 4 October 2006.

⁴⁰⁵ Oğuzlu, "Middle Easternization of Turkey's Foreign Policy," 13.

or Turkey's big population. The debates on the borders of the Union or the debates about the labour force requirements of Europe in the future show the importance of constructivist perspective in understanding such issues. As mentioned by Antonio Missiroli, "it is extremely difficult to base the debate [about Turkey] on an objective assessment" because of the fact that "where one stands depends on what one sees" in this case. Turkey's characteristics like its population, size, and geographical location are perceived as "strategic assets" by some, while they are seen as "structural liabilities" by others.⁴⁰⁶

There are various arguments used by those who oppose a potential Turkish membership. Its identity, geographical location, religion, culture, large and agricultural population come among the most popular ones. However, the tension in the debates dramatically increased when the opposition about Turkey's EU membership became based on arguments with religious and civilisational basis. It is generally argued that economy or any other material criteria will not be the real concern in deciding about Turkey's full membership. This argument is supported with the relative success of Turkey about these criteria. Very few Europeans can deny the fact that Turkey's situation, in measurable material terms, is similar to the two newcomers in the Union, namely Bulgaria and Romania, and at least as good as Spain and Portugal when they applied.⁴⁰⁷

Thus, emotional, identity-related and civilisational arguments seem to dominate the opposition against Turkey's EU membership. For instance, former French president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing argues that "Turkey's capital is not in Europe; 95 per cent

⁴⁰⁶ Antonio Missiroli, "Foreword," in Amanda Akçakoca, "EU-Turkey relations 43 years on: train crash or temporary derailment?" *EPC Issue Paper*, no.50 (November 2006): 5-6.

⁴⁰⁷ Norman Barry, "Turkey and the European Union," *Today's Zaman*, 30 January 2007.

of its population lives outside Europe; it is not a European country.”⁴⁰⁸ However, his real concern is the identity and Muslim population of Turkey. Although Turkey is officially accepted by the Union to “sufficiently” share the European values that are described in Article 6(1) of TEU before, some Europeans like Edmund Stoiber, the Bavarian prime minister, believe that “Turkey is not part of Europe’s community of values,”⁴⁰⁹ without mentioning what these values are. Looking at these examples, many commentators believe that there is at least a certain amount of hostility to Turkey in some EU member countries.⁴¹⁰

The reasons for objections have sometimes become harsh as in the example of Dutch European commissioner, Frits Bolkestein, who warned that Turkey’s membership will mean “the Islamisation of Europe” without hesitating to claim that it will mean “the relief of Vienna in 1683 will have been in vain.”⁴¹¹ For Turkish public, nothing can be more awkward than using this argument to oppose Turkey’s membership to a Union that arose from the ashes of the most brutal war the world has ever seen. This shows a lack of understanding even at commissioner level about the logic behind the establishment of the Union on the basis of cooperation of two recent enemies, namely France and Germany.

One interesting argument of those who oppose Turkish membership like Wolfgang Schauble, deputy head of the CDU/CSU group in German Bundestag, is that Europe has made a crucial mistake by “postpon[ing] for too long a discussion about the

⁴⁰⁸ Quoted in Anthony Browne, “We can strengthen Brussels, says Turkey,” *The Times*, 5 March 2004.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ See Norman Barry, “Turkey and the European Union.”

⁴¹¹ Quoted in *The Spectator*, “Open the gates of Vienna,” 18 September 2004. Also see, Ian Traynor, “In 1683 Turkey was the Invader, in 2004 Much of Europe Still Sees It That Way,” *The Guardian*, 22 September 2004.

ultimate limits of EU extension and about the meaning of European identity.”⁴¹²

Although David Phillips criticises him in the same article for reflecting the view of Europe’s older generation, Schauble asserts that Europe should stop lying to Turkey and be “honest” enough to say that it will never be a full member.⁴¹³ This perspective is well reflected by a speech of another CDU member in the Bundestag who claimed they are the honest ones by saying Turkey can only have a privileged partnership, while SDU is giving wrong hopes (or lying) to Turkey about full membership.

Turkish public is becoming increasingly indignant towards the EU because of the perception that Europeans are not keeping their promises and applying double-standards against Turkey. This anger is making it harder for the government to introduce reforms and slowing down the negotiation process. This point is emphasised by European Commission Vice-President Günter Verheugen, in an interview when he warned that “Europe is sending Turkey almost exclusively negative signals.” He continued that “we are focusing on the weaknesses of the country and not encouraging them to change. This is feeding a reluctance to make the reforms we are asking for, which in turn leads Europe to the view that the Turks simply can’t manage it.” According to him, this “is a dangerous spiral that threatens to lead to a global political failure of the highest order.”⁴¹⁴

Like many other analysts Amanda Akcakoca observes that “the national consensus on Europe is fading away, with every reform being portrayed as a concession to the

⁴¹² Wolfgang Schauble, “A Still-European Union” in Wolfgang Schauble and David L. Phillips, “Talking Turkey,” *Foreign Affairs* (November/December 2004), <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/europe/2004-11-01/talking-turkey> (Accessed 14/02/2013).

⁴¹³ Ibid.

⁴¹⁴ Günter Verheugen, interview in *Bild am Sonntag*, 8 October 2006 cited in *EUobserver*, “Verheugen defends Turkey’s EU membership,” 9 October 2006.

Union.”⁴¹⁵ For those in Turkey who oppose EU membership, the main reasons are fears about losing sovereignty, territorial integrity or Turkish culture/religion, the belief that Europeans hate Turks and ‘they play with us’ perception. Some also think that Brussels is much far away to Turks and some do not see a desirable future in the Union.

This situation is exploited by some Turkish politicians in order to block the reforms leading to EU membership. Many of them blame foreigners including Europeans for Turkey’s own problems and mistakes. Many tend to picture reforms as concessions to Europeans. Many others seem to forget that it is Turkey who applied for membership and use some European politicians’ attitudes as a reason to oppose introducing reforms that are in the interest of Turkey.

According to Gerard Delanty, identities can be constructed in two ways. First, they can be constructed on a sense of belongingness and solidarity arising out of shared lives. This type of construction is apparently dominant in European public and political rhetoric. However, there is a second way of construction, which is generally overlooked in European case. In this latter type;

...the ‘We’ is defined not by reference to a framework of shared experiences, common goals and a collective horizon, but by the negation of the Other. Identification takes place through the imposition of otherness in the formation of a binary typology of ‘Us’ and ‘Them’. The purity and stability of the ‘We’ is guaranteed first in the naming, then in the demonisation and finally, in the cleansing of otherness...The defining characteristic of the group is not what

⁴¹⁵ Amanda Akçakoca, “EU-Turkey relations 43 years on: train crash or temporary derailment?” *EPC Issue Paper*, no.50 (November 2006): 16.

members have in common but in what separates them from other groups.⁴¹⁶

As has been put by Necip Yıldırım from Uludağ University, Turks have been the relative other for Europe for long periods of time in the history. Since Ottoman Empire had been the main bearer of Islam for centuries, the words ‘Turk’ and ‘Muslim’ have been used interchangeably by the Europeans.⁴¹⁷

Peggy Heller from University of King’s College, Canada, points out this construction process by saying, “Europeans increasingly came to describe themselves as Western during the rapid modernisation in the nineteenth century due, in part, to their perception of essential differences between Western Europe and whatever part of Europe was deemed Eastern, including the Russian Empire, the Balkans and the Ottoman Empire.”⁴¹⁸ The conflicts in these regions were called in England and elsewhere in Europe as the ‘Eastern Question’.⁴¹⁹ Thus, the European idea of Ottoman Turkey as Eastern contributed to its idea of itself as Western.⁴²⁰

According to Paul Blokker and Gerard Delanty, one specific form of identification of Europe became “widely shared among European elites” after the end of Cold War. This identification is mainly based on “reassertion of the age-old idea of Europe as representing a specific, European civilisation grounded in the Occidental, Judaeo-Christian legacies of Europe,” with special “emphasis is on Christian Europe and Europe as the bastion of Western Christianity.” This identification inevitably causes “a more binary (and age-old) understanding [that] sets up Christian Europe

⁴¹⁶ Gerard Delanty, *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity, Reality* (Palgrave: Macmillan, 1995): 5.

⁴¹⁷ Necip Yildirim, “If I were European Union,” *Turkey Tribune*, 7 February 2013.

⁴¹⁸ Peggy Heller, “The Russian Dawn: How Russia contributed to the emergence of ‘West’ as a concept,” in Christopher S. Browning and Marko Lehti, (eds.), *The Struggle for the West: A Divided and Contested Legacy* (London: Routledge, 2010): 36.

⁴¹⁹ Marry Anne Perkins, *Christendom and European Identity: the Legacy of a Grand Narrative since 1789* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004): 287.

⁴²⁰ Heller, “The Russian Dawn,” 36.

against the Islamic Orient (currently mostly taking the guise of Turkey).”⁴²¹ In her popular textbook on the European Union, Desmond Dinan emphasises this point by saying, “Although Western Europeans had legitimate economic and political reasons to doubt Turkey’s suitability in the foreseeable future, many were motivated primarily by anti-Muslim prejudice. All could hide behind the excuse of deep-rooted Greek hostility toward Turkey.”⁴²²

Swedish diplomat Ingmar Karlsson claims that if Turkey is rejected on cultural or religious basis, it can easily be argued that Greece should have been kept out for its Eastern Orthodox religion, or “semi-Orientals” like Romanians and Bulgarians should not have been accepted, or Albanians and Bosnians should be forced to be the outsiders forever. She adds that this will be a serious message to Muslims already residing in the Union that they are “second-class citizens.”⁴²³

In Ludger Kühnhardt’s words, “it would constitute a blatant betrayal of trust if Turkey’s orientation towards Europe and European promises to Turkey were refused by the EU itself.” He emphasises at this point that the core of European credibility, namely “honesty,” should not be demolished by the EU itself.⁴²⁴

The time for Europeans to discuss the Europeanness of Turkey was when Turkey applied for association agreement in 1959. According to Article 237 of *Treaty Establishing the European Economic Community* (1957), “Any European State may

⁴²¹ Paul Blokker and Gerard Delanty, “European Identity, post-Western Europe and complex cultural diversity,” in Christopher S. Browning and Marko Lehti (eds.), *The Struggle for the West: A Divided and Contested Legacy* (London: Routledge, 2010): 122.

⁴²² Dinan, *Ever Closer Union*, 156.

⁴²³ Ingmar Karlsson, Consul General of Sweden, “Turkey’s Cultural and Religious Heritage– An Asset to the European Union,” *CEPS Turkey in Europe Monitor*, no. 10 (October 2004): 3.

⁴²⁴ Ludger Kühnhardt, “Turkey’s Capability to Become Member of the EU,” *ZEI EU-Turkey-Monitor* 1, no. 1 (October 2005): 3.

apply to become a member of the Community.”⁴²⁵ By accepting Turkey’s application all EEC members unanimously declared that Turkey is a European country.

Since “European identity” of the applicant country is important for the Union, this condition was openly expressed in Treaty on European Union (TEU) as well. According to Article 49 of Treaty on European Union (Maastricht Treaty, 1992), any European State which respects the principles set out in Article 6(1) TEU may apply to become a member of the European Union. Article 6 (1) describes these principles as those of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law, principles which are common to the Member States.⁴²⁶

The Union had another chance to discuss Turkey’s ‘Europeanness’ in 1987, when Turkey applied for full membership. Again the EU member states accepted that Turkey is eligible for application. The EU members declared that Turkey was eligible contrary to countries like Morocco that was rejected for not being a European country. After the formal candidacy in 1999 and opening of negotiation process in 2005, it is not possible for Turkish side to understand this questioning any

⁴²⁵ Article 237 is as follows: “Any European State may apply to become a member of the Community. It shall address its application to the Council which, after obtaining the opinion of the Commission, shall act by means of a unanimous vote. The conditions of admission and the amendments to this Treaty necessitated thereby shall be the subject of an agreement between the Member States and the applicant State. Such agreement shall be submitted to all the contracting States for ratification in accordance with their respective constitutional rules.” (Treaty Establishing the European Economic Community, 1957).

⁴²⁶ Article 49 is as follows: “Any European State which respects the principles set out in Article 6(1) may apply to become a member of the Union. It shall address its application to the Council, which shall act unanimously after consulting the Commission and after receiving the assent of the European Parliament, which shall act by an absolute majority of its component members. The conditions of admission and the adjustments to the Treaties on which the Union is founded, which such admission entails, shall be the subject of an agreement between the Member States and the applicant State. This agreement shall be submitted for ratification by all the contracting States in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements.” (Treaty on European Union, 1992).

more.

For many Turks, adopting EU *acquis* is a serious commitment and it can be done only with partners, which do not keep questioning Turkey's identity each and every year again and again in spite of all previous declarations.

“Islamist” AK Party?

For almost all analyses on AK Party-led Turkey, Islam is accepted as an inseparable and generally the most preponderant element of Turkish identity. This approach gained more popularity after the end of Cold War and reached its peak with AK Party governments. One of the first controversial examples was Huntington's highly debated and cited work *The Clash of Civilizations*, which depicts the hegemonic description of Turkish identity as a Muslim state. In his words, Turkey is “historically the most obvious and prototypical torn country” that “rejected Mecca” and that is “rejected by Brussels.”⁴²⁷ He is confident that Turkey will not become a member of the Christian EU because of its Muslim identity.

At this point, the important role of the international context, which has seen the rise of Islamophobia, on how inferences are drawn from this “Islamist” label should be mentioned. This concept has become a keyword to define anything that is from the Muslim world. For instance, BBC's usage of the title “Islamist” as the single adjective to define different actors within the very same week ranges from Egypt's

⁴²⁷ Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?,” *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 42.

President Mohammed Morsi⁴²⁸ to Somalia's Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys (considered a terrorist by the UN and the United States)⁴²⁹, from a 'militant network' in Germany⁴³⁰ to 'Al-Qaeda-linked militants' in Syria⁴³¹ and the rebels ousted by France from Northern Mali⁴³², from Afghanistan's Taliban⁴³³ to Erdoğan and AK Party.⁴³⁴

Ihsan Dağı from Middle East Technical University in Ankara defines AK Party leaders as post-Islamists, as those who have Islamic views but do not prescribe construction of an Islamic society by means of state power.⁴³⁵ Yet, among many others, Katerina Dalacoura from London School of Economics and Political Science claims that AK Party "does have sufficient links with Islamism as a political ideology to merit considering it as an Islamist party." Thus, she rejects the term 'post-Islamism,' since she believes this concept assumes that "Islamist liberalism" is an oxymoron" in the sense that "once liberal and democratic values have been incorporated within it, Islamism has been 'transcended'."⁴³⁶

A lifestyles survey conducted by the KONDA market research company found that 9.7% of Turks consider themselves to be 'fully devout', while 52.8% would describe themselves as a 'religious person who strives to fulfil religious obligations'. On the other hand, 34.3% are 'believers who do not fulfil religious obligations', while 2.3% say they do not believe in religious obligations and 0.9% of the population are

⁴²⁸ *BBC News*, "Egypt protest: Crowds gather for big anti-Morsi rally," 30 June 2013.

⁴²⁹ *BBC News*, "Top Somali Islamist flown to Mogadishu 'after split'," 29 June 2013.

⁴³⁰ *BBC News*, "German police reported to have raided Islamist network," 25 June 2013.

⁴³¹ *BBC News*, by Jim Muir, "Syria sides head for neither victory nor defeat," 25 June 2013.

⁴³² *BBC News*, "Mali displaced reluctant to go home," 24 June 2013.

⁴³³ *BBC News*, by Frank Gardner, "Qatar: A country of seemingly ironic contrasts," 30 June 2013.

⁴³⁴ *BBC News*, "Turkey profile," 25 June 2013.

⁴³⁵ Ihsan Dagi, "Rethinking Human Rights, Democracy, and the West: Post-Islamist Intellectuals in Turkey," *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies* 13, no.2 (Summer 2004): 135-136.

⁴³⁶ Katerina Dalacoura, *Islamist Terrorism and Democracy in the Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011): 148.

atheist.⁴³⁷

The arguments that are shown as proofs of Islamisation under AK Party rule necessitate closer look instead of being taken for granted. For instance, one of the few examples depicted as a sign of Islamisation in the hands of AK Party government is the attempt to increase the legal restrictions about purchase and consumption of alcohol in Turkey has been. However, some countries that cannot be described as “Islamist” already have tighter restrictions for alcohol usage than Turkey, where existing laws set 18 as the minimum legal age for buying and consuming alcohol. For instance, minimum age limit is 20 in countries like Japan and Iceland, and 21 in United States.⁴³⁸ Some U.S. States have legislation that make providing to and possession of alcohol by persons under 21 a “gross misdemeanor” with a potential punishment of \$5,000 and a year in jail (or more).⁴³⁹

During the height of Gezi Park incidents, the sale of alcohol was forbidden around the areas where there were tense clashes between the police and the protestors, in order to help establishing public order. In her infamous interview with Chief Adviser to Prime Minister Erdoğan İbrahim Kalın, *CNN*'s Christian Amanpour was interestingly relating this measure to “theocracy” by saying: “I need to ask you about the alcohol issue. Because that does worry a lot of Turkey’s young, secular people, who used to be able to have a beer in Taksim Square. Why has this measure

⁴³⁷ Cited in Ben Cooper, "Focus - Turkey Facing Tighter Restrictions on Alcohol," *Just-Drinks*, 19 July 2011, http://www.just-drinks.com/analysis/focus-turkey-facing-tighter-restrictions-on-alcohol_id104478.aspx (Accessed 03/08/2013).

⁴³⁸ International Center for Alcohol Policies ICAP, "Minimum Age Limits Worldwide," <http://www.icap.org/Table/MinimumAgeLimitsWorldwide> (Accessed 04/08/2013).

⁴³⁹ Washington State Legislature, "RCW 66.44.270; Furnishing liquor to minors - Possession, use - Penalties -Exhibition of effects - Exceptions," State of Washington, <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=66.44.270> (Accessed 04/08/2013).

been passed? People are worried about a creeping theocracy.”⁴⁴⁰ It is a mystery if she could have asked the same question if she was simply reminded that “alcohol is prohibited in [New York City’s] Central Park [at all times]... to ensure that everyone can enjoy the Park safely.”⁴⁴¹

Yet, some observers like Fadi Hakura of the Chatham House think-tank still believe that “the current government in Turkey is an Islamic-rooted, socially conservative government which is implementing a socially conservative agenda, and part of that agenda is increasing restrictions on alcohol.”

Erdogan’s views on alcohol and gender politics give credence to fears that his aim is to transform Turkey into a fully-fledged Islamic state. However, while there have been concerns that he has become increasingly autocratic and intolerant of dissent, he is also considered to be a pragmatist. The degree to which he tightens alcohol regulation may therefore be determined more by a tactical judgment on his part.⁴⁴²

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan insists that strong alcohol restrictions are necessary to protect Turkish youth as has been ordered in Turkish Constitution and have nothing to do with alleged religious sentiments of his party.⁴⁴³ Indeed Article 58 of *The Constitution of The Republic of Turkey* says: “The state shall take necessary measures to protect the youth from addiction to alcohol, drug addiction, crime, gambling, and similar vices, and ignorance.”

⁴⁴⁰ Christiane Amanpour’s Live Interview with İbrahim Kalm, *CNN*, 11 June 2013.

⁴⁴¹ Official Website of New York City’s Central Park, "Rules & Regulations," <http://www.centralparknyc.org/about/park-information/rules-and-regulations.html> (Accessed 04/08/2013).

⁴⁴² Cooper, “Focus - Turkey Facing Tighter Restrictions on Alcohol”.

⁴⁴³ Benjamin Harvey, “Erdogan Defends Revised Alcohol Curbs in Turkey, Hurriyet Says,” *Bloomberg*, 27 January 2011.

In the next chapter, negative representation of AK Party in the mainstream western media in cooperation with Turkish mainstream media is analysed by taking Gezi Park incidents as a case. It is claimed that this negative representation was important in shaping the possibilities for Turkey-EU relations negatively. Moreover, it is argued that power relations in the media determine a specific dominant discourse that discriminates against a specific Other. “The role of media in demonizing certain Others”⁴⁴⁴ is underlined in that respect.

**NEGOTIATIONS HIT THE ROCK BOTTOM:
WESTERN MAINSTREAM MEDIA AND POLITICAL DISCOURSE ON AK
PARTY DURING GEZI PARK PROTESTS & AFTERWARDS**

On 20 June 2013, in the wake of Ankara's crackdown on mass demonstrations in Taksim Square, Germany blocked the start to new EU accession talks with Turkey and put reservations about proceeding with the regional policy chapter of EU membership talks, which would be the first chapter to be opened in three years. An EU diplomat was saying “Germany was simply not ready to give its support. The ongoing protests obviously had an impact on the decision.”⁴⁴⁵

The prospects for Turkey's EU membership are looking bleaker than ever now, as is the representation of Erdoğan and AK Party in the mainstream western media. Turkey's relatively independent foreign policy choices and domestic developments

⁴⁴⁴ Michael Welch, “Foreword,” in George Morgan and Scott Poynting (eds.), *Global Islamophobia: Muslims and Moral Panic in the West* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2012): xi.

⁴⁴⁵ Daniel Dombey, James Fontanella-Khan and Quentin Peel, "Germany blocks Turkey's bid to join EU," *Financial Times*, 20 June 2013.

that started with Gezi Park protests and continued during the power struggle between Turkish government and Gülen Movement made things worse.

This chapter focuses on how mainstream media discourses and narratives function, how they shape and fix meaning in a way that excludes alternative views and alienates certain groups. Despite the new communicative opportunities presented by mediums like social media, mainstream media remains the key site of discourses with significant media power over discourses that represent and shape western societies. The analysis of language in mainstream media is “an important element within the research on contemporary processes of social and cultural change.”⁴⁴⁶ The mainstream media has an important role in influencing identity and policy narratives that are dominant among public and elites. The term ‘mainstream’ here roughly denotes the most widely circulated print media as well as the most heavily trafficked online media. It is not meant to carry a value-based connotation.

Many EU countries and EU bodies have increased their criticisms about the AK Party government and its leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan during and after Gezi Park protests. Political leaders from various EU member states are much more frank in their opposition to Turkey’s EU membership by saying that a country like Turkey is not and/or cannot be part of Europe.⁴⁴⁷

In a continuous interaction process, Turkish government’s discourse has shown a parallel downturn in terms of Turkey’s EU membership prospects. For instance, in his statement that marked Turkey’s first high-level acknowledgement that its decades-long bid for membership may never be successful, Egemen Bağış, Minister

⁴⁴⁶ Norman Fairclough, *Media Discourse* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995): 2.

⁴⁴⁷ For instance, German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble cited in *Russia Today*, “Turkey may ‘never be EU member’ – Ankara negotiator,” 22 September 2013.

of EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator at the time, said Turkey will probably never become a member of the European Union because of stiff opposition and “prejudiced” attitudes from the bloc’s current members.⁴⁴⁸ Haluk Ilıcak, Turkey’s undersecretary of the Ministry of EU Affairs reflected mental preparations for the possibility of ultimate failure in negotiations by saying “The process means more than the accession. Once the necessary levels are achieved, Turkey is big enough to continue its development without the accession.”⁴⁴⁹

Public opinions show a similar trend. According to the “Transatlantic Trends 2013” public opinion survey released by the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF), the desire of Turks to join the European Union has cooled considerably over the past decade and only 44% of Turkish respondents favoured joining the European Union in 2013, down from 73% in 2004. 34%, up from 9% in 2004, said that it would be bad for Turkey to join the EU. Citizens of EU member states are much less enthusiastic about Turkey’s EU membership, since only 20% of EU respondents said that Turkey’s accession would be good, while 33% said it would be bad and 37% said that it would be neither good nor bad.⁴⁵⁰

Contrary to the official discourse, Turkey’s membership negotiation process is much more than a technical procedure that is dealt only by European and Turkish bureaucrats. This thesis rejects the analyses, which assume that membership negotiations have opened or halted upon objective cost-benefit calculations of rational actors. It argues that, alongside other factors like the performance of Turkish

⁴⁴⁸ Cited in Alex Spillius, "Turkey 'will probably never be EU member'," *The Telegraph*, 21 September 2013.

⁴⁴⁹ Haluk Ilıcak, His speech at the conference of the Turkish Ministry of EU Affairs, İstanbul, 7 June 2013.

⁴⁵⁰ The German Marshall Fund of the United States, "Transatlantic Trends: Key Findings 2013," 46.

government, AK Party's positive representation in the western mainstream media within the immediate post-9/11 social context provided an environment for supporting Turkey's EU membership in European identity and interest discourses (as will be analysed in the preceding chapter). Moreover, changing conditions and representations became part of considerable obstacles for Turkey's membership later on by producing sources of fear and confusion in the minds and hearts of Europeans. This has been reflected well in the fact that "the more Europeans have begun to see Islam as an existential threat in post-September 11 era, the more they tend to define Turkey as one of the potential 'others' of the EU's emerging identity."⁴⁵¹ Later on, 'autocracy' allegations about Erdoğan, who seems to have the political power to rule Turkey in the foreseeable near future, have created a scarier blend. The representation of AK Party and its leader in the western media has played a key role in this discursive interaction and change.

"Islamist" has become the single dominant adjective used for AK Party, Erdoğan and Davutoğlu lately, especially with the downfall of Turkey-EU relations and the increase of active foreign policy choices of AK Party government that are relatively more independent from its traditional western allies. Personal attacks against Erdoğan have become more common firstly in the pro-Israeli and neo-con segments of the western media. For instance, *Bloomberg View* columnist and *The Atlantic's* national correspondent Jeffrey Goldberg, who was named as "the most influential journalist/blogger on matters related to Israel"⁴⁵² by *Columbia Journalism Review* contributing editor Michael Massing, has said that: "It's time to call Turkish Prime

⁴⁵¹ Oğuzlu, "Middle Easternization of Turkey's Foreign Policy," 13.

⁴⁵² Michael Massing, "The News About the Internet", *New York Book Review* 56: 13, 13 August 2009, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2009/aug/13/the-news-about-the-internet> (Accessed 12/03/2012).

Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan what he is: a semi-unhinged bigot."⁴⁵³ Gideon Rachman, the chief foreign affairs commentator for the Financial Times was joining the group by saying "I'm beginning to think Erdogan may actually be quite stupid."⁴⁵⁴

Especially after the anti-government Gezi Park protests in 2013, it has become much more commonplace in the mainstream western media to call Erdoğan *autocrat*⁴⁵⁵ and even *dictator*.⁴⁵⁶ There has been close relationship and even cooperation between domestic anti-government groups and considerable number of authors in the western media to enhance this representation of Erdoğan.⁴⁵⁷ His policies like banning Twitter until it recognises Turkish court decisions, while emphasising that he does not care what others (especially western media) would say about him, accelerated this trend.⁴⁵⁸ This was followed by the widespread criticisms in the mainstream Western media about increasing number of AK Party supporters for not seeing the *reality*(!) and “rewarding” Erdoğan for his wrongdoings. In addition,

⁴⁵³ Jeffrey Goldberg, "Turkey's Erdogan: A Smart Man with Jews on the Brain," *Bloomberg View*, 21 August 2013.

⁴⁵⁴ Gideon Rachman, His official Twitter account @gideonrachman, 20 August 2013.

⁴⁵⁵ *Washington Post*, Editorial, "Prime Minister Erdogan's strongman response to Turkey's protests," 3 June 2013.

⁴⁵⁶ Robert Fisk, "Has Recep Tayyip Erdogan gone from model Middle East 'strongman' to tin-pot dictator?" *The Independent*, 10 April 2014; Fulya Ozerkan, "Erdogan Says 'I'm No Dictator'... But Is He?" *Agence France Presse*, 6 March 2013.

⁴⁵⁷ Among many examples, Simon Tisdall, "Recep Tayyip Erdogan: Turkey's elected sultan or an Islamic democrat?" *The Guardian*, 24 October 2012; Simon Tisdall, "Turkish opposition leader condemns 'dictator' Erdogan," *The Guardian*, 15 February 2013; *Today's Zaman*, "Erdoğan will become 'dictator' with de facto presidential system," 4 May 2014; *Press TV*, "Erdogan Turkey's 'new dictator': Republican People's Party leader," 31 July 2014.

⁴⁵⁸ For instance, Chris Taylor, "Dear Dictators: Yes, Please Try to Block Twitter," *Mashable*, 21 March 2014; Andy Kessler, "The Autocrat-and-Mouse Censorship Game" *The Wall Street Journal*, 2 April 2014; Jonathan S. Tobin, "Twitter and Turkey's Slide into Dictatorship," *Commentary*, 21 March 2014.

political tactics were provided for Erdoğan's critics to beat him up in the next elections.⁴⁵⁹

While Erdoğan's long-time opponents are welcoming this change by claiming that "western depictions of Turkish politics have finally begun to catch up with the authoritarian reality,"⁴⁶⁰ Merve Şebnem Oruç from *Daily Sabah* summarises this radical change in Erdoğan's representation in the Western media discourses by saying:

"Almost all the stories on Turkish politics penned by Western or West-obsessed Turkish writers start with the same cliché: "Once upon a time, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was a moderate, successful, exemplary Islamist democrat. Oh, we loved him so much. When the Arab Spring spread, many pointed to Erdoğan-led Turkey as a model for guiding the transformation of the Middle East. But those days are over. Suddenly - yes, suddenly - Erdoğan became an autocrat - no wait, he became more evil: a dictator. He became "the dark one" in the Middle East. He somehow ruined the country; now, Turkey is a mess. And it all started with the holy Gezi Park." Their code is simple, actually."⁴⁶¹

What Happened in Gezi Park?

As has been mentioned earlier, Turkish general election held in 2002 was named by many writers as a political earthquake. Just after its election victory, Justice and Development Party's (AK Party) identity and its possible performance in

⁴⁵⁹ Bloomberg View, "Turkey's Erdoğan Tightens His Grip," *Bloomberg Businessweek*, 3 April 2014.

⁴⁶⁰ Erik Meyersson and Dani Rodrik, "Erdogan's Coup," *Foreign Affairs*, 26 May 2014.

⁴⁶¹ Merve Şebnem Oruç, "How Has Erdoğan Suddenly Gone From Role Model to Dictator?" *Daily Sabah*, 14 April 2014.

government have been subjects of fierce debates both at home and abroad. Surprising developments like Arab Spring and unprecedented factors like Israeli-Turkish hostility complicated the already hot debate on AK Party-led Turkey's identity and foreign policy destination. Identity debates concerning AK Party-led Turkey have fluctuated within a wide spectrum of labels, including but not limited to European, Middle Eastern, Asian, Eurasian and/or Muslim. Unexpected turmoil caused by so-called Taksim protests became a fruitful case for observing the complexity and variety of representations of AK Party and its leader. Thus, it is analysed in the coming pages with a special focus on sharp differences in competing narratives about the same event.

Turkey has been paralyzed by mass protests over the eviction of a peaceful sit-in at Istanbul's Gezi Park on 31 May 2013. The demonstrations sparked and spread to various cities around Turkey in a short period of time, and they have widened into broader protests against AK Party and specifically Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Foreign media, including but not limited to *CNN*, *BBC*, *Al Jazeera*, *France 24*, *German ZDF* and *Russia Today* showed unprecedented interest in the events, compared to previous domestic incidents in Turkey, and described them as “the biggest challenge to Erdogan and his governing Justice and Development Party during their decade in power.”⁴⁶² *CNN* broadcasted seven hour continuous live coverage to its American audience about Taksim events on 11 June 2013. At the same time, media outlets like *The Guardian* and *Associated Press* portrayed the demonstrations as “Turkey's most widespread anti-government protests in

⁴⁶² Nick Paton Walsh, Gul Tuyuz and Ben Brumfield, "Turkish riot police move in on protesters at Taksim Square," *CNN*, 11 June 2013.

decades.”⁴⁶³ From the very first day of the protests, journalists such as Richard Seymour started to talk about “a potential Turkish Spring.”⁴⁶⁴

Amid escalating tension and growing opposition, the Turkish government started a negotiation process with the representatives of the Gezi Park protesters. Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arınç met with representatives of the Taksim Platform, a solidarity group formed to oppose the planned demolition of Gezi Park in Taksim. The group listed its demands, including a decision to end the redevelopment of the park. During their press conference, committee members were asked if they would want a referendum in Istanbul over the fate of the relevant park. Ironically, the committee representative said that they don’t want referendum over the issue. They even claimed that “in developed democratic countries there cannot be a referendum held” over such an issue, and wanted the government to abide by their demands without questioning them.⁴⁶⁵ This approach clearly put “democratic demands” argument of the protestors in jeopardy. Moreover, they declared that they are also against projects of third Bridge on the Strait and third airport in İstanbul.

In the following meeting with the representatives of the protestors, the government stepped back from its initial redevelopment plan about Gezi Park and proposed a referendum on the issue. A deal with the representatives was reached on 14th of June and the government asked the protesters to evacuate the park. The protesters, who were divided over the decision of whether to stay, first announced that they would leave, but later issued another statement declaring they reject the referendum over the redevelopment plan and declared that they would “stay in the park and continue

⁴⁶³ *The Guardian*, "Istanbul riot police move in to clear Taksim Square," 11 June 2013.

⁴⁶⁴ Richard Seymour, "Istanbul park protests sow the seeds of a Turkish spring," *The Guardian*, 31 May 2013.

⁴⁶⁵ Taksim Platform, Press Conference Held in Ankara, 5 June 2013.

the resistance,” without defining any deadline or concrete aim.⁴⁶⁶ Upon this decision, police forces evicted Taksim Square and Gezi Park on 15th of June, but protests continued in various scales elsewhere.

Many different groups of people joined these protests for different reasons and some of these people are the members of some illegal and terrorist organizations. Alongside flags of marginal far-left political parties like Turkish Communist Party (TKP) and Workers Party (İP) and their youth organisations like Turkey Youth Union (TGB), which later showed up in the western headlines by attacking American soldiers in İstanbul in November 2014.⁴⁶⁷ The Union was declaring in its statement about the incident that “The TGB members dedicated the protest to our martyrs and to the millions of innocent people slaughtered by the imperialism in the Middle East.”⁴⁶⁸

The protestors were also openly carrying signs and flags of organisations like PKK and DHKP-C, which are both recognised as terrorist organisations by Turkey, EU, USA and UK. These organisations have been involved in terror attacks against Turkish and foreign targets in the past, suicide-bombing of US Embassy in Ankara on 1 February 2013 being one of the latest incidents.

A considerable group of activists hurled fireworks, fire bombs and stones at police. Interior Minister Muammer Güler stated that within the first five days of the protests 280 workplaces, 6 public buildings, 103 police vehicles, 207 private vehicles including live broadcasting vans of news agencies, one residency, one

⁴⁶⁶ Taksim Platform, Press Release, 15 June 2013.

⁴⁶⁷ Sophia Jones, "Hypernationalist Turkish Youth Attack U.S. Sailors In Istanbul," *Huffington Post*, 12 November 2014

⁴⁶⁸ Cited in Ceylan Yeginsu, "Nationalist Youths Attack U.S. Sailors in Turkey," *New York Times*, 12 November 2014.

police station, and 12 AK Party district buildings were damaged, with a total cost over 40 million dollars.⁴⁶⁹ Moreover, vandalism of the protestors targeted international companies like *Starbucks*, which declared its concern over their personnel's safety and condemned hatred speech of protestors against the company.⁴⁷⁰ Etyen Mahçupyan, a prominent author and journalist with Armenian origin, explains the background of the protests as follows:

“To reduce the matter to errors made by the government in connection with the incidents would be a superficial explanation. Indeed, at the very heart of the incidents is the reaction by secular groups to the “lack of power” they feel in the face of being banished from the political center... The incidents were soon derailed and turned into a completely anti-government spree of violence. Hundreds of public and private vehicles were set on fire and shops were damaged or vandalized, as was the cultural center of the Greek Consulate. Aggressive groups led by neo-nationalists performed their “duties” with both flags and pavement stones in their hands. Meanwhile, many headscarved women faced harassment by protestors.”⁴⁷¹

Foreign and domestic anti-government media alongside majority of foreign analyses based their arguments on the assumption that protestors were representing all segments of Turkish society except AK Party supporters. Foreign media outlets like *The Economist* asserted that these mass protests were “the expression of the long-stifled resentment felt by nearly half of the electorate who did not vote for the ruling

⁴⁶⁹ Muammer Güler, Speech during plenary meeting, Turkish Grand National Assembly, Ankara, 4 June 2013.

⁴⁷⁰ See, Starbucks Turkey's official Twitter account @StarbucksTR, 16 June 2013.

⁴⁷¹ Etyen Mahçupyan, “From Gezi Park to politics,” *Today's Zaman*, 6 June 2013.

Justice and Development (AK) party in the June 2011 parliamentary elections.”⁴⁷²

Moreover analysts like Paul Mason from *BBC*, claimed “the breadth of social support - within the urban enclave of Istanbul - was bigger than Greece and closer to Egypt.” However, the only source of his assertion was a quote from a protestor saying "Everyone is here - except the AK Party."⁴⁷³

However, two out of three major political parties (i.e. Turkish nationalist MHP and Kurdish nationalist BDP) strictly criticised these protests and vandalism applied by these groups. If voter bases of these political parties are kept in mind (AK Party %50, MHP %13, BDP %7 in 2011 General Elections), political representatives of a decisive majority of the electorate (more than 70%) expressed their opposition to these protests. Both MHP and BDP denounced the protests and asked their followers not to participate in these events. Devlet Bahçeli, one of the hard line opponents of Erdoğan and leader of Turkish nationalist MHP said “sympathisers of PKK terrorist organisation and marginal leftist groups” provoke these protests to destabilise the country. He unequivocally refuted claims about a possible “Turkish spring,” and denounced vandalism that targeted public and private properties. Bahçeli also condemned efforts as “baseness” in the media to link MHP supporters with these protests and said that any member of MHP who wants to participate in these demonstrations should resign from the party before doing that. He also underlined that the only place to overthrow AK Party government is the ballot box, not these provocative protests.⁴⁷⁴

Selahattin Demirtaş, leader of Kurdish nationalist BDP, asserted that the protestors

⁴⁷² Charlemagne, “Resentment against Erdoğan explodes,” *The Economist*, 2 June 2013.

⁴⁷³ *BBC News*, “Turkey clashes: Erdoğan says protests 'are not Turkish Spring'” 3 June 2013.

⁴⁷⁴ Devlet Bahçeli, His Group Speech in the Turkish Parliament, 5 June 2013.

mainly aimed to sabotage the peace initiative designed to bring an end to the decades-long Kurdish insurgency. Likewise, Vice-Chairman of BDP Group in Parliament İdris Baluken noted that slogans and symbols of *status quo* have prevailed in these protests and added “we will never position ourselves side by side these racist, sexist and militarist groups under any circumstances.” According to Baluken, the protests were merely a result of revanchist feelings of those groups (mainly Kemalists) that “have been holding Turkish society under captivity for decades.”⁴⁷⁵ Indeed, as has been noted by Hugh Pope, a veteran author on Middle Eastern matters, majority of protestors were chanting “We are the soldiers of Mustafa Kemal [Ataturk].” This showed that they mainly belonged to opposition Kemalist sect.⁴⁷⁶

Likewise, Felicity Party (*Saadet Partisi*), the political representative of Nationalist View Movement as the fourth biggest opposition party after Republican People’s Party (CHP, *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*), Nationalist Movement Party (MHP, *Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*) and Peace and Democracy Party (BDP, *Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi*) condemned the provocations of “marginal groups” for “turning the streets into battlefields.” The Party published an official declaration to denounce western media for naming the events as “Turkish Spring” and announced that their supporters will never be involved in such “violent” protests that are abused by “illegal and marginal groups.”⁴⁷⁷

Public survey conducted by Andy-Ar Center for Social Research after two weeks

⁴⁷⁵ News Agencies and Newspapers, 1-3 June 2013.

⁴⁷⁶ Hugh Pope, “A ringside seat as Istanbul protests,” 1 June 2013, <http://hughpope.com/2013/06/01/a-ringside-seat-as-istanbul-protests> (Accessed 12/06/2013).

⁴⁷⁷ Felicity Party, “15 Maddelik Gezi Parkı Deklarasyonu,” [Official Declaration on Gezi Park], 5 June 2013.

from the beginning of the protests, 83% of Turkish population was not supporting continuation of the protests, while only 7% endorsed the continuation of the demonstrations (10% undecided).⁴⁷⁸ Even foreign observers who are sympathetic towards Taksim protest like Piotr Zalewski of *Time Magazine* accepted that “the protests have included mostly young leftists, environmentalists and secularists, all of them core government opponents.”⁴⁷⁹

CHP was the only major political actor that continuously supported the protests. As has been emphasised by Bekir Berat Özipek from Istanbul Ticaret University, protests were mainly in rich districts of Istanbul, where wealthy Kemalists are residing, instead of relatively poorer areas.⁴⁸⁰ Supporters of the protests in Turkey ran a full-page ad in *New York Times* to explain why the demonstrators are so angry with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his government. They initially explained their ideological background by defining themselves as “the proud inheritors of Atatürk’s legacy.”⁴⁸¹ A comprehensive survey conducted among protestors inside and outside Gezi Park by GENAR Research Center reveals that 74% of protestors were supporters of the main opposition leftist/Kemalist party CHP and 15% of protestors were supporters of socialist/Kurdish nationalist BDP. The remaining major group (6%) consisted of supporters from other left-wing parties: Turkish Communist Party, Workers Party and Democratic Left Party.⁴⁸²

⁴⁷⁸ *Türkiye*, “Gezi’den ilginç anket sonuçları,” [Interesting Survey Results about Gezi Demonstrations], 11 June 2013.

⁴⁷⁹ Piotr Zalewski, “Protests in Turkey: Will Taksim Become Erdoğan’s Tahrir Square?” *Time*, 2 June 2013.

⁴⁸⁰ Bekir Berat Özipek, TV Programme “Gündem Özel,” *ATV*, 2 June 2013.

⁴⁸¹ This phrase was included in the initial draft of the ad that has been widely distributed among protestors in the social media; yet erased from the text in the last minute before publication. *New York Times*, 6 June 2013.

⁴⁸² GENAR, *Gezi Parkı Profili*, [Profile of Gezi Park], (İstanbul, June 2013): 14.

Coalition of Supporters for the Protests

Taksim protestors received support from an interesting coalition of domestic and foreign actors with anti-AK Party leanings. As has been mentioned, a coalition of left-wing parties (including Republican People's Party, Turkish Communist Party, Workers Party and Democratic Left Party) was the main domestic driving force behind the demonstrations. Anti-government print media (including *Hürriyet*, *Sözcü*, *Milliyet*, *Aydınlık*, *Taraf*, *Cumhuriyet* and *Radikal*) has played a prominent role as well. Foreign media, including but not limited to *CNN*, *BBC*, *Al Jazeera*, *France 24*, *German ZDF* and *Russia Today* followed an identical anti-Erdoğan attitude during this process.

Decisive majority of foreign media coverage included only views from the protestors and academics/journalists/analyst that are famous for their anti-Erdoğan attitude. Erdoğan-bashing became prominent in discourses of a wide range of journalists, academics and politicians. Their comments are provided as "specialist opinion" without mentioning their ideological preferences, although most of them have expressed their support for the protests or participated in demonstrations themselves or even declared to give extra points to their students who join the demonstrators (as in the case of Professor Veysel Batmaz from İstanbul University). As James Reynolds from *BBC News* underlines, it seemed to be "tempting to conclude from the demonstrations in Taksim Square and Gezi Park that the entire country is against Turkey's Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan."⁴⁸³ Very few foreign media outlets felt the necessity to provide what those who oppose the demonstrators think. Yet, most of those few reporters interestingly preferred to

⁴⁸³ *BBC News*, James Reynolds, "Turkey protests: Erdoğan support still strong elsewhere," 5 June 2013.

interview AK Party supporters in poor areas of İstanbul, which possibly provided the suitable background for strengthening image of *modern seculars vs. backward Islamists* dichotomy in their discourse.⁴⁸⁴

There was an interesting parallelism between the publications of different media outlets that are normally clashing on all other issues. For instance, *Nasr TV* in Iran was showing its capabilities as a propaganda tool by fabricating lies, like claiming that the Turkish government was “destroying Taksim Square as a historical site and was aiming to stop revolution and progress.” Interesting coverage prepared more as a propaganda video than news reporting by *Nasr TV* was saying: “Erdoğan government does not stand for Islam; it does not stand for democracy. But, it is another pawn in the hands of the Americans.” As the strongest ally of Syria’s Assad regime, *Nasr TV* was explaining the motive behind the Taksim protests as the opposition from Turkish people to AK Party government for “working with the Americans and the Saudis and others to overthrow the government in Damascus.”⁴⁸⁵ Interestingly, commanders from Bashar al-Assad’s Syrian army published support videos for protestors, with banners saying “resisting Syrian people is shoulder to shoulder with resisting Turkish people.”⁴⁸⁶

The demonstrators were also supported by global hacker network Anonymous and Redhack, the largest Turkish Socialist hacker organisation. These groups launched cyber attacks under the title “Operation Turkey #opTurkey” against websites of Turkish Presidency, Prime Ministry, various ministries, state organisations, AK Party and some media companies like *NTV*, the most popular private TV news

⁴⁸⁴ For instance see Paul Mason, “Will gas canisters or yoga prevail in Turkish spring?” *BBC News*, 8 June 2013.

⁴⁸⁵ *Nasr TV*, “Turkey in fire and blood,” 2 June 2013.

⁴⁸⁶ *Youtube*, 7 June 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O8by1Cnbd0>.

channel in Turkey.⁴⁸⁷ Moreover, several Twitter accounts like the one owned by The U.S. Consulate in İstanbul were compromised to publish tweets supporting the protests.⁴⁸⁸

Egyptian author Fehmi Huveydi quoted Moshe Feiglin, Deputy Speaker of Israeli Parliament, saying "we are praying for protests in Turkey to continue until Erdoğan is toppled," while Former Foreign Minister Avigador Lieberman, renowned for his anti-Turkish sentiments, was saying "Turkey's domestic issues are not our business, but I cannot hide my happiness about the protests."⁴⁸⁹

In his interview with *The Voice of Russia Radio*, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, founder and the leader of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) and Vice-Chairman of the State Duma, asserted that Erdoğan's policies are not in the interest of Russia and Taksim protests are the same as The Orange Revolution that took place in Ukraine from late November 2004 to January 2005. He also claimed that "Erdoğan has no future" and called Turkish military to take control of government.⁴⁹⁰

Curiously, some wealthy families in Turkey, which have supported military interventions in the past, expressed their support for the demonstrations, although they have impressively increased their wealth during economic success story of AK Party. Koç Holding, the top industrial conglomerate owned by the Koç family as one of Turkey's wealthiest families, supported the protests. It has even called the students of Koç University to participate in the protests. Ironically Koç University

⁴⁸⁷ *AnonNews*, "Operation Turkey - Fighting the censorship taking place in Turkey," <http://anonnews.org/press/item/1005> (Accessed 24/09/2013).

⁴⁸⁸ U.S. Consulate in İstanbul declared: "A while ago our @ABDIstanbul account was compromised, now we are in control of the site." 16 June 2013.

⁴⁸⁹ *Yeni Şafak*, "İsrailin Gezi Duası: Erdoğan Düşsün," [Israel's Prayer: Erdoğan be Toppled], 10 June 2013.

⁴⁹⁰ *The Voice of Russia Radio*, "Zhirinovski: Erdoğan'ın geleceği yok," [Zhirinovskiy: Erdoğan has no future], 6 June 2013.

campus has been built on forestland in İstanbul by cutting tens of thousands of trees in 1990s. Tayyip Erdoğan, as Mayor of Istanbul then, was the fiercest opponent of the project. Although he could not prevent the construction of the campus and was forced to give up his mayorship because of his infamous prison sentence, he achieved to prove that the land Koç University was illegally built on forestland owned by state and Koç University became leaseholder of the land, since the campus was already built by then.⁴⁹¹ Cem Boyner⁴⁹², Chairman of Boyner Holding, one of the leading non-food retail groups in Turkey, and Ergun Özen, CEO of Garanti Bank owned by Doğuş Group, one of the top three largest private-sector conglomerates in Turkey, were among those who openly declared their support for the protests.

Alleged members of Ergenekon Terror Organisation, a secularist ultra-nationalist organisation in Turkey, who are indicted on charges of plotting to foment unrest, among other things by assassinating intellectuals, politicians, judges, military staff, and religious leaders, with the ultimate goal of toppling the AK Party government, expressed their strong support for the demonstrations. Moreover, they linked Taksim protests to their own demonstrations against what they call AK Party “dictatorship.”⁴⁹³

Some foreign analysts, like Steven Cook, senior fellow for Middle Eastern studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, and politicians like Claudia Roth, Co-Chair of

⁴⁹¹ *Star*, “İşte Koç’un ağaç katliamının hikayesi” [Here is the Story of Koç’s Tree Decimation], 8 June 2013.

⁴⁹² Cem Boyner founded a liberal political party named New Democracy Movement in 1994 with the participation of intellectuals and politicians, who supported Gezi Park demonstrations with anti-Erdoğan sentiments in 2013. However, after a devastating failure in 1995 general elections (got only 0,47% of the votes), the party dissolved itself.

⁴⁹³ *Ulusal Kanal*, “Ergenekon tutuklularından Taksim’e destek,” [Support for Taksim from Ergenekon Detainees], 3 June 2013.

German Green Party, came to İstanbul to join the protests in person and published anti-Erdoğan messages.⁴⁹⁴ Efgani Dönmez, a parliamentarian from the Austrian Green Party, proposed to deport supporters of Erdoğan from Austria. Referring to the Austrian advocates of Erdoğan with Turkish origin, who have announced a big demonstration in Vienna with participation of up to 5000 Erdoğan fans as a reaction to Taksim protests, Dönmez said “5000 one-way tickets and no one would weep for those...”⁴⁹⁵ Some foreign analysts like Professor Udo Steinbach, head of the Governance Center Middle East |North Africa at the Humboldt-Viadrina School of Governance in Berlin, did not even hesitate from likening Erdoğan to dictator Assad of Syria and defaming by calling him “cement head.”⁴⁹⁶

Social Media as the Driving Force behind the Protests

Social media is a useful open platform in which any type of information and thought can be shared. Nevertheless, it can also have negative influences. As Elif Shafak, one of the most internationally famous Turkish writers, emphasised regarding her experiences during Taksim protests, “social media is open to misinformation, baseless rumours, hate speech and conspiracy theories.”⁴⁹⁷ During these protests, it served as the main platform for organising events and communication. However, it was also the source of information chaos as well. Some provocative messages have been distributed, including calls for violence. Moreover, these messages have found an important place in the Turkish and international mainstream media.

⁴⁹⁴ Steven A. Cook, His Official Twitter account @stevenacook, 15-16 June 2013. And Claudia Roth’s interview with German TV channel ZDF, 15 June 2013.

⁴⁹⁵ *Kurier*, “Grüner Bundesrat: "Schickt alle heim, die für Erdogan sind," [Federal Green: "Send home all those who are for Erdogan"] 17 June 2013.

⁴⁹⁶ Linda Wurster, "Türkei-Experte: Betonkopf Erdogan argumentiert wie Syriens Diktator Assad," [Turkey expert: Cement Head Erdogan argued as Syria's dictator Assad], *Focus*, 11 June 2013.

⁴⁹⁷ Elif Shafak, “The view from Taksim Square: why is Turkey now in turmoil?” *The Guardian*, 3 June 2013.

One of the iconic inflammatory news, which proved to be false later, was that a girl aged 26 was overrun by a police armoured vehicle and died during the protests. Anti-government public figures including some singers and TV stars (some of them having over a million Twitter followers during the protests) shared this false news with their followers. It was re-tweeted by thousands of protestors. Newspapers like *Cumhuriyet*, with Kemalist ideology, declared that they were absolutely certain about the story. At the height of tensions, Adnan Keskin, Vice-President of main opposition party CHP, telephoned pro-CHP TV station *Halk TV* and claimed that he has confirmed the death of the girl from his sources. He asserted that the mainstream media was under the influence of the government and condemned the media for not covering this story. Then a photo alleged to be a proof for a person overrun by a police vehicle has been widely distributed among supporters of the protest, including CHP members. However, it was later understood that the story was totally a provocative lie. The photo distributed as proof turned out to be an old photo of an accident abroad. Adnan Keskin had to admit that he was wrong and blamed Twitter for misleading him. Other public figures who shared the story on their Twitter accounts silently deleted those tweets.

One other baseless rumour was the claim about Istanbul Police using Agent Orange (a deadly toxic substance used by U.S. military as part of its chemical warfare program during the Vietnam War) against protesters. This news was highly distributed among protestors since it was published on CNN's website in its iReport section, where users share their story. After being spread by tens of thousands of protestors, the piece was removed by CNN a few days later with the following statement: "This iReport, which claimed that police in Istanbul have been using

Agent Orange against protesters, has been removed. CNN reporters there have seen no indication this is the case. Police in Istanbul have been using a colored substance, according to protestors, which may be the source of the confusion.”⁴⁹⁸

Another manipulated iconic photograph was allegedly showing some police officers using pepper spray towards a dog. However, the uniforms of police officers were blurred in the distributed photo. Newspapers like Britain’s *Daily Mail* used this photo alongside others in their news coverage under the title “Now DOGS are being tear-gassed: Heartbreaking images of pets caught in carnage as police target protestors for a fifth day in Turkey.”⁴⁹⁹ Daily mail reporter explained his source as follows: “The latest photographs, which were uploaded to Twitter, are believed to show dogs caught up in the carnage near Gezi Park in Istanbul.”⁵⁰⁰ However, un-blurred original photo came out later and the police uniforms in the photo showed that the photo was not even taken in Turkey. Thereupon, *Daily Mail* removed the photo from its website.

The claims about the government interference to access to social media websites was one other provocative lie used by protestors and shared by others to erupt public reaction. Influenced by these rumors, journalists like Byron Acohido from *USA Today* started talking about "reported Internet censorship" to prevent social media access of protestors.⁵⁰¹ However, let alone being censored, social media has seen record levels of accession from Turkey during the protests. As a study by New York

⁴⁹⁸ CNN, “This iReport is not available,” Date is also removed from the page, <http://ireport.cnn.com/docs/DOC-980610> (Accessed 30/06/2013).

⁴⁹⁹ Daily Mail Reporter, “Now DOGS are being tear-gassed: Heartbreaking images of pets caught in carnage as police target protestors for a fifth day in Turkey,” *Daily Mail*, 6 June 2013, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2336515/Now-DOGS-tear-gassed-Heartbreaking-images-pets-caught-carnage-police-target-protestors-fifth-day-Turkey.html> (Accessed 06/06/2013).

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁰¹ Byron Acohido, "Turkey citizens use VPN to air grievances," *USA Today*, 5 June 2013.

University revealed, “at least 2 million tweets with hashtags related to the Turkish protests were sent in just eight hours on May 31 when protests gathered steam, around 90% of them from Turkey and 50% of them from İstanbul. In comparison, Egypt's main protest hashtag was tweeted less than 1 million times throughout the country's entire revolutionary period and only about 30 percent of people tweeting during the Egyptian revolution in 2011 were actually in Egypt.”⁵⁰²

Detailed analysis by Sandra González-Bailón at the Oxford Internet Institute and Pablo Barberá of New York University's Social Media and Political Participation laboratory also show how systematically social media was used during the protests. As their analysis show, “just one percent of users generated about 80 percent of all retweets. According Bailón and Barberá, this means the protest has been driven by so-called "authorities," who generated content, and "disseminators," who pushed it out there by quoting and retweeting. Besides, “by the fourth day, more than 30% of unique users employing protest hashtags were English speakers; Twitter accounts like “YourAnonNews”, “AnonOpsLegion” or “AnonOpsMob”, part of Anonymous, a network of hacktivists, also started to appear among the most retweeted.”⁵⁰³

Some of the many other similar fictitious news and manipulated photos distributed by anti-government journalists, politicians, activists, TV celebrities and managers of prominent companies that turned out to be tools for provocations were as follows: “Police is using real bullets... Keep up; if we continue the protests for over 48 hours, the government will fall according to EU laws... Son of Vice-Prime Minister Bülent Arınç is shareholder of the shopping mall (alleged) to be built on the Gezi Park...

⁵⁰² Sarah Brown, "From Turkey, with pride," *CNN*, 7 June 2013.

⁵⁰³ Sandra González-Bailón and Pablo Barberá, "The Dynamics of Information Diffusion in the Turkish Protests," *The Monkey Cage*, 9 June 2013.

Thousands of police officers resigned to protest government... There is only one name to be used for politics that uses chemical weapons against its own people for 20 hours: fascism. The name of the government that allows this is: dictatorship... Police is distributing water containing drugs in order to put the protestors to sleep and detain them... (Using a photo from Intercontinental Istanbul Eurasia Marathon) Tens of thousands are crossing the Bosphorus Bridge to join the protestors... Help! Spread the word. Istanbul on fire @nytimes @AFP @BBCWorld... Hundreds of Islamists are heading to Taksim with Kalashnikovs... It is unbelievable!!! The government is killing its own people/us in front of us/its people again @CNN... Turkish PM Erdoğan calls for a mass slaughter of the protestors!⁵⁰⁴

Erdoğan-phobia within Dominant Discourse in Mainstream Media

Gezi Park protests served to introduce Erdoğan to Western intellectuals as an "Islamist despot" who does not tolerate any opposition.⁵⁰⁵ It has become commonplace to insult Recep Tayyip Erdoğan during and after Gezi Park incidents in Turkish and international mainstream media. Interestingly, despite authoritarianism over Turkish media allegations against Erdoğan, Turkish media was filling up with such insults. Mümtazer Türköne from Gülen's *Zaman* daily likened Erdoğan to a "spoilt and talebearer child."⁵⁰⁶ Yılmaz Özdil from *Hürriyet* newspaper was warning Erdoğan by saying, "Nobody would even like to remember you [after your death]. You have no place to sleep [A Turkish idiom used for people who have so many sins that nobody in this world or the afterlife loves him/her]. Riot

⁵⁰⁴ The last provoking lie was a tweet by by CHP MP Aykan Erdemir @aykan_erdemir. After reactions, he amended his tweet as follows: "Erdoğan's order to Interior Minister to "finish protests within 24 hours" could lead to mass slaughter." 12 June 2013.

⁵⁰⁵ Süheyb Ögüt, "PM Erdoğan and AK Party: The Usual Objects of Racism," *Daily Sabah*, 2 March 2014.

⁵⁰⁶ Mümtazer Türköne, "Gücünüz yetiyorsa buyurun," [Go for it if you can], *Zaman*, 13 March 2014.

control vehicles will have to wait upon your grave in order to prevent people from spitting on your grave.”⁵⁰⁷

Roni Margulies, Fethullah Gülen’s *Taraf* Daily columnist and member of Revolutionary Socialist Workers' Party (Turkey) was claiming that Prime Minister Erdoğan will be taken to the gallowses, as he deserves it.⁵⁰⁸ Another journalist Ahmet Şık was saying, “You will see; Erdoğan will either escape or be arrested or become a dictator. He is going for the third option, but this nation will not allow that.”⁵⁰⁹ Columnist Mümtazer Türköne from *Zaman* daily, the highest circulated newspaper in Turkey, was accusing Erdoğan for suffering “severe necrophilia.”⁵¹⁰ Erdoğan was also being portrayed as a traitor and a tyrant.⁵¹¹

James Traub, a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and a contributing writer for *The New York Times Magazine*, *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *National Review* and *Foreign Affairs*, claimed that Erdoğan was ruling Turkey “by tyranny-of-the-majority.”⁵¹² With “his authoritarian style,” *Financial Times* argues, “Erdoğan is demonstrating to the world that Turkey is a country with a shaky democracy, a flawed constitution and a diminishing number of allies.”⁵¹³

Decisive majority of foreign media and anti-government Turkish media acted as if Taksim Square redevelopment program was new and covered the story as if a spontaneous public uproar occurred against a recent decision taken unilaterally by

⁵⁰⁷ Yılmaz Özdil, “Berkin,” *Hürriyet*, 13 March 2014.

⁵⁰⁸ Roni Margulies, His Twitter Account @RoniMargulies, 12 March 2014.

⁵⁰⁹ Ahmet Şık, His Twitter Account @sahmetsahmet, 12 March 2014.

⁵¹⁰ Mümtazer Türköne, “Mecbur olmasa, bu kadar kötü olur mu?” [Will he be this bad, if he does not have to?], *Zaman*, 16 March 2014.

⁵¹¹ Merve Şebnem Oruç, “‘A Tyrant’ Ready to Drink Hemlock Poison,” *Daily Sabah*, 26 February 2014.

⁵¹² James Traub, “Déjà Vu and Paranoia in the Deep State Foreign Affairs,” *Foreign Policy*, 10 January 2014.

⁵¹³ *Financial Times*, Editorial: “Arrogance undoes the Turkish model,” 8 January 2014.

Erdoğan himself. Dictatorship and/or authoritarianism arguments against Erdoğan were mainly based on this false information. Even after weeks of government efforts to repeatedly give details of the project and its decision process, majority of foreign voices insisted on misleading their readers and claiming “Gezi Park generation is refusing to simply comply with the government's dictates.”⁵¹⁴

However, the Project was far from being new, since it was introduced with details by Erdoğan himself before 2011 General Elections, among other projects related to İstanbul, like third Bridge on the Strait and third airport in İstanbul. More importantly, the decision for the project had been taken by İstanbul City Council, which consists of representatives from all major political parties, not the government. The project of Taksim Square that caused replantation of some trees (the main reason behind the protests) was supported by all political parties at the city council, including the opposition parties CHP-MHP-BDP, and it was accepted unanimously at the İstanbul City Council in 2011.⁵¹⁵ After an application for overruling the project, High Commission for Protection of Cultural and Natural Heritage approved the project as a whole on 1 March 2013.

This being said, foreign media, including *BBC*, *CNN* and *Al Jazeera* reported that the protests started to prevent the government from demolishing a park and building a shopping mall in its place. This was the argument of some protestors. However these media outlets did not try to learn what was really happening about that park. The construction was for rebuilding Taksim Square for pedestrians. Only 13 trees were replaced to another park within this project. (Interestingly, more than 30 trees

⁵¹⁴ Daniel Steinvorth, " Rambo of Kasimpasa: Erdogan's Risky Response to the Revolt," *Der Spiegel*, 18 June 2013.

⁵¹⁵ *Radikal*, “Belediye Taksim Meydanı için kararını verdi,” [City Council Gave its Decision About Taksim Square], 16 September 2011.

were cut – not replaced – at the Warwick University campus, while this section of the thesis was being written.) More importantly the decision for this construction was taken unanimously in İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality Council, with the votes of opposition parties. On top of that, Fahrettin Kayhan, member of the Council from main opposition party CHP, was thanking AK Party for this project and saying “We as CHP support all projects like this, which are designed in the interest of people. It is a big deficiency that this project was not produced by previous governors of İstanbul.”⁵¹⁶

Moreover, some journalists did not hesitate to blatantly lie about what was happening during the events. For instance, some protestors threw Molotov cocktails at police on 11 June 2013. However, Luke Harding from *The Guardian* was describing the situation in a mocking tone, influenced by social media rumors, as follows: “a small group of four or five "demonstrators" throwing molotov cocktails at police. At one point they advanced on police lines in a comic Roman-style phalanx while holding the flag of a fringe Marxist party. The ‘protesters’ were in fact middle-aged undercover police officers, staging a not very plausible ‘attack’ on their own for the benefit of the cameras.”⁵¹⁷

However, within a few hours, the identities of these demonstrators were revealed as members of a far-left political party (Socialist Democracy Party SDP) as opposed to claims in social media that he was a policeman in disguise. And it was revealed that they were previously convicted and served prison sentences. They were arrested by police on the same day at the headquarters of SDP with illegal guns and machetes.

⁵¹⁶ Cited in Hilal Kaplan, “Ağaç ve Hükümet,” [Tree and Government], *Yeni Şafak*, 2 June 2013.

⁵¹⁷ Luke Harding, "Erdoğan's reaction to Turkey protests reveals ominous Putin parallels," *The Guardian*, 11 June 2013.

Turkish daily *Hürriyet*, a major anti-government media outlet that first voiced suspicion about these demonstrators for being undercover police officers, had to accept its mistake.⁵¹⁸ However, foreign correspondents and analysts like Luke Harding did not feel the necessity to apologise from their readers for simply lying and misleading them or even updating their articles to provide the true information.

News outlets like *BBC* and *Russia Today* (RT) prepared live update timelines, which consisted of messages and tweets from protestors and their supporters without checking the authenticity of the information.⁵¹⁹ They preferred to act like notice boards for the messages of demonstrators, while simply ignoring the other side of the story. These media outlets did not show interest in and chose to ignore when, as a reaction to Taksim protests, hundreds of thousands welcomed Erdoğan with mass rallies in three different cities on 9 June 2013 after his trip to North Africa. Especially, unprecedented crowds in Ankara waving Turkish flags and chanting their support for Erdoğan was so huge along the 25 kilometer highway from the airport to the city centre that he had to stop and give speech in four different locations in a row along the way. The same attitude continued about the mass rally in İstanbul on 16th of June, which has been one of the largest if not the largest, rallies in Turkish history with well over 1 million participants according to official figures.

As has been pointed out by Mustafa Akyol, a liberal Turkish writer and journalist, “the classic Orientalist prejudices prevailed in western media” during these protests, and “subjective consciousness that prefers secular Turks over pious Turks”

⁵¹⁸ *Hürriyet*, “Polis SDP Binasını bastı,” [Police Raided SPD Headquarters], 11 June 2013.

⁵¹⁹ For instance see *Russia Today*, “Turkish police clamp down on anti-government protests: LIVE UPDATES,” 31 May 2013, <http://rt.com/news/istanbul-park-protests-police-095> (Accessed 11/07/2013).

dominated their discourse.⁵²⁰ For instance, anti-government protestors were generally referred as *people* and *citizens* in media coverage, while AK Party supporters are called by some as Erdoğan's "troops".⁵²¹ Erdoğan contested this approach by asking, "Are the people only those at Gezi Park? Aren't those who came to meet us at the Istanbul airport the people too? Those who are gathered now in Ankara; aren't they the people, too?"⁵²² This sense of elitism that is widely shared by secular Turks in Istanbul is well reflected in the attitude of figures like Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, a professor of international relations at Sabancı University, who complains that the city had "been invaded by Anatolian peasants" who were "uncultured."⁵²³

Ivan Watson from *CNN* depicted the protests as a result of "culture wars" between pious Muslims and secular urban circles in Turkish society.⁵²⁴ Usage of the "urban" term only for seculars is key here, since that indirectly means that AK Party supporters are rural. However, this has no base in reality, since AK Party has repeatedly won elections in all major cities including İstanbul and Ankara, with few exceptions like İzmir.

Hugh Pope says "there's a lot of talk among my Turkish friends of the Gezi Park demonstrations being a turning point".⁵²⁵ Understanding this situation is key in grasping how a specific type of discourse is generally determining the perceptions of

⁵²⁰ Mustafa Akyol, "Hayır, bu filmi henüz görmemiştik," No, we have not seen this movie yet, *Star*, 10 June 2013.

⁵²¹ Mark Lowen, "Turkey PM Erdogan warns protesters of 'limited patience'," *BBC News*, 9 June 2013.

⁵²² Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Public Speech given in a mass rally in Ankara, 9 June 2013.

⁵²³ Tim Arango, "Protests in Turkey Reveal a Larger Fight Over Identity," *New York Times*, 2 June 2013.

⁵²⁴ Ivan Watson, TV coverage of Istanbul Protests, *CNN*, 1 June 2013.

⁵²⁵ Hugh Pope, "A ringside seat as Istanbul protests," 1 June 2013, <http://hughpope.com/2013/06/01/a-ringside-seat-as-istanbul-protests> (Accessed 12/06/2013).

foreign observers. Most of these friends belong to a specific sect of political spectrum, mainly Kemalists. This makes it much confusing to understand election results in Turkey. Because majority of Turkish people, which do not have the chance to be “friends” of these observers think and act differently.

Foreign media reporters mainly residing in certain districts of Istanbul are surrounded by Kemalist friends and colleagues. They have limited contact with the rest of the society, although they are supposed to be in a position to see domestic developments in Turkey more thoroughly. A unanimous British colleague who stayed in Istanbul for more than a year says “I have not met any single person who supports Erdoğan in Istanbul. All my friends say how much they hate him. I have no idea who votes for him.” The anomaly of this situation is better understood if it kept in mind that Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has been the governor of Istanbul for after 1994 local elections and his party won elections in Istanbul since 2002.

Lack of basic knowledge about Turkey, worsened the situation in news coverage of some foreign media outlets. As has been put by Mahir Zeynalov, columnist at Turkish daily *Today's Zaman*, “several international media staged systematic attack on Turkey during protests while the rest just exaggerated out of lack of knowledge.”⁵²⁶ For instance, a TV program named Grand Soir 3 was using Tunisian flag on its screen, instead of Turkish flag, while covering Taksim protests at *France 3*, the second largest French public television channel.

From the Government’s Perspective

Contrary to general argument in anti-AK Party media, Taksim protests are not “the

⁵²⁶ Mahir Zeynalov, His official twitter account @MahirZeynalov, 11 June 2013.

biggest challenge to Erdogan and his governing Justice and Development Party during their decade in power.”⁵²⁷ AK Party has faced much bigger opposition protests during its ten year rule. So-called “Republic Rallies” before the elections in 2007 have been the largest series of protests with millions of participants in total, according to the organisers. The government believed that Taksim Park protests and their results would increase AK Party votes even more, like the Republic Rallies, which actually increased its vote in the elections although they were designed to demonize AK Party,.

However, AK Party still took the Taksim demonstrations very seriously from the beginning. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan denied claims about shopping mall construction plan and declared that a city museum will be built there. He also said his government opposes violence and is open to "democratic demands" raised by demonstrators. "What we are against is terrorism, violence, vandalism and actions that threaten others for the sake of freedoms," Erdoğan said in a televised conference in İstanbul and added "I am open-hearted to anyone with democratic demands.”⁵²⁸

As has been almost unanimously accepted by observers from both supporters and opponents of the demonstrations, it was soon understood that the main issue of disagreement was not about trees or the park. Especially the vandalism of protestors and intensification of public polarisation revealed that the fault lines are much deeper. Even leading figures of the protests confessed that trees and environmental arguments were just symbolic tools to be used for stimulating masses. Indeed,

⁵²⁷ Nick Paton Walsh, Gul Tuyuz and Ben Brumfield, "Turkish riot police move in on protesters at Taksim Square," *CNN*, 11 June 2013.

⁵²⁸ *Al Jazeera English*, "Turkey PM says he welcomes democratic demands," 8 June 2013.

Mehmet Ali Alabora, an actor known for his anti-government attitude, tweeted “Dear friend, the issue is not only Gezi Park, did not you still get that? Come join us.”⁵²⁹ Tayfun Kahraman, Chamber of City Planners Head of Istanbul Branch and a member of Taksim Platform that met with Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arınç as the representative of Taksim protestors, confessed that they were aware of the fact that there was pedestrianisation of Taksim square, instead of a shopping mall construction, and no trees were cut for this project. “Yet, if false news about shopping mall construction and cutting trees did not spread through social media,” he continued, “we could not have seen this wave of protests.”⁵³⁰

Prime Minister Erdoğan declared that they received intelligence reports three months before Taksim demonstrations that foresee mass protests against the government. However, he emphasised that they did not expect these demonstrations to start from environmental debates, since in his words “preservation of nature and forestation are the areas where AK Party has been strong most.” Indeed, over 2 billion 800 million saplings were planted during AK Party’s ten year rule.⁵³¹

Erdoğan has slammed the interest lobby and stock Exchange speculators repeatedly in his speeches during the protests. He portrayed them as the main actors behind the demonstrations and warned them: "The interest lobby should better behave itself. This lobby exploited my people for years. We have shown patience for a long time. I am not saying this only for one bank or two but for all whoever making this lobby. Those who have started this fight against us, you will pay the price heavily."⁵³² This

⁵²⁹ Mehmet Ali Alabora, His Official Twitter Account @memetalialabora, 30 May 2013.

⁵³⁰ Erdiñç Akkoyunlu, "AVM Olmadığını Biliyorduk," [We Knew There was no Plan for Shopping Mall], *Star*, 7 June 2013.

⁵³¹ Okan Müderrisođlu, "Uçaktaki Hava," [Climate in Prime Minister's Plane], *Sabah*, 8 June 2013.

⁵³² Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Public Speech given in a mass rally in Ankara, 9 June 2013.

groups was claimed to be against AK Party, since it has lowered overnight interest rates of Central Bank as low as 4,7% in 2013, compared to 44% in 2002 when it came to power.

In an interview with *BBC*, Minister for EU Affairs Egemen Bağış said that the protests initially began 'peacefully and sincerely' but eventually 'other groups' became involved, and that they identified '11 different terrorist organizations that have encouraged people to become a part of this demonstration and turned this into a parallel campaign of a vandalism which no country accepts'.⁵³³ He also claimed the demonstrations are linked to "interest lobbies" wishing to profit from instability in the country. Bağış reflected the opinion commonly shared among AK Party supporters and those who withdrew their support from the protests after the rise of vandalism and abnormal foreign media coverage trying to create a 'Turkish Spring' story out of demonstrations. He claimed that the protests were connected to forces that want to prevent Turkey's rise, by saying "Turkey is not wanted as a regional power by many. Turkey's rise has given reason for many countries to become anxious as Turkey's prominence means peace, prosperity and stability in the Middle East. There are strong links between the protests and national and international pressure groups wishing to profit from instability in Turkey."⁵³⁴

AK Party's top policymakers vociferously criticised foreign media and alleged that foreign interest groups are working to subvert Turkey's success. Egemen Bağış reflected this feeling by saying: "The international media's approach to this issue has been quite unique. I don't think that CNN International did as much reporting on

⁵³³ Egemen Bağış, His interview with *BBC News*, 5 June 2013.

⁵³⁴ Mary Fitzgerald, "Turkey's minister for EU affairs, Egemen Bagis, rejects EU criticism of crackdown on nationwide protests," *Irish Times*, 12 June 2013.

Boston marathon explosions, or on the demonstrations which ended with many more casualties throughout Europe, or even on what is happening in Syria today. In Syria, a dictator is killing hundreds of citizens of its own country every single day. CNN International ignores that, but runs a three-hour non-stop report from Taksim Square, without commercials.”⁵³⁵

Prime Minister Erdoğan openly explained his concern about a plan to overthrow AK Party government by undemocratic means, saying “Overthrowing the elected government and ignoring the election results are habits of the past. Today they have no relevancy.”⁵³⁶ Even analysts with critical stance against AK Party, like Kerem Öktem, research fellow at the European Studies Centre, St Antony's College and Karabekir Akkoyunlu, researcher at the London School of Economics, share this concern and underline “Turkey's recent record of undemocratic manipulations to bring the [AK Party] government down,” mainly with the involvement of those groups who support the Taksim protestors:

“Kemalist elites, the military, the judiciary and the so-called "deep state" rogue elements acting within the visible state structures, conspired to terminate the Justice and Development Party's government from the very moment of its first election in 2002. Ever since, the party had to face several attempts at power grab, from an ultra-nationalist conspiracy in the mid-2000s based on unresolved assassinations of Christian missionaries and the murder of Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink to the so-called Republican Marches against the election as President of Abdullah Gül to the Constitutional Court's only

⁵³⁵ Ayla Albayrak, "Turkey's EU Minister Shrugs off Criticism," *The Wall Street Journal*, 15 June 2013.

⁵³⁶ Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Parliamentary Group Speech in Ankara, 11 June 2013.

narrowly averted closure case against the ruling party in 2008.”⁵³⁷

There is a parallelism in the eyes of AK Party electorate among Menderes, Özal and Erdoğan, all of whom gained strong public support as pious leaders from center-right with their performance in economic development and democratisation of Turkey. Adnan Menderes was the first democratically elected Prime Minister of Turkey, after decades of one-party rule of Atatürk’s CHP. He was toppled by a military coup in 1960 and killed with death penalty alongside his two ministers with baseless allegations. This incident is accepted as one of the worst black marks in Turkey’s democratic history.

Allegations against Democrat Party government in the headlines of the press during the 1960 military coup period are revealing the atmosphere of the time and providing hints in understanding media’s relationship with undemocratic interventions in Turkish political history. In order to legitimise the military coup, Democrat Party was accused for establishing a dictatorial regime by using all authoritarian means, including repression, censorship and even massacres. One of most shocking allegations was a report titled “Students Were Minced in Machines,” claiming that hundreds of university students were killed with torture upon the order from Democrat Party and grinded in state-owned mince machines. This allegation was falsified and called disinformation many years later by the Journal’s Chief Editor Orhan Birgit, who published the allegation at that time. Birgit, who became Republican People’s Party’s MP and spokesperson after the coup, confessed that there were many similar fabricated allegations against Democrat Party in the media and this particular “grave disinformation” was first fabricated by high-ranking

⁵³⁷ Kerem Öktem and Karabekir Akkoyunlu, “From victim to villain: Erdogan's unfinished transformation,” *CNN*, 9 June 2013.

military officers and then distributed by them through media.⁵³⁸

Other allegations against Democrat Party government in the press showed a similar pattern: “Democrat Party was to plot a massacre if not taken over.” (*Dünya*, 31 May); “Murdered students’ graves detected” (*Cumhuriyet*, 29 May); “Government to deport İnönü” (*Yeni Sabah*, 30 May); “New corpses found in ice houses and pits” (*Cumhuriyet*, 2 June); “9 found dead in İstanbul” (*Ulus*, 11 June); “Officers were to be murdered in mass” (*Vatan*, 9 June); “Plot to annihilate! Democrat Party plot to abolish universities and the armed forces” (*Dünya*, Second Edition, 31 May).⁵³⁹

Hüseyin Kocabıyık, Chief Advisor of Former Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Çiller between 1995 and 1999 was highlighting similarities between accusations and attacks against Çiller before 1997 military coup and against Erdoğan in the current power struggle from the same circles:

“Those who accuse Erdoğan for being a thief had been doing the same things for the first and only woman Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Çiller. Military, judiciary, capital owners, Republican People’s Party and Aydın Doğan [media tycoon] organised the 28 February coup in cooperation. They were blackmailing Çiller to leave her seat then. They are doing the same thing for Erdoğan now. They were accusing Çiller for being a drug smuggler, nuclear smuggler, CIA spy and of course the most corrupt politician. Today they are

⁵³⁸ Orhan Birgit, “Kıyma makineleri dezenformasyondur,” [Mince Machines were Disinformation], *Aksiyon*, 4 April 2011.

⁵³⁹ Cited in Yusuf Özkır, “Military – Journal/ist Relations from May the 27th to April 27th,” *Turkish Journal of Business Ethics* 4, no.8 (November 2011): 109.

accusing Prime Minister Erdoğan for being a corrupt dictator, who divides the country and sends arms to Al-Qaeda.”⁵⁴⁰

Özal was another popular leader who was democratically elected after 1980 military coup, and received unexpected public support as a reaction to military intervention. He died in 1990, and recent forensic analysis of his corpse revealed high doses of lethal chemicals in his body. This has strengthened the public belief that poisoning was his cause of death. Among others, Levent Kırca, a Turkish actor and a hard line Erdoğan opposer, threatened Erdoğan and his supporters in his interview with pro-CHP TV station *Halk TV*, and claimed that Erdoğan’s fate will be similar to Menderes.⁵⁴¹

Thus one of the main slogan for Erdoğan supporters against the protests was “You hanged Menderes and poisoned Özal. We will not let you take down Erdoğan.” Referring to military coup against Menderes government, Mustafa Elitaş, Co-Chair of AK Party Parliamentary Group, emphasised the parallels between two incidents and defined chaos caused by the protests as an attempt for modern coup d’état.⁵⁴²

This perception about ‘flawed anti-AK Party’ media coverage evaporates the power of these media outlets to influence the ideas of AK Party supporters. On the contrary, it enables the government to claim to be on the right track if those anti-AK Party media outlets are criticising AK Party.

⁵⁴⁰ Hüseyin Kocabıyık, "Bu Kadar Çok Benzerlik Birazcık Hafızaya Sahip Olanlara Ne Anlatıyor?" [What do so many similarities explain to those with a little piece of memory?], *Yeni Asır*, 10 March 2014.

⁵⁴¹ Levent Kırca, His interview with *Halk TV*, 15 June 2013.

⁵⁴² Cited in *Türkiye*, "AK Partili Elitaş: 'Gezi olayları, modern darbe uygulaması'," [Gezi Events are Attempt for Modern Coup], 16 June 2013.

Different Stories for the Same Event

Differences in perceptions and identity narratives were reflected in the comparisons made about Taksim protests. For those, who are sympathetic to AK Party, like Marwa Maziad, a columnist at Egyptian newspaper *Almasry Alyoum* and a visiting researcher at İstanbul Şehir University, “uprising represents a needed dose of opposition for a healthy and viable democracy.”⁵⁴³ Yet, a prominent anti-government journalist and author Ahmet Altan defined the protests as “the most genuine, most unforgettable and most impressive public resistance in Turkish history” and compared Erdoğan with Spanish dictator Francisco Franco.⁵⁴⁴

Ian Buruma, Professor of Democracy, Human Rights, and Journalism at Bard College, was analysing the events from “class” prism and saying “The protesters, whether they are liberal or leftist, tend to be from the urban elite – Westernized, sophisticated, and secular. Erdoğan, on the other hand, is still very popular in rural and provincial Turkey, among people who are less educated, poorer, more conservative, and more religious.”⁵⁴⁵

Foreign media correspondents and analysts who lack basic information about Turkish politics inferred some other interesting and naive meanings from the protests. BBC Newsnight economics editor Paul Mason was among them, as he likened the events to “Paris Commune”, which was an early socialistic and communalistic government that briefly ruled Paris in 1871. He was reporting from the Istanbul streets: “To any student of social history the sight of an urban middle class using its fingers to dig up cobblestones, form a human chain and pile them 3ft

⁵⁴³ Marwa Maziad, "From Tahrir to Taksim Square," *Al Jazeera English*, 5 June 2013.

⁵⁴⁴ Ahmet Altan, “No pasaran” *T 24*, 6 June 2013.

⁵⁴⁵ Ian Buruma, "Turkey's Class Struggle," *Project Syndicate*, 6 June 2013.

(1m) high to make a barricade screams the words "Paris Commune". That is what I saw in the streets around Besiktas stadium last night and the comparisons are ominous." Although Turkish police briefly withdrawn from Taksim Square in Istanbul with the order from the local authorities during the events, Paul Mason was asserting "there is again the echo of that event in Paris. Then, too, the state pulled out, leaving the urban middle class and workforce of Paris to run the city for 100 days. But it ended in tragedy and bloodshed."⁵⁴⁶

There were various arguments about the actors behind the protests. For instance, Aaron Klein, senior staff reporter and Jerusalem bureau chief of WorldNetDaily (WND) headquartered in Washington, D.C., linked the protestors with American administration. Klein was claiming that Turkey protest leaders were trained by Obama online gurus and emphasised that "directors of a youth movement helping to lead the anti-government protests rocking Turkey (namely *Genç Siviller*, or Young Civilians with liberal ideology) participated in a 2009 U.S. State Department-sponsored training summit on how to use social media to organize societal change."⁵⁴⁷ However, Turgay Oğur and Ceren Kenar, both journalists and participants of this summit from *Genç Siviller*, were highly critical about the protests. Turgay Oğur asserted that the attitude of western media can be explained as ill-will at best, for depicting Erdoğan as "an Islamist Middle Eastern dictator", although he was the one that advised secularism to Middle Eastern leaders and has never intervened in his people's lives and was bravely driving Turkey towards social peace.⁵⁴⁸ Yet *Genç Siviller*, as an NGO, actively supported the protests.

⁵⁴⁶ Paul Mason, "Analysis: The hopes that blaze in Istanbul," *BBC News*, 3 June 2013.

⁵⁴⁷ Aaron Klein, "Obama Online Gurus Trained Turkey Protest Leaders," *WND*, 6 June 2013.

⁵⁴⁸ Turgay Oğur, "#direndemokrasi" [*#resistdemocracy*], *Star*, 8 June 2013.

Some analysts, which were following the provocations on Twitter didn't hesitate to stereotype the protests and compare them to those of the Arab Spring and labelled the protests as the Turkish Spring, not knowing many of the images and notes they receive over Twitter were actually fraudulent."⁵⁴⁹ Stephen Walt from Harvard Kennedy School was putting Turkey into the basket of Arab Spring countries and saying "If heaven exists, Edmund Burke is watching Syria, Iraq, Turkey, Egypt, Libya, etc. and nodding: 'See what happens when rules disappear?'"⁵⁵⁰ *CNN* was citing a protestor claiming "This is an uprising, a protest against the increasing bans. Perhaps just like we saw the Arab Spring, this will be the Turkish Spring."⁵⁵¹

This argument was mainly based on a claim that Erdoğan is a dictator like the ones toppled during Arab Spring. Only two days before the protests broke out, Jean-Maurice Ripert, the ambassador of the European Union to Turkey, was praising AK Party government for "reiterat[ing] its commitment to the EU accession" and for "the impressive progress over the last months, with important steps towards meeting the Copenhagen criteria," which stresses the requirement for preservation of democratic governance and human rights.⁵⁵² However, after the start of The Gezi Park protests, foreign media was suddenly flooded with accusations about Erdoğan for being a dictator.

For instance, by interviewing with a few people from Arab streets, *Reuters* correspondents were impatient to reach premature, if not premeditated, conclusions about Turkey and its image in the Arab world: "Two years ago, Tayyip Erdogan was

⁵⁴⁹ Ceylan Ozbudak, "Are we seeing a 'Turkish Spring' on the streets of Istanbul?" *Al Arabiya*, 2 June 2013.

⁵⁵⁰ Stephen Walt, Official twitter account @stephenwalt, 2 June 2013.

⁵⁵¹ Gul Tuysuz, "Police try to break up Istanbul shopping project protest," *CNN*, 31 May 2013.

⁵⁵² Jean-Maurice Ripert, His Speech at the Symposium on EU-Turkey Relations: Future Prospects, Van, Turkey, 27 May 2013.

mobbed by adoring crowds in Arab capitals and Turkey seemed set to expand its trade and influence across the region on the back of his support for the upstart democrats of the Arab Spring. Today, his crackdown on protests at home has sickened some of those who hailed an unlikely liberator from the land of their former Ottoman overlords; they now scorn the prime minister as little better than the dictators they ousted.”⁵⁵³ Firat Demir from University of Oklahoma supported this claim by arguing that social engineering and authoritarian decision-making have become AK Party's top policy tools.⁵⁵⁴

However, both election results and public surveys by domestic and foreign research centers show a completely different picture about Erdoğan’s and AK Party’s democratic credentials. As a leader who has won three general, two local elections alongside two referenda Erdoğan keeps his popularity among electorate. Jacop Poushter, Research Associate at the Pew Global Attitudes Project, summarises the situation by saying: “As anti-government protests continue in Istanbul and other Turkish cities, a March 2013 poll conducted by the Pew Research Center shows Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan to be broadly popular in Turkey. A majority (62%) had a favorable view of Erdoğan, while just 34% viewed him unfavorably. This is basically unchanged from 2012, when 59% of Turks had a positive view of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) leader.”⁵⁵⁵

AK Party also proved its wide basis by being the most successful party in 65 out of 81 provinces in Turkey, including İstanbul and Ankara, in 2011 General Elections.

⁵⁵³ Alastair Macdonald and Tarek Amara, "Erdogan: from 'rock star' to mixed reviews from Arabs," *Reuters*, 12 June 2013.

⁵⁵⁴ Firat Demir, “Here's What You Need to Know about the Clashes in Turkey,” *Foreign Policy*, 1 June 2013.

⁵⁵⁵ Jacop Poushter, “Prime Minister Erdoğan popular in Turkey broadly, but less so in Istanbul,” *Pew Research Center*, 5 June 2013.

According to January 2013 official records of Turkish Supreme Court of Appeals, AK Party outscored its rivals with 7.551.472 registered members. Its main rival CHP has only 953.416 registered members, while MHP and BDP follows with 363.393 and 44.156 members consecutively.⁵⁵⁶

Based on these records, another group reject claims about a possible Turkish Spring. Fadi Hakura, associate fellow and manager of the Turkey Project at the London-based think-tank Chatham Housei was within this group by claiming “Despite the rising emotions sweeping Turkey, this is not equivalent to the "Arab Spring" that led to the toppling of former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. Unlike Egypt and other Arab countries, Turkey is a functioning, albeit incomplete, democracy and has been since 1950. Erdoğan received a resounding mandate of almost half the vote in the last general elections in 2011. He still remains the most popular politician in Turkey, while the opposition is widely seen by many Turks as weak and ineffective.”⁵⁵⁷

Ceylan Ozbudak from *Al Arabiya* agreed with Hakura emphasised that “the Arab Spring started as an uprising against the tyrants of Baathist regimes who had been oppressing the people under juntas or dictatorships for decades. Turkey is not a dictatorship, nor is it a junta regime.”⁵⁵⁸ On comparisons to the Arab Spring, Tuna Kuyucu, assistant professor of sociology at Bogazici University in Istanbul, says "The similarities are very small. Arab uprisings were mass events preceded by massive economic crises. In Turkey, this is an upper-middle-class movement,

⁵⁵⁶ *Hürriyet*, "AK Parti üye sayısında fark attı," [AK Party Outscored about Member Numbers], 13 February 2013.

⁵⁵⁷ Fadi Hakura, "Is Turkey on the verge of a meltdown?" *CNN*, 4 June 2013

⁵⁵⁸ Ozbudak, "Are we seeing a 'Turkish Spring' on the streets of Istanbul?"

mostly about people defending lifestyle matters."⁵⁵⁹

İhsan Bal, Head of Center for Security Studies at International Strategic Research Organisation in Ankara, underlines the general tendency in the Western media to liken Taksim "to places such as Tahrir or Bengazi where dictator's reigned as opposed to the protests in London, Madrid, Athens and Wall Street which are much more similar cases." In his words, this is a result of a "wider trend in Western media that subconsciously wants to dress Turkey's experiences in Middle Eastern robes."⁵⁶⁰

However, another approach is to accept each case on its own terms, since each event is unique. Within this framework, Bahadır Kaleağası, the international coordinator for the Turkish Industry and Business Association (TÜSİAD), said the international investors had noticed that these country-wide protests were unlike the other more violent protests in the European Union or Arab Spring. "They see that these incidents are not the factor of political instability. The beginning of the protests is different than the situation in Athens or Cairo. This is a post-modern reaction that aims to protect historical and ecological heritage and seeks expansion of freedoms and more accountable public authority."⁵⁶¹

Uneasy Relationship between AK Party and Media

It is fair to claim that there is a strong relationship between politics and journalism and "almost everywhere in the world, most of the media is still politically

⁵⁵⁹ Marwa Maziad, "From Tahrir to Taksim Square," *Al Jazeera English*, 5 June 2013.

⁵⁶⁰ İhsan Bal, "What Lessons Can We Draw From the Taksim Protests?" *USAK*, 8 June 2013.

⁵⁶¹ Zehra Aydoğan, "Investors 'caustiously' optimistic amid protests," *Hürriyet Daily News*, 7 June 2013.

differentiated along with general public orientations.”⁵⁶² Yet there are still important variances about media systems in different countries. Daniel Hallin and Paolo Mancini propose a three-fold typology of media systems by taking four criteria into account: (1) development of media markets; (2) the extent to which the media system reflects the major political divisions in society; (3) the development of professional journalism; and (4) the degree and nature of state intervention in the media system.⁵⁶³

The first model Hallin and Mancini outline is *North Atlantic* or *Liberal Model*, which is characterised by medium newspaper circulation, neutral commercial press, strong professionalization and market domination. The second one is *Northern European* or *Democratic Corporatist Model*, which is featured by high newspaper circulation, external pluralism in national press, strong professionalization and strong state intervention alongside protection for press freedom. The Third model is *Mediterranean* or *Polarised Pluralist Model*, which is characterised by low newspaper circulation, high political parallelism, weaker professionalization and strong state intervention.⁵⁶⁴

As a Mediterranean country, Turkey has historically been closer to Polarised Pluralist Model in this categorisation. Similar to previous terms, it has been possible to observe the consequences of increasing polarisation in Turkish society during AK Party rule. Media was not immune from the influences of this polarisation. The lines between pro and anti government media have become thicker each and every day.

⁵⁶² Raşit Kaya and Barış Çakmur, “Politics and the Mass Media in Turkey,” *Turkish Studies* 11, no.4 (December 2010): 521.

⁵⁶³ Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini, *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 21.

⁵⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 66-80.

This has forced journalists and media administrations to take sides. This limited the space for freedom of expression especially for those who contradict their newspaper's or TV channel's editorial line. When journalists were sacked for having ideological/intellectual contradictions with their bosses and editors, they were welcomed by the opposite side for the same reason.

Turkey's mainstream media is owned by moguls who operate in other major sectors of the economy like telecommunications, banking and construction. An extensive study conducted for the European Union by a group of journalists and independent media experts from across the continent found similar problems throughout southeastern Europe.

“Many media owners and leading journalists have vested political and economic interests and use their position to engage in ruthless “media wars” against political opponents. Journalism and media associations tend to replicate political or ideological demarcation lines... For a lot of owners, their media appear to be little more than “arrow and shield” that they use in power struggles and as instruments to achieve business goals by influencing political and administrative decision-makers.”⁵⁶⁵

This relationship has become more problematic in Turkey with the involvement of some religious groups in media circles. For instance, as a journalist who claims to be victim of problems regarding freedom of press in Turkey, Mahir Zeynalov was reflecting his position about journalism and Gülen Movement: “I sacrifice my head to this sacred truth, for which hundreds of millions of heads were sacrificed. Even if

⁵⁶⁵ European Commission funded Report by Partecip GmbH, “Western Balkans and Turkey Media and Freedom of Expression Fact-finding and Scoping Study,” (April 2013): 12.

you turn the world into fire for us, we will not give up this sacred duty.”⁵⁶⁶ Only two days after he left Turkey, Zeynalov was attacking pro-government *Star* daily and claiming that it should not be called a newspaper, but a piece of paper.⁵⁶⁷ By this way, he was showing his approach to freedom of press.

Businessman Akın İpek, the owner of *Bugün* daily and Kanaltürk TV, was clear about his position as a media boss: “I would sacrifice all of my possessions for a single smile of [Fethullah Gülen].” In his article about İpek’s loyalty to Gülen, Ahmet Kurucan from *Zaman* daily was endorsing and sharing that approach by saying “You cannot understand servants... It is an honour for us to be servants of *Hizmet* [i.e. Gülen Movement]. We are all like Akın İpek.”⁵⁶⁸

There is a tendency in the western mainstream media to assume that there is a domination of pro-AK Party media in Turkey. There is no dispute about the fact that there has been a clear separation of opinions among Turkish media outlets especially since Gezi Park incidents that has become sharpened after the power rift between AK Party and Gülen Movement. Generally speaking newspapers like *Sabah*, *Türkiye*, *Star*, *Yeni Şafak*, *Akşam*, *Takvim*, *Güneş* and *Yeni Akit* have had pro-AK Party positions, while dailies like *Zaman*, *Posta*, *Hürriyet*, *Sözcü*, *Haber Türk*, *Bugün*, *Milliyet*, *Aydınlık*, *Şok*, *Cumhuriyet*, *Yeni Asya*, *Yurt* and *Yeni Çağ* defended a pro-Gülen position in this debate.

As has been underlined by Mustafa Karaalioğlu from daily *Star*, if mainstream Turkish media and Gülen Movement’s media is added, the total amount of

⁵⁶⁶ Mahir Zeynalov, His official Twitter account @MahirZeynalov_, 7 February 2014.

⁵⁶⁷ @MahirZeynalov_, 9 February 2014.

⁵⁶⁸ Cited in Ahmet Kurucan, “Hizmetçileri anlayamazsınız siz!” [You cannot understand the servants], *Zaman*, 17 March 2014.

newspapers that “categorically oppose AK Party” consist of nearly ¾ of the total circulation.⁵⁶⁹ Moreover, Turkey’s two English language dailies were also both in the anti-AK Party camp (Gülen Movement’s *Today’s Zaman* and Aydın Doğan’s *Hürriyet Daily News*). In order to show the distribution of the balance among pro-government and anti-government newspapers, providing the circulation numbers of the ten largest dailies (excluding two sports newspapers) gives tangible data:

Average Daily Circulation of Top 10 Newspapers			
between 13.01.2014 and 19.01.2014			
<i>Source: Press Announcement Association</i>			
Newspapers with Pro-Gülen Stance During the Political “Battle”⁵⁷⁰		Newspapers with Pro-AK Party Stance During the Political “Battle”	
<i>Zaman</i>	1.174.257	<i>Sabah</i>	330.434
<i>Posta</i>	415.225	<i>Türkiye</i>	184.053
<i>Hürriyet</i>	402.770	<i>Star</i>	136.469
<i>Sözcü</i>	364.726	<i>Yeni Şafak</i>	128.092
<i>Haber Türk</i>	229.759	<i>Takvim</i>	108.534
<i>Bugün</i>	167.644		
<i>Milliyet</i>	166.858		
Total	2.921.239	Total	887.582

It has become one of the most commonly used criticisms against AK Party to claim that the government, specifically Erdoğan, is applying pressure on the media. Whenever, anti-AK Party journalists faced problems they received high international media attention. Almost all of them used this chance to blame the AK Party government for oppression. For instance, in her interview with Matthew Cassel, columnist Ece Temelkuran, who had to leave her position from pro-Gülen Habertürk daily, was saying:

⁵⁶⁹ Mustafa Karaalioğlu, cited in Melih Altınok, “Erdoğan’ın karşısındaki basın değil medya partisi” [It is not press against Erdoğan, it is a media party], *Türkiye*, 19 February 2014.

⁵⁷⁰ *The Guardian*, Editorial: “Turkey: up from the depths,” 27 December 2013.

“I am freaking out, it's not the imprisonment necessarily, but now I feel like I have this stamp of *persona non grata* by the government. I am afraid I might be unemployed for a while because no newspaper would employ me because of that stamp.”⁵⁷¹

However, she continued writing articles for national and international media. Her books remained as bestsellers. Moreover, she became editor-in-chief of left-wing *Birgün* daily the next year. It was surprising to read her reason for leaving her editor-in-chief position after only three months: “I need to write a book. I have not decided about its subject yet.”⁵⁷²

During the height of tension between Turkish government and Gülen Movement, BBC has been quoting “Turkish journalists” saying “We have serious problems with freedom.”⁵⁷³ Interestingly the only two journalists, BBC was interviewing for this analysis was from pro-Gülen Movement newspapers (i.e. Amberin Zaman, a columnist at pro-Gülen *Taraf*, and Yavuz Baydar, a columnist at Gülen’s *Today's Zaman*). These two journalists were interviewed as victims of government for being “sacked from pro-government newspapers.” There was no mention about the journalists who were sacked from pro-Gülen newspapers during the same time period. They did not seem to have any value in the eyes of western media, as shown in this BBC piece, since anti-government journalists were accepted to talk in the name of “Turkish journalists” as a whole.

⁵⁷¹ Matthew Cassel, "Firing Turkey's Ece Temelkuran: The Price of Speaking Out," *Al Akhbar English*, 6 January 2012.

⁵⁷² Ece Temelkuran, "Artık Gitme Zamanı," [It is Time to Go], *Birgün*, 21 October 2013.

⁵⁷³ *BBC News*, "Turkish journalists: 'We have serious problems with freedom'," 24 December 2014.

Yet, there is another part of the story that is not adequately told in the mainstream western media. Some very well-known journalists were fired from anti-AK Party newspapers for the ideas they defended in their columns. One important example was Andrew Finkel, who was fired from *Today's Zaman*, for objecting the imprisonment of renowned journalists Ahmet Şık and Nedim Şener. These two journalists were imprisoned for writing books that criticise Gülen Movement. Finkel was saying that “it should not be a crime to write a book that bothers Gülen Movement.”⁵⁷⁴

Bülent Keneş, the editor-in-chief of *Today's Zaman*, was explaining their decision by saying, “as an editor-in-chief you have the right to choose whom to work with and whom not to work with in consideration of the daily's editorial policy. I exercised this right when I started working with Finkel. I used this right again when extending my appreciation for his contributions and parting ways. I don't think this has anything to do with a free press or the freedom of thought.”⁵⁷⁵

Another example were Ahmet Taşgetiren, who had to leave Gülen's *Bugün* daily for being closer to the AK Party government's position during the Erdoğan-Gülen power struggle. Another journalist was columnist Ergun Babahan was fired from his post at *Today's Zaman* via a twitter message by Bülent Keneş, over a number of controversial tweets he posted about Fethullah Gülen. Just moments after Babahan's tweets, *Today's Zaman* Editor-in-Chief Bülent Keneş announced via Twitter that he was no longer working for the paper: "Babahan had his opinions published in TZ [Today's Zaman] twice a week. I hereby declare that he will remain a bitter memory

⁵⁷⁴ Metin Münir, "Andrew Finkel neden kovuldu?," [‘Why was Andrew Finkel fired?’] *Milliyet*, 7 April 2011.

⁵⁷⁵ Bülent Keneş, “Why was Andrew Finkel fired?,” *Today's Zaman*, 11 April 2011.

at TZ."⁵⁷⁶ The apology of Babahan for mistyping the controversial word in his tweet and unintentionally offending Gülen and his followers did not change this decision.⁵⁷⁷

Pro-AK Party media has also become victim of hate speech in this process. For instance, while sharing the link of an analysis of *Daily Sabah* titled “No Surprises Expected in Local Elections”, which reflected predictions for an AK Party victory in İstanbul and Ankara (which actually turned out to be true in the actual elections), *Hürriyet Daily News* columnist Emre Deliveli was reacting by saying, “you wish, you lying, scheming, treacherous traitor assholes!”⁵⁷⁸

By his heavily re-tweeted post from his Twitter account with more than 600.000 followers, *Taraf* daily columnist Mehmet Baransu revealed personal information (including home address and citizenship number) of journalist Elif Çakır from pro-AK Party *Star* newspaper and *24 TV*. Upon increasing death threats following this disclosure, Çakır had to move out of her house and request personal protection from police forces.⁵⁷⁹

Another example was Hüseyin Gülerce whose TV programme was ended on Gülen’s *Mehtap TV* channel. Although he has been praised as a leading figure in Gülen Movement’s media for long years, his programme was ended because of his critical stance against using undemocratic means to topple the government. In his tweets that ostracised him from Gülen Movement, Gülerce was saying, “I cannot

⁵⁷⁶ *Hürriyet Daily News*, “Turkish columnist fired via Twitter over his tweets,” 13 May 2012.

⁵⁷⁷ *Milliyet*, “Ergun Babahan attığı tweet yüzünden işinden oldu,” [Ergun Babahan Lost His Job upon His Tweets], 13 May 2012.

⁵⁷⁸ Emre Deliveli, His official Twitter account @EmreDeliveli, 5 March 2014.

⁵⁷⁹ *Anadolu Agency*, “Gazeteci Çakır’dan Baransu hakkında suç duyurusu,” [Journalist Çakır filed criminal complaint against Baransu], 12 March 2014.

accept plots against Prime Minister Erdoğan. If he has to leave his seat, this may occur as a result of the will of delegates in AK Party Congress or the will of electorate in elections. But foreigners cannot send my country's prime minister away. In the name of democracy, fairness and conscience, we should not consent to provocations and plots."⁵⁸⁰

Although it is generally, presented as if Erdoğan is in a personal power struggle with Turkish mainstream media, the problematic relationship of this media is far from being limited to Erdoğan himself. AK Party supporters could not escape from this hate speech of the mainstream Turkish press as well. For instance, Enver Aysever, who presented a discussion program on *CNN Turk* and who became member of CHP Party Council, was tweeting to his 660K followers that "rightists/conservatives don't read book, don't go to theatre, don't listen to music, don't respect to the nature."⁵⁸¹ Similarly, Ercan İnan from *Vatan* daily was criticising AK Party for hiding behind a "mass that does not read and listen; and that cannot learn."⁵⁸² Columnist Emre Uslu from *Taraf* and *Today's Zaman* dailies was claiming that "ignorance" is the only life buoy of AK Party.⁵⁸³

In his infamous article, as columnist of *Hürriyet* daily, Bekir Coşkun was despising AK Party supporters as "men scratching their bellies," who watch entertainment TV shows instead of news programmes.⁵⁸⁴ Another *Hürriyet* columnist and a popular social media figure Yılmaz Özdil, who has more than 1,6 million Twitter followers

⁵⁸⁰ Cited in his interview with *Al Jazeera*, "Böyle bir karar beklemiyordum," [I did not expect this decision], *Al Jazeera Turk*, 27 February 2014.

⁵⁸¹ Enver Aysever, His official Twitter Account @enveraysever2, 10 November 2014.

⁵⁸² Ercan İnan, His official Twitter account @ercaninanvatan, 2 March 2014.

⁵⁸³ Emre Uslu, His Twitter Account @EmreUslu, 1 March 2014.

⁵⁸⁴ Bekir Coşkun, "Göbeğini kaşıyan adam...", [Man scratching his stomach], *Hürriyet*, 3 May 2007.

as of March 2014, was naming AK Party supporters as “barrel-headed.”⁵⁸⁵ Mine Kırıkkanat from *Radikal* newspaper was comparing Turkish people to bears and describing the AK Party voters as “short-legged and long-armed hairy men.”⁵⁸⁶ Interestingly two years later, Kanat was citing similar observations of *Le Monde*’s Guillaume Perrier as a supporting proof for her arguments.⁵⁸⁷

In reference to Aziz Nesin who claimed that ‘sixty percent of Turkish people is stupid’, Müjdat Gezen, an activist Kemalist actor, was saying “Some polls show the support for AK Party is at fifty percent. According to Aziz Nesin’s standards, that should be sixty percent.”⁵⁸⁸ Aybars Turan, President of National Education Foundation, was likening AK Party supporters with “donkeys”.⁵⁸⁹ A former model, who co-presented a show on *NTV* news channel was complaining, “I cannot bear the fact that the vote of a shepherd in the mountain is as valuable as mine.”⁵⁹⁰

There were similar insults within political arena. The statements on placards in the election rallies of opposition parties were part of the insulting discourse, saying things such as “We do not want shepherd Recep and his sheep. One becomes an AK Party supporter when he loses his honor.”⁵⁹¹ As the leader of the main opposition party, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu was openly praising a banner in his election rally in Bursa which says “I will not vote for the AK Party because I have a brain.”⁵⁹² Leader of Nationalist Movement Party Devlet Bahçeli was identifying AK Party voters as

⁵⁸⁵ Yılmaz Özdil, “Bidon kafa...” [Barrel-Headed], *Hürriyet*, 13 August 2007.

⁵⁸⁶ Mine Kırıkkanat, “Halkımız eğleniyor,” [Our people is having fun], *Radikal*, 27 July 2005.

⁵⁸⁷ Mine Kırıkkanat, “Mangalıcının siyasal tercihi,” [The political choice of barbecue lovers], *Vatan*, 27 July 2007.

⁵⁸⁸ Müjdat Gezen, TV Programme with Uğur Dündar, *Arena- Star TV*, 1 February 2011.

⁵⁸⁹ Aybars Turan, His speech at the First Plenary Session of National Education Foundation, Samsun, 18 April 2009.

⁵⁹⁰ *Hürriyet*, “Dağdaki çobanla benim oyum eşit olamaz,” [My vote cannot be equal to the vote of a shepherd], 28 March 2008.

⁵⁹¹ Cited in Keneş, “Vote of a shepherd should not be as valuable as mine.”

⁵⁹² Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, His speech at the election rally in Bursa, 29 May 2011.

“inauspicious.”⁵⁹³ Leader of Justice and Equality Party Osman Pamukoğlu was claiming that only “ignorant, hungered and rent-seeker” people vote for AK Party.⁵⁹⁴ Serdar Turgut from *Haber Türk* daily was characterising the act of voting for AK Party as “unscrupulous, weird and contemptible conduct.” And he was expressing his disappointment that the majority of Turkish people will again vote for AK Party.⁵⁹⁵

The İstanbul mayoral candidate of the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP), Mustafa Sarıgül, was claiming that “If AK Party wins İstanbul mayorship again, Allah forbid, they will start raking with machine guns. They will first rake Republican People’s Party and then Nationalist Movement Party. They will then rake TÜSİAD (Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association), European Union and remaining few journalists. They will rake TUSKON (Turkish Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists), The [Gülen] Community and free-thinking youth in social media.”⁵⁹⁶ Interestingly, he punched a protestor in the face on the same day he posted these tweets. His justification for his action was more interesting: “We later identified that person. He turned out to be an AK Party supporter. He was not a citizen; he was a brother of an AK Party member.”⁵⁹⁷

As has been underlined by Chief Editor of *Today’s Zaman* Bülent Keneş before Gülen Movement separated its ways from AK Party, “The roots of this elitism and condescending /discriminative language can be traced back to the first generation of the republican era,” within which Kemalist elites “isolated themselves from the

⁵⁹³ Devlet Bahçeli, His speech at Nationalist Movement Party Youth Congress, 10 February 2013.

⁵⁹⁴ Osman Pamukoğlu, His press conference at Grand Yükseliş Hotel, Kocaeli, 21 August 2010.

⁵⁹⁵ Serdat Turgut, "Paranoya notları, [Paranoia notes], *Haber Türk*, 13 Mart 2014.

⁵⁹⁶ Mustafa Sarıgül, His official Twitter account @M_Sarigul, 2 March 2014.

⁵⁹⁷ Mustafa Sarıgül, Cited in *Star*, "Sarıgül'ün özrü kabahatinden beter," [Sarıgül's Apology is Worse than His Fault], 5 March 2014.

people.”⁵⁹⁸ “The same twisted point of view manifested itself once more after the transition to a multiparty system in 1950.” Keneş continues: As the supporters of “the longstanding dictatorship of the CHP,[Kemalist elite] insulted the popular choice, saying that the feet have replaced the heads.”

Interestingly, there has been a double standard in the mainstream media even about the deaths according to their political leanings. For instance, thousands of people attended the funeral of 15-year-boy Berkin Elvan, who died in March 2014 after being in a coma for 269 days resulting from being hit in the head by a gas canister fired by police in Istanbul during Gezi park protests in June 2013. It sparked anti-government protests in different cities, which attracted massive foreign media coverage. Berkin’s story was identified as a “symbol of the heavy-handed police tactics against demonstrators” during Gezi protests.⁵⁹⁹ Foreign media outlets like BBC News interviewed with the Elvan’s father.

Government officials and pro-government media reported that “illegal groups exploit the public grief with violent attacks on civil servants and civilians.”⁶⁰⁰ 22-year-old Burak Can Karamanoğlu was shot from his head by protestors and a police officer died of a heart attack while in a car that is stoned by protestors. The only pro-government English newspaper *Daily Sabah*, which recently started publication as an alternative to other two anti-AK Party English dailies totally dominating the field (i.e. *Hürriyet Daily News* and *Today’s Zaman*), was among the sources reporting about unlawful incidents. Interestingly correspondents of foreign news outlets were ridiculing these reports simply because of their prejudice against AK Party. For

⁵⁹⁸ Bülent Keneş, “Vote of a shepherd should not be as valuable as mine,” *Today’s Zaman*, 7 June 2011.

⁵⁹⁹ *France 24*, “Clashes in Turkey as protesters mourn teenager’s death,” 12 March 2014.

⁶⁰⁰ *Daily Sabah*, “Boy’s Death Sparks Violence,” 13 March 2014.

instance, Alex Christie-Miller, Turkey correspondent for the Times of London, and also for the Christian Science Monitor and Eurasianet.org, was criticising *Daily Sabah*'s coverage and saying "I reckon the AKP's international reputation was taking less damage when Sabah was just in Turkish."⁶⁰¹

However, a few hours later, extreme-left Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front (DHKP-C), a terrorist organisation that is infamous for its US Embassy suicide blast⁶⁰² and attacks on the Ministry of Justice and AK Party headquarters in Ankara⁶⁰³ alongside many other previous crimes, accepted the responsibility for killing Burak Can Karamanoğlu, burning down AK Party's election offices and raking a police vehicle with machine guns.⁶⁰⁴ Not surprisingly, Ragıp Soylu from *Daily Sabah* remained empty handed when he asked for an apology from foreign correspondents, including Alex Christie-Miller, for their unfair insults. Moreover, there was not a single word about the funeral of Burak Can Karamanoğlu in the mainstream foreign media (like *CNN*, *BBC*, *Al Jazeera* and *France 24*), which covered Elvan's funeral extensively the previous day. There was a similar silence when DHKP-C murdered Mehmet Selim Kiraz, the prosecutor who was handling the Elvan case, in March 2015.

Oltac Unsal, the Head of The World Bank Group's *infoDev* global grant program, was the main organiser of the Indiegogo crowd-funding campaign to raise money for a full-page ad in the New York Times about Berkin Elvan's death.⁶⁰⁵ When asked

⁶⁰¹ Alex Christie-Miller, His Twitter account @AChristieMiller, 13 March 2014.

⁶⁰² *BBC News*, "DHKP-C group claims US embassy suicide blast in Ankara," 2 February 2014.

⁶⁰³ *Today's Zaman*, "DHKP/C claims responsibility for Ankara attacks," 20 March 2014.

⁶⁰⁴ *BBC News Turkish*, "DHKP-C Burak Can Karamanoğlu'nun öldürülmesini üstlendi," [DHKP-C claims responsibility for the killing of Burak Can Karamanoğlu], 13 March 2014.

⁶⁰⁵ Indiegogo, "NYT Ad for Berkin Elvan," <http://www.indiegogo.com/projects/nyt-ad-for-berkin-elvan> (Accessed 13/11/2013).

why he used the money for an ad in NYT instead of donating it to the victim's family that is in need of help, Unsal's answer was revealing: "Our aim in publishing this ad is to punch Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's lights out by means of media. Donation is totally another story."⁶⁰⁶

CONCLUSION

The story of Turkey's fluctuant EU membership bid, which dates back to 1959, has experienced many ups and downs at various stages. There have been many different factors at play throughout the process and Turkey-EU relations have not been happening between two unitary and rational actors. The actions and interactions are continuously influencing the outcomes alongside many other factors, including material ones. Unexpected developments like the recent turmoil in Ukraine or the refugee crisis caused by the Syrian war have been continually affecting the pace of the process as well. Thus, no single study is exclusively enough in grasping all aspects of Turkey-EU relations.

⁶⁰⁶ Cited in *En Son Haber*, "New York Times'a Berkin Elvan ilanı diyalogu," [Dialogue on Berkin Elvan's New York Times ad], 15 March 2014.

While the main focus in the literature is generally on what AK Party has or has not done while analysing the good and bad times of the relationship in the post-9/11 period, the role of other actors like mainstream international media is generally neglected in influencing the possibilities of Turkey-EU relations both in positive and negative directions. Standing closer to the poststructuralist approach, this thesis analyses the changing nature of competing representations of AK Party in the western mainstream media and political discourse, which is widely neglected in spite of its importance in the process. “The role of media in demonizing certain Others”⁶⁰⁷ is underlined in that respect.

This thesis rejects the analyses, which assume that membership negotiations have started or halted upon objective cost-benefit calculations of rational actors. It argues that, alongside other factors like the performance of Turkish government, AK Party’s positive representation in the western mainstream media within the immediate post-9/11 social context provided an environment for supporting Turkey’s EU membership in European identity and interest discourses. Moreover, changing conditions and representations became part of considerable obstacles for Turkey’s membership later on by producing sources of fear and confusion in the minds and hearts of Europeans. This has been reflected well in the fact that “the more Europeans have begun to see Islam as an existential threat in post-September 11 era, the more they tend to define Turkey as one of the potential ‘others’ of the EU’s emerging identity.”⁶⁰⁸ Later on, ‘autocracy’ allegations about Erdoğan, who seemed to have the political power to rule Turkey in the foreseeable near future,

⁶⁰⁷ Welch, “Foreword,” xi.

⁶⁰⁸ Oğuzlu, “Middle Easternization of Turkey’s Foreign Policy,” 13.

have created a scarier blend. The representation of AK Party and its leader in the western media has played a key role in this discursive interaction and change.

This thesis rejects rationalist materialist assumption on natural and pre-given identity understanding. Within that framework, it deconstructs concepts and labels like Islamist or secular, which are taken for granted within debates. It analyses dominant discourses on AK Party and Turkey's identity, as well as foreign policy predictions emanating from these discursive positions. Thus, it highlights the changes and interactions among different sources of discourses during the relevant period, benefiting from the latest discursive data, especially during the Gezi Park incidents in Turkey that has caused Turkish-EU relations to hit rock bottom. It focuses on the western mainstream media coverage of the incidents that dominantly included views from the protestors and academics/journalists/analyst that are famous for their anti-Erdoğan attitude.

The prospects for Turkey's EU membership are looking bleaker than ever now, as is the representation of Erdoğan and AK Party in the mainstream western media. Turkey's relatively independent foreign policy choices and domestic developments that started with Gezi Park protests and continued during the power struggle between Turkish government and Gülen Movement made things worse. Many EU countries and EU bodies have increased their criticisms about the AK Party government and its leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan during and after Gezi Park protests, mainly focusing on the authoritarian tendencies of Erdoğan and the pitfalls of the majoritarian style democracy in Turkey. Political leaders from various EU member states are much more frank in their opposition to Turkey's EU membership by saying that a country like Turkey is not and/or cannot be part of Europe.

This thesis takes Turkey-EU relations as the policy area to analyse the relationship between discursive representations and policy choices. If one only analyses the material factors in Turkey and EU, that has no use in understanding the changes in Turkey-EU relations. Although there have been some developments that caused negative reactions from the West, changes in material conditions of Turkey in meeting the membership criteria do not reflect the dramatic negative change in Turkey's EU membership destination. Although, the pace has been criticised, new reform steps have been taken in addition to already existent reforms that hardly anyone in Turkey and abroad denies. Moreover, there have been considerable positive developments about the reasons that were used to support Turkey's membership bid, such as good performance of Turkish economy or its importance in terms of Europe's energy security.

This qualitative research claims that the dominant rationalist materialist and essentialist analyses in the literature and media fell short of understanding Turkey, its new governing party and Turkey-EU relations. It challenges the plausibility of essentialist arguments like "they hate us", "they will not take us", "they are not like us," or "they will ruin us." Moreover it argues that these dominant approaches have had decisive influences on western actors' perceptions and actions related to AK Party and Turkey under its rule. As it underlines "the power of incomplete, ambiguous, and contradictory discourses to produce a social reality that we experience as solid and real,"⁶⁰⁹ this thesis examines how language constructs phenomena and how that influences policy choices. Since "discourse is not produced without context and cannot be understood without taking context into

⁶⁰⁹ Phillips and Hardy, *Discourse Analysis: Investigating Processes of Social Construction*, 1-2.

consideration,”⁶¹⁰ it pays special attention on the role of social context during the relevant period (i.e. post-9/11 period up until now).

Moreover, this thesis argues that material elements have a secondary status, because they gain meaning only through intellectual processes. As has been pointed out by Kevin Dunn, reality “is unknowable outside human perception, and there is never only one authority on a given subject.”⁶¹¹ In Friedrich Nietzsche’s words, “There are no facts in themselves. It is always necessary to begin by introducing a meaning in order that there can be a fact.”⁶¹²

The mainstream media has an important role in influencing identity and policy narratives that are dominant among public and elites. When they explain why some ideas win out over others, comparative politics scholars tend to “emphasize neither the constitutive power of ideas nor an idea’s intrinsic force, but rather its ability to clarify uncertainty or reconcile the interests of elites.”⁶¹³ Differently from other negotiation processes, public opinion has always been a substantial part of Turkey’s membership debate. Contrary to the formal discourse, the process has been much more than a technical procedure. Turkish membership has been an important subject of various national election campaigns in EU member states. New laws that required national referendum in some of these members (i.e. France and Austria, both of which are among the countries with the least public support percentages in polls about Turkey’s EU membership) regardless of the success of Turkey’s negotiations increased the role of media and public opinion in the process.

⁶¹⁰ Fairclough and Wodak, “Critical Discourse Analysis,” 277.

⁶¹¹ Dunn, “Historical Representations,” 79.

⁶¹² Cited in Roland Barthes, “The Discourse of History,” *Comparative Criticism*, no. 3 (1981): 16.

⁶¹³ Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, “TAKING STOCK: The Constructivist Research Program in International Relations and Comparative Politics,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 4, no.1 (2001): 406.

It is possible to claim that “the EU appears to have reached the limits of a top-down, elite-driven Project.”⁶¹⁴ What people on the street think is becoming more and more important especially after the rise of public resentment in numerous member countries against the policies of EU. This trend has become much more visible after the last European Parliament elections that increased the pressure on the mainstream political parties and EU bodies, while providing an increasing voice for anti-EU and anti-enlargement actors.

Nick Couldry describes ‘media power’ as “the concentration in media institutions of the symbolic power of “constructing reality” (both factual representations and credible fictions).”⁶¹⁵ Despite the new communicative opportunities presented by mediums like social media, mainstream media remains the key site of discourses with significant media power over discourses that represent and shape western societies. Since mainstream media outlets are vertically structured organizations staffed by professionals that are geared towards large, homogeneous (segments of) audiences, they remain the main carriers of dominant discourses and representations.⁶¹⁶ In this framework, it is possible to claim that mainstream media’s corporate structure and its large audience-base allow for discourses’ representations to be spread widely in a highly uniform and repetitive way.⁶¹⁷

As has been put by Hansen, “the emphasis in discourse analysis on the importance

⁶¹⁴ Ziya Öniş, “Contesting for Turkey’s Political Centre: Domestic Politics, Identity Conflicts and the Controversy over EU Membership,” *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 18, no.3 (September 2010): 362.

⁶¹⁵ Nick Couldry, *The Place of Media Power: Pilgrims and Witnesses of the Media Age* (London: Routledge, 2000): 4.

⁶¹⁶ Nico Carpentier, Rico Lie and Jan Servaes, “Community Media: Muting the democratic media discourse?” *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 17, no.1 (2003): 56.

⁶¹⁷ Christian Ledwell, “Ideology No More: a discourse of othering in Canadian mainstream newspaper representations of the Idle No More movement,” *MEDIA@LSE MSc Dissertation Series*, London School of Economics (August 2013): 10.

of language makes knowledge of a particular language and its codes essential.” One of the solutions in meeting this requirement is to “shift the focus of the analysis to texts that were aimed at an international, usually English speaking, audience.”⁶¹⁸ English-language mainstream media that target a more general audience has been the main resource for this thesis. Mainstream American and British media are included in this group in addition to English-language mainstream media outlets like *Der Spiegel*, *France 24* and *RT News*. Since they are part of debates in western political discourse by being followed by a considerable amount of western elite audience and by being contributed by western authors, English-language media outlets like *Al Jazeera* and *Haaretz* are also included.

Moreover, mainstream western media publications in other languages were used by benefiting from various online translation services when they are referenced in Turkish and English language media. Mainstream Turkish media was also extensively used as a source, since its interaction with the rest of the western media is key in understanding AK Party’s representation in western political/media discourse. Although mostly print media is taken into account in this thesis, there is a fruitful area for future analyses that will focus on empirical data from other media sources like TV coverage and radio broadcasting.

Within that framework, this thesis is particularly interested in the way in which AK Party and specifically Erdoğan have been represented in the Western mainstream media discourse, and how these representations have influenced specific encounters in Turkey-EU relations. The changes in the dominant representations over time have a special place in this analysis. It is claimed that western media and political

⁶¹⁸ Hansen, *Security as Practice*, 83.

discourse on AK Party had decisive influence in limiting possible policy options for policy makers. Positive and praising discourse on AK Party and Turkey that dominated western political landscape enabled EU leaders to open the way for membership negotiations. Similarly, negative and even demonising discourse on AK Party became the biggest obstacle for the continuation of the negotiations.

This thesis puts emphasis on the contested meanings of AK Party and Erdoğan and traces how the dominant representation has shifted over time. Because, as has been argued by Iver Neumann, when “a discourse maintains a degree of regularity in social relations, it produces preconditions for action.”⁶¹⁹ It is claimed that the changes in representations of AK Party and Turkey under its rule defined the limits of possible policy choices both for the EU and Turkey. Analysing these changes reveal important clues in understanding how the opening of negotiations emerged as a political option, how other options were shunted aside at that time, and how those options became dominant after some time.

Both positive and negative political and media representations of AK Party have been crucial in re-shaping possibilities for the nature of the EU-Turkey relationship and EU’s position about Turkey’s accession process. This does not mean that there is a single factor that explains everything about the ups and downs of the relationship or a scapegoat for the obvious failure of the negotiation process. It should be emphasised that, instead of directly causing foreign policy actions, this thesis claims that socially constructed representations “frame the context of the ‘perceived’ reality of decision-makers at any given time.”⁶²⁰ As has been put by Teun van Dijk, “media influence, and hence power, is usually indirect and rarely

⁶¹⁹ Neumann, “Discourse Analysis,” 62.

⁶²⁰ Browning, *Constructivism, Narrative and Foreign Policy Analysis*, 22.

total.”⁶²¹ This conception obviously leaves an important room for agency. This highlights the importance of the concept of ‘logic of appropriateness’ that is referred as the behavioural logic emphasised by constructivist analysts. According to this approach “a certain course of behaviour is adopted because it is in agreement with the intersubjectively shared, value-based expectations of appropriate behaviour emanating from the actor’s social environment.”⁶²²

Within this framework, this thesis accepts the important role of mainstream media in shaping identity and policy discourses that are dominant among elites and public. In other words, the mainstream media continue to influence people’s understanding of the most salient issues of the day. Founded on the idea that media texts do not have innate meanings, but instead are assigned meanings by media consumers, this thesis employs a qualitative discourse analysis rather than a quantitative content analysis. It does not deal with discussions on whether politicians are sincere in their public discourses or they simply try to use it as a tool to achieve their hidden goals. It is assumed that media texts are a significant target of discourse analysis because of their central role in the production and reproduction of dominant discourse.⁶²³

The media is uniquely positioned to exert control over discourse through its operation as a central institution of information production and its relations to other dominant institutions.⁶²⁴ Although dominant ideologies and their variations are

⁶²¹ Teun A. van Dijk, "The Mass Media Today: Discourses of Dominaion or Diversity?" *Javnost - The Public: Journal of the European Institute for Communication and Culture* 2, no.2 (1995): 32.

⁶²² Volker Rittberger, "Approaches to the Study of Foreign Policy Derived from International Relations Theories," *Center for International Relations/Peace and Conflict Studies - University of Tübingen*, no. 49 (2004): 9.

⁶²³ Julia E. Janes, Bonny Ibhawoh, Narda Razack and Nathan Gilbert, "The Trouble with Triumph: Discourses of Governmentality in Mainstream Media Representations of Urban Youth," *Journal of Progressive Human Services* 25, no.1 (2014): 55.

⁶²⁴ Victor Valle and Rodolfo D. Torres, "The idea of mestizaje and the “race” problematic: Racialized media discourse in a post-Fordist landscape," in Antonia Darder (ed.), *Culture and difference:*

jointly produced by the elites, “media elites have the special role and persuasive power to control dominant discourse reproduction among the population at large.”⁶²⁵

It is predominantly media elite’s definition of the situation that contributes to the manufacturing of public opinion, if not to the opinions of the political elites.

In the process that brought the opening of Turkey’s negotiation press in 2005, AK Party was frequently praised in the mainstream western media as a ‘model’ that had to be exported to the rest of the Muslim world.⁶²⁶ Its leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was applauded as one of the rarest blends in the Islamic world and the champion of Turkey’s westernisation reforms.⁶²⁷ The economic success of AK Party-ruled Turkey was also praised. Prime Minister Erdoğan became “the darling of the international community” during this period,⁶²⁸ a period when the Western political and media landscape mainly viewed Turkey as a success story under AK Party rule. Turkey’s supporters in EU welcomed the opening of negotiations as “truly historic for Europe and for the whole of the international community.” And they hailed the deal as an important step in undermining “Islamist extremists by showing that the EU is not an exclusively Christian club” and helping “relations with millions of Muslims in today's EU.”⁶²⁹

After the dominant discourse in coverage of Gezi Park incidents and the negative representation of AK Party and Erdoğan in the mainstream western media, “in member countries’ parliaments and the European Parliament, the chorus of voices

critical perspectives on the bicultural experience in the United States (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing, 1995): 139–153.

⁶²⁵ Dijk, “The Mass Media Today,” 33.

⁶²⁶ Cihan Ziya Tugal, “Towards the End of a Dream? The Erdogan-Gulen Fallout and Islamic Liberalism’s Descent,” *Jadaliyya*, 22 December 2013.

⁶²⁷ Andrew Purvis, “Recep Tayyip Erdoğan: Turkey’s Builder of Bridges,” *Time* 100, 26 April 2004.

⁶²⁸ Daron Acemoglu, “The Failed Autocrat” *Foreign Policy*, 22 May 2014.

⁶²⁹ Nicholas Watt, “Europe embraces Turkey as diplomatic deadlock is broken,” *The Guardian*, 4 October 2005.

demanding that accession talks be suspended is growing.”⁶³⁰ Indeed, Germany blocked the start to new EU accession talks with Turkey in June 2013 and put reservations about proceeding with the regional policy chapter of EU membership talks, which would be the first chapter to be opened in three years. In the words of an EU diplomat, “Germany was simply not ready to give its support. The ongoing protests obviously had an impact on the decision.”⁶³¹ Andreas Scheuer of the Christian Social Union (CSU), the Bavarian sister party to Angela Merkel's Christian Democrats (CDU) was saying, “Erdogan's Turkey has no place in Europe.” Green Party chairman Cem Özdemir was supporting him that an Erdoğan-ruled Turkey is an “increasingly authoritarian state.”⁶³²

Reuters was announcing AK Party's latest election victory in March 2014 to its subscribers with the title “Erdogan victory puts icy Turkey-EU relations in deep freeze,” while claiming that “the EU is very unlikely to nudge Ankara's accession hopes along until Erdogan shows he is prepared to protect civil liberties, justice and the rule of law - and govern like a mainstream European prime minister.”⁶³³ In the words of Alexander Christie-Miller from *The Times*, “The European Union is expected to put Turkey's membership application on ice amid fears that the country's Prime Minister is steering his Government towards autocracy.”⁶³⁴ By continuing the same discourse, Alan Cowell from *New York Times* claims that “after months of increasingly authoritarian rule” by Erdoğan,” the portals of the club seem

⁶³⁰ Carsten Volkery and Severin Weiland, "Turkey's Gamble: Crackdown Threatens EU Accession Talks," *Der Spiegel*, 12 June 2013.

⁶³¹ Daniel Dombey, James Fontanella-Khan and Quentin Peel, "Germany blocks Turkey's bid to join EU," *Financial Times*, 20 June 2013.

⁶³² Cited in 'Erdogan's Turkey has no place in Europe', *The Local*, 12 August 2014.

⁶³³ Luke Baker, "Erdogan victory puts icy Turkey-EU relations in deep freeze," *Reuters*, 31 March 2014.

⁶³⁴ Alexander Christie-Miller, "EU expected to freeze Turkey's application over Erdogan autocratic style," *The Times*, 24 February 2014.

more than ever to be closing on Turkey.”⁶³⁵

"The path to an authoritarian government is paved," claimed *Bild* in its coverage of Erdoğan's election. In an article entitled "What Germans need to know about Erdogan", the paper wrote: "It's not easy to explain to a German why 20 million Turkish people voted in a president caught in the middle of a multi-million Euro corruption scandal. To understand, one has to be Turkish.”⁶³⁶

The Economist was drawing a similar conclusion about the latest incidents that "further dents Turkey's hopes of joining the European Union." It is warning that "Turkey is sliding backwards, with more than a whiff of authoritarianism about the prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan," while reminding that Erdoğan's "Islamist-flavoured AK party has been in power since November 2002.”⁶³⁷

Before her visit to Turkey, *The Observer* was warning Angela Merkel not to "make Erdoğan look respectable" before 1 November 2015 elections and saying: "Turks are witnessing the murder of democracy over time. Angela Merkel should have no part in this. Whatever the stakes, on migration or Syria or anything else, neither should the EU.”⁶³⁸

For some, this new picture is a relief since it is a step back from the "worrying dynamic" in the West that had "stopped seeing political Islam as a hostile ideology", and "started to actively aid the consolidation of Islamist power, particularly in

⁶³⁵ Alan Cowell, "Turkey Turns Its Back on the E.U." *The New York Times*, 3 April 2014.

⁶³⁶ Ertuğrul Özkök, "Was die Deutschen über Erdogan wissen müssen," *Bild*, 12 August 2014.

⁶³⁷ *The Economist*, "Going cold on Turkey," 18 January 2014.

⁶³⁸ *The Observer*, "The Observer view on the EU's wrong-headed wooing of Turkey," 18 October 2015.

Turkey, on this newly found pink cloud.”⁶³⁹ Anti-AK Party figures in Turkey, like journalist Ece Temelkuran are happy to see this change in the mainstream western media. Her complaints one year before the Gezi Park incidents show the sharp contrast in mainstream western media discourses on AK Party and Erdoğan:

“Turkey has managed to maintain a democratic image to the outside world through international and national propaganda. Mainstream western media is serving their own governments' foreign policy interests. So they wanted to see this model of Muslim democracy, which looks good from outside and has freedom of people, ‘bon pour l’orient’ (French for “good enough for the orient”). It's not good enough, neither for people in Turkey or the rest of Middle East.”⁶⁴⁰

There is no linear or causal relationship between media representations and policy choices. Social world is so much complex to detect which factor comes before another one. They continuously interact with each other. It is also not possible (or even necessary) to detect what actors ‘really’ have in their minds while talking and acting. It depends on one’s personal position to choose which media discourse would be praised as key to truth or discredited as propaganda. However, it is clear that these representations have a crucial place in discussions on Turkey-EU relations and its future. There is an expanding area to be covered in further comparative studies that do not take dominant discourses on AK Party in the western mainstream media as given facts.

⁶³⁹ Timon Dias, "Erdoğan the tyrant and his EU accomplices," *Jerusalem Post*, 1 July 2013.

⁶⁴⁰ Matthew Cassel, "Firing Turkey's Ece Temelkuran: The Price of Speaking Out," *Al Akhbar English*, 6 January 2012.

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