The West or the EU as ‘The Other’ from the Perspective of National Pride

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Source:
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Introduction

As is known, in early 2006, the results of research on the projection of two political trends were declared. One of these research studies was on nationalism (Tempo April 2006), while the other was on conservatism (Yılmaz, 2006). In both research studies, the attitude and opinion of the Turkish public about both nationalism and conservatism are explained in detail within the framework of qualitative data. What is more important is that both studies reveal a common finding: if this finding is mentioned by reference to the evaluation of Kadıoğlu on nationalism research (2006), it is the finding of the process, ‘westernisation in the face of the west in Turkey’, which is one of the fundamental disputed areas in the Ottoman-Turkish modernisation period.

The two studies also clearly reveal those proud people who, it would seem, do not much like themselves and who are convinced that they need to change (Kadıoğlu, 2006). Answers to questions which focus on an assessment of EU membership and the west support such an opinion to a large extent: according to the results of the nationalism research study (Tempo, 2006: 26-27), 30.6% of those interviewed said that ‘they would vote against EU membership of Turkey in a referendum’, while 33.5% believe that ‘the demanded reforms from Turkey are no different to the conditions of Sèvres’, 50.3% state that ‘the aim of the EU is to disintegrate Turkey’ and 45.3% think that ‘the EU will damage the traditions and customs of Turkey’. By stating such opinions, they put forward their opinion which includes sceptical and negative judgements about the west within the framework of the EU. However, at the same time, it is understood from the research data that more than one-half of those interviewed reacted positively to the EU membership of Turkey. It may be learned from the findings of the research that 58% believe that ‘EU membership of Turkey is a good thing’ while 63.1% state that ‘they would vote for the EU membership of Turkey in a referendum’.

The findings of the conservatism research study reveal similar results, indicating that the state of mind of the Turkish public swings between ‘sceptical and doubtful feelings towards the EU’ and ‘economic pragmatism’. 55.2% of those interviewed state that EU membership is ‘a good thing’, whereas 23.3% consider it ‘a bad thing’. At the same time, 56.5% argue that EU membership would be ‘beneficial for them’; however, 35.7% state that it ‘would not provide anything’. 67.1% think that membership ‘would benefit the country’ while 25.1% think that it ‘would not provide anything’. Those who think that ‘the EU reforms resemble Sèvres’ amount to 48.4%, while those who think that these reforms are no different to the capitulation reach 52.2%; and those who believe that, behind the attitudes of Europeans there is a ‘Crusade spirit’, total 52.9%. Moreover, it is understood that those who think that EU membership for Turkey¹ would mainly ‘harm religious values, break down the morality of young people and family structure, etc.’ are (separately) over 50% (Yılmaz, 2006: 51-55).
Unlike these two studies, the results of research aimed at understanding the opinion of young people in high school on the EU membership process of Turkey (Şen et al, 2005: 129), are much more striking. It was expected that the opinion of high school students would show more flexibility than that of older generations, but 19% think that EU membership would have negative effects on Turkey while 9.2% (i.e. about 30% in total) think that membership would not make any difference to the country. 21.8% of young people state that they would vote against membership in a possible referendum whereas 8% (again, about 30% in total) show hesitation. At the same time, those who think that membership would not be beneficial for Turkey are about 22% and those who have no opinion account for a further 9% (i.e. 31% in total).

From this last study, it can be argued that about one-third of young people have negative attitudes and judgements about the EU. Moreover, 45.2% of young people think that the EU wants Turkey’s membership ‘in order to benefit from Turkey’s strategic geography’; for 12.3%, the reason is ‘in order to benefit from the Turkish army’; while for 10.9%, it is ‘in order to benefit from Turkey’s natural resources’ (Şen et al, 2005: 139). For this reason, rather than the positive gains of membership both for Turkey (‘Self’) and the west (‘the Other’), the selfish interests of the west against ‘us’ are emphasised. Consequently, this leads to the idea that ‘economic pragmatism’, which was put forward by both nationalism and conservatism research studies, does exist in young people’s opinions. Moreover, in parallel with the results of these two studies, the transformations brought by membership and regarded as ‘decay’ in the moral and cultural sphere (such as use of drugs, family structure, neighbour relations, relations between men and women) are referred to negatively by more than 60% of young people (Şen et al, 2005: 158, 171).

The similar numbers obtained from these research studies leads to a result which can be interpreted as ‘westernisation in the face of the west’ or ‘aspiration of EU membership in the face of the EU’. According to Yılmaz (2006), the west:

Plays a dual role: on the one hand, being excluded in both the public-political and the personal identity context; on the other, being included as ‘the other’.

Furthermore, as long as the west:

…is perceived as a power threatening the state, Euro-scepticism and Sèvres syndrome as a radical demonstration of this phenomenon [emerges] as an object of conservative reactionism which feeds both nationalism and Islamism.

**Nation-state process of national pride**

In order to understand the nationalism, or nationalist or conservative pride, obtained in these results, it is necessary to examine the historical roots of the issue. Actually, this nationalism, or conservative or nationalist pride, is a *sine qua non* element of the

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1 Negative opinions and doubts about EU membership are at a relatively high level but, as researchers argue, economic pragmatism is the underlying reason for support for integration with the EU, which is at a level over 65%. In this sense, if EU membership provides economic benefit, it gains importance in the eyes of the public; otherwise, considerable support for EU membership is doubtful.
nation-state process and the results of a policy of creating a national identity both at the universal and local levels during the early republican period. However, it is important to bear in mind that the process of the formation of nation-state and national identity within Kemalist Turkish nationalism was also a *sine qua non* component of the modernisation project, or the project of becoming civilised (Akman, 2003: 87).² In this sense, in order to become citizens of the new nation-state, developing rights and freedoms by going beyond being an ordinary individual, it was an inevitable responsibility on the individuals of the new Turkish state to accept the Kemalist nationalist ideological discourse which was institutionalised ‘even as the official ideology’ (Bora, 2003: 65). The Turkish history thesis and sun-language theory, in which this nationalist ideological discourse became concrete, were the nationalist speculations which aimed at leading a nation forced for years to feel Ottoman, with the *ummah* mentality, to turn back to its origins and be proud of its Turkish character by reminding people that the Turkish nation is a very old nation which has its own language-culture and which, within this framework, had created a huge civilisation, etc.

The purposes of these theories were not solely to make people internalise the ideas of the revolutionary cadre in order to create a new nation and develop the idea of citizenship. Beyond this, it was necessary to situate them within a rational framework.³ In Eagleton’s statement, the problem was one of:

> How it described itself rather than how it marketed itself. (Eagleton, 1996: 92)

In this sense, the Kemalist ideological discourse, which aimed at creating national pride and trust by addressing national feelings, referred to the imaginary relationship between individuals and their real existence; in other words, the claims in those theses did not converge with the realities but, rather, the realities were only implied. This

2 In the early republican period, the project of becoming civilised or, in Yörük’s words, the modernisation project, is ‘The struggle of being recognised as western by the west. The struggle of aspiring to the other’s aspiration.’ When one looks at the list of the absolute realities presented by this project in the name of becoming civilised or of compelling civilisation, it is understood that one of the basic purposes is to force citizens to become civilised starting with their physical appearance. For this purpose, there was a need to break individuals’ ties with everything that reminded of the old order in daily life, such as clothes, calendar and time systems, surname applications and use of weight scales. Moreover, it was frequently emphasised in the course books of the period that, without resembling westerners in their appearance, it was not possible to convince them that Turkish people had achieved mental change (Parlak, 2005: 505). In this sense, that there was an emphasis on physical appearance converges with Göle’s statement (1994: 124) that: ‘Modernisation in an Islamic country includes a top-down pressure on society by the political power which envisions westernisation of the cultural structure, the way of life and identity’.

3 At this point, the elite-revolutionary cadre of the republic, in Gramsci’s words, virtually undertook the mission of the organic intellectual. More importantly, in general, teachers, specifically village teachers, every citizen who had a diploma, party executives, academics, etc., as the missionaries of the period, were mobilised in order to create the designed nation and citizen. It should be borne in mind that the guiding idea of these organic intellectuals was enlightenment logic within the direction of rationality and positivist science.
point demonstrates that, in order to reach the actual reality of the world, it is necessary to interpret those ideological discourses since ideologies design the world in an imaginary way (Özbek, 2000: 147-150).

The purpose of this article becomes clear at this point: to examine the historical and discoursive background of the sceptical and proud status of nationalist conservatism or conservative nationalism, or nationalism against the west or the EU, starting from the findings of the afore-mentioned research on conservatism, nationalism and high school young people which puts forward in general public opinion about the west (and in particular about the EU), tracing back to the construction of national identity in the early republican period.

From the beginning, Turkish national education ideology, in line with the aim of establishing national identity and creating citizens who have internalised the constructed identity (Parlak, 2005), has always included a nationalist core in its structure during the process of creating common memory. It is assumed that the unification of the two different German- and French-type nationalist ideas with the Kemalist nationalist discourse during the early republican period has played an important role in the repeated reproduction of this nationalist core within that discoursive structure. Like-wise, the results of research into history and civics course books during the early republican period (Parlak, 2005) demonstrate that the nationalist ideological discourse, based on the concept of political or legal citizenship in Atatürk’s early republican period, was designed as the principal constitutive element of the societal-political order. On the other hand, it is understood that, during İnönü’s single party years, a nationalist ideological discourse was being constructed based on racial/ethnic-cultural similarities which, within this framework, can lead to the sharp exclusion of those who are different from the national superiority and the established national identity. Therefore, it can be argued that this situation provides an opportunity for different nationalist discourses, which swing between an understanding of a racial/ethnic-based cultural nationalism and a legal/political-based citizenship centred on nationalism (Bora, 2003: 72), and especially the different versions of nationalism from the right to the left, to unite with Kemalism. In other words, these different ideological discourses, in order to create their legitimacy, try to locate themselves around Atatürk nationalism. In line with Koçak’s statements (2003: 37), Kemalist nationalist ideology, in Turkey’s conditions, has a content which provides the only legitimate political base or the opportunity to exist in demos.

It is known that French-type nationalist understanding, especially within the framework of constitutive values:

Is relatively open and convenient for universal-humanist approaches and relies on patriotism, (Bora, 2003: 67)

and, in addition, accepts:

Civilisation with the material and intellectual premises of European enlightenment. (Kadioğlu, 2003: 285)

4 For similar findings put forward by research on course books, see İnal (2004: 336); Er-sanlı (2003: 21-46); Bora (2003: 72); and also Tekeli (1998: 11).
In contrast, German nationalism is closer to a position which is:

Based on an ethnic-historical-cultural-linguistic national core, which emphasises the uniqueness and, implicitly or explicitly, the superiority of that national core [and] which considers universal-humanist approaches with scepticism and even denies them from time to time, (Bora 2003:67)

or which, in this sense:

Possesses anti-enlightenment and romantic premises [which looks for] the source of power of the individual in intuition and feelings, rather than reason and mind (Kadioglu, 2003: 285).

Within this context, it should be mentioned that sanctifying the state authority, obedience to that state authority, unity and solidarity around the authority, the superiority of national interests and collective rather than individual assets and interests, and – in line with this – an understanding of citizenship and nationalism which relies on an ethno-cultural basis within the direction of the criteria of a patriotism filled with death for the sake of collective assets (nation, state, motherland, republic, etc.), have all been used as a basic emphasis in course books which were one of the most important tools in the reproduction of ideology during the early republican period. In other words, it can be argued that, during the Kemalist restructuring process, course books were written in order to enable the Kemalist project to create:

A citizen who is civilised, enlightened, obedient-dutiful, who believes in the superiority of science and the logic of positivist progress, (Parlak, 2005: 9-10)

and that self-sacrifice was prioritised for the sake of collective assets or national interests.

Two essential components of national pride: oriental nationalism; and the perception of civilisation
Actually, behind the prioritisation of the obedience and dutifulness of the citizen, as Chatterjee argued, there is a contradictory situation inherent within oriental nationalisms. The intellectual or revolutionary cadre who formulated this type of nationalism undertook the heavy responsibility of transforming ‘the popular consciousness which is embedded within the public religion,’ and which was considered as irrational, and ‘superstitious beliefs inherent in societal memory’. In order to realise this project, this responsibility required the monopolisation of enlightenment within the hands of the revolutionary cadres and the burdening of republican duties on the citizen (Kadioglu, 2003: 286). Indeed, the visible duties of the citizen in the early republican period were voting in elections, compulsory military service and paying taxes, while invisible ones were obedience, protecting unity and solidarity, risking life for the sake of collective assets, working hard for the country, protecting health with this in mind, etc. (Parlak, 2005: 509).

The process which operates within this direction, as Açıkel mentions (2003: 132), is the result of a national pedagogy which addresses national conscience and individual value judgements rather than universal reason during the creation of the nation. In
this sense, the construction of duty and conscience with ‘an authoritarian super ego’, invites individuals to self-sacrifice and devotion. However, what is important at this point is that a keen sense of duty and understanding of conscience brings discontent and scepticism, even aggressiveness, towards other nations or diversities within the country: everything in the name of sacredness was directed towards collective ideals and the only reference point for citizens was determined as the nation-state itself (Açıkel, 2003: 133).

Behind the common finding put forward by different research studies as a ‘sceptic-distrustful approach, but a willingness of the Turkish public for the integration of the country with the west or EU membership’, it is important to realise two aspects of the Kemalist nationalist discourse which seek to unite two different understandings of nationalism. The first aspect is related to the inheritance of the oriental nationalism discourse – in the terms of Chatterjee’s approach – within Kemalist nationalism.

Oriental nationalism both tries to imitate the west and feels hostility towards it. (Kadroğlu, 2003: 285).

Within this framework, in the name of becoming civilised or modernised, it became westernised and, at the same time, developed a reactionism and scepticism/fear of the west due to a decline from a position of one that is followed to the position of follower, as in Turkish nationalism. The basic target of the Kemalist project was to keep pace with the level of contemporary civilisations and its subject, the west5 – even to surpass it – and to keep a balance between western civilisation and old eastern Turkish culture, but this has emerged as one of the basic contradictions. Becoming western, or being included in contemporary civilisation, was the basic target, so:

The limits of being western [had to be drawn] originally but with Turkist motifs rather than Islamic ones, since it is secular. (Kadroğlu, 2003: 284).

It can be argued that drawing the limits of being western with secular-Turkist motifs has been determinant in the shaping of nationalist-conservative reaction regarding both secularism and the western world and the west, and with the integration of Islamic tone in Kemalist nationalism within the framework of Turkish-Islamic synthesis (especially since mid-70s). In the shaping of this reactionism, the role of reflection of ‘the level of contemporary civilisation’ discourse in the Kemalist mentality, as:

5 Kılıçbay (1998: 62) states that it is not appropriate to consider the west as a separate civilisation, and that it should be regarded as a revised version of a matrix civilisation comprising east and west simultaneously; the west can be constructed as a reaction to the imprisoning character of the east for individuals because the west is formed as long as the individual is freed – in this sense, the west is the son of the east, albeit a more free child (1998: 63); western civilisation is the rebirth of eastern civilisation, its renewed existence or the logical result of eastern civilisation, but the east can also survive by being westernised (2005: 33). As a discourse and a set of images for evaluation of the west as a comparative model between societies, see also Kahraman and Keyman (1998: 78-79).
A demanded consumption commodity of modernity or as an ideal wished to be reached in a non-western society, (Göle, 1998: 65)

should not be underestimated.  

The second aspect of Kemalist nationalist discourse which shapes ‘nationalist pride’ is hidden behind the perception of civilisation of the early republican period. This perception led to the concept of civilisation to be located within a nationalist form by gaining strength from the nationalist ideological discourse constructed around the Turkish history thesis and sun-language theory of the period. Inspired by Takış (1998: 9), it can be argued that a concept of civilisation located within a nationalist form has a content which prepared the ground for Kemalist nationalism to create its own east and west.

The concept of civilisation which possesses a distinguishing character in the construction of national identity within Kemalist nationalist discourse which addresses national feelings, in this sense targeting the creation of self-trust and proud citizens, in accordance with the logic of positivist progress, virtually travels on a straight line between east and west. More importantly, there is a tendency in this perception that, when either the east or the west is civilised, the other becomes as if it is uncivilised and should follow the civilised one. According to the perception of civilisation which is an instrumental extension of Kemalist nationalist ideology, the first geographic location where civilisation was born is the east, namely central Asia – that is to say, the holy motherland of Turks: those who created that civilisation for the first time were Turks (Parlak, 2005). In other words, priority in the perception of civilisation is that the roots of Turkish national identity are in the civilised east as opposed to the barbarian west: a civilised east which is superior to the barbarian and wild west. Turks, who made the east become east, as the creators of eastern civilisation, are the primary elements in this definition. Consequently, what is meant by ‘east’ is actually central Asia. Within this context, what is intended by nationalist discourse on the basis of civilisation is that every kind of ‘initiative’ in the name of civilisation has been created by Turks and also that Turks have civilised the entire world with their civilisation (Parlak, 2005: 212).

Against the east of the civilised Turk, the west is presented as embodying those who live in caves, who do not know ironwork, who have not yet learned agriculture, who could not tame animals. It is obvious that, in this kind of presentation, the discourse of the superiority of Turkish national identity to the west is targeted through civilisation. In other words, Turkish national identity, based on the consciousness of the oppressed (Timur, 1997: 265), with the help of this perception of civilisation, is actually a resistance to the west who ‘treat unjustly’ the Turkish nation and other nations sharing the feeling of being oppressed and against the west’s attitude of otherisation.

Plainly-speaking, the understanding of civilisation in the Kemalist project against the west, which possesses the idea of individuals interpreted within the context of the

However, if one follows the argument of Kılıçbay (2001: 44; 2005: 34), it is not necessary to take western civilisation as a model for keeping pace with contemporary civilisation. According to Kılıçbay, Turkey is so western that it does not want to be western, as it was eastern civilisation itself that gave birth to western civilisation.
idea, freedom and originality of democracy, which undertakes the responsibility of spreading certain values such as innate human rights to other cultures due to their universal character (İnalçık, 1998: 30) and which, by doing this, forces the other to resemble itself, is actually a challenge to an orientalist west which had put forward its superiority by defining the east within a negative content. Via the geographic expeditions, the west developed a mentality which explicitly referred to its superiority within this framework, as well as strong self confidence; consequently, it considers the spread of these superior values as the transfer of civilisation and, moreover, presents this as its duty. In relation to this mentality, reducing the civilised to active and the uncivilised to passive, the concept of civilisation gave birth to the concept of to civilise. When the civilised is defined as the west and the barbarian (non-western) as the other, virtually a hierarchical structure emerged within the framework of a subordinate-superordinate relationship. This structuring required the west to create an inter-societal classification where the west despises and belittles the other, legitimising its every action in the name of civilising the other. The result, since the 18th century, is that the west has started to transfer to the east, even to insist on, its own type of relationships and values. On the other hand, the east, which assumed that there was no other way but to internalise the superiority of the west, considered keeping pace with this type of relationship as keeping pace with contemporary civilisation (Sezer, 1998: 37- 43).

When one looks at the construction of nationalist-national identity by taking these points into consideration, it can be realised that the west is the reference point in the equation of that identity with the east which is identified by the superiorities of the Turk. In other words, the west, which is referred to with several negatives, is ‘an internal construction’ in the construction of the east of the Turk (Kahraman and Keyman, 1998: 79). Alternatively, this process can also be interpreted as making Europe ‘the other’ under the construction of ‘the west’ as possessing a different identity and history beyond the east of the Turk. The positive meanings of the east of the Turk and the anachronistic transfer of Turkish identity up to now have been possible with certain explanations symbolising the west such as ‘living in caves’, etc.

It can be understood that Turkish national identity has a past of which it is proud, of being the creator and transporter of a certain civilisation up to now, unlike other nations standing against the west. For this reason, subsequent to the Ottoman modernisation movements, to confess being left behind the west in the civilisation race, and being its obedient follower, inherently has many contradictions which cannot be explained.

Within this framework, the concept of civilisation in the construction of Turkish national identity has targeted the putting forward of the superiority of its own national identity before confessing the superiority of the west. There is a need to have historical moments as a source of trust, while national pride is among the requirements of the process of becoming a nation state and acquiring an identity, so this point needs to be emphasised above all: the Turkish nation is a continuation of a nation which created a superior civilisation and which has deep roots in history. Therefore, it is inevitable to ask the question: if that is so, although we are the superior, why should we follow the west, which argues that it is superior? It is this important point which leads to the inferiority complex as regards the west, creating a contradiction in national construction. Finding an answer to this question, or removing this paradox, has become
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an obligation for the Kemalist regime. This point, which is the basic contradiction of the oriental nationalism mentioned by Chatterjee, has naturally prepared the ground for the emergence of a hidden anger against the west within the constructed national identity. Here, exactly at this point, it is necessary to insert a different factor in this construction: that of Islam.

Who is superior? We or the West? What about Islam?

After putting forward the superior nature of the Turk and its positive differences from the others within the context of a civilised east, the factor of Islam may be incorporated into the issue as the second stage. Islam has the means to provide both the construction of Turkish national identity and, in a sense, the exchange between east and west on the basis of perceptions of civilisation. In other words, Islam is rendered as having the possession of a content which forces the eastern (Turkish) civilisation to stay behind, makes eastern people illiterate and moves eastern life (of the Turk) away from a rational basis.

In this sense, in taking western modern/civilised life as a model and constructing Turkish national identity upon it, it is inevitable that Islam and, consequently, the Ottoman is made ‘the other’ on the basis of the dominant nationalist discourse (Yörük, 2003: 312). In short, the factor of Islam has undertaken an analytical function in explaining the Kemalist modernisation project, in which enlightenment and positivist aspects are dominant, and in differentiating it from its Ottoman past. The moment of giving Islam this role as a means during the construction of Turkish national identity and the design of the modernisation project represents the moment when the west, while it was behind the east, started to integrate into civilised life and, more importantly, the moment when the west started to shape and lead civilised life. Islam is a factor paving the way for the east (or the Turk), which had an indisputable superiority over the barbarian and wild west, to fall back to a secondary position and, for this reason, it should be considered as something negative. In other words, it was regarded as something which damaged the national spirit of the Turk who created civilisations, established states and was virtually sanctified by God. It is because of this damaging effect of the Islamic factor that the east, whose civilisation was propelled forwards by its association with Turkish ethnic origins, could not follow the west, which emerged and evolved from barbarianism to civilisation.

Moreover, short-sighted Ottoman administrators, who had forgotten the civilised character and the superiority of their ethnic origins, forced the Turks to stay under the

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7 The superiority of the civilisation created in the east in central Asia and Mesopotamia, the motherland of the Turks, over that of the west is reflected in course textbooks in very different manners. In this way, mining, farming and stock raising are among the most important legitimisation tools in the comparison between civilisations. For details, see Parlak (2005: 212-217).

8 Foremost in the Oghuz epic poems, included in many course textbooks, a blue light coming from the sky, and girls as a gift of that light (the mothers of Turkish children), are mentioned as a means of sanctifying the Turkish nation and its generations. Stating that Turkish generations spring from the children born from those girls coming from the sky is actually a reflection of the holiness of the sky, the radiance or the light which are, in a sense, sacred (Parlak, 2005: 256).
political dominance of the west, which was being civilised; in doing so, they opened the state to the oppression and exploitation of the west in both the military-economic and the cultural sense. For instance, within the course books of the early republican period, the modernisation movements starting with the Tanzimat (administrative reforms) are not considered as transformation movements in the real sense; rather, they are portrayed as the realisation of the demands of western states by short-sighted Ottoman administrators; the west is explained as the force supporting the nationalist rebellions of non-Muslim communities who were living under Ottoman sovereignty, insisting on the Sèvres Treaty and as the force (particularly the British) behind the ‘Greek Atrocity’ during the War of Independence. At the same time, the capitulations are regarded as the realisation of ‘western exploitation’ on an economic basis. Thus, the dark pages of the history which the nation does not want to remember, and which are not compatible with the construction of identity based on ‘national pride’, are attributed to the Ottoman which forgot its Turkishness and the past (or which was compelled to do so) within the framework of an Islamic factor which is not compatible with a state of being civilised or defined within the regime’s perception of civilisation.

It can be understood that, in the shaping of ‘the enlightenment, absolute rational reason and positivist scientific thought’, internalised as a basic principle during the construction of Turkish national identity and the modernisation project, the western world has been substituted with the east in order to explain that it has become an active subject of this process rather than a passive object. The west managed to follow rational thinking and positivist scientific reality by entering into the era of enlightenment and Renaissance, and reform has, in this way, become the subject of the concept of civilisation. The west, which should be followed in this manner, is now an ‘enlightenment’, a ‘rationality’. However, it is a western enlightenment rationality, internalised as a model and negating all other rationalities – including Turkish national identity itself (Yavuz, 1998: 115-116).

For this reason, Kemalist nationalist discourse, aiming at establishing self-trust in the construction of Turkish national identity, and for this aim addressing national feelings, firstly put forward the superior civilised east of the Turk and took the western enlightenment modernisation programme as a reference point in order to design a secular-commanding-total modernisation movement to create a civilised/modern society which is the other side of the coin of national identity. Naturally, this other side created a paradox of what should be the attitude of ‘us’ against the ‘other’, constructed on the basis of both the concept of civilisation and, in particular, that civilisation itself. The Kemalist modernisation project takes the west, which is the other, as the model rather than the civilised east of the Turk. This, in turn, brings the creation of a traumatic situation at both consciousness and mental levels, consequently leading to a search for solutions with which to escape this trauma.

One of the reasons why the civilisation that we created stayed behind western civilisation is Islam and the other is Ottoman identity. Therefore, it is necessary to otherise these two factors on a historical, societal and cultural basis. This internal process of other-isation, named by Göle (1998: 70-71) as ‘modernist non-traditionalism’ led

For a similar comment, see Yörük (2003: 312).
to a transformation of traditions, excluding them from the modernisation project, freezing them and leaving them with a chance of survival only on the edge of societal-political order. Together with the wave of globalisation coming after the 1980s, there emerged a revival of traditional mental structures and identity constructions. This situation, if we consider Göle’s comments, can be referred to as:

Not a revival of tradition or a return to the past, but a search for a paradoxical harmony between subjectivity and modernity. (Göle, 1998: 71)

For this reason, it is necessary, in the integration process with the EU, to realise this transformation caused by globalisation, which lays behind the strong expressions of those nationalists-conservatives who are sceptical of and distant from membership, as well as those who are for integration with the EU.

At this point, we should not miss a reality. In the process of substituting the west, which is associated with enlightenment and positivist scientific thought, with the east, western thought was, in a sense, transferred to eastern territories. In other words, the Kemalist modernisation project can be interpreted as the reflection or the transfer to an eastern society of orientalist thought, which can be considered as a discourse ‘constructing or representing the other as a non-western object’ or as a:

Historical interpretation establishing the discursive formation of the globalised hegemony of modernity. (Kahraman and Keyman, 1998: 76)

The cadre of the revolutionary elite, via this project, perceived itself as western but its society as eastern in a society recast by the west as eastern. Within this direction, it wished to create a western society out of its eastern society, or otherwise to transform it into a western one. In other words, the Kemalist modernisation project can be interpreted as a project other-ising those who became alienated from the modernisation and transformation project within the same society, or those who abstained from the subjectivity created by that project, and forcing the inclusion of the other by transforming them. Yörük (2003: 313-314) interprets this as Kemalist nationalism’s ‘desire to suppress’ the eastern or the ‘east within itself’. Meanwhile, as the process of modernisation and transformation was applied through an enlightenment and positivist mentality, as Kadıoğlu (2003: 284) argues, enlightenment thought itself was transformed into a project; Turkish modernisation, which targeted total transformation within the context of this project, turned out to be a cultural code within the hands of statist-elites characterising the realisation of Kemalist ‘nationalist ideology’ (Kahraman and Keyman 1998: 77).

**Turkicisation of western civilisation, the other and the language of education**

Turkish identity is said to have a superior and deep-seated past; however, it stayed behind the western, once the barbarian but today the civilised and the superior. Thus, there is a necessity to reverse the national trauma of feeling despised and defeated in the context of that superiority and deep-seated past. For this reason, what is required is a search for the roots of western civilisation, which has been taken as a model, in order to be able to attribute it to the Turk, or to Turkicise it. In this sense, western civilisation, which dominates, oppresses and exploits the Turkish nation politically, deserves its own existence to the Turk: the Turkishness of the basis of western civilisations – the Ancient Greek and Roman – is obvious; moreover, there is enough evidence that the first communities of the Egyptian civilisation preceding these two
civilisations in the south, as well as the Anatolian and Mesopotamian civilisations, are of Turkish origin10 (Parlak, 2005: 334).

In line with this opinion, the instructions in 1930 regarding the contents of history courses are meaningful: for the two-hour history courses in the fourth class, it is stated that, under the title of ‘ancient major civilisations’, there should be:

A special emphasis on Greeks and Romans (Ministry of Education – Maarif Vekaleti – 1930: 68).

In addition, it is mentioned that central Asia, the old motherland of the Turks, and the regions into which the Turks expanded their territory, as well as their lifestyles and living conditions, their religion, traditions and legends would be concentrated on; there would be brief information on the emergence and spread of Islam, the establishment of the government of the Sons of Ottoman (not the Ottoman Empire), and the conquest of Rumelia and Istanbul; the development and disintegration periods would be paid ‘an extremely precise glance’ [gayet mücmel bir nazár]; after that, it is stated that national history would be dated back to the republican era in a very concise manner (1930: 69). Moreover, it can be seen that most of the images (16.5%) used in the history course books of the early republican period belong to the Ancient Greek and Roman eras and, with regard to the subjects of these books, the density of pages written on the Greek and Roman civilisations is in first place, with 18.3% (Parlak, 2005: 166-176).

Consequently, the message waiting to be delivered becomes much more certain:

Europe, which was once backwards, and now is the one which creates the contemporary civilisation that we want to reach, is itself a Turkish production.

For this reason, once again there is concrete need for a differentiation of the civilised east of the Turk, which is an important nationalist element in the definition of ‘us’, from the Islamic factor which holds it back. In other words, in line with the basic principle of nationalist ideologies moving forward on a secular basis, it is necessary to other-ise Islam. It is inevitable to other-ise not only the Islamic factor, but also the Ottoman past which is associated with it.

10 In the history course books of the early republican period, it is stated with different mental links that many nations or societies are Turkish in their origins and of a racial base, excluding Huns, Iskits, Hitits, Gokturks, Uyghurs – who are ‘without any proof’ Turkish – also the Meonians, Trako-Frigs, Sartians, Turshas, Hitites and Lidyas, Etrusks, Tursens, Turcas, Ligures, Iberians, Kimrians and Traks; while those who are said to have migrated from central Asia, such as Kelts or Gollians, Germans, Alans, Franks, Suevs or Vandals are of Turkish origin according to the history course books. After stating that the race issue should be examined on the basis of bone and skeleton rather than skin colour, it is claimed that Turks belong to the brachycephalous race; consequently, Elams, Sumerians, Subars, Kasites, Hurrians, Mitannians and proto-Hittites – the tribes of the peoples of the Egyptian Delta coming from central Asia and belonging to the brachycephalous race – are thus of Turkish origin. Moreover, those who mixed with Turks as a result of migrations, such as Irish, British, Berberians, Scandinavians and Macedonians of Philip II, also the first inhabitants of Phoenicia and Frigia; in addition, the families of Lenin, Buddha and Confucius are Turkish (Parlak, 2005: 229-230).
The result is that the regime which had put forward the target of ‘keeping pace with the level of contemporary civilisation’ looked for the source of contemporary civilisation in Ancient Greece and Rome, and worked hard to define a national identity by locating the territories of central Asia and pre-Ottoman Anatolia, and the civilisations produced by these territories, as well as the legacy of the near Asia civilisations, within this contemporary civilisation (Parlak, 2005: 175-176). In this sense, as the essence and the basic target of the Kemalist modernisation project, ‘the level of contemporary civilisations’ represents a point which is secularised and differentiated from the factor of religion which holds civilisation back. This point is the moment at which the content of the policy of secularism, as the most important of the basic fields of dispute in the Turkish political and societal order, acquires certainty. Kadıoğlu (2006) argues that the basic arguments regarding secularism take their power from the idea that religion, or Islam, is responsible from the backwardness of the Turkish nation and its civilisation. Once more, it is for this reason that:

It is a widespread attitude to perceive the motifs regarding Islam as backwardness and secularism as modernity.

This common opinion can be reversed during the crisis times of the official ideology and at the hands of ethnic and religious discourses which are strengthened with globalisation; this, in turn, brings a reactive opposition at the cultural and societal levels to the western model, or the EU membership of Turkey, which causes Islam to be associated with ‘backwardness’.

Within this framework, it should be mentioned that the course books of the early republican period, as Pingel (2003: 1) argues, do not only give information according to universal rules, but also target the creation of ‘a common memory’11 by re-ordering the new norms of the political and societal order to the memories (Parlak, 2005: 7). This common memory has been transformed to a means which determines the expectations of individuals with regard to their futures and societal identities. In this way, certain memories regarding the past, the created symbols and their meanings facilitate the construction of the nation within the framework of certain targets and duties (Akçam, 2003: 53).

If one of the most important points with regard to these means is the claim of extending continuity and the past into the future (Tekeli, 1998: 106), the other is – as was touched upon above – breaking from the Ottoman past within the framework of the perception of civilisation and the definition of identity. Consequently, within such a claim, there is no Islamic factor; however, Islam is attributed as having an important role to play in breaking from the Ottoman past. Nevertheless, what is meant here concerning Islam is not the essence of Islam as a religion. The superiority and rationality of Islam compared to other religions are frequently mentioned and what is actually meant as stated here is dogmatic religion; the factor causing the backwardness of the Turk in the civilisation race is frequently mentioned as an unprogressive mentality. For this reason, many things which go under the name of ‘Ottoman’ which are associ-

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11 The common memory mentioned here should be considered within the framework of Gellner’s (1992) commitment to common culture, societal homogeneity, in particular nationalism based on a discourse which emphasises the education given by official education institutions, and unity. The purpose is to place the illusion of sameness and a common root in their historical, cultural and political context and as a target for minds.
ated with this unprogressive mentality have been transferred negatively to the course books.

The view of Kadıoğlu (2006) needs to be considered in this context:

In order to raise Turkey to the level of contemporary civilisations, the past is to be erased from the memory. Citizens who get their share of the Turkish education system learn well how to forget the past and to reproduce this forgetfulness. The probability of becoming western is high to an extent that we forget.

If the past is to be erased from this common memory, forgetting ‘the past which is other-ised’ is an important factor in defining the citizen which the state sought to create in the early republican period. Nevertheless, the conservative reaction which is in opposition to forgetting and erasing the past, in the name of keeping pace with the level of contemporary civilisations, inherently possesses a reactionism and scepticism towards the west as much as the Kemalist project itself. Whatever has been imitated since the Tanzimat period in the name of westernisation and modernisation – all of these have been interpreted as they would be in terms of traditional values. Today, it is this experience which is easily put forward in relations with the EU. At the root of today’s secular-based disputes within the political and societal order, the role of contradiction and reactionism caused by erasing some part of the historical process from the common memory seems to be important.

Here, considering the existence of scepticism and the feeling of inferiority in individuals who are subject to the teaching of a national education ideology which targets the reproduction of a nationalist ideological discourse, it is significant that the west is reflected in the course books firstly on the grounds of its barbarianism and in a negative context and, after that, as a model to be reached. In this sense, suspicion and scepticism have become an importantly emphasised theme in nationalist thought. Kemalist nationalist discourse, constructed around the themes of obedience to authority (of the state, parents, chief, teacher, etc.), protecting the unity and integrity of the nation/society against external and internal enemies, and risking life voluntarily for collective assets (nation, state, republic, motherland, etc.) (Parlak, 2005: 481-482; 495), prepared the ground for citizens always to be watchful and vigilant and to acquire a reactionary nationalist discourse which virtually does not accommodate any feeling of trust regarding external and internal differences.

In particular, the discourse in history course books examining wars in the period from the oldest ages until modern times which relates that, even though enemy forces were superior to the Turkish armies in terms of their number and weaponry, the Turks were nevertheless victorious, is a significant one at this point (Parlak, 2005: 243); it says that what ‘we’ should do against the numerical superiority and power of the enemy is to stay vigilant all the time and, consequently, distrust every sort of foreigner in the societal/political sense. It is because of this that the only purpose and source of existence of all hostilities within education, as the most important reproduction institution, is constructed as hostility against the Turk (Parlak, 2005: 500; Bora, 2003: 79); alternatively, it makes the effort to keep alive the feeling of:

Being surrounded and under a continuous threat. (Akçam, 2003: 58)
Whenever there is a question or evaluation of EU membership, people can reveal their positive opinion with a pragmatic attitude on the economic basis and their feelings of suspicion and distrust against the west on political-societal-cultural bases. Likewise, according to the data from the research study into nationalism, 71.3% of those interviewed share the statement that ‘the Turk has no friends other than Turk’; this is a concrete example of an excluding-sceptic-heroic nationalist postulate. At this point in Turkey, filling the content of the concept of civilisation with incorrect and contradictory meanings and associating the term directly with religion, making an east-west distinction on the axis of religion and, in line with this, stating easily that the Turk, associated with Islam (Kılıçbay, 2001: 50), would not have any friend other than Islam and Turk, all become possible. Furthermore, the west or the EU, which are not Islam and Turk, can be declared totally as the enemy.

An example from the results of other research studies on this issue, according to ‘Research on the Political Culture of Turkey: The Results from Istanbul’ (Esmer, Sunar and Alpay, 1993: 9), is that 29.3% of those interviewed answered the question ‘Who are the best friends of Turkey?’ with ‘Turkey has no friends’. Those who answered the question regarding ‘the most dangerous countries for Turkey’ as ‘western countries’ total 53.1%, whereas ‘western countries’ are represented with a high proportion of 48.3% in the ranking of the least-liked countries (Esmer, Sunar and Alpay, 1993: 10-11). In contrast, those answering these two questions as, respectively, ‘Islamic countries’ and ‘Muslim nations’ totalled only 29.6% and 22.5%. High school young people think that there is ‘no good in’ Greeks foremost (31.1%), followed by Americans (26.2%), French (19.1%), Germans (11.4%) and Europeans in general (9.5%) (Sen et al., 2005: 106-107).

Up to now, it has been taught that people should always be sceptical towards foreigners and concerning difference. Arguments such as ‘the whole world is hostile to Turks’ (making, in this context, Turks to be ‘scapegoats’ of history and continuously subject to injustice and double standards) has been a ‘constant theme’ and *sine qua non* of discourse in nationalist ideology. This produces a result which can be interpreted as ‘the syndrome of being misunderstood’ or ‘the psychology of loneliness’ (Akçam, 2003: 55).

If we look at the dusty pages of history, we might well come across certain policies or concrete examples of double standards which would justify sceptical and suspicious attitudes towards the west. However, we need to pay attention here to two important points. Firstly, this state of mind, around the *sine qua non* ‘discourse of unity and integrity’ within nationalist discourse, and in a historically anachronistic manner, is being transferred constantly from the past to the present day, starting from ‘the

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12 It is meaningful to take examples from the course books of the 1930s in explaining the high amount of concern in this statement in nationalism research. For instance, ‘there is no benefit from any nation towards Turks’, ‘the power which will save the Turkish nation is again its own strength’ (Refik, 1932); ‘the Turk has realised that it has nothing to rely on except his own weaponry’ (Ekrem and Halit, 1930: 41); ‘the Turks who terrified the world with their courage and bravery raised many great men’ (Edip and Tevfik, 1929a: 90); etc.

13 Here, it should be noted that those that are foreign and different are perceived firstly on the axis of religion and culture, and secondly on the axis of nation.
games’ (especially via beautiful princesses) of the Chinese and Byzantine against the Turkish nation. Secondly, and more importantly, these discourses, requiring feelings of hostility and hatred against the ‘other’, are also being transferred as they are from today into the future, and they may turn into aggressiveness in times of crisis. At all these formative stages, there is a ‘concern for survival’ (Bekmen, 2003: 329) which is from where Turkish nationalism gains its typical reactionism and scepticism. It is for this reason that an enemy who would not rest in the proverb of ‘water sleeps, but the enemy never rests’, can easily be made concrete in the form of the EU, or the USA or the western world in general. In other words, they may have humiliated or ‘wounded the pride’ of Turkish national identity in the past, despite historical superiorities such as power, civilisation, organisation, high morality, etc. (Akçam, 2003: 58), so there is no guarantee that these enemies would not again show similar hostilities. In relation to the concern for survival, the perception of threat (Bekmen, 2003: 329) and a continuous state of vigilance are among the basic points which give legitimacy to nationalism repeatedly reproducing itself.14

History course books are written in particular on the basis of external and internal enemies who are ‘the other’ and their betrayals-attacks-games-oppressions and, at the same time, on the basis of our, the Turks, heroisms in connection with the negative actions of these enemies, so it is inevitable that such an ideological discourse penetrates cultural codes and the genes of individuals. This process is an inseparable part of the construction of the national identity of the state which created the nation; in other words, of the creation of ‘we’ and ‘other’. Within the framework of the language of ideological discourse, according to the statement of Dijk (2003: 57), it can be argued that this situation depends on the strategy of ‘tell positive things about us; negative things about them’ or, if we put it another way, ‘do not tell negative things about us or positive things about them’.

In this way, presenting one’s self positively and the other negatively defines a general characteristic of both group conflict and the form of interaction with opposite groups, as well as the way we talk about ourselves and others. Within this framework,

14 It can be claimed that the gangs which consider the Republic of Turkey to be under internal and external threat, which state that the country is almost ‘on the point of being occupied’ and which, organised under different names (the most typical name is ‘Atabey’s’), undertake the duty of defending it from these threats – more importantly, those which cause abnormalities to become normalities and remembered with a depth that is difficult to be understood – have been fed to a considerable extent by the ‘internal and external enemy’ perception within nationalist discourse since the early republican period. In this sense, the construction of an external enemy, more importantly the internal extension of that external enemy, was significant in terms of the conception of a homogenous and uniform society in the early republican period; today, it is an important national language which keeps society in a state of vigilance. That is to say, the wish virtually to take the rights to living from certain individuals or groups labelled with treason or betrayal and to exclude them from demos, even the claim of protecting the country from ‘internal enemies’ who are among the main sources of the military interventions of 12 March and 12 September – all are within the scope of the nationalist discourse. For the perception and construction of internal and external enemies in the course textbooks of the early republican period, see Parlak (2005: 423-466); for the position of Turkish nationalism on the rejection of minorities as ‘the other’, see Dündar (2003: 893-900).
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considering the results of the research, it can be realised that not only those who fit the definition of enemy are approached negatively, but also neighbours who have different sexual preferences, different political opinions or are of different religions or sects. For instance, among those who participated in the nationalism research study, 60.8% of them do not want to accept atheists or irreligious people as their neighbours. Similarly, 58.7% of them have the same attitude towards homosexuals, 56.5% towards Jews, 53.5% towards Christians, 52.7% towards gypsies and 38.2% towards people who belong to other nations (Tempo, 2006: 42). In 1993, in response to a similar question in a research study into ‘The Political Culture of Turkey’, 92.9% would not want to accept as atheists as neighbours, 86.5% said the same about homosexuals, 33.9% about Jews, 31.2% about Christians and 34.6% about irreligious people (1993: 37).

This subject, considered on the basis of (in)tolerance towards difference, was also examined in Esmer’s study in 2000, comparing data from 1990 and 1997. According to the research of Kalaycıoglu and Çarkoğlu in 2006, on ‘Research into Social Preferences in Turkey’, 91% of the public do not want to see homosexuals as their neighbours, while 88.5% of them have the same attitude towards those who have AIDS. Similarly, 92% of the public do not want neighbours who use drugs. Those who state that they would oppose their daughter’s marriage to a non-Muslim reach 61%. Those who think that tourists damage the morality of the country amount to 42%, while those who argue that foreigners who settle in the country damage Turkish culture total 46% (Radikal 14 June 2006).

There is a similar picture when research data on high school students is examined. Among the excluded who young people do not want to see as their neighbours, irreligious people (50.7%), Armenians (46.5%), homosexuals (41.4%), Communists (39.9%), gypsies (36.5%) and Jews (37.6%) are referred to most often. More importantly, it is understood from the findings of the same study – which also encompass the research referred to above on perceptions of people from other nationalities – that young people who do not want to see these groups as their neighbours are mostly from middle and middle-lower socio-economic status (Sen et. al, 2005: 104-105). It can be argued that ‘respect for difference’, which should be at the basis of modern western democratic culture, is completely reversed and has in this shape found a large living space in Turkish society in the form of ‘intolerance and prejudice’ towards those who have different religious beliefs and preferences.

The transformation of the feeling/trauma of inferiority to intolerance

We sought to explain above that the progress of the west, leaving the east behind, has created a contradiction with the superiority claims of the Turk who was introduced as eastern; moreover, this contradiction has also given birth to the emergence of a ‘feeling of inferiority’. The west, which is negated firstly on the basis of national trust and difference created in the process of the establishment of national identity, apart from being humiliated, is now the creator of ‘contemporary civilisation’ which is set out as the basic target that should be reached. Consequently, there is an exchange between civilised and uncivilised. This feeling of inferiority is actually an emotional reaction caused by the exchange between east and west on the line between civilised and uncivilised. This feeling has two aspects.
The first of these runs closely in parallel with feelings of suspicion and distrust. This suspicion and distrust are supported by the negation of the other. The West, in contrast to our civilisation, our statist organisation, our high culture and morality, our historical inclination to democracy, our tolerance, our technical inventions in the scientific field, was not able to produce these cultural-political-economic-scientific values for a long time and, furthermore, was treated as inferior, as barbarians who lived in caves. In this way, anachronistic concealment was sought for the backwardness of the Turk while negation was sought simultaneously for the west. For this reason, Turks and, since the 1970s with the inclusion of Islam, Muslim Turks have always been described as superior to the west.

At this point we need to pay attention to the second aspect of the issue. That is to say, the uncivilised west, after making the geographic expeditions which resulted from its savage convictions, claimed ownership of the assets of civilisation after meeting the east, reached a reference point in the civilisation race and, moreover, then exploited and oppressed eastern civilisation. This unacceptable situation led to a feeling of humiliation at the level of societal-historical-cultural memory and consciousness. In other words, in the shaping of this traumatic cognitive structure, that Turkish national identity remained in a secondary position and was humiliated instead of being superior to the west; was obliged to follow the created western civilisation, instead of creating civilisations; had to abolish a six-centuries old empire, instead of establishing new states; its compulsion in a sense ‘to be crushed under the greatness of its past’ (Akçam, 2003: 58) – all these are important in the shaping of ‘a collective feeling of being crushed’ (Yörük, 2003: 314). It should not be overlooked that the original subject of the east on an ethnic basis is Turkish national identity.

The most important way of reversing the effect of that trauma is the pragmatic attitudes which have emerged as the result of nationalism and conservatism and in the research on young people. In other words, where there is an attitude of pragmatism or a pragmatic tactic on an economic basis in relations with the west, especially during the EU adaptation process, this trauma is forgotten and the superiorities of the west are remembered, while the benefit which would be brought by being together with this west is considered. Furthermore, the west, in its political-cultural-societal-religious structure, is at a distance or in a position of otherness which should always be watched carefully. Besides, by referring to Bekmen (2003: 327), in considering relations with the EU on an economic basis, there is the idea that the modernisation train, which was specifically observed in the early republican period, should not be missed. Otherwise, it can be argued that the concern that economically they would remain ‘on the edge, corner or outside the modern world’, has an important role in the shaping of this pragmatic attitude.

Concerning the giving of superiority to the west in the civilisation race – more importantly, that reaching western civilisation and even surpassing it is demonstrated as the target – Akçam approaches the issue in a similar way to Bekmen in removing the trauma or ‘paranoia’ in the mind caused by this backwardness, arguing that, behind

15 The geographic expeditions in the course textbooks of the early republican period were used as a means of demonstrating and negating the uncivilised spirit of western civilisation (the wild and cruel desires of the west). For details, see Parlak (2005: 458-459).
the transformation of nationalist discourse into aggressiveness beyond intolerance, it must be considered that:

Turkish national identity was very late in appearing on the stage of history. (Akçam, 2003: 53)

Due to this delay, the nationalist ideological discourse is ‘alarmed to fill the gap’ and has an attitude of explicit scepticism and even aggressiveness to different nations as ‘the other’.

Beyond this pragmatic nationalist attitude, the second way of removing the trauma, as has been mentioned before, passes through a linking of the roots of western superiority to the Turkish civilisation which has its roots in the east. In other words, what needs to be done is to search for the superiority of the west within the Turk. Thus, it can be argued that, in understanding the concern to claim the Turkishness of ancient Greek, Roman, Egyptian, Anatolian and Mesopotamian civilisations, this trauma can thereby be considered. Furthermore, thanks to the Turkicisation of the ancient Greek and Roman civilisations, which are regarded as the basis of western civilisation, western superiority is linked to the Turk; at the same time, a message is given to the Turkish nation, which once established such a superior civilisation, that it can reach that superiority again, as in the past. In this effort towards Turkicisation, the social science disciplines, such as anthropology, ethnology, linguistics, folklore and geography, have been the most important tools of legitimisation.

In order that this message reaches its target, as in the early republican period, addressing national feelings is the most important tactical tool. In particular, the use of this tactical tool by the nationalist-conservative front in political life today should be considered within this framework. Those national feelings have been continuously and intensively concentrated on the target of once again catching hold of successes by returning to the days of the past, which can virtually be named as the century of happiness. This situation is a way of coping with the modern world (Bekmen, 2003: 326). Akçam (2003: 58) also points out that, in this sense, our superiorities to the west in the past are always pushed to the front, while the target of reaching and surpassing the level of contemporary civilisations becomes meaningful only within this framework.

More importantly and paradoxically, achieving this would only be possible within rational reason and a positivist scientific approach and its concretisation in the principles of secularism-nationalism-statism developed by the west, not the east. Nevertheless, anachronistically, humiliating the west, reacting with a pragmatic attitude in the economic sense in relations with the west and also the efforts of Turkicising the west on the basis of civilisation seem on the one hand to serve to remove these feelings of inferiority and trauma; on the other, and more importantly, it leads to the development of heroism literature and nationalist-conservatist reactionary attitudes, putting forward our pride or the perception of the west that it is distrustful, an enemy, so deceitful and ungrateful that it cannot be a friend, and looking down on its superiority in cultural-political-moral-religious-societal terms. In the shaping of this nation-

16 Secularism, nationalism and statism are the three most referenced principles in the history and civics books of the early republican period. During the Atatürk years, the principle of secularism and, during the İnönü years, the principle of nationalism, are in first place. For details of this issue, see Parlak (2005: 188-190).
alist-conservatist reactionary attitude, it is important to examine and analyse the ‘consciousness of the oppressed’, mentioned by Timur (1997: 265), the emergence of nationalist identity as a reaction to the ‘continuous humiliation’ touched upon by Akçam (2003: 54),17 the ‘fear of disappearing’ (Akçam, 2003: 56), or the ‘psychosis of defeat’, regarding itself as ‘being defeated and crushed’ by the west (Kılıçbay, 2001: 51).

It can be argued that a nationalist ideological discourse constructed on the basis of a national consciousness of being oppressed determines this scepticism and distrust of the west. Even so, that the new national identity and nationalist discourse constructed on such a mentality have been developed in the context of the mentioned oppression and humiliation and fear of disappearance as ‘resistance’ needs to be explained to the public. The process of publicly explaining this has supported the development of a sort of excluding mental process which draws a sharp distinction between ‘we’ and a threatening ‘enemy/others’. Especially if the style of ‘exalted’ or ‘sanctified’ death and the situation within the conception of nationalism of being oppressed/humiliated/under the threat of disappearance are considered together, it becomes inevitable, even natural, for Turks, who are subjects of such a national identity, to behave bravely for the national cause without considering whether they are right or wrong.

For this reason, against the background of the Cyprus problem, the problem of terror and the dangers thought likely to be caused by the adaptation process with the EU, such as religious-linguistic-cultural-family related degenerations which can be regarded as the national cause, a nationalist-conservatist reactionary attitude can easily emerge without concession. Following the early republican period, the nationalist discourse transferred within the education programme and the language of the media, which are among the most important tools in the reproduction of ideological discursive language and consciousness, naturally imposed on other nations (above all, western ones) the perception of ‘others’, not to be trusted, but to be hated and which are, in themselves, frightening. Today, in addition to the educational/linguistic/communicative reproduction which, to a large extent, still continues,18 the articulation of political language within the framework of terror incidents makes the problem more serious.

Meanwhile, considering European civilisation as the symbol of the level of contemporary civilisation, and as a model to be internalised within the framework of Kemalist positivist-rational principles, moreover, without being applied completely, the crisis in this official ideology, accepted as the basic element of societal life (Kahra-

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17 Bekmen (2003: 327) points out that the novels of Omer Seyfettin are important in this sense. In particular, one of the ways of standing against minorities is ‘to know how to be economical’. It is necessary to configure society in terms not only of cultural sense but also the needs of the material world for the humiliation of the Turks who are regarded as ‘unable to learn calculus’. For this reason, Seyfettin says that ‘Hey Turks! Learn calculus!’

18 For a sample of the reproduction of the themes of course textbooks in the early republican period and for an analysis of the course textbooks of the 2000s, see Betül Çotuksöken et. al (2003) Human Rights in Course Books: Results of Scanning Istanbul: History Foundation Publications (Ders Kitaplarında İnsan Hakları: Tarama Sonuçları Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yayınları).
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man and Keyman, 1998: 86), gave birth to a distrust of the west in general and EU
countries in particular. Especially after the 1980s, this crisis has become sharper with:

The appearance of globalisation which causes cultural uniformity and forces consumption
rather than production,

as mentioned by Mahçupyan (1998: 45). After the 1980s, those who believe that they
are directed by globalisation rather than directing globalisation are much more aware
that they have to resemble those people who are different. Furthermore, there is an
emerging line which differentiates those who perceive this similarity as an obligation
and those who do not. To speak plainly, between those who enter the uniforming
process of globalisation without any objection and those who oppose uniformity,
there is a developing differentiation which resembles that of the old ‘civilised west’ –
‘barbarian east’ divide.

The instinct of being together with similar ones, like a double-sided knife, simultaneously di-

In this context, approximately 67% of the Turkish nation thinks that the reason be-
hind the disagreements between young people and adults is the desire of young peo-
ple to ‘imitate the west’ (Radikal 14 June 2006). In this sense, it should be realised
that east and west are ‘the inevitable process of naming’, that there are ‘mental identi-
 ties separating west and east’ and that:

A mental and identity gap developed for centuries divides [these] two worlds of meaning.

Conclusion

The transformation of the Turkish history thesis into a Turkish-Islam synthesis after
the mid-1970s, integrating the Islamic factor in the secular nationalist identity con-
structed in the early republican period, led to the enlargement of this mental and identi-
ty gap. The efforts of integrating society with the EU by legal regulations under the
title of ‘reform packages’, and through governments rather than through a natural
process, brings the articulation of the national mental structure and identity to a
nationalist-conservative mind and identity, and thus this gap grows larger rather than
gradually narrowing. In this sense, Turkey daily becomes physically closer (via eco-
nomic-mass communication tools-transportation facilities, etc.) to the west in general
and the EU in particular but, for both sides, there is a continual struggle to protect dif-
fences in terms of cultural structure, mental structure and identity.

It should be realised at this point that there is a paradoxical search for harmony be-
tween subjectivity and modernity. In other words, this issue actually results from dif-
fferences in efforts to define becoming contemporary or western within the framework
of the mental structures and identity perceptions of Turkish citizens who, on a cultural
basis, do not approach positively the EU membership of Turkey, and of those Turkish
citizens who do approve EU membership. In reference to Göle (1998: 72), it can be
argued that nationalist or conservative Turkish citizens who are sceptical of EU mem-
bership are trying to express their differences and protect their identities. Neverthe-
less, it is certain that this expressed difference and the identity they try to protect during this effort are perceived and considered as threatening to modernity or of becoming contemporary.

On the other hand, the attitude of nationalist-conservative fronts in making the west ‘a term of their disputive ideology’ and, moreover, without knowing, even without trying to know and understand the west,

Constructing [it] in an illusory way, (Kılıçbay, 2005: 36)

in addition shaping this construction with negative perceptions, is today effective in the emergence of attitudes interpreted as ‘westernisation in the face of the west’. We have tried above to explain that, following the establishment of the republic, the west, which is introduced in the national identity construction and modernisation project of both the official education ideology and Kemalist societal and political discourse as the ‘antithesis of the east’ (Kılıçbay, 2005: 37), as Dijk emphasises, is presented via the attribution of every kind of negativity but specifically as degenerate, especially in moral-societal-political terms. The east-west dualism has been virtually transformed into an ‘angel-evil’ (Kılıçbay, 2005: 37) dichotomy and this has been impressed on the minds of the Turkish public. Actually, it would be wrong to attribute this transformation of the west into evil merely to the republican period. In other words, within the framework of the Turkish and Islamic roots of the empire, how the eastern civilised roots became old and outmoded, and:

How and why the west entered into a phase of transformation were not put forward as problematic; (Kılıçbay, 2005: 37)

consequently, it is important that the experienced societal-political-cultural-economic structure and the difficulties are perceived as if they had to be experienced inevitably.

Furthermore, perceiving modernisation movements since the Tanzimat period simply as an imitation of the west, but also perceiving westernisation as the degeneration of society (since this westernisation could not prevent the dissolution of the empire), and totally condemning transformations that are in the direction of the west, should be realised as resorts which are impressed on the societal and national memory. This situation can also be interpreted as:

The heavy guilt of inability to achieve transformation, (Kılıçbay, 2005: 37)

since the Tanzimat period. In this sense, if today in the EU membership process similar doubts and distrust of the west are revived in societal and national memory, this state of mind is actually nothing more than a reflection of the guilt of being a simple and poor imitator of the west rather than being included within western civilised societal-economic-political life, instead of reflecting this guilt internally as self-criticism.

In conclusion, it should be mentioned that, within the direction of the Turkish modernisation adventure, Turkish society and public have, ever since the Ottoman modernisation movements, i.e. for about 200 years, been distant from the west, regarding it as a threat factor, while drawing on it as a model. In other words, society has, on the one hand, had a negative attitude to the west on a conservative basis both
culturally and socially, resisting transformation; on the other hand, it confesses that it should change in comparison with the west on an economic and technological basis. Consequently, the issue of what should be changed or preserved with the transformation or modernisation process in the direction of the west has been debated on these territories for quite some time. The most typical example of the attitude of ‘let us take the technics-science of the west but never its culture’, which has been on the agenda as a flow of thought since the New Ottomans, can be seen in Gökalp’s distinction between civilisation and culture. Today, similar attitudes are stated in the EU membership process and the content of the opposition expressed by nationalist-conservative discourses does not differ much from the past.

It is significant to realise that the main concerns and priorities in the historical construction of Turkish national identity lie behind the inability to achieve this transformation. It should be realised that national identity is constructed upon national pride and trust in order to get rid of the state of mind of being oppressed and humiliated, for this aim – as was discussed above in detail – constitutes one of the basic reference points of the perception of civilisation. The construction of Kemalist nationalist discourse on the basis of two different understandings of nationalism, and that eastern nationalism accommodates the dilemma of ‘following it and feeling hatred’ towards the west, is a turning point in the shaping of perceptions of civilisation. More importantly, this dilemma, within the structure of Kemalist nationalism, cannot be considered historically independent of Ottoman modernisation movements. This dilemma has become an inseparable part of the Ottoman-Turkish modernisation process since the Tanzimat movements. Behind the shaping of this dilemma, both the efforts of Kemalist discourse to separate the modernisation project from the Islamic factor and placing it on a secular basis, and the mentality of totally transforming society with the idea of ‘enlightenment and positivist science’ in a top-down manner, should be traced. Moreover, it should be added that this ideological discursive structure and process are reproduced through education institutions and especially course textbooks.

Within this context, in interpreting the results of research studies as ‘westernisation in the face of the west’ or ‘being for the EU on an economic basis’ but ‘opposing membership on a societal-cultural basis’, it should be mentioned that detailed historical analysis of Turkish modernisation movements, identity constructions during the republican period and the restructuring of the nationalist ideological discourse are very significant. In other words, it would be insufficient to try solely to explain the attitude of citizens who are simultaneously for and against EU membership in the context of recent domestic and international developments. The result is that it is an inevitable necessity to go deeply into the mental and cognitive level of the structure of Turkish society.

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