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WHAT STORIES DOES EUROPE TELL?
A VIEW FROM TURKEY

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ABSTRACT

Turkey's omnipresence at the margins of Europe throughout history has given shape to both Turkish and European identities. This paper sheds light onto this relationship by endeavoring to go beyond the much-studied institutional relationship between Turkey and the European Union (EU). It focuses on three critical historical moments, namely the inter-war years, the years of labor migration after 1960, and the period after 2004 which began with the failure of the United Nations proposal to settle the Cyprus dispute. While the image of the Turk was long viewed as the nemesis of Europe, there was a change in mutual perceptions during the inter-war years thanks to the efforts of political leaders who were keen on initiating societal reforms and change their minds after listening to one another. The years of labor migration after 1960 had set the stage for mutual encounters and interwoven lives. This period diversified the stories of Europe in a dramatic way. The third critical moment involved the concomitant crises of Turkey and the EU after 2004 when Turkey's membership in the EU finally seemed probable.

WHAT STORIES DOES EUROPE TELL?

A VIEW FROM TURKEY¹

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An enormous, terrible silence has fallen on the genius of Europe.
We have all had the impression that a European spirit has been struck
by stupefaction, that the workers for a future Europe
have been infinitely discouraged.
Georges Duhamel, 1933²

Introduction

Today, we are faced with a decline in the idea of a diverse Europe, a theme that is expressed in many conferences, lectures, books, articles and op-eds. In some countries the decline is so severe that the idea of a diverse Europe is replaced with the loathing of social inclusiveness. This is manifested in the discourse of Europe's new authoritarian leaders. The decline of the original values of the European Union (EU) are evident in discussions about Brexit as well as in EU's inability to impose sanctions against member states like Hungary that follow increasingly authoritarian paths. The EU embodies the idea of a Europe associated with values such as human rights, democracy, and rule of law. Hence, decline of the idea of a diverse Europe undoubtedly includes the loss of the values of the EU.

Turkey's relations with Europe until the end of the Second World War and with the EU since 1959, the year of Turkey's initial application for associate membership of the European Economic Community (EEC) indicate an omnipresence at the margins of

¹ An earlier version of this paper was written for the 10th Anniversary Dahrendorf Colloquium convened by Timothy Garton Ash and held at the University of Oxford on May 2-4, 2019 with the theme "What stories does Europe tell? Contested Narratives, Complex Histories, Conflicted Union."

² Cited in Mark Hewitson, "The United States of Europe: The European Question in the 1920s" in Mark Hewitson and Matthew D'Auria (eds), *Europe in Crisis: Intellectuals and the European Idea, 1917-1957* (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012), p. 16.

Europe. Turkey was not only called the “sick man of Europe”³ in reference to an earlier expression used for the Ottoman Empire but also became the country aspiring for EU membership for the longest time in the history of this institution. This seemed like a sickness that did not kill but kept one in an unsettled and ailing state of being in a waiting room for a very long time. The wait was so long that, even if Turkey was not the “sick man of Europe” at the beginning of its relationship with the EU, it eventually developed an unhealthy obsession with the European aspects of its identity. In fact, as it will be shown below, if the long wait for inclusion was one aspect of this relationship, another aspect involved the nature of the bond between Turkey and the EU. As Richard Falk put it in 1993: “...Turkey is not so much stranded at the European doorstep, but confined to the servants’ quarters in the European house.”⁴ While Turkey was indeed stranded at the servants’ quarters with the onset of labor migration from Turkey to Europe in the 1960s through various bilateral agreements, more recently, it found itself in the position of border patrol, guarding the borders of Europe, especially in the aftermath of the 2016 Turkey-EU refugee deal.

In the course of the long and troubled relationship between Turkey and Europe, Turkey was like a partner kept in close proximity but whose hand was never asked in marriage. Many Turkish citizens, witnessing the ups and downs of this relationship at the margins of Europe for half a century, have long stopped fantasizing about membership in the EU as a goal. The focus has long been on the process and journey rather than the destination. The predominant feeling among the supporters of Turkey’s membership in the EU is like that of King Sisyphus in Greek mythology who was given the punishment of carrying a huge stone to the top of a mountain only to watch it roll down repeatedly; symbolizing a futile act. One of the well-known expressions underlining the process rather than the destination was uttered by Eduard Bernstein (1850-1932), a member of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) in the 1870s who famously “revised” the Marxist orthodoxy. His focus on the

³ It was Nicholas I, the Emperor of Russia (1825-1855) who initially referred to the Ottoman Empire as “sick.” The expression “sick man of Europe” appeared in a piece in the *New York Times* on May 12, 1860.

⁴ Richard Falk, “A Meditative Comment on European Doors,” in Taciser Belge (ed.), *Where Does Europe End?* (Ankara: Helsinki Citizens Assembly, 1993).

process was epitomized in the words: "...the ultimate aim...is nothing, but the movement is everything."⁵

Colleagues and friends of my generation who are in their 50s share a sense of futility in relations with the EU. At times, we embraced this Sisyphean task positively and emphasized the positive aspects of keeping the EU anchor even if Turkey would never become a member. Yet, at other times, and especially in the course of the past decade, the significance of the process over the goal weakened since the EU itself lost its own anchor.

Zeus, the king of gods, punished Sisyphus mainly for his hubris and for challenging his intelligence. Zeus wanted to show Sisyphus that he had more cunning than him by punishing him with this exasperatingly futile act. Why was Turkey given this Sisyphean task? Was it viewed as full of hubris and cunning; legacies of the crumbled Ottoman Empire? Was it really deceitful in its orientation towards the EU? Did the insecurities of the founding members of the EU, especially regarding the population of Turkey and how its admission would change the existing balances play a role in othering Turkey? After all, the population not of Turkey, but Istanbul alone, is higher than the population of some of the current EU members including Belgium.⁶ Did the association of Turkey with Islam, the religion of the majority of its citizens, play a role in Turkey's entrapment in a Sisyphean task? The answers to these questions change at different moments in time during Turkey's almost 60 years old relationship with the EU.

This paper aspires to describe the distinguishing features of the Turkish and the European perceptions of one another, from the historical European view of the Turk as "the bloodthirsty foe of Christ and Plato"⁷ to the expressed Turkish desire for westernization in the early years of the republic and then to its more recent abandonment. In doing so, it

⁵ Eduard Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism* (New York: Prism Key Press, 2011 [1899]), p. 172.

⁶ Population Turkey 2018: 82,916,871; Population Belgium 2018: 11,498,519 Source: World Population Review Countries <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/> (accessed February 16, 2019); Population of Istanbul 2018: 14,539,767 Source: World Population Review World Cities <http://worldpopulationreview.com/world-cities/> (accessed February 16, 2019).

⁷ Robert Schwoebel, *The Shadow of the Crescent: The Renaissance Image of the Turk, 1453-1517* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1969), p. 166.

highlights some of the critical moments of the relations between Turkey and Europe in an attempt to portray what Turkey and Europe did for one another and shaped each other's identity.

Mutual Perceptions and Inherited Stories: “Why am I what I am?”

In *White Castle*⁸ (1985), Orhan Pamuk tells the story of an Italian scholar who is captured by the Turkish fleet while on board a ship sailing from Naples to Venice in the seventeenth century. The Italian scholar, brought and imprisoned in Constantinople, initially tells his captors that he has knowledge of astronomy and nocturnal navigation so that he is not kept at the oars but realizing that this does not garner enough respect, he eventually presents himself as a medical doctor. After healing a number of people on the basis of common sense knowledge, he gains the admiration of a Pasha who later gives him as a slave to one of his friends named Hoja (meaning master). Hoja and the Italian scholar look like twin brothers. Such similarity in their physical appearance startles the Italian scholar during their first meeting when he almost feels like looking into the mirror. Over the years, they develop a relationship revolving around the question that Hoja poses: “Why am I what I am?”⁹ In the course of their conversations, while the captive scholar shares his knowledge in western science, technology and medicine with Hoja, his identity goes through a transformation. By the end of their more than a decade long mutual observations coupled with sharing stories, they each take on the identity of the other to the extent that who is who becomes blurred. The relationship between the Italian scholar and Hoja, their exchanges, physical/cosmetic similarities matched by significant differences of character and worldview, as reflected in Pamuk's dazzling prose, mimics the story of Turkey's relations with Europe. Conflict, collaboration, resentment, frustration as well as master-slave relations between the Italian scholar and Hoja are akin to the nature of the association between Europe and Turkey.

Coexistence of love and hate shaped Turkey's relations with Europe. This was nowhere

⁸ Orhan Pamuk, *Beyaz Kale* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1985). English translation from Turkish by Victoria Holbrook, *White Castle* (New York: Vintage International, Random House, 1998).

⁹ *White Castle*, p. 58.

better reflected in the coexistence of national pride and a paradoxical low self-esteem vis-à-vis Europe within the Turkish psyche. Pride in national history was emboldened by the national education curriculum. Yet, it was coupled with an uneasy sense of low self-esteem. I have earlier argued that the paradoxical coexistence of pride and low self-esteem was possibly rooted in Turkish state's denialism of the Armenian Genocide:

At some point in my adult life, I realized that many people in Turkey had developed a sense of pride in their national history thanks to the national education system. Nevertheless, they did not think very highly of themselves. I believe that such a sense of pride, coupled with a low sense of self-esteem, is one of the significant cultural dilemmas in Turkey. While on the one hand there is a sense of pride in ancestors and/or the national flag, there is at the same time a low sense of self-esteem. I always wondered about the origins of this paradox. Could it be that people knew and did not talk about the atrocities on this land? Could it be that they knew what happened was wrong but were channeled not to reflect about it? Could it be that they were encouraged to forget what cannot be forgotten? Could it be that the land itself kept whispering words about past atrocities, while the history books were boisterously claiming national victories?¹⁰

Turkey's efforts to establish its credentials as a westernized society came "at a psychic cost"¹¹ by creating a split in the society. Polarization between the urban, secular, citizens (center) and the provincial, religious people (periphery), namely the center-periphery cleavage has long been characterized as a "key" in understanding Turkish politics.¹²

¹⁰ Ayşe Kadioğlu, "Skeletons in the Turkish closet: remembering the Armenian Genocide," *openDemocracy*, April 24, 2015. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/ay%C5%9Fe-kad%C4%B1o%C4%9Flu/skeletons-in-turkish-closet-remembering-armenian-genocide> (accessed February 18, 2019).

¹¹ Kevin Robins, "Interrupted Identities, Turkey/Europe," in Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (eds), *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London: Sage, 1996), p. 65.

¹² Şerif Mardin, "Center-Periphery Relations: A Key to Turkish Politics," *Daedalus*, 102/2, 1973, pp. 169–190. I always thought that this split created a tension akin to the conflicts in university towns such as the University of Oxford between the gown-wearing members of the university community and the lay people of the town who are engaged in jobs providing services to the university. Since this paper was written for a conference at the University of Oxford (where I spent 4 academic terms as a visiting scholar), I felt the need to look into the origins of the town versus gown conflict in Oxford and discovered that one of the well-known moments of this conflict took place in 1355 when a brawl at the local Swindlestock Tavern grew into a battle between the people of the town and the academics leading to the death of 30 town folks and 63 students. Strangely enough, after this mayhem known as the St Scholastica Day Riot, the mayor and the councilors had to march through the streets, attend a Mass and pay the university a fine for each scholar murdered in 1355. These marches of compulsory remorse lasted until 1825. Today, there is an inscription at the spot of the tavern in Oxford. Dominic Selwood, "On this day in 1355: University fracas ends with 93 dead and the birth of a 600-year-long tradition," *The Telegraph*, February 10, 2017. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/02/10/day-1355-university-fracas-ends-93-dead-birth-600-year-long/> (accessed on February 7, 2019).

Mutual perceptions and inherited stories between Europeans and Turks can be traced back to significant moments of their encounter in history. European approaches to the Ottoman Empire and Turkey, during and after the Ottoman capture of Constantinople in 1453, were laden with remarks that portrayed Turks as the nemesis of Europe. Cosimo de Medici of the Medici family that ruled Florence during the Italian Renaissance allegedly remarked that “the fall of Constantinople was the most tragic event that the world had seen for many centuries.”¹³ The Grand Turk was described by the King of Denmark and Norway as “the beast rising out of the sea described in the Apocalypse.”¹⁴ Overall, the Turk was stereotyped as “savage and bloodthirsty, swooping down upon innocent Christians, and massacring them indiscriminately.”¹⁵ Nevertheless, between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, such negative and fearful imagery of the Turk was coupled with alternating expressions of admiration praising “military and administrative skills, a tolerant government, a system of justice which was simpler, quicker and less corrupt than that of Europe.”¹⁶ There was also admiration for some personal characteristics such as “endurance, frugality, sobriety, cleanliness, politeness and hospitality.”¹⁷ However, many critical views were expressed about the position of women in Ottoman society as well as the practices of polygamy and abortion, that were seen as rife among the Turks.¹⁸

These images were matched by similar statements on the part of the Ottoman Turks. The expression used for the lands under the rule of Islam was *Dar al-Islam* while the lands under non-Muslim rule were referred as *Dar al-harb*. Within *Dar al-harb*, the expression used for the Orthodox Christian world was *Rum* (that is, Rome) while the Latin world was called *Firangistan* (the land of the Franks).¹⁹ Although the expression “Europe” became common in seventeenth and eighteenth century, *Firangistan* continued to be used popularly. An Ottoman ambassador reported to Louis the XV in eighteenth century that

¹³ Cited in Robert Schwoebel, *The Shadow of the Crescent: The Renaissance Image of the Turk, 1453-1517* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1969), pp. 3-4.

¹⁴ Cited in Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 13.

¹⁶ M. E. Yapp, “Europe in the Turkish Mirror,” *Past and Present*, 137, November 1992, pp. 134-155, esp. p. 149.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Cited in Ibid. and also p. 152.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 139.

Franks and the Turks were like day and night and if you turned a Turk upside down you would get a Frank.²⁰

When the Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamid shelved the first constitutional monarchy in 1876, the Young Turks began to organize in European capitals in order to topple the sultanate. Young Turks who tried to overthrow the sultanate through activities in European cities became visible with the foundation of the Committee of Union and Progress in 1889. During their stay in European capitals between the two constitutional monarchies (1876-1908), some of the Young Turks became quite acquainted with European ideas and ways of life. It was during these years that the desire for westernization began to be expressed by some of them. The desire to emulate European ideas and ways of life was particularly pronounced among the liberals within the Committee of Union and Progress. One of the key liberals of those years, Prince Sabahattin expressed his encounter and fascination with a new scientific method in Paris as follows:

One day, as I walked on one of the famous streets of Paris in a tired and sad way, both spiritually and materially, my eye caught Edmond Demolins' book *A Quoi Tient La Superiorite des Anglo-Saxons* (What accounts for the Superiority of Anglo-Saxons) . . . That night, I read the book in a dash. In the author's answer to this question, I sensed the presence of a scientific method that I have not encountered before in the sociology literature, which was akin to the methods of positive sciences.²¹

Prior to such fascination with western ideas, Turkish modernization had already begun in the course of the eighteenth century with the reform of the military that involved the establishment of disciplined troops trained upon the recommendations of western advisers. At the turn of the nineteenth century, modernization spread to areas other than the military. Between 1839 and 1908, the reforms increasingly involved civilian matters leading to the “revamping of the civil and political institutions of the Ottomans.”²² Reforms introduced

²⁰ Cited in Ibid. p. 140.

²¹ Cited in Nezahet Nurettin Ege, *Prens Sabahattin, Hayatı ve İlmi Müdafaları* (Istanbul: Güneş Neşriyatı, 1977), p. 36 (my translation). See also; Ayşe Kadioğlu, “An Oxymoron: The Origins of Civic-Republican Liberalism in Turkey,” *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies*, 16/2, Summer 2007, pp. 171-190. This encounter with Demolins' book is reminiscent of an expression by Orhan Pamuk: “I read a book one day and my whole life was changed” the opening sentence of his novel *The New Life*, translated from Turkish by Güneli Gün (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997). [L¹]_{SEP}

²² Şerif Mardin, “European Culture and the Development of Modern Turkey,” in Ahmet Evin and Geoffrey Denton (eds), *Turkey and the European Community* (Leske, Budrich: Opladen, 1990), pp.13-23, esp.15.

by the Tanzimat Charter (1839) involved a major reorganization at the levels of provincial administration, education, and the judiciary. The ultimate aim of the Tanzimat reformers was the achievement of a French understanding of civilization.²³ With the onset of the republican reforms, this aim became a desire to elevate Turkey to the level of *muasır medeniyet* (contemporary civilization).

With the initiation of Tanzimat reforms, the dilemma of the achievement of a balance between the materiality of the west and the spirituality of the east became quite pronounced in the writings of the Tanzimat authors.²⁴ Their main problematique became the achievement of a balance between the reforms and Islamic teachings by underlining the compatibility between the two. This was coupled by a critique of cosmetic modernization adopted by the Ottoman elites that involved the adoption and imitation of western consumption patterns and costumes. In a key novel published in 1876, titled *Felâtnun Bey and Râkım Efendi*,²⁵ Ahmet Mithat, for instance, portrayed the difference between an imitative, cosmetic Westernization which is ridiculed as phony and a preferred one which is characterized by a relentless effort to hold on to indigenous cultural traits. One of the main characters in the novel, Felatun Bey epitomizes the former by spending his inheritance on the European side of Istanbul in gambling and entertainment. Rakım Efendi, on the other hand, spends his time working diligently in order to achieve his goal of leading a modest life. As someone who graduated from Ottoman educational institutions, he also has command over the French language and literature. He represents a serious, hard-working person in contrast to the affluent, conspicuous and spend-thrift Felatun Bey.

Recaizade Ekrem's novel *Araba Sevdası*,²⁶ published in 1896, depicts Bihruz Bey as an ostentatious character who was appointed to public office through his father's connections despite his apparent laziness and incompetence. He not only refers to Turkish customs as barbaric but also mocks the traditional costumes of the Turks. While dressed in expensive, tailored costumes in western styles and roaming around the city in carriages in the style of

²³ Ibid., p. 16.

²⁴ Ayşe Kadıoğlu, "The Paradox of Turkish Nationalism and the Construction of Official Identity," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 32/2, April 1996, pp. 177-193, esp. 180-182.

²⁵ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, *Felâtnun Bey and Râkım Efendi: an Ottoman Novel*, translated from Turkish by Melih Levi and Monica M. Ringer (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2016).

²⁶ Recaizade Mahmut Ekrem, *Araba Sevdası* (Istanbul: Kanaat Yayınları, 1979).

European aristocrats, Bihruz bey constantly makes exaggerated remarks in French.

Such characters out of the Tanzimat novel portray the beginning of the dilemmas posed by the advent of westernization in the Turkish society. The dual and contrasting representations of the European and the Turk inherited from medieval history were replaced in nineteenth century by an endeavor to combine them and identify a balanced path of westernization. Yet, during the early years of the republic, the endeavor to achieve a synthesis between the west and Islam was abandoned and westernization became the prevailing desire.

Republican reforms included the abolition of the Caliphate in 1924 accompanied by the establishment of the Directorate of Religious Affairs. This was followed by a series of reforms in 1924 within the legal, educational, and cultural institutions, such as the bill abolishing the Ministries of *Şeriat* and *Evkaf*, closing the institutions of religious education (*medrese*) and unifying all education under the Ministry of Education, as well as eradicating the religious orders (*tariqas*).

Between the years 1920-1925, the Republican elite increasingly moved away from Islam in defining national identity.²⁷ Mustafa Kemal, the founder and the first President of the Turkish Republic, defined the nation on the basis of Islam in 1920. By 1925, he was emphasizing Turkism over religion.²⁸ According to Mardin, by 1925, Mustafa Kemal assumed that secular education and nationalism – the twin foundations of the Turkish Republic – could constitute a substitute for Islam and “would fill in for all the functions of Islam.”²⁹ İsmet İnönü, the second President of the Turkish Republic, in the aftermath of his participation in the meetings leading to the Treaty of Lausanne (1923) that defined the borders of the modern Turkish Republic, said: “If we do not totally get rid of the *hodjas* (local religious leaders), we can do nothing.”³⁰ He maintained that despite the fact that they fought against the Entente powers, Hungarians and Bulgarians were able to maintain their

²⁷ Ayşe Kadioğlu, “The Pathologies of Turkish Republican Laicism,” *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 36/3-4, pp. 489-504.

²⁸ İsmail Kara, *Cumhuriyet Türkiye’sinde Bir Mesele Olarak İslam* (Istanbul: Dergah, 2008), pp. 29-30

²⁹ Şerif Mardin, “The Ottoman Empire,” in Karen Barkey and Mark von Hagen, *After Empire: Multiethnic Societies and Nation-Building* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), p. 126.

³⁰ Cited in İsmail Kara, *Cumhuriyet Türkiye’sinde Bir Mesele Olarak İslam*, p. 31.

independence since they were Christians. He thought that the colonizing powers and especially the British would continue to view the Turks as inferior as long as they remained Muslim. Such views portray the shift of gears by the republican elite who began to engage in a type of modernization by denouncing Islam and placing it under the control of the state after 1923. Westernization had become the prevailing desire on the part of the early republican elite. This was expressed in their will to join the European institutions.

Turkey and the EU institutional history is an area of research that thrives with many substantial scholarly publications.³¹ Turkey-EU relationship is aptly described by Arisan Eralp as a “unique partnership.”³² It is true that the history of nation-states progresses through the interaction of many actors. Nevertheless, there are always certain fateful moments, years, periods and/or turning-points that shape the progress and/ or reversal of processes.³³ In what follows, three such fateful periods of Republican Turkey’s relations with Europe and the EU will be underlined.

These are, first of all, the encounter between the new Turkish Republic and Europe during the inter-war years that reversed the earlier trends and mutual perceptions through the efforts of competent political leaders; secondly, the years of labor migration leading to the phenomenon of the guestworkers and the reality of daily encounters as well as what is called below the “dilemma of impossibility” encountered by the migrants and thirdly, the period after the failure of the Annan Plan in 2004 in resolving the Cyprus conflict and the

³¹ See, for instance, Atila Eralp and Zerrin Torun, “Europeanization of Turkish Politics and Policies: Past, Present and Future,” in Belgin Akçay and Bahri Yılmaz (eds): *Turkey’s Accession to the European Union, Political and Economic Challenges* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013). Nilgün Arisan Eralp and Atila Eralp, “What Went Wrong in Turkey-EU Relationship,” in Kerem Öktem, Ayşe Kadioğlu and Mehmet Karlı (eds), *Another Empire? A Decade of Turkey’s Foreign Policy Under the Justice and Development Party* (Istanbul: Istanbul Bilgi University Press, 2012). Meltem Müftüler Baç, *Turkey’s Relations with a Changing Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997); Meltem Müftüler Baç, *Divergent Pathways: Turkey and the European Union* (Berlin: Barbara Budrich publishers, 2016). Nathalie Tocci, *Conditionality, Impact and Prejudice in EU-Turkey Relations* (Rome: Quaderni IAI, 2007). Senem Aydın Düzgit and Nathalie Tocci, *Turkey and the European Union* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). Alper Kaliber and Senem Aydın Düzgit (eds), *Is Turkey De-Europeanising? Encounters with Europe in a Candidate Country* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017).

³² Nilgün Arisan Eralp, “Turkey and the European Union: A Unique Partnership,” American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, 2014, http://www.academia.edu/11010768/Turkey_and_the_European_Union_A_Unique_Partnership (accessed February 11, 2019).

³³ It is, for instance, possible to view the failure of the unification attempts of the Frankfurt National Assembly in 1848 as such a fatal moment in shaping subsequent German history.

subsequent deterioration of Turkey-EU relations. These critical moments are examined in an attempt to read and highlight some of the stories that Europe tells.

Inter-war years: possibility of Turkey in Europe appears on the horizon

There were two conferences organized in 1933 by the League of Nations: the first one took place in Madrid on May 3-7, 1933 with the title *L'avenir de la culture* and the second one was held in Paris on October 16-18, 1933 with the title *L'avenir de l'esprit européen*. These conferences were attended by such intellectuals as Paul Valéry, Johan Huizinga, Julien Benda, Hermann von Keyserling, and Georges Duhamel. The participants in these conferences tried to define a common European narrative across national differences and recurrently used the idea of a European nation/homeland. They undertook a concerted effort “to balance the sense of belonging to a community with the quest for common good, a common good interpreted more as common liberty of the people rather than the cultural affinity and homogeneity of a people.”³⁴ Their views were informed by the German artist Franz Marc’s definition of the First World War as “a European civil war, a war against the invisible enemy of the European spirit.”³⁵

One of the early proposals for a European union was put forth in a 1923 book titled *Panuropa* by Richard von Coudenhove-Kalergi, an intellectual and aristocrat of Austrian and Japanese background. Coudenhove-Kalergi’s view was built on the assumption that the League of Nations conceived by President T. Woodrow Wilson was no more than a weak and utopian idea that was bound to remain an abstraction. Hence, he did not think membership in the League of Nations was necessary in order to be included in Europe. Still, Turkey was not considered as part of his initial idea of Europe.

The search for a united Europe was taken to a new dimension by Aristide Briand in 1929, who was the French Foreign Minister at that time. Briand’s ideas appeared in his address to the League of Nations and were distinguished from the Coudenhove-Kalergi’s ideas by

³⁴ Paola Cattani, “Europe as a Nation? Intellectuals and debate on Europe in the inter-war period,” *History of European Ideas*, 43/6, 2017, pp. 674-682, esp. 682.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 681.

the emphasis laid on membership in the League of Nations as a prerequisite for membership in the European union which he envisioned as a “federal link” among the member states.³⁶ Briand also underlined that the sovereignty of the member states to this union would remain intact. Barlas and Güvenç, in their meticulous comparison of these two plans, refer to “‘the idealism of the cosmopolitan aristocrat’ Coudenhove-Kalergi and the realism of the statesman Briand who naturally thought more in terms of interests and conflict.”³⁷ When the initial plan for a European federation was published as a memorandum by Briand in May 1930, Turkey was not included in it.

After the proclamation of the republic in Turkey in 1923, there was an increasing interest on the part of the new political elite to be recognized in the international community of states. Although Turkey was excluded from the initial process, its leaders remained attuned to the Briand plan albeit eyeing it as a plan to counter the Anglo-American influence in Europe. The new republican elite were assuming that Turkey was in Europe since it was surrounded by the European waters of the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. Moreover, they thought that “the values and norms accepted by societies were more significant than the geographical criterion in defining Europeanness, which in any case was met by Turkey.”³⁸

A vision of Europe based not on culture and religion but values was appealing to those on the margins of Europe, namely the Turkish political elite. Turkish diplomats lobbied in many countries, such as Italy, Germany, Greece, Hungary and Bulgaria in order to be included in the deliberations leading to a European union. Greece strongly supported Turkey’s inclusion in the plan. Turkey was finally invited to join the deliberations in 1931 in spite of the fact that it was still not a member of the League of Nations.³⁹ This process brought Turkey closer to the League of Nations. As Barlas and Güvenç put it: “Although

³⁶ The plans for a united Europe and the approach of the new Turkish republican state towards them between the inter-war years are reviewed in an excellent article by Dilek Barlas and Serhat Güvenç, “Turkey and the idea of a European Union during the Inter-War Years, 1923-1939,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, 45/3, May 2009, pp. 425-446, esp. 428. My views on Coudenhove-Kalergi’s and Briand’s ideas about a united Europe were largely shaped by this illuminating article.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 430.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 432.

³⁹ Turkey joined the League of Nations on July 18, 1932.

Briand's proposal did not materialize, his half-hearted inclusion of Turkey might have served to bring that country into the League as a European country."⁴⁰

When Coudenhove-Kalergi published his second book titled *Europa Erwacht!* in 1934, he had already visited Turkey and had observed the reforms taken by the republican elite. Modern Turkey, in his words, "under its leader Kemal Atatürk, embraced without any European pressure all the vital elements of Western civilization . . . paving the way for a complete reconciliation between Europe and the Near East."⁴¹

Turkey's initial exclusion from and later inclusion in the first plans for a European union during the inter-war years represent a change in mutual perceptions of the Turkish and European leaders. Moreover, it portrays a competent political leadership on the part of the republican elite who engaged in lobbying activities to turn the tide. A capable political leadership was also displayed by European leaders who, in light of the substantial reforms undertaken in Turkey during those years, were able to change their minds. This underlines the significance of political leaders who can transcend prejudices through close observation and have the ability to change their minds.

The consideration of Turkey as part of the European union pushed the idea of Europe to a broader level emphasizing values over culture and religion. Such an emphasis on the values of Europe was expressed in the two aforementioned conferences held in 1933, in Madrid and Paris. It was in the Paris conference that Georges Duhamel voiced the words about "an enormous, terrible silence" that has "fallen on the genius of Europe" mentioned in the epigraph of this article. Although the idea for a Europe based on values was emphasized in these conferences, the reality on the ground in 1933 was moving in the opposite direction with Adolf Hitler as the Chancellor of Germany followed by the Reichstag Fire and the Enabling Act.

I believe, what distinguished the vision of these political leaders who were opting for a European union of values rather than cultural and religious identity during the inter-war

⁴⁰ Dilek Barlas and Serhat Güvenç, "Turkey and the idea of a European Union during the Inter-War Years, 1923-1939," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 45/3, May 2009, pp. 425-446, esp. 437.

⁴¹ Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 438.

years was their recent experience and vivid memories of the First World War. They, first and foremost, were guided with a desire to prevent another war. They were not successful but theirs was a vision that should be remembered today especially when the new leaders of Europe and Turkey seem to have lost such a perspective to an alarming extent. Today, loss of the memory of war on the part of its leaders is moving the EU away from its original values and *raison d'être*.

Guestworkers who stayed: interwoven identities

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the idea of a European union that failed to materialize during the inter-war years was resurrected in an attempt to prevent wars. This time, the political determination was powerful and it culminated in the Treaty of Rome in 1957 giving birth to the European Economic Community (EEC) which evolved into the European Union (EU) in 1992 with the Maastricht Treaty. Turkey applied for associate membership in the EEC in 1959 leading to negotiations that led to the Ankara Agreement in 1963. By this time, Turkey had already become a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1952 as well as the Council of Europe (CoE) only three months after it was founded in 1949.

When relations with the EEC began, Turkey began to sign bilateral agreements initiating labor migration, first with Germany in 1961, and later with countries such as Austria, Netherlands, Belgium, and France. The number of Turkish workers entering Germany was visibly higher than other countries. 80% of the 800,000 workers from Turkey went to the Federal Republic of Germany between 1961-1975.⁴² These workers were called *Alamanca* (Germaners) in Turkey regardless of where they went in Europe. They were also known as the *gastarbeiter* (guestworkers) in Europe due to an overall anticipation about their temporary stay. While remittances of the guestworkers constituted 14% of the foreign currency earnings of Turkey in 1964, this figure rose to 70% by the early 1970s.⁴³ Turkey

⁴² Daniel Kubat (ed.), *The Politics of Migration Policies: The First World in the 1970s* (New York, Center for Migration Studies, 1979), p. 248.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 253.

had become so dependent on these remittances that when Germany imposed an immigration ban in 1973 due to the oil crisis, it had an highly detrimental impact on the Turkish economy. The guestworker phenomenon became “dead” by the end of the 1980s. In fact, one of the most influential scholars writing on the theme wrote its obituary in 1985 by declaring: “The guest-workers systems of Western Europe are dead...The guest-workers are no longer with us; either they have gone or they have been transmogrified into settlers and marginalized into ethnic minorities.”⁴⁴

Although it began as a temporary endeavor, labor migration and later family reunification processes led to the settlement of about 5 million migrants from Turkey in Europe.⁴⁵ While guestworkers were criticized by the governments for failing to culturally integrate into European societies, their integration was paradoxically made more difficult by government policies that continued to view them as temporary. Hence, they were faced by the “dilemma of impossibility.” Accordingly, no matter how much they desired and tried to integrate, they faced a wall of impossibility. While the government policies did not envision policies of integration, they continued to blame the migrants for not integrating adequately to the host society.

As it will be seen below, the “dilemma of impossibility” faced by the guestworkers who stayed in Europe is like a microcosm of the impossibility facing Turkey in its relations with the EU. In the words of Kevin Robins: “There is the demand that the Turks should assimilate western values and standards alongside the conviction that, however much they try to do so it will be impossible for them to succeed.”⁴⁶

Turkey was granted official candidate status at the Helsinki Summit of the European Council in 1999. The European Council stated that Turkey was “a candidate State destined

⁴⁴ Stephen Castles, “The Guest-Worker in Western Europe: An Obituary,” *The International Migration Review*, 20/4, Winter 1986, pp. 761-778, esp. p. 775.

⁴⁵ About 3 million settled in Germany. See, Murat Erdoğan, “The Turkish Diaspora in Europe and the Euro-Turks Barometer Survey,” American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, <https://www.aicgs.org/events/the-turkish-diaspora-in-europe-and-the-euro-turks-barometer-survey/> (accessed February 11, 2019).

⁴⁶ Kevin Robins, “Interrupted Identities, Turkey/Europe,” in Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (eds), *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London: Sage, 1996), p. 66.

to join the Union on the basis of the same criteria as applied to the other candidate States.”⁴⁷ Official candidacy status led to an unprecedented enthusiasm in Turkey about the EU processes. In a leap forward, governments passed eight EU Reform Packages between February 2002 and July 2004 that included such legal changes as gender equality, protection of children, elimination of sentence reductions in honor crimes, the abolition of death penalty, prevention of torture, strengthening civilian over military authority, and the recognition of the supremacy of international agreements over domestic legislation. However, the enthusiasm generated by official candidacy was soon shadowed by the “dilemma of impossibility” in the course of the negotiation processes. Will, desire, and substantial reforms of the Turkish governments, that had once convinced the European leaders that Turkey belonged in Europe, was no longer adequate to persuade the new leaders of Europe.

At the turn of the twenty first century, Turkey’s inclusion in Europe constituted a major bone of contention between those political actors who embraced diversity, multiculturalism, living together and those who harbored anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim worldviews. In 2005, at the high point of the debates on Turkey’s membership in the EU, Timothy Garton Ash had said: “The question to ask is not what Europe will do for Turkey, but what Turkey has done for Europe.”⁴⁸ Turkey’s inclusion in Europe could indeed have been the key to the survival of a discourse of diversity. However, the breakdown of the negotiations between Turkey and the EU accompanied the weakening of a worldview in Europe that espoused multiculturalism.

The labor migration from Turkey to Europe that began in the 1960s ignited the fire of the real encounters between immigrants and rooted citizens of Europe. This was an encounter that left an unprecedented mark on Europe’s landscape. It led to the emergence of hyphenated identities such as Euro-Turks, German-Turks, Euro-Muslims, Muslim-Germans, and Muslim-Europeans. It diversified the European landscape through interpersonal relationships, new genres of music, cinema and the arts. It enhanced the daily

⁴⁷ *Helsinki European Council, December 10-11, 1999 Presidency Conclusions*, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/hell_en.htm (accessed February 12, 2019).

⁴⁸ Timothy Garton Ash, “How the dreaded superstate became a commonwealth,” *The Guardian*, October 5, 2005, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/oct/06/eu.turkey> (accessed February 12, 2019).

manifestations of Islam in the European urban space.

The daily encounters of not only Turkish Muslims but Muslim immigrants from various other countries initially created a new spirit of *convivencia* (coexistence) in Europe.⁴⁹ The encounters that began with labor migration and the ensuing impact of the second/third generation migrants led to the envisioning of a diverse and inclusive Europe among the liberal and social democratic European elites. As Kalypso Nicolaidis put it in 2004: “the glue that binds the EU together is not a shared identity; it is, rather, shared projects and objectives.”⁵⁰ These projects and objectives included the single market, the euro, enlargement, the promotion of peace, social justice, gender equality, children’s rights, sustainable development, a highly competitive social market economy, and full employment.

In the aftermath of its first electoral victory in 2002, the leaders of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) announced their determination to fulfill the conditions for the start of negotiations geared towards Turkey’s full membership in the EU. Shortly after the elections, the government representatives arrived in Copenhagen where it was decided that the date for the beginning of talks would be decided at the end of 2004. Prior to the AKP, the former Turkish political elite had conventionally underscored their western appearances in their relations with the EU. When AKP leaders went to their first meeting in Copenhagen, they were open about their conservative and religious manners and appearances. The subsequent meetings in Luxembourg on 3 October 2005 finally led to the start of negotiations.⁵¹

The relations between Turkey and Europe after the Second World War were highly shaped by the mutual encounters initiated by the labor migration processes. Initial encounters did

⁴⁹ Ayşe Kadioğlu, “The Spirit of Convivencia,” in Gülgün Küçükören, Hakan Altınay and Gökçe Tüylüoğlu (eds) *The Cost of No EU-Turkey III: Five Views* (Istanbul: Open Society Foundation, May 2011).

⁵⁰ Kalypso Nicolaidis, “We, the Peoples of Europe . . .” *Foreign Affairs*, 83/6, November-December 2004, pp. 97-110, esp. 103.

⁵¹ I was in Oxford on that day. The next day, on October 4, 2005, I remember seeing the headline on the cover of the *The Independent* that said “Europe’s New Borders,” with the borders drawn by the stars of the EU along the eastern borderline of Turkey. I remember posting that page on my office door at St Antony’s for this was a long awaited triumphant moment for my generation.

not foster diversity and rather involved discriminatory perceptions of one another. Yet, over time, sharing spaces in the daily settings of cities like Berlin, Cologne, Hamburg, Munich, Brussels, Rotterdam, Amsterdam and others changed the nature of the mutual perceptions and relations. In a remarkable study focusing on such daily encounters and conflicts between rooted Europeans and immigrant Muslims (Muslim-Europeans) in a number of urban public spaces, Nilüfer Göle maintains that the new space created can no longer be explained through the metaphor of collage.⁵² Collage involves placing different and sometimes conflicting expressions, colors, and symbols side by side. Many artworks, using the method of collage, combine differences by placing them next to one another. Göle argues that collage can potentially be explosive since placing differences side by side without letting them mix into each other's world can lead to the fortification of parallel worlds that do not touch and cannot learn from one another. Göle rather uses the metaphor of carpets woven by hand, an image that she came across growing up in Turkey. The bright colored threads that are interlaced and weaved together represent much better than the collage, the many forms of encounters and mutual penetrations in the lives of people from different cultural and religious backgrounds. At the turn of the twentieth century, it is because of such encounters and interlaced lives that European public space began to resemble carpets displaying multiple motifs and stories. Yet, while such mutual penetrations encouraged the formations of new hybrid and interwoven identities, they were accompanied by opposing voices resisting such hybridity and advocating a return to separate and unmixed identities defined by clear boundaries. With the onset of the twenty first century, the threads of the carpet were about to be torn and meet their nemesis in the newly celebrated images of the fences and the walls. Political leaders of the new right exploited the ultimate unenlightened feeling of fear and promoted an anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim rhetoric. Migrants were increasingly portrayed as backward criminals and carriers of diseases as well as people who steal the jobs of the nationals, drive down wages, abuse the welfare state, and lower the standards of education.⁵³ These thoughts accompanied the

⁵² Nilüfer Göle, *Gündelik Yaşamda Avrupalı Müslümanlar: Avrupa Kamusal Alanındaki İslam İhtilafları Üzerine bir Araştırma* (Istanbul: Metis, 2015).

⁵³ "Living Together: Combining diversity and freedom in 21st-century Europe," Report of the Group of Eminent Persons of the Council of Europe, 2011, <https://rm.coe.int/16806b97c5> (accessed February 16, 2019).

crisis of the vision of a diverse Europe.

The concomitant crises of Europe and Turkey

The Copenhagen Summit of the European Council in December 2002 was the first summit in which Turkey was represented by the newly elected AKP government. In this summit, the conclusion of the accession negotiations with Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia was declared and it was announced that “the Union now looks forward to welcoming these States as members from May 1, 2004.”⁵⁴ After this summit, AKP carried on with implementing reforms that had already begun as part of the EU accession processes displaying a clear will about pursuing membership in the EU.

Moreover, AKP supported the Annan Plan that was devised by the then-UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, opting for an independent Cyprus in which Turkish and Greek Cypriot citizens would coexist in a bi-communal federal republic. AKP’s support for the plan faced intense opposition from conservative, nationalist circles, the main opposition political party and the Turkish military. The plan was voted in a referendum on April 24, 2004 by Turkish and Greek Cypriot citizens. The result was an approval of the plan by the Turkish Cypriot community and its rejection by the Greek Cypriots, overall marking its failure. Nevertheless, a week later, in May 1, 2004, the Republic of Cyprus became a member of the EU on the basis of the aforementioned decision taken at the 2002 Copenhagen Summit.

The enthusiasm about the onset of the negotiations for Turkish accession to the EU was soon replaced by expressions of a “train crash” in relations.⁵⁵ EU wanted Turkey to open

⁵⁴ *Copenhagen European Council, December 12-13, 2002 Presidency Conclusions*, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/20906/73842.pdf> (accessed February 12, 2019).

⁵⁵ The expression came to be famously associated with the then-EU Commissioner responsible for enlargement, Ollie Rehn. See, *A Very Special Relationship: Why Turkey’s EU Accession Process Will Continue*, European Stability Initiative (ESI) Report, March 2011. https://www.esiweb.org/pdf/esi_picture_story_-_a_very_special_relationship_-_march_2011.pdf (accessed February 13, 2019).

its ports and airports to the Republic of Cyprus (which Turkey does not recognize) within the framework of the Customs Union and the Additional Protocol of July 2005 extending Turkey's association agreement with the EU to the ten new member states.⁵⁶ The Turkish government, on the other hand, declared that it will only do this if the EU ended the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots by engaging in direct trade with them, a promise spelled out when the Annan Plan failed despite constructive efforts on the part of the Turkish government and Turkish Cypriots.⁵⁷ In December 2006, a year after the beginning of Turkey-EU negotiations, the European Council decided to suspend negotiations with Turkey on eight chapters on the basis of the dispute in Cyprus.

EU's suspension of negotiations in December 2006 seemed like adding insult to injury for both the Turkish government and citizens supporting Turkey's EU endeavor. The feeling of disenchantment was expressed aptly by a Turkish scholar, Soli Özel, who said "almost everyone I know has lost heart."⁵⁸ The suspension of negotiations dealt the final blow to the willpower of the actors in Turkey opting for EU membership and provided the government with an excuse to abandon the EU processes. Pro-EU actors found themselves coping with the "dilemma of impossibility" and the doors kept closing and leaving them outside. They felt as though, no matter how hard they tried, Turkey's EU membership was never going to happen. From that point onwards, Turkey's relations with the EU began to deteriorate. From 2005 onwards, as Senem Aydın-Düzgit and Nathalie Tocci argued: "anti-Turks' in Europe and 'anti-Europeans' in Turkey have reinforced each other, generating a spiral of antagonism and lack of reform in Turkey and increasing the distance between the two sides."⁵⁹

⁵⁶ European Union, European External Action Service, Treaties Office Database <http://ec.europa.eu/world/agreements/prepareCreateTreatiesWorkspace/treatiesGeneralData.do?step=0&redirect=true&treatyId=1561> (accessed February 17, 2019).

⁵⁷ William Horsley, "Cyprus threatens Turkey EU talks," BBC News, September 13, 2006. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/5342094.stm> (accessed February 15, 2019).

⁵⁸ "The Turkish Train Crash," *The Economist*, November 30, 2006.

⁵⁹ Senem Aydın Düzgit and Nathalie Tocci, *Turkey and the European Union* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 31. See also, Hanna-Lisa Hauge et al., "Mapping milestones and periods of past EU-Turkey relations," FEUTURE Working Paper, September 2016. http://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/feuture_2.pdf (accessed February 13, 2019).

Even during the short years of enthusiasm in Turkey-EU relations between 1999 and 2004, there were political leaders in Europe who adamantly underlined Turkey's non-European character. Former French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, for instance, famously declared Turkey an "Asiatic" nation that should never be allowed in the EU. When the news about d'Estaing's words was broadcasted, it was accompanied by widespread expressions in the media about how he was "stating what many European politicians privately believe."⁶⁰ "Uttering publicly what is usually kept to a whisper in EU corridors," D'Estaing went on to say in 2002 that Turkey's 70 million Muslims would be the "death of the European Union" and that "its capital is not in Europe; 95 per cent of its population live outside Europe; it is not a European country."⁶¹

In 2004, the future Pope Benedict VI, said that "Turkey always represented another continent during history, always in contrast with Europe" and that he opposed Turkey's membership in the EU "on the grounds that it is a Muslim nation."⁶² More recently, another former French President, Nicholas Sarkozy said: "Can Turkey be regarded a European country culturally, historically, and economically speaking? If we say that, we want the European Union's death."⁶³ Later in 2016, Sarkozy once again maintained that "it was time that someone told Turkey its place is in Asia."⁶⁴ Examples of such statements by political leaders in Europe can be multiplied. Yet, what is clear is that either voiced publicly or whispered in the EU corridors, Turkey's membership has long been associated with the death of the EU.

⁶⁰ Ian Black, "Turkey must be kept out of the union, Giscard says," *The Guardian*, November 9, 2002 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/nov/09/turkey.eu> (accessed December 20, 2018).

⁶¹ Ambrose Evans-Pritchard, "'Asiatic' Turkey is threat to EU, warns Giscard," *The Telegraph*, November 9, 2002 <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/turkey/1412703/Asiatic-Turkey-is-threat-to-EU-warns-Giscard.html> (accessed December 20, 2018).

⁶² Stephen Weeke, "Navigating difficult waters: Vatican and Islam," *NBCNEWS.com* http://www.nbcnews.com/id/11714990/ns/world_news-islam_in_europe/t/navigating-difficult-waters-vatican-islam/#.XBv4p5NKgZo (accessed December 20, 2018).

⁶³ "Anyone who says Turkey is European country wants EU's death-Sarkozy," *RT News*, March 20, 2016 <https://www.rt.com/news/336385-sarkozy-turkey-eu-death/> (accessed December 20, 2018).

⁶⁴ "It's time to tell Turkey 'your place is in Asia': Sarkozy," *Hürriyet Daily News*, September 29, 2016 <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/its-time-to-tell-turkey-your-place-is-in-asia-sarkozy-104407> (accessed December 20, 2018).

After 2006, Turkey-EU relations came to a standstill. Although there were efforts to revitalize relations in the spring of 2012, Turkey froze its relations with the EU when it was the turn of Cyprus to take over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union between July and December 2012.⁶⁵ By this time the EU had already slowed down plans for enlargement in response to the 2008 financial crisis. By the fall of 2014, President-elect of the European Commission, Jean Claude Juncker said in no uncertain terms that "the EU needs to take a break from enlargement so that we can consolidate what has been achieved among the 28."⁶⁶ He indicated that although ongoing negotiations will continue under his Presidency of the Commission, there will be no further enlargement during the next five years.

It was only with the beginning of the refugee crisis after the conflict in Syria that EU-Turkey relations reappeared on the horizon. Turkey had been following an open door policy towards Syrian refugees from 2011 onwards. As more and more refugees tried to cross from Turkey to Europe, Turkey came under increasing scrutiny by the EU for "its inability to manage its borders effectively and for becoming a 'highway' for the transit of refugees, as well as irregular migrants."⁶⁷ As of July 2019, 3,639,284 Syrian refugees were registered in Turkey. This number constitutes 64.7% of the Syrian refugees in the world while the rest are registered in Lebanon (16.5%), Jordan (11.7%), Iraq (4.1%), and Egypt (2.3%).⁶⁸ While these countries hosted about 5 million Syrian refugees, the number that settled in Europe was about 1 million with more than 500,000 in Germany.⁶⁹ Given the fact that the bulk of the Syrian refugees are in Turkey, in the face of expressions like "Europe's refugee crisis" analysts had good reason to ask "whose refugee crisis?"⁷⁰

⁶⁵ This was during the 18 months long Trio Presidency of Poland, Denmark, and Cyprus that began in July 2011.

⁶⁶ European Commission Press Release Database, September 10, 2014. http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-14-523_en.htm (accessed February 13, 2019).

⁶⁷ For a very concise review of the Turkey- EU Refugee Deal, see; Nilgün Arisan Eralp, "Challenges of the German-led refugee deal between Turkey and the EU," *CESifo Forum*, 2, June 2016, pp. 21-24, esp. 21.

⁶⁸ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Situation Syria Regional Refugee Response. <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria> (accessed August 8, 2019).

⁶⁹ Pew Research Center, January 29, 2018. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/01/29/where-displaced-syrians-have-resettled/> (accessed February 13, 2019).

⁷⁰ Gurminder K. Bhambra, "The current crisis of Europe; refugees, colonialism and the limits of cosmopolitanism," *European Law Journal*, 23/5, 2017 pp. 395-405, esp. 396.

In 2015, the refugee and migrant flow into Europe increased dramatically from about 200,000 in 2014 to 1 million in 2015; about 500,000 arriving in the Greek island of Lesbos alone.⁷¹ What Alison Smale of *New York Times* called a “movable feast of despair,” tens of thousands began to make their way from Greece to North Macedonia (named as such in February 2019), Serbia, Croatia, and Hungary on their way to north European countries, only to face a fence built at Hungary’s borders with Serbia and Croatia.⁷² Anti-immigrant statements by the Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orbán accompanied the construction of these fences. He said: “Of course it’s not accepted, but the factual point is that all the terrorists are basically migrants.”⁷³ Orbán’s words came after the Paris attacks on the night of November 13, 2015 by suicide bombers and gunmen in a concert hall, stadium, restaurants and bars leaving 130 dead and hundreds wounded. The attacks were described by the then-President François Hollande as an “act of war” organized by the Islamic State.⁷⁴ Orbán was quick to link terrorism and refugees and migrant flows. He said that it was “quite logical” that “enemies” send their fighters to Europe through migration: “All of them present a security threat because we don’t know who they are. If you allow thousands or millions of unidentified persons into your house, the risk of ... terrorism will significantly increase.”⁷⁵

Orbán’s statements came a few weeks after the global circulation of the picture of the washed up body of the 3-year-old Syrian boy, Alan Kurdi. He drowned in the Mediterranean Sea near Bodrum, Turkey on September 2, 2015 during his family’s attempt

⁷¹ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), “Asylum and Migration into the EU in 2015, Fundamental Rights Report,” May 2016. <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2016/fundamental-rights-report-2016> (accessed February 14, 2019). See also a very informative presentation by Gerald Knaus, “On the Edge: Refugees, Europe and the Turkey Deal,” April 22, 2016, Oslo presentation. <http://www.esiweb.org/rumeliobserver/2016/04/22/my-oslo-refugee-presentation-on-the-edge-22-april/> (accessed February 14, 2019).

⁷² Alison Smale, “Migrants Race North as Hungary Builds a Border Fence,” *New York Times*, August 24, 2016. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/25/world/europe/migrants-push-toward-hungary-as-a-border-fence-rises.html> (accessed February 14, 2019).

⁷³ Matthew Kaminski, “Interview: All the terrorists are migrants,” *Politico*, November 23, 2015. <https://www.politico.eu/article/viktor-orban-interview-terrorists-migrants-cu-russia-putin-borders-schengen/> (accessed February 14, 2019).

⁷⁴ “Paris attacks: What happened on the night” *BBC News*, December 9, 2015. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34818994> (accessed February 14, 2019).

⁷⁵ Matthew Kaminski, “Interview: All the terrorists are migrants,” *Politico*, November 23, 2015. <https://www.politico.eu/article/viktor-orban-interview-terrorists-migrants-cu-russia-putin-borders-schengen/> (accessed February 14, 2019).

at an illegal passage to the island of Kos, Greece. The summit of the EU leaders in October 2015 was marked by a temporary feeling of compassion invoked by this picture. The summit put the emphasis on a relocation plan for EU countries to share the responsibility for the resettlement of refugees stranded in Greece. In the aftermath of the summit, EU made what Ahmet K. Khan referred as “an indecent proposal” to Turkey.⁷⁶

German Chancellor, Angela Merkel took the lead in approaching Turkey for the “Turkey-EU Refugee Deal” accepted on March 18, 2016. The deal involved the return of illegal migrants from Greece to Turkey coupled with a plan to resettle one Syrian from Turkey in an EU state for each migrant readmitted to Turkey from Greece. In return, Turkey was offered the possibility of the removal of visa requirements for its citizens in entering the EU, an initial 3 billion euros with the prospect of additional funds from the EU, and the possible revitalization of the EU accession processes through the opening of new chapters for negotiations.⁷⁷ Long frozen Turkey-EU relations seemed potentially resurrected once again. This time, Turkey was given the role of guarding the borders of the EU. Nevertheless, Turkey’s and EU’s concomitant crises continued during the fateful year of 2016 which included the June 23, 2016 Brexit referendum when 51.9% of the British citizens voted in favor of leaving the EU and the July 15, 2016 coup attempt in Turkey.

The political alliance between AKP and the Gülen community led by cleric Fethullah Gülen who has been in self-exile in the USA since 1999 began to show signs of deterioration in 2012. In February 2012, a prosecutor summoned the head of Turkey’s National Intelligence Agency along with three of his top level associates. At this time, AKP, with the lead of Prime Minister Erdoğan, was engaged in negotiations with the Kurdish insurgents (PKK, *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê*, Kurdistan Workers Party). The head of the National Intelligence Agency was handling these negotiations.⁷⁸ The

⁷⁶ Ahmet K. Khan, “Commentary: An Indecent Proposal? The Issue of Syrian Refugees and EU-Turkey Relations,” Italian Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI), November 2, 2015. <https://www.ispionline.it/it/publicazione/indecent-proposal-issue-syrian-refugees-and-cu-turkey-relations-14099> (accessed February 14, 2019).

⁷⁷ Nilgün Arisan Eralp, “Challenges of the German-led refugee deal between Turkey and the EU,” *CESifo Forum*, 2, June 2016, pp. 21-24, esp. 22.

⁷⁸ Sebnem Arsu, “Turkey: Intelligence Chief Must Testify,” *The New York Times*, February 10, 2012. <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/11/world/europe/turkey-intelligence-chief-must-testify.html> (accesses February 15, 2019).

summoning of the head of Turkey's intelligence unit was followed by a warrant for his arrest on the basis of his engagement in these talks. These developments, viewed as moves by Gülenist state officials, were perceived as a threat by the AKP and signalled the end of the political alliance between the Gülen community and the AKP. The subsequent tug-of-war between them culminated in the July 15, 2016 coup attempt. The government declared the Gülen community to be the culprit behind the coup attempt. The members of the Gülen community were now called terrorists and/or members of the FETÖ (*Fethullah Gülen Terör Örgütü*, Fethullah Gülen Terror Organization). A State of Emergency was declared after the coup attempt and purges of individuals from the police, state bureaucracy, universities, judiciary, as well as the military began. By the time State of Emergency ended in July 2019, those purged from the Turkish state were more than 130,000 along with 77,000 arrests over alleged involvement with either Gülen or the Kurdish insurgents.⁷⁹

A fundamental Constitutional Amendment Package was accepted in 2017 in a referendum during the State of Emergency, defying all common sense notions of free and fair elections, leading to a new presidential regime devoid of the basic checks and balances and replacing Turkey's long established tradition of a parliamentary regime. The crackdowns on academics and journalists were particularly noteworthy leading to the purges of about 6000 academics and the court cases against hundreds of academics for signing a peace petition.⁸⁰

In its 2018 report, Freedom House changed Turkey's freedom status from "Partly Free" to "Not Free" for the first time since it began its reporting on Turkey in 1999 (Turkey's press freedom status was "Not Free" since 2014 while freedom on the net status was "Not Free" since 2016) by stating the following reasons:

due to a deeply flawed constitutional referendum that centralized power in the presidency, the mass replacement of elected mayors with government appointees, arbitrary prosecutions of rights activists and other perceived enemies of the state, and continued purges of state employees, all of which have

⁷⁹ Eric Maurice, "Turkey ends state of emergency but continues crackdown," *EUObserver*, July 19, 2018. <https://euobserver.com/enlargement/142419> (accessed February 15, 2019).

⁸⁰ The Committee to Protect Journalists reports that with 68 imprisoned journalists Turkey remains the top jailor of journalists in the world at the end of 2018. https://cpj.org/data/imprisoned/2018/?status=Imprisoned&start_year=2018&end_year=2018&group_by=location (accessed February 25, 2019). On the purges of the academics after 2016, see; Ayşe Kadioğlu, "Reading John Stuart Mill in Turkey in 2017," *Middle East Law and Governance*, 10/2, 2018, pp. 203-232.

left citizens hesitant to express their views on sensitive topics.⁸¹

While Turkey descended deep into authoritarianism after the coup attempt, the rise of anti-EU, anti-immigrant, nationalist politics in EU member states was becoming more and more palpable. The cases of Hungary and Poland deserve particular attention at this point. When Orbán became the Prime Minister of Hungary after the landslide victory of his nationalist, Christian, populist party called *Fidesz* (Hungarian Civic Alliance) in 2010, he immediately used the party's majority in the parliament to engage in the drafting of a new constitution. Hungary's status was lowered to "Partly Free" in Freedom House's Freedom in the World 2019 report due to *Fidesz*'s restrictions and control over "the opposition, the media, religious groups, academia, NGOs, the courts, asylum seekers, and the private sector since 2010."⁸² This was the first time an EU member state's status became "Partly Free."

In Poland, a party with similar nationalist, Christian, populist, and anti-immigrant ideology, namely PiS (*Prawo I Sprawiedliwość*, Law and Justice) acquired the majority of the national votes in *Sejm* (the parliament) in 2015. Party's Chairman since 2003, Jaroslaw Kaczyński is known to be the driving force behind the ideology of PiS. The most distinguishing aspect of the PiS government since 2015 was the blows it dealt to the independence of the judiciary.⁸³

Similar political parties with an open anti-immigration stance were also strengthening their electoral base in other European countries; namely Alternative for Germany (*Alternative für Deutschland*, AfD), National Rally (*Rassemblement national*, RN) in France, Northern League (*Lega Nord*, LN) in Italy, Freedom Party of Austria (*Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*, FPÖ), Party for Freedom (*Partij voor de Vrijheid*, PVV) in Netherlands, and Sweden Democrats (*Sverigedemokraterna*, SD).

⁸¹ *Freedom in the World 2018, Turkey Profile*, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2018/turkey> (accessed February 15, 2019).

⁸² *Freedom in the World 2019, Hungary Profile* <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2019/hungary> (accessed August 8, 2019).

⁸³ European Stability Initiative (ESI), "European Tragedy: The collapse of the Rule of law in Poland," May 29, 2018. <https://www.esiweb.org/index.php?lang=en&id=607> (accessed February 15, 2019)

There was an increase in the votes received by such right wing nationalist and populist parties in the European Parliament elections of May 2019.⁸⁴ Interestingly, there was also an increase in the votes received by liberal and green parties coupled with a decrease in the votes of center-right parties as well as socialists and democrats indicating an overall rise in polarization.⁸⁵ As indicated in an opinion piece in *New York Times*, the most obvious takeaways from the results of the European Parliament elections were “fragmentation and polarization.”⁸⁶

There is no doubt that the most vocal among the leaders of anti-immigrant, nationalist political parties is Hungary’s Prime Minister Orbán. Orbán glorifies “Christian democracy,” “illiberal democracy” and vocally criticizes the 1968 elite whom he thinks has failed to stop immigration in the name of an open Europe that made it possible for immigrants to replace Europeans, and transformed the Christian family into an “optional, fluid form of cohabitation.” In February 2019, he declared that while blocking migration, his government will lift tax obligations for women who give birth to four or more children.⁸⁷ Orbán’s speeches portray in no uncertain terms the agenda of the new right politics in Europe. This is a politics that hijacks the rights discourse of the 1968 generation and declares that the 1990 generation is ready to replace them. As Orbán puts it:

Calmly, and with restraint and composure, we must say that the generation of the ’90s is arriving to replace the generation of ’68. In European politics it is the turn of the anti-communist generation, which has Christian convictions and commitment to the nation. Thirty years ago we thought that Europe was our future. Today we believe that we are Europe’s future. Go for it!⁸⁸

The long, black cloud over Europe is quite evident in these lines. A new illiberal, Christian, nationalist, indignant and self righteous Europe is in the making. What Cas Mudde calls

⁸⁴ European Elections 2019, *BBC News* <https://www.bbc.com/news/topics/c7zzdg3pmgpt/european-elections-2019> (accessed August 8, 2019).

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Steven Erlanger and Megan Specia, “European Parliament Elections: 5 Biggest Takeaways,” *The New York Times*, May 27, 2019 <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/27/world/europe/eu-election-takeaways.html> (accessed August 8, 2019).

⁸⁷ Shaun Walker, “Viktor Orbán: no tax for Hungarian women with four or more children,” *The Guardian*, February 10, 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/feb/10/viktor-orban-no-tax-for-hungarian-women-with-four-or-more-children> (accessed February 17, 2019).

⁸⁸ Prime Minister Viktor Orbán’s speech at the 29th Bálványos Summer Open University and Student Camp, July 28, 2018. <https://visegradpost.com/en/2018/07/30/say-goodbye-to-the-entire-elite-of-68-the-new-project-of-viktor-orban-full-speech/> (accessed February 15, 2019).

“nativism” seems to be rising in an attempt to homogenize the European landscape.⁸⁹ Duhamel’s words in the epigraph, expressed in one of the darkest moments in Europe in 1933, can be stated once again today.

The rise of the new right in Europe does not only represent the decline of the values of the EU but also mocks these values by hijacking the rights discourse embedded in them. The new authoritarianism both in Turkey and Europe has the support not of the tanks and military might but rather those political actors who hijack and monopolize the discourse of democracy. Authoritarian leaders and political parties both in Turkey and Europe are using an abysmal rights discourse as well as constitutions in building up their own power.

In Turkey, the law was used to transform the regime into an unchecked presidential one in 2017. The “use, abuse, and non-use (in Spanish *desuso*) of the law in favor of the executive branch” has been called “autocratic legalism” by Javier Corrales in his analysis of the post-1999 regime in Venezuela.⁹⁰ Kim Scheppele, recently elaborated this concept in reference to the regimes in Hungary, Turkey, and Philippines.⁹¹ In all of these cases, the law was used in strengthening the executive at the expense of the judiciary. In fact, one of the most fascinating social movements in Poland in 2018 was in response to government’s violations of the Polish Constitution. Since the Constitutional Court was rendered unable to defend the constitution in Poland, a constitutional patriotism among the citizens had taken to the streets symbolized in t-shirts with the expression “Constitution.”⁹² Although, this was a limited response, it nevertheless signified a consciousness on the part of the citizens about the mantle of the law in guarding the rights and liberties acquired through long struggles.

⁸⁹ Cas Mudde uses the expression “nativism” as an overarching category and defines it as: “an ideology, which holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group (the nation) and that non-native elements (persons and ideas) are fundamentally threatening to the homogeneous nation-state.” Cas Mudde, *The Relationship Between Immigration and Nativism in Europe and North America*, Migration Policy Institute, 2012, p. 2.

⁹⁰ Javier Corrales “Autocratic Legalism in Venezuela,” *Journal of Democracy*, 26/2, April 2015, pp. 37-51, esp. 38.

⁹¹ Kim Scheppele, “Autocratic Legalism,” *The University of Chicago Law Review*, 85/2, March 2018, pp. 545-584.

⁹² As part of this movement, citizens famously dressed up Gdansk’s Neptune statue in a t-shirt with the slogan “Constitution” in August 2018. Malgorzata Wojtunik, “Neptune statue gets T-shirt in Polish Protest Campaign,” *Reuters*, August 10, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-eu-poland-t-shirt-protest/neptune-statue-gets-t-shirt-in-polish-protest-campaign-idUSKBN1KV1N0> (accessed February 25, 2019).

Conclusion

What stories does Europe tell in the light of its long relationship with Turkey? The Turk was indeed regarded as the nemesis of Europe until the end of the First World War. The genocidal policies of the Ottoman leaders during the decline of the empire undoubtedly emboldened such an image of the Turk. The end of the First World War was followed by proposals and plans for a European union by intellectuals and political leaders who clearly did not want another war. At about the same time, the “new Turks” had embarked on republican reforms and portrayed a strong will to engage in westernization.⁹³ Although Turkey was not considered part of a European union in the original proposals and plans, there was an increasing interest in including Turkey by the early 1930s.

During the inter-war years, Turkey’s inclusion in Europe became a possibility. Europe’s leaders recognized the significance of the remarkable reforms taking place in the new Turkish Republic. In other words, prejudices were renounced through mutual observations and conversations. It is noteworthy that the initial plans for a European union evolved into the recognition and inclusion of its historical nemesis, i.e. Turkey. Such a story of Europe was fostered by an intellectual tradition that upheld the common liberty of the people rather than cultural affinity and homogeneity as well as a political leadership that was observant and open to dialogue. Such political leadership is increasingly absent in Europe and Turkey today. The absence of such political leadership served neither Turkey nor the EU; while it diminished the will on the part of the Turkish governments to join the EU, it condoned the nationalist, anti-immigrant, Christian, and anti-liberal politics and facilitated its movement from the fringes to the center of European politics.

The story of Europe after the Second World War, on the other hand, had led to the

⁹³ Bisbee, Eleanor (1951) *The New Turks: Pioneers of the Republic, 1920-1950* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press). Eleanor Bisbee (1891-1956) was an Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Civilization at the University of Cincinnati until she joined Robert College and the American College for Girls in Istanbul in 1931. She lived in Istanbul until her return to the US in 1942 and her first hand observations during the republican reforms informed her book.

emergence of many interlaced stories. The guestworker phenomenon and family reunifications had a remarkable impact on both the Turkish and European societies. They connected the daily lives of the migrants and rooted citizens of Europe and turned the idea of diversity into a reality. Europe began to resemble a carpet with multiple colors and stories as described in Nilüfer Göle's aforementioned book. Turkish guestworkers and their families contributed a great deal to the transformation of the European societal landscape. Similar to the transformation of the Italian scholar and Hoja depicted in Orhan Pamuk's novel, the identities of Europeans and immigrants were displaced with immigrants becoming Europeans and some Europeans converting to Islam.⁹⁴ The story of Europe indeed represents manifold and irrevocably interlaced stories manifested in various daily encounters. These stories are also expressed in the language of music, cinema, and the arts. Today, it is of key importance to recite these interlaced stories that reflect the reality of Europe.

Today's new authoritarian regimes resort to autocratic legalism by "operating in the world of legalism."⁹⁵ Hence, reclaiming the mantle of the law within the stories of Europe is becoming a vital necessity. New authoritarian regimes pretend to embrace constitutionalism and democracy. Yet, they primarily use legal processes to alter the liberal foundation of constitutions. In doing so they alter the *raison d'être* of constitutions from "limiting government" to "amassing power and disabling checks."⁹⁶ Since it is expected that such violations can be overturned by constitutional courts, they make concerted attempts to pack these courts and enhance the power of the executive body of governments. The aforementioned constitutional patriotism moment in Poland was one of the remarkable stories of Europe in 2018. The sights of citizens rallying in defense of their constitution and the independence of the judiciary were quite inspiring. Their demands were remarkably supported by the EU institutions. The law passed by the PiS government in the summer of 2018 that reduced the retirement age of the judges of the Supreme Court of Poland in an

⁹⁴ See, Esra Özyürek, *Being German, Becoming Muslim: Race, Religion and Conversion in New Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015) on Europeans who choose and embrace Islam and how, in a discriminatory outlook, they see their Islam as different from the Islam of the immigrants.

⁹⁵ Kim Scheppele, "Autocratic Legalism," *The University of Chicago Law Review*, 85/2, March 2018, pp. 545-584, esp. 562.

⁹⁶ Aslı Bâli "Turkey's Constitutional Coup," *MERIP*, 288/48/3, Fall 2018, pp. 2-9, esp. 9.

attempt to assign new judges close to the government was strikingly overturned by the European Court of Justice in October 2018.⁹⁷ The PiS government was ordered by the court to suspend its overhaul of the Supreme Court. This was an outstanding resistance of the EU institutions against autocratic legalism, a timely reminder about the mantle of the law; a triumphant moment in the story of the EU.

In this article, I highlighted three legacies/stories of Europe inspired by its relations with Turkey. The first one is the legacy of political leadership that was portrayed during the inter-war years by European and Turkish leaders who were able to renounce their prejudices and change their minds by observing each other. The second legacy of Europe is the interlaced identities that were fostered in the aftermath of the labor migration of the 1960s and the ensuing family reunifications. It was during this time that differences and diversity blossomed and European story became multiple stories. Third legacy is the mantle of the law in protecting the values of the EU, namely human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. The role played by the EU institutions in defense of the independence of the judiciary in Poland in 2018 was a crucial moment portraying the *raison d'être* of these institutions. The guiding role of the EU institutions may still be the most plausible reason for Turkey to pursue the sixty years long Sisyphean task to join the EU.

While considering whether Europe lacks the symbolic legacy of the nations in offering individuals a collective sense of fraternity, Anne-Marie Thiesse asked in 1999: “what if Europe’s founding fathers had founded it without building it?”⁹⁸ There is indeed a difference between the founding of a state and nation-building. In fact, when the Turkish Republic was proclaimed in 1923 from the ashes of the Ottoman empire, the political elite engaged in an effort to create a nation. It was Şerif Mardin, the doyen scholar of Turkish modernization, who argued that “Mustafa Kemal took up a non-existent, hypothetical entity, the Turkish nation, and breathed life into it” in portraying the utopian nature of

⁹⁷ Griff Witte, “Europe’s top court orders Poland to halt a law forcing Supreme Court judges into retirement,” *Washington Post*, October 19, 2018. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/europes-top-court-orders-poland-to-halt-a-law-forcing-supreme-court-judges-into-retirement/2018/10/19/f16eb8ee-d39e-11e8-b2d2-f397227b43f0_story.html?utm_term=.21529bcf6156 (accessed February 17, 2019).

⁹⁸ Paola Cattani, “Europe as a Nation? Intellectuals and debate on Europe in the inter-war period,” *History of European Ideas*, 43/6, 2017, pp. 674-682, esp. 674.

Mustafa Kemal's thought.⁹⁹

The task facing Europe today is not to build such a utopian identity but rather to recognize the many legacies of Europe, its triumphant moments of political leadership, interwoven identities that are lost in one another, like the Italian scholar and Hoja in Orhan Pamuk's *White Castle*, and its reverence to fundamental rights and the mantle of the law in protecting these rights. If the EU does not write this story and breathe life into its founding values, political leaders like Orbán will continue to breathe nationalism, Christianity, and homogeneity into that story. That breath will paradoxically kill Europe.

⁹⁹ Şerif Mardin, "Religion and Secularism in Turkey" in Albert Hourani, Philip S. Khoury, Mary C. Wilson (eds), *The Modern Middle East: A Reader* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, p. 363.