# The Turkish perspective on the European integration: ideological and social motivations of non-integration

**Irina-Maria Cosma** ✉

Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

**Abstract:** The Republic of Türkiye is the state that has the longest EU candidature, due to several events and policies that led to the prolongation of the process. The country's internal and implicitly external profile have faced significant changes from the 1923 moment when the Republic of Türkiye was founded, having a great impact on the Turkish society. We shall focus our attention on the ideological dimension, i.e. extendedly the set of ideas – social, cultural and political – that motivate Turks' non-integration. These aspects are related to: doctrines, identity, religion, political ideology. The main objective of this paper is to present and analyse some of the most important ideological motivations from the Turkish perspective regarding the European integration. We shall, therefore, present not only why Türkiye is not a member state, but also and most importantly, the way in which the motivations are rooted in the Turkish perception.

Keywords: Türkiye, ideology, social motivations, EU, integration, non-integration

## Introduction

The European Union is a very complex structure, defined differently regarding the perspective from which it is seen and perceived or understood. Technically, it is an organisation of twenty-seven countries, coming together due to the alignment of their values and objectives as state entities and accepting to limit their national competences in some areas and transmit those competences to the European Union exclusively. One of the very first moments marking the existence of the European Union was 1951, when the European Coal and Steel Community was founded, based on the Schuman plan (History of the European Union 1945-59, n.d.).

The Treaty of Lisbon „clarifies which powers belong to the European Union, which powers belong to the member states of the European Union and which powers are shared" (Founding Agreements). This creates a very complex structure of the European apparatus, where, to some extent, countries remain separated from each other and from the European institutions by differences of tackling certain aspects,

---

✉    MA Student, Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania; e-mail: irina.cosma@stud.ubbcluj.ro.

while in other aspects, all countries act the same due to the exclusive competences of the European Union.

The Republic of Türkiye is often called a Eurasian country, due to its geographical and geopolitical profile present in both Europe and Asia. „According to the Turkish constitution, the word <<Turk>> as a political term includes all citizens of the Republic of Türkiye" (Dewdney & Yapp, 2025). The latest fundamental law was established in 1982, stipulating that: „The State of Türkiye is a Republic. Its language is Turkish. Its capital is Ankara." (Constitution of the Republic of Turkey), but the capital was changed in 1924, being already stipulated in that constitution (1924 Anayasası, n.d.), after the capital had been in Istanbul for a very long time.

The Republic of Türkiye represents one of the most important state actors in relation with the European Union, due to multiple factors: its geopolitical and geostrategic position at the bridge between the East and the West, but also due to its historical ties and interactions with various peoples, especially in the Ottoman era. In the present, Türkiye's candidature is considered to be the longest candidature, the country gaining the „candidate country" status in 1999.

The term „ideology" comes from the Greek „idea" and „logia" – the study of ideas. According to its linguistic origins, the term ideology is related to ideas in general: „a system of ideas that aspires to explain the world", later on becoming „a form of social or political philosophy" (Cranston, 2025).

Our understanding of „ideology" is not limited to political attributes, but rather it refers to the set of ideas, i.e. motivations found in the Turkish collective mind or ideological environment that have been settled and are not questioned, but rather act like an engine, setting the directions of Turks' actions.

## 1. Motivation for the paper

The Republic of Türkiye might be, in very many cases, taken as a (*geo*)*political given*, that is – its *actions* are more discussed than its *motivations*. The necessity of understanding not only *what*, but more precisely *why* it acts in a certain way would provide an answer to „*Why is Türkiye not a member state?*" from the Turkish perspective.

One of the most discussed topics regarding the European integration, especially in the case of the Republic of Türkiye, refers to the Copenhagen criteria (*Accession criteria*), especially in terms of democracy and human rights – but what is not tackled is the aspect that all of these have a Eurocentric ideological background. In other words, the meaning of democracy, the meanings of human rights or the understandings differ, being defined according to the socialisation in the European environment. This can be understood as a consequence of different communities understanding the same concepts differently, being filtered by their own cultural background.

Türkiye does have a different understanding in terms of certain political concepts, there is a Turkish democracy, a Turkish way of tackling the question of rights and obligations, the matter of principles etc. That is what makes the case of Türkiye *sui-generis* (unique in its own way). In other words, the case of Türkiye can be understood as complex, due to the oscillation between the some Occidental and some Oriental elements and the combination between the two poles in some aspects.

This originates from a very strong national feeling and sense of unity, inherited from the pre-state Turkic tribes.

As we mentioned, our focus on *ideology* in its inclusive meanings of not only political, but social, psychological *motivations* in general, we can state the importance of understanding a state from its own perspective and own sense of identity, especially when talking about states that are *not completely European* – geographically and geopolitically.

In this understanding, ideological motivations explain not only *what* happens or happened in the case of the relations between the Republic of Türkiye and the European Union, but also and most importantly *why* those aspects happened in the way they did: extendedly, the tackled aspects are the *motivations of the motivations* – a continuum of aspects determining each other in the background of what is seen: the *un-observables*.

## 1.1. Objectives

While there are various discussions about why the Republic of Türkiye cannot enter the European Union – from a Eurocentric perspective, we shall analyse this case from the Turkish standpoint, more precisely following the ideological dimension of Turks and the ideological prescriptions that hold the state back from becoming a European Union member state. In other words, the main focus of this analysis is the Turkish perspective: how is the matter of the European integration seen from the Turkish lenses.

We shall guide our analysis by the following research question: „*What are the main aspects in terms of ideological motivations that contribute to the Turkish non-integration?*".

The research methodology is qualitative, more specifically following the analytical and interpretative framework. Our choice of methodology is based on the benefits this methodology offers: one of the most important aspects is the possibility of not only presenting events and ideas, but offers us the possibility to generate hypotheses. This approach is suitable for this specific subject, since we analyse the case of the Turkish non-integration from the Turkish perspective, which appears to be different from the European perspective on the matter of integration.

In order to provide a comprehensive answer to the research question, we shall focus our analysis on the following aspects forming the social and ideological motivations of non-integration: *nationalism*, *populism*, *language*, *identity*, *political*

*profile* and *policies* (neo-Ottomanism and faith-based diplomacy), *religion – society* binomen and *Eurasianism*. These aspects are not meant to present an exhaustive view of the discussed matter, but are rather significant because they allow us to present this subject from various perspectives which are subject to analysis and generating hypotheses upon. In other words, we consider these aspects relevant and suitable for the qualitative research methodology.

As we mentioned, there is a Turkish perspective on all these aspects: the Turkish nationalism is formed around a sense of belonging to the Turkish state, understood and perceived as a protector of the people, whose continuity is crucial for the common good. One of the most important element of the Turkish nationalism is Turkish language, with a tendency to purify i.e. to *Turkify* the language starting from the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye. Populism is represented by a form of non-elitist discourse minimising the gap between the people, members of the society, and the leaders.

The Turkish identity is formed around the characteristics of a *collectivist* culture, where the *individual* is tackled *collectively* and the community is of great importance – contrasting with the individualist culture of the European environment, which focuses on the individual rather than on the community. Another contrasting point is Türkiye's *Eurasian* profile, which makes Türkiye the meeting point between the East and the West.

In the Turkish society, there are certain aspects that govern the way it functions and have religious origins – therefore, they are perceived as natural or normal, while the members of other cultures might perceive them differently.

## 1.2. Limits

When it comes to the limits of this paper, the first aspect to be taken into consideration is the fact that ideology and ideological motivations are wide concepts, therefore including several dimensions. This analysis shall not be exhaustive, but rather *comprehensive*, attempting to present and analyse the Turkish standpoint regarding the question of integration. The comprehensive (and not exhaustive) character is assured by the nature of the analysis rather than by the number of the aspects analysed.

Another aspect to be taken into consideration is the fact that events cannot be isolated or treated (analysed) regardless of the context. In other words, the integration process is vast due to the very many aspects of the international community, each having a different impact on it and on its development.

Furthermore, we shall present the Turkish perspective, but from an external, exogenous origin; due to our *socialisation* (education) in a European environment, some elements might be filtered and interpreted accordingly. This is because of a lack of full access to the Turkish cultural and political environment, with incursions in the field by means of specialised literature.

## 2. Historical background of the relations

Türkiye is a very well welded, one of the most homogenous state entities in the international community, according to its uninterrupted history and strong national identity, supported by the idea of unity, strongly felt among people in the Turkish society.

When it comes to the European Union, it is an agglutination of states, working uniformly only in certain areas of competence, while in the others, each state acts according to their own internal status quo.

There is a long history regarding the relations between the European Union and the Republic of Türkiye, one of the first aspects that can be mentioned is the Ankara Agreement, signed in 1963 and implemented in 1964, establishing the foundation of the relations between the two entities, with emphasis on the economic dimension of their cooperation, but also mentioning that the final objective of this agreement is for Türkiye to become a full member of the European Union (Türkiye-AB İlişkilerinin Tarihçesi, 2024). The president of the European Commission, Walter Hallstein then said that „Türkiye is part of Europe", after the association agreement being signed (Liboreiro, 2023), therefore underlying its European profile.

„The official application was first submitted in 1987, even though the GDP per capita was not as good as other countries', therefore Türkiye was expected to carry out additional reforms so that the criteria for integration would be met" (Liboreiro, 2023) The Republic of Türkiye became a candidate state officially in 1999, but one of the important stalemates was the year 2005, when the *framework for negotiations* was adopted, stating that „the shared objective of the negotiations is accession", but also that „if Türkiye is not in a position to assume in full all obligations of membership, it must be ensured that it is fully anchored in the European structures" (Liboreiro, 2023). In other words, the European perspective is that even though the candidate state cannot meet the criteria, the relations between the two entities should be maintained tight.

The following years were marked by changes not only in Türkiye, but also in the region. One of the most impactful moments was the migration crisis from 2015 (Liboreiro, 2023), which showed the geopolitical and strategic importance of Türkiye between the Middle East and Europe.

## 3. Ideological dimensions in Türkiye. Ottomanism and Kemalism

Before the Ottoman Empire's replacement with the republic, the Ottoman-Turkish ideology was based on *Ottomanism*, a doctrine stating the importance of the Ottoman state per se, diminishing the importance of the loyalty towards the persona of the sultan himself (Ottomanism, n.d.). This importance of the state is later on translated into the Turkish nationalism, formed from the need to *protect the state* because the state *protects the people*.

The very first moment from which we shall begin our analysis is the 1923 moment – the profound shift in the Turkish politics, immediately after establishing the republic, which replaced the empire. After the First World War, the Turkish state was not among the victorious states, therefore the Ottoman territories were endangered to be divided by the Great Powers. The shift in the domestic politics, but also in the social and psychological fields was as great as the crisis which the state was facing. We are talking about a multi-dimensional change in ideological terms, which implicitly had social effects. Moreover, we can analyse the *psychological impact* of this event: Turks' territories threatened by the Europeans can be translated into the idea that the Western powers might endanger the internal status quo.

When Mustafa Kemal Atatürk became the first president of the newly established Republic of Türkiye, he also imposed a number of reforms, all of them shaped around *Kemalism*, the new state ideology, based on six fundamental pillars: *reformism* (*revolutionism*), *republicanism*, *statism*, *nationalism*, *secularism* and *populism*. The pillar of *reformism* was meant to change the aesthetics of the internal profile of the country, in order to bring some changes for the development of various aspects: social life (family names, attire), language, institutions etc. *Republicanism* and *statism* emphasised the importance of the Republic of Türkiye as an institution meant to protect the continuity of the Turkish state entity. *Nationalism* underlined the importance of the Turkish nation and language, „glorifying the Turkish past" (Dewdney & Yapp, 2025). *Secularism* was formed in the direction that religious institutions were under the state's authority, while *populism* can be considered the pillar that supported all of the above; in other words, it was a pillar meant to legitimise the newly formed republic and reforms for the Turkish population by means of discourse.

## 4. Ideological motivations of non-integration

### 4.1. Turkish nationalism

When it comes to nationalism, we can state that from the Turkish perspective, this pillar is one of the strongest, most deeply and profoundly rooted in the collective mind, but also in the political area. The importance of the Turkish state, its unity, its continuity and its *glory* are one of the most present elements in the case of Turkish nationalism.

When it comes to its origins, some scholars tend to frame it in the *Tanzimat* period – the reforms from the XIXth century decadent Ottoman Empire, meant to support the Ottoman state in improving its administrative system (Tanzimat, n.d.). „*Nationalism*" comes from „*natio*" – being *something that is born*. In other words, we may admit that Turkish nationalism sprang from a feeling of fear not to lose the state apparatus, perceived therefore as a *protector* of the people.

One of the most important aspects of the Turkish nationalism is language, that is why one of the most important reforms of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was based on purifying the Turkish language and *Turkifying* it, trying to draw it as far away from Arabic or Ottoman Turkish as possible.

Nationalism is very contrasting when it comes to the often used „*European family*" phrase, where the focus is supposed to be on *the whole* more than on the integrant parts. That is because the term „European family" is implicitly a plural, invoking a focus on the entire European community rather than a specific country. This linguistic expression is used among the European Union member states, referring to the European community as a „*family*", which places the emphasis on the member states together, not separately.

In order for this to be compatible with the European Union, Turks would have to transfer the above-mentioned feeling of protection felt in regard with the Turkish state towards the European apparatus.

## 4.2. Populism

The very pillar of support when it comes to nationalism is *populism* – the discourse supplementing the emotional dimension, the most important one to further support the national feeling – *nationalism*.

Turkish populism is the *macro* exposition of the *micro* elements, for „*populism*" comes from „*populus*", meaning „*people*" – family, common good, using accessible, everyday vocabulary so that it can stick to the mass – the society in its entirety.

Even though certain perceptions on populism might place it in a position which is not always compatible with the European sense of democracy, some scholars believe that „populism is an extension of democracy itself" and not „a deadly challenge to democracy" (Giraudi, 2018), as some might tend to perceive it.

## 4.3. Language

Another crucial pillar of the Turkish nationalism is Turkish language. This was present from the very beginning of the republic, through the reforms of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, meant to purify the language and detach it from Arabic or Persian as a symbol of distance from the East and closeness to the West. He declared: „I want to address the very matter that is the foundation of each development" (Harf ve Dil Devrimi, 2023) – *the language*. The shift from the Arabic alphabet to the Latin alphabet was motivated through a rather populist discourse, by appealing to the masses: „It is as clear as day how easily Turkish children learnt how to read and write, in cities and in villages"; „The great Turkish nation can only avoid ignorance with such an instrument (*i.e. the new writing system*) that fits our beautiful and noble language." (Harf ve Dil Devrimi, 2023). Therefore, the reform was necessary in

order to assure the continuity of the Turkish language, but also in order to help the education of people.

In other words, Turkish language represents the *sine qua non* condition of existence for *Turkishness* – i.e. the *Turkish element*, being the mirror of Turks' identity, acts and politics. That is one of the reasons for which in 2021, the international name of the country changed from the English „*Turkey*" to the original Turkish version – „*Türkiye*". The change became official in the United Nations, after the country's request (The United Nations Changed the International Name of Türkiye, 2022). This change can be perceived in terms of transparency: „there is only one *Türkiye*", (Cosma, Turkish Identity. Ethnic and Cultural Characteristics and Identity Formation, 2024, p. 294), but also of nationalism: „Türkiye cannot be completely and fully internationalised" (Cosma, Turkish Identity. Ethnic and Cultural Characteristics and Identity Formation, 2024) – therefore this is „an *international transparency reform*", showcasing the unity of the country, internally and internationally (Cosma, Turkish Identity. Ethnic and Cultural Characteristics and Identity Formation, 2024).

Turkish is part of the Turkic family, very different from any European language, mainly due to its grammar and the construction of phrases. The Turkic languages belong to the Altaic language group, with different branches having different characteristics. Nevertheless, one of the shared characteristics is that they are *agglutinative* languages – suffixes can be added to a word in order to form a new one (Johanson, 2025). Due to this difference, but also to the difference in pronunciation, some foreign terms are either replaced with their equivalent in Turkish, or *Turkified* in order to make them easier to be pronounced.

From the above-mentioned aspects, we can deduce that there is a tendency to Turkify the external borrowings, rather than the opposite which would be to *internalise* certain Turkish terms.

Therefore, the linguistic barrier would be an important aspect to be taken into consideration, due to the importance of language as an instrument, especially in the case of international organisations, where a mutually shared and understood instrument of communication is of great importance.

## 4.4. Identity

The question of identity is very complex, for (national) identity is a marker made up of multiple dimensions: geographical, cultural, ideological, political – all interrelated so that they form the coherent *sense of self*. Therefore, the complexity of elements forming an identity explains its importance not only for the members of a society (people), but also for the macro level of the state apparatus, inter-state relations and interactions and international organisations.

In etymological terms, „*identity*" comes from the Latin „*identitas*", which comes from „*idem*", meaning „*the same*", underlying the idea of *similitude*. Isolated,

identity may refer to *similitude to self* (the idea of being identical to oneself), but when placed in the context of interactions, identity may also refer to *similitude to the other*, implying the paradox of being *similar* to something *different* from us. This explanation provides the image of a distance between two entities, which might be bigger or smaller. The bigger the distance, the smaller the similitude and vice versa. Therefore, identities are crucial especially in the relations between a state and an organisation (here, the European Union), being able to bring them closer or impose a distance.

To begin with, Turkish identity is an entirety formed of ethnic characteristics and supported by ideological attributes. When it comes to the ethnic characteristics, today's Turks are the successors of the pre-societal Turkic groups, a migratory people having a rudimentary tribal organisation, which laid at the basis of the Ottoman Empire, a multi-continental state with a military elite and religious-infused ideology (Cosma, Turkish Identity. Ethnic and Cultural Characteristics and Identity Formation, 2024, pp. 204-293).

We can also talk about a sense of *Turkic superiority*, coming from the Islamic philosophy sphere, more specifically from the *Theory of Seven Real Climates*, stating that there are seven climates from which the fourth and fifth climate are *the most privileged*, due to them having a good climate, water, temperature etc., thence people living there are the most educated people on Earth, according to Kâtib Çelebi. Anatolia, the geographical area where Turks formed themselves as a people is part of those privileged areas, therefore Turks themselves belong to a privileged group of people (Cosma, Turkish Identity. Ethnic and Cultural Characteristics and Identity Formation, 2024, pp. 298-299).

In terms of cultural and ideological attributes, the idea of *unity* and *continuity* is what helped Turks always organise and re-organise so that the *auto-preservation* and *state preservation* would be unaltered (Cosma, 2024, pp. 298-299).

These attributes were maintained and are still present till today, but have had an increased importance when Mustafa Kemal Atatürk founded the republic, wanting to re-establish a pure Turkish identity to support the state organisation and institution. To some extent, identity is nowadays perceived as the *protector* of Turkishness, of internal stability and of perpetuation of values, traditions and customs.

When talking about the European Union, we have to consider not only the technical and strictly political aspects, but also the cultural and psychological ones – the *supranational* state or feeling. Some scholars define it as „*Europeanness*" – the conception of a European identity (European Identity, n.d.). The European identity is defined as „the sense of belonging and shared cultural consciousness that *individuals* within the European Union strive to develop, transcending their national identities (European Identity, n.d.). In other words, the European identity is something that goes beyond the national identity or surpasses it.

There are two main questions in order for this to be applied to Turks: the first one is the situation of *individual(s)* – the Turkish identity is *collective*, even though it is *one*, it is one for all and cannot be fractioned in the case of each member of the society.

The second one is the matter of surpassing the national dimension or level. Even if Turks think regionally or internationally, the national level can hardly be surpassed. In their case, it is the national level and the regional level or the international level, not in a hierarchy, but rather placed *horizontally* in the field of perception. Thence, the Turkish identity is so strong that there is no place left to be filled with anything that is supranational in terms of identity or culture.

The *family analogy* can provide a more complete explanation of this phenomenon – family is considered to be the fundament of the Turkish society (Kafesoğlu, 2020, pp. 219-220). Extendedly, the Turkish society is a *macro family* in general understandings, due to the strong ties among the members of the society and the collectivist culture. This macro family is governed by the Turkish identity, which can be understood as *the family name* – therefore, another family name (like the European one) would be quite difficult to find its place so that the balance is maintained.

## 4.5. Neo-Ottomanism and faith-based diplomacy

The Kemalist revolution represented a profound social change meant to diminish the Ottoman inheritance and a „re-constitutive process of the Turkish state into a new construction in order to respond to the evolutive necessity" (Cosma, Faith-based Diplomacy and Neo-Ottomanism, 2025, p. 166). Kemalism opposed the previous state doctrine especially due to its *secular* dimension, but also to its Occidental approach, considered to be a model of development and modernisation. Due to its rapid and drastic character in terms of change, the collective mind later on faced a form of nostalgia towards the Ottoman period, which had been settled in Turks psychology. Due to these aspects, neo-Ottomanism and faith-based diplomacy appeared as a doctrinal jump to the pre-Kemalist period (Cosma, Faith-based Diplomacy and Neo-Ottomanism, 2025, p. 170).

*Neo-Ottomanism* is characterised by three main aspects: the Ottoman Empire is seen at the origins of civilisation, it is an Islamic empire, but also a multicultural empire. Türkiye is, therefore, the heir of the Ottoman Empire, having the moral duty to cultivate, perpetuate and promote the Ottoman cultural legacy (Wastnidge, 2019, p. 4). At the level of diplomacy, this is done by promoting certain aspects of the Ottoman culture.

*Faith-based diplomacy* refers to policies supported by religious teachings and principles, such as reconciliation, solidarity towards the poor, prayer and fasting (Philpott, 2010, pp. 32-34) concrete example is the reinforcement of the role of *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*, the *Directorate of Religious Affairs*, an institution that

gained power regionally by offering humanitarian aid, religious courses and building mosques in the region (Muhasilovic, Turkey's Faith-based Diplomacy in the Balkans, 2018, pp. 63-64).

## 4.6. Religion and society

One of the oldest ties in the history of humanity is the tie between the material and immaterial – between the *sky* and the *earth*. This is what gave people a sense of belonging both to each other and to a superior entity governing their actions. In other words, people started to govern their lives according to their beliefs, which were shared between the members of the community in which they were living. As much as these gave them a sense of cohesion, it also created a difference between them and other communities guided by different beliefs.

As times evolved, the religious teachings reflected in societies directly and indirectly: from the way the society is shaped, the human relations, laws and principles of the state apparatus (the *macro* sphere) till the personal choices, attire, deeds, conducts and ways of behaving (the *micro* sphere). These aspects can be better understood starting from the etymology of the term „*religion*", which is the Latin „*religio*", meaning „*obligation*", „*reverence*". This establishes a triple obligation: the first one is the obligation between the individual and the deity (the obligation towards the *immaterial*), the second one is the obligation between the individual and himself/herself (the obligation towards the *self*) and the third one is the obligation between the individual and the people (the obligation towards the *alterity*).

Even though in its political fundaments, the Turkish state is a secular one, everyday life is marked profoundly by religious values, reflected in people's way of conducting their lives and behaving.

Religion marks, therefore, Turks' understanding of values and even political norms, human rights, democracy etc. In order to provide a concrete example, we shall analyse the status and roles of people in a society, starting from its nucleus – the *family*, where the later politically defined „*gender roles*" emerge.

Generally, it is believed that *the man* is the „head of the family", who should, therefore, take care of the woman and children. The very origin of these social attributes lays in religious teachings. For example, in the Quran, there is a verse stating that „Men are the caretakers of women" (Coranul și traducerea explicativă, 2015).

Therefore, the fact that some women in the society do not go to work and do not have a job is translated and interpreted in the Eurocentric understanding as oppressive, while in the Turkish culture, it might be perceived as the normal course of events and share of roles between men and women within a society – in some areas or groups.

The idea of entirety and wholeness in the Turkish culture is therefore, based on *separation* i.e. differentiation of roles – people have different roles that work

similarly to the pieces of a puzzle – when put together, they form a cohesive and coherent entirety. In other words, cohesion is given by differences – that is the paradox of the Turkish society – its unity is given by people having different roles.

## 4.7. Eurasianism

Culturally speaking, the Turkish society is more inclined towards a *collectivistic Asianism*, in a way that the group, the community, the society is placed higher in the hierarchy rather than the individual separately. The European culture in these terms and especially the culture of the European Union is mainly based on individualistic values – many aspects being focused on the individual. In the case of Turks, the individual must be placed within a larger entity and cannot be treated independently, neither when it comes to societal rights, obligations, nor when speaking about personal life – since *personal* life is, up to a certain degree, *collective*.

The integration to such a distinct cultural environment would force Turks to become more focused on *one*, rather than on *the many*, which would be extremely difficult, if not impossible: the Turkish identity of one is defined in rapport with the identity of all, therefore such separation would create an immense unbalance in the collective mind: Turks would have to define themselves in regard to their own selves and to limit this definition so that it does not expand to the community in its entirety.

Another very important element to be taken into consideration is that Türkiye is not at the cross point between the East and the West, but rather represents the cross point itself. Thence, its European integration would somehow unbalance the equilibrium, because Türkiye would have to diminish some of its ties with the East. This aspect would be, nevertheless, culturally almost impossible, due to its *genetic* belonging to Eurasianism or even Asianism, Turks being the heirs of the migratory tribes and of the later tri-continental Ottoman Empire.

The aspect of Eurasianism is, therefore, one of the most important aspects in the case of Türkiye, combining elements from both cultural spheres: European and Asian. In this way, the country becomes „*not completely European*" and „*not completely Asian*" – a sui generis character formed due to its geographic and cultural characteristics acquired over time. It is to be mentioned than more than it is geographical, it is cultural: there are „different grades of inferiority and power offered" to define the border between the East and the West, leading to „an *imaginary* and geographical division between the East and the West" (Said, 2018, p.279). The idea of imaginary division is similar to the one of „*mental maps*" used by people in their everyday life to place countries or cultures in proximity or far from each other, operating more with what they think (opinions, perceptions – informal knowledge or generalisations) rather than with what there is (geographical reality) – informal knowledge or generalisations

## Conclusions and perspectives

One of the main characteristics of the field of international relations is *dynamicity*, due to the shift to multipolarity, where there are „multiple powers having similar capabilities, but also being in a competition in changing configurations" (Atudorei, 2022, p. 176) – on-going events, either regional or international can affect directly or indirectly other events, precipitate integration or on the contrary, inhibit the process and lead to its prolongation. As a consequence, it is quite difficult to attempt to predict if Türkiye will become a member state and when that shall happen or under what circumstances. This is not solely related to the development of the relations between Türkiye and the European Union, but it is rather related to multiple factors: international and regional events, but also national.

There is a Turkish understanding of values, norms, principles, that is very deeply settled in the collective subconscious that when facing the *alterity* (i.e. the European understanding), it might cause a cultural clash that distances the two entities. This explains that apart from the strictly (geo)political events and developments, the *psychological* aspects are also important when it comes to the integration process. In other words, it is important to analyse to what extent the collective subconscious is shaped in the European direction (in the case of Turks), but also in the Turkish direction (in the case of the European apparatus).

In order to provide an answer to the research question „What are the main aspects in terms of ideological motivations that contribute to the Turkish non-integration?", we analysed different social and ideological dimensions of Turks' motivations for non-integration: nationalism, populism, language, identity, political profile and policies (neo-Ottomanism and faith-based diplomacy), religion – society binomen and Eurasianism.

Regarding the aspect of nationalism, one of the most important aspects that impede the European integration is the contrast between the „European family" (where the focus is on the entirety, i.e. the European Union per se) and the Turkish nationalism, formed around a strong sense of belonging and trust towards the Turkish state. Populism is one of the strongest pillars of support for this sense of belonging, by means of discourse – a form of non-elitist language bringing people and leaders together.

Language is also an important aspect in the process of integration: Turkish is different from the European languages due to its belonging to the family of Turkic languages. The matter of identity and self-perception is crucial for two main reasons: one of them is the difference between the Turkish identity, which is collective and the European perspective, where identity is mainly formed as individualistic; the second one is related to the field of perception, where the Turkish identity is so strong that it is difficult to be surpassed. On the etymological line, the term „identity" can be related to the term „similitude": in the case of the European integration, the matter

of identity being therefore treated as similitude not only to oneself (sense of self), but also to the other (the alterity).

In terms of the actual profile (internal and external) of Türkiye, we mentioned two main aspects: *neo-Ottomanism* as a doctrine formed around nostalgia towards the Ottoman past and *faith-based diplomacy*: diplomatic practices inspired from teachings of good deeds, helping the poor, conciliation etc., being rather contrasting with the secular profile of the European apparatus. Moreover, through these practices, Türkiye's role in the region increases.

The *religion – society* binomen is understood as social practices having religious origins. One of the explanations provided for this aspect is the difference of roles in the Turkish society, perceived as a natural means of completing the societal puzzle, which might be perceived differently from the European perspective. One of the most complex matters is the aspect of *Eurasianism*, combining both cultural-ideological and geographical attributes: in the case of Türkiye, the country represents the bridge between the East and the West, therefore having a sui-generis character and equilibrium between the two.

When it comes to *perspectives* regarding the relations between Türkiye and the European Union, but also the integration process of Türkiye to the European Union, one of the most important aspects to be taken into consideration is the need for a middle ground, i.e. an altered understanding of values and norms: either the European Union is willing to look through Türkiye's lenses so that it accepts their understanding of the above mentioned elements, or the Republic of Türkiye adapts some elements and understandings to the European perspective.

In order for this to happen, not only a lot of time is needed, but also an impactful societal change coming from a strong psychological and ideological background. If the Kemalist moment was the solution for saving a decadent state, then Neo-Ottomanism is a jump to the pre-Kemalist period, we could prospect that in order for things to change in the European Union's direction, a jump to the *pre-Neo-Ottomanist*, i.e. to the Kemalist period would be needed.

As things tend to form a circle in the psychology of a people, we could expect this to happen in the future, based on the experience of the above mentioned development of perceptions in the collective mind, but a precise outcome cannot be provided, due to the dynamicity of the international events.

Nevertheless, perspectives regarding the relations between Türkiye and the European Union imply the necessity of bringing together the past, the present and the future, while the past happened, the present is on-going and the future is unknown. A specific type of scenario related to the evolution of the interactions between the two entities would limit and thence exclude all the other alternatives, due to the fact that it would mainly be based on the events which happened in the past. This explains that the present is, in fact, even more unpredictable than the future.

# References

1924 Anayasası. (n.d.). Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Anayasa Mahkemesi. https://www.anayasa.gov.tr/tr/mevzuat/onceki-anayasalar/1924-anayasasi/

Atudorei, C. M. (2022). *Tranziția sistemului internațional de la ordinea unipolară la cea multipolară*. Coresi.

BM, Türkiye'nin yabancı dildeki ismini değiştirdi. (2022, June 2). Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı İletişim Başkanlığı [Presidency of Communications of the Republic of Turkey]. https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/turkce/dis_basinda_turkiye/detay/bm-turkiyenin-yabanci-dildeki-ismini-degistirdi

Constitution of the Republic of Turkey. (n.d.). Anayasa. https://anayasa.gov.tr/media/7258/anayasa_eng.pdf

Coranul și traducerea explicativă. (2015). Departamentul pentru servicii confesionale [Department for Confessional Services].

Cosma, I.-M. (2024). Turkish identity: Ethnic and cultural characteristics and identity formation. *Studia UBB Europaea*, *69*(1), 291–309.

Cosma, I.-M. (2025). Faith-based diplomacy and Neo-Ottomanism. In L. M. Pop-Flanja (Ed.), *Strategic narratives in turbulent times: Communication, legitimacy, and global stakes* (pp. 165–175). Presa Universitară Clujeană.

Cranston, M. (2025, April 23). Ideology. *Britannica*. https://www.britannica.com/topic/ideology-society

Dewdney, J. C., & Yapp, M. E. (2025, June 20). Turkey. *Britannica*. https://www.britannica.com/place/Turkey

European identity. (n.d.). *ScienceDirect*. https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/european-identity

Founding agreements. (n.d.). *European Union*. https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/principles-and-values/founding-agreements_en

Giraudi, G. C. (2018). Populism: What is and why we need a multidimensional approach to understand it. *European Scientific Journal*.

Harf ve Dil Devrimi. (2023, June 27). *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi*. https://atam.gov.tr/harf-ve-dil-devrimi/

History of the European Union 1945–59. (n.d.). *European Union*. https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/history-eu/1945-59_en

Johanson, L. (2025, July 11). Turkic languages. *Britannica*. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Turkic-languages#ref80004

Kafesoğlu, İ. (2020). *Türk millî kültürü*. Ötüken.

Liboreiro, J. (2023, May 16). A brief history of Turkey's long, tortuous road to join the European Union. *Euronews*. https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2023/05/16/a-brief-history-of-turkeys-long-tortuous-road-to-join-the-european-union

Muhasilovic, J. (2018). Turkey's faith-based diplomacy in the Balkans. In A. M. Katıtaş (Ed.), *Public diplomacy of rising and regional powers*.

Ottomanism. (n.d.). *Harvard Divinity School*. https://rpl.hds.harvard.edu/faq/faq-country/turkey?page=1

Philpott, B. C. (2010). Faith-based diplomacy: An ancient idea newly emerged. *Taylor & Francis Online*.

Said, E. (2018). *Orientalism*. Art.

Tanzimat. (n.d.). *Harvard Divinity School*. https://rpl.hds.harvard.edu/faq/faq-country/turkey?page=1

The United Nations changed the international name of Türkiye. (2022, June 2). Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı İletişim Başkanlığı [Presidency of Communications of the Republic of Turkey]. https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/turkce/dis_basinda_turkiye/detay/bm-turkiyenin-yabanci-dildeki-ismini-degistirdi

Türkiye-AB ilişkilerinin tarihçesi. (2024, August 9). T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı Avrupa Birliği Başkanlığı [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, Directorate General for European Union Affairs]. https://www.ab.gov.tr/turkiye-ab-iliskilerinin-tarihcesi_111.html

Wastnidge, E. (2019). Imperial grandeur and selective memory. *Open Research Online – The Open University*.