Constructivist Approaches to EU–Turkey Relations

Senem Aydın-Düzgit and Bahar Rumelili

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The end of the Cold War and the European Union's (EU) decision to enlarge to countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEECs) while leaving Turkey out of the new enlargement queue sparked a rising academic interest particularly in the role of identity in EU–Turkey relations in the late 1990s. As Turkey's accession process progressed between 1999 and 2005, debates on the desirability of Turkish accession intensified in the EU. As the prospect of accession became more real, the opposition also began to be increasingly based on the grounds that the country posed a profound challenge to the European project due to the perceived ambiguities over Turkey's 'Europeanness'. It was explicitly and increasingly voiced, most prominently by former French President Nicolas Sarkozy and German Chancellor Angela Merkel, among others,

S. Aydın-Düzgit (✉)

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Sabancı University, Istanbul, Turkey

e-mail: saduzgit@sabanciuniv.edu

B. Rumelili

Department of International Relations, Koç University, Istanbul, Turkey

e-mail: brumelili@ku.edu.tr

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that Turkey's democracy, geography, history, culture, and the mindset of its politicians as well as its people qualify it as a non-European state unfit to become a member of the EU.

This chapter focuses on the emergence and proliferation of constructivist approaches to EU–Turkey relations between 1997 and 2020, which placed significance on the role of identity in academic studies on the relationship. Constructivist approaches define identity as a socially constructed and relational concept. Being socially constructed means that identity is not an essentialist trait that exists as intrinsic to an individual or collectivity, but gathers its meaning through social interaction. Identity being relational implies that identities can only be articulated and enacted with reference to their constitutive Other(s). We will first outline the main tenets of constructivism and the premises of a constructivist approach to EU–Turkey relations. In doing so, we highlight the theoretical diversity within constructivism, especially the difference between the ‘thin’, ‘liberal’ constructivism on the one hand, and the ‘thick’, ‘critical’ constructivism that builds on poststructuralism on the other. On the basis of a literature overview, we discuss how these theoretical differences have played out in constructivist analyses of EU–Turkey relations through an in-depth analysis of selected works in three periods: 1997–1999, 2000–2010, and 2011–2020. We do not aim to provide a comprehensive overview of the entire constructivism-inspired literature on EU–Turkey relations; rather, we study exemplary authors for each period. In conclusion, we identify some future directions for constructivist research on EU–Turkey relations.

3.2 CONSTRUCTIVISM AND EU–TURKEY RELATIONS

Constructivist approaches in the broadest sense share an emphasis on the role of norms, values, ideas, identities, and discourse in the constitution of the social world. Norms set standards of appropriate behavior, ideas constitute shared understandings, discourse reflects dominant ways of representing reality, and identities are images and concepts of selfhood held by and attributed to actors (Jepperson et al., 1996). Constructivist approaches to international relations underline that states, just like human agents, do not exist independently from their social environment and its shared systems of meanings (Risse, 2009: 145) as reflected in norms, ideas, identities, and discourse, and they thus reject the treatment of states as strictly rational and self-interested actors pursuing strategic preferences

geared toward maximizing self-interest. Hence, according to a constructivist approach, the EU is a socially constituted actor; the interests of the EU and its member states are shaped by their identity conceptions and the prevailing norms and values of European and global international society. This is reflected in the EU's foreign policy behavior, such that its relations with all other actors, not only with 'Muslim' Turkey, are shaped by norms, values, and identity considerations (Manners & Whitman, 2003; Merand, 2006; Sedelmeier, 2005). In other words, EU–Turkey relations are not a unique case, where an exception from a strategic, utility-driven EU foreign policy unavoidably arises due to civilizational differences with non-EU actors.

Constructivist approaches are also united in their empirical emphasis on meaning and meaning structures. Hence, in a constructivist study of EU–Turkey relations, it is necessary to focus on the meanings that relevant actors attach to policy decisions. For example, it is not enough to note that the EU started accession negotiations with Turkey; what matters is how this decision was made sense of, explained, and justified by EU officials, member states' politicians, and other relevant actors. Similarly, it is not enough to simply list the political reforms Turkey undertook to buttress its membership bid; what matters are the meanings attached to those reforms.

There has been an overwhelming emphasis in constructivist approaches to EU–Turkey relations on the notion of identity. This is mainly because the prospect of Turkish accession to the EU has raised heated political debates in Europe on whether Turkey is a European country that can have a credible accession perspective on the grounds of culture, religion, geography, and history.

This almost exclusive focus on identity brings us to the necessity to clarify at the outset how constructivists approach the issue of identity, and the relationship between identity and norms, discourse, and behavior in international politics. One of the fundamental tenets of the constructivist approach is that identities are not fixed and rooted in some supposedly objectively identifiable characteristics of populations; instead, they are continuously constructed (and reconstructed/shaped), negotiated, and contested through interactions between political actors (Cederman, 2001: 10–11). The constructivist perspective does not claim that identity can be completely divorced from objectified traits, such as race, ethnicity, religion, history, culture, or the political system, but stresses that identity

is ultimately a presentation of self that is recognized by others (Wendt, 1994: 404–405) and that the meaning and salience of various objectified traits in constituting identities are negotiated and contested between political actors. For example, while constructivism would not deny that most European citizens subscribe—at least nominally—to the Christian belief, it would contend that the meaning and salience of Christianity in constituting European identity cannot simply be assumed as an objective fact. Similarly, other elements of European identity, including history, democracy, market economy, etc., are also products of an ongoing process of construction and negotiation within Europe and between European actors and others.

Applied to the case of EU–Turkey relations, the constructivist perspective would contend that the identity incompatibility between the EU and Turkey on the grounds of mainly cultural and religious differences between the two is socially constructed and cannot be assumed as a given. Identities are ‘historically contingent, tenuous, and subject to constructions and reconstructions’ (Risse, 2009: 167). Yet, this possibility of change, which arises from the socially constructed nature of identity, does not amount to a claim that identities can be changed, reimagined, and reconstructed overnight. Particular identity constructions are sticky, and they matter in terms of impacting attitudes and behavior in a given context. Although this is not a given, that relevant European and Turkish political actors represent European and Turkish identities as incompatible with one another matters because it shapes how the two sides make sense of each other’s political moves.

Over time, substantive variations have developed between constructivist approaches in their outlook on the ways in which identities, ideas, norms, values, and discourses play a role in the construction of social reality. There are many constructivist approaches that range along a continuum from a ‘thin’, ‘liberal’ constructivism to ‘thick’, ‘radical’, or ‘critical’ constructivist approaches (Checkel, 2007: 58). The former is an explanatory theory in competition with rationalism, which contends that identities, norms, values, ideas, and discourses matter in shaping states’ interests and hence influencing their actions. For that, thin-liberal constructivism pits norm- and identity-based accounts against purely interest-based ones and shows that the latter are insufficient in explaining the said outcomes. Accordingly, thin-liberal constructivist accounts emphasize, for example, that one cannot explain why the EU embarked on an ambitious enlargement policy that includes Turkey

without taking into account the constraining effects of enlargement discourse which underlined the duty of the EU to enlarge to democratic European states, hence rhetorically committing itself to enlarging to a democratizing Turkey, despite controversies over the country's European identity. States as agents interact and constitute the social structure of international politics, which in turn shape their identities and preferences (Wendt, 1999). In this case, the member states constructed the enlargement discourse, which imposes on them a duty to complete the unification of Europe and ties the expansion of EU membership to the fulfillment of value-based conditions. This, in turn, shaped their conceptions of European and national identity and preferences toward enlargement.

'Thick' and 'critical' constructivist approaches, influenced by poststructuralism, shy away from explanatory theory and, rather, focus on the 'how possible' question (Checkel, 2007: 58). For example, instead of debating whether interests or norms ultimately shape the EU's decisions on enlargement toward Turkey, thick-critical constructivists focus on laying out the set of meanings in discourses on European identity that make it possible for the EU to oscillate between inclusion and exclusion of Turkey (Aydın-Düzgit, 2012). Also, in contrast to the thin-liberal approach, thick-critical constructivists do not treat language as a simple mirror of social reality but point to its constitutive dimensions. In line with their poststructuralist premises, they stress that there is no social reality outside language. In other words, neither the EU nor Turkey exist as independently constituted actors outside of discourse. Broader discourses on modernity and civilization, as well as more specific discourses on Europe and EU enlargement, produce certain subject positions for the EU and Turkey from and within the limits of which they act. Foreign policy, in this framework, is thus conceptualized as a discursive practice that constructs particular subject identities for states, positioning them *vis-à-vis* one another and thereby constructing a particular reality in which certain policies become possible (Doty, 1993: 305). The EU's enlargement policy is therefore first and foremost a discursive practice of constituting European identity in relation to others—be they candidates or outsiders. Thick-critical constructivists are interested in laying out how European identity and relations of difference and hierarchies of moral superiority/inferiority between Europe and others are constructed through the EU's enlargement policy. In poststructuralism, discourse is intimately linked with power, and a critical analysis of discourse

serves to expose how taken-for-granted structures of meaning naturalize hierarchies, limit agency, and marginalize alternatives.

Another key difference between thin-liberal and thick-critical constructivism emerges in the conceptualization of the relationship between identity and difference. As Rumelili (2004, 2007) points out, in thin-liberal constructivism, the discursive dependence of identity on difference is often overlooked. Hence, the formation of collective identities among states, such as European identity, is viewed mostly as a self-generated, self-sustained process based on shared norms, ideas, and understandings among states. In other words, European identity is constituted by characteristics that are internal to the EU—such as democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights—and not necessarily through differentiating Europe from others. Thin-liberal constructivists have argued in different formulations that European identity is not dependent on Othering; that it is a liberal, inclusive identity that constructs outsiders as less-than-Europe rather than as non- or anti-European (Wæver, 1998: 100) and a post-national identity premised on Othering its past rather than those external to it. In the context of EU–Turkey relations, this means that Turkey is not Europe’s Other and that the relationship is not based on Othering. In a thin-liberal constructivist perspective, the EU does not discriminate against Turkey, and the membership of Turkey in the EU is possible depending on how well Turkey adopts the EU’s self-generated, value-based conditions.

In contrast, thick-critical constructivist scholars have insisted that identity among states, like all other forms of identity, is constituted in relation to difference; it always resides in the nexus between the collective Self and its Others, not in the Self as seen in isolation (Neumann & Welsh, 1991; Neumann, 1998). Moreover, thick-critical constructivist scholars emphasize that identities are performed through practices of differentiation that distinguish the identity in whose name they operate from counter identities (Campbell, 1998; Weldes et al., 1999). Consequently, thick-critical constructivist analyses of EU enlargement and foreign policy have focused on the ways in which Europe constitutes its identity by constructing Eastern Europe, Russia, Turkey, the Mediterranean, and the United States as different, inferior, and in some cases threatening. It needs to be noted, however, that whereas in essentialist approaches, the difference between Self and Other is pre-given and rooted in inherent characteristics, in thick-critical constructivism, it needs to be produced and reproduced. In other words, Turkey is an Other of Europe not because it is Muslim and hence

different, but because the reproduction of European identity depends on the production of Turkey as different. Collective identity formation is a process that inevitably defines other identities and produces them as different. Consequently, thick-critical constructivist accounts of EU–Turkey relations have focused on identifying prevailing constructions of difference in various European discourses, focusing on EU institutions as well as different national discourses within the EU (Aydın-Düzgüt, 2012; Tekin, 2010).

In sum, constructivism provides a rich conceptual and theoretical basis to make sense of EU–Turkey relations. It enables scholars to study the identity and value-laden aspects of the relationship without resorting to simplistic essentialism. The case of EU–Turkey relations also brings to the foreground competing propositions put forward by different variants of constructivism.

3.3 THE CONSTRUCTIVIST LITERATURE ON EU–TURKEY RELATIONS: NAVIGATING THROUGH CHANGE AND THEORETICAL DIFFERENCES

Having laid out conceptually how the basic premises of constructivism and its different variants would apply to the case of EU–Turkey relations, in this section we turn to analyzing actual constructivist accounts of EU–Turkey relations. We do not aim to provide a comprehensive overview. Most of the case-specific literature on EU–Turkey relations is theoretically eclectic and thus hard to classify in terms of theoretical perspective. Many constructivist studies on European identity and EU enlargement refer to the Turkish example but not at the level of depth necessary to consider them as a constructivist analysis of EU–Turkey relations. Therefore, below we analyze a sample of works and focus on discussing the ways in which they adopt certain constructivist premises in making sense of EU–Turkey relations and the ways in which they use the case of EU–Turkey relations to validate constructivist theoretical premises.

The constructivist literature on EU–Turkey relations can be temporally divided into three periods. First is the 1997–1999 period in which scholars tried to explain why and how Turkey was excluded from the ‘big bang’ wave of EU enlargement in the 1990s. The second period roughly spans from 1999 to 2010, when Turkey was for the first time given a

credible membership perspective through the decision to launch accession negotiations. This created a virtuous cycle of political reforms in the country, although this began to stagnate from 2006 onward. The third and the final period covers the post-2010 years in which Turkey's EU accession negotiations stalled with the de facto freezing of accession talks along with the EU's own internal crises and the democratic decline in Turkey. In many ways, the shifts in EU–Turkey relations—where the exclusionary relationship of the 1990s moved toward a credible membership perspective and convergence in the 2000s but reverted back to divergence in the 2010s—have created challenges for formulating a consistent constructivist perspective on the relationship.

3.3.1 *1997–1999: Exclusion from the Enlargement Wave*

Despite its expectations, Turkey was excluded from the list of countries announced by the EU in 1997 that were to join the EU as part of its 'big bang enlargement'. It was only in 1999 that Turkey was officially granted the status of candidate country destined to join the EU. The question of why the EU had been reluctant to accept Turkey as a member state was answered in most of these earlier works primarily with references to identity (Müftüler-Baç, 2000: 32; Öniş, 1999). While engaging with the role of a key constructivist concept, in this case mainly with regard to identity, these earlier works of the late 1990s stayed away from the heated theoretical debates between rationalism and constructivism ongoing at the time in the field of International Relations. Subsequently, a new generation of studies started to approach the question of Turkey's exclusion from/inclusion to Europe from an explicitly constructivist theoretical vantage point. Rather than only seeking to explain the state of EU–Turkey relations, these studies were also interested in demonstrating the impact of norms, values, ideas, and discourses in European enlargement and foreign policy through the case of Turkey.

A pioneering critical constructivist analysis of the EU–Turkey relationship in this period is Neumann's work on the discursive construction of European identity via its historical relations with the 'East'. In an initial study conducted with Jennifer Welsh (Neumann & Welsh, 1991), they argued that the discourses on Turkey in European history still have ramifications for contemporary European representations of the 'Turk' and Turkey. In Neumann's later work, he showed that despite the historical

importance of the Russian Other in the construction of European identity, ‘the constitutive exclusion of the Turk was central to the becoming of the “European”’ (Neumann, 1999: 60). In other words, in European history, being European was relationally defined as being non-Turkish, with the positive attributions associated with the former and the negative traits ascribed to the latter. Neumann argued that these long-lasting and well-entrenched historical stereotypes also impact on how the EU views modern Turkey and leads to a reluctance in its admission to the EU by also referring to Turkey’s exclusion from the enlargement queue in the 1990s. Nevertheless, carrying the sensitivity of a poststructuralist scholar over competing and contested representations, he also highlighted that in the case of Turkey, selective utterances from history and contemporary rhetoric tend to ‘present a picture that is a bit too stark in that it largely fails to highlight the ongoing struggles over representations of the “Turk”’ (Neumann, 1999: 63).

3.3.2 2000–2010: *Rise of Membership Prospects and the Period of Convergence*

In the 2000s, the European integration studies literature came under the strong influence of a variety of constructivist approaches. In the meantime, as the prospects for Turkey’s accession to the EU improved, interest in the case of EU–Turkey relations surged. As a result, constructivist approaches to EU–Turkey relations flourished and even diversified.

Earlier works in this period continued to focus on the reasons behind the tardy inclusion of Turkey in the EU enlargement queue. A highly influential study undertaken in this period explicitly took on the question of why the EU prioritized the CEECs over Turkey in the enlargement process (Sjursen, 2002, 2006). It rested on a Habermasian perspective, which argues that efforts to achieve consensus through discourse via appeals to legitimacy contributes to the construction of a social structure of politics. As such, Helene Sjursen focused on the ‘reasons’ given by policy actors in the EU to justify enlargement to candidate countries. Within this framework, she classified the arguments that were given in favor of enlargement under three categories *à la* Habermas: those that emphasize utility, those that refer to rights, and those that focus on values. She argued that enlargement to CEECs was justified on the basis of all these three argument types, while justifications for enlarging to Turkey

did not include a ‘value’ dimension that corresponds to a ‘shared identity’ and a ‘kinship based duty’, leading to the prioritization of CEECs over Turkey in the EU’s decision to enlarge (Sjursen, 2002).¹ Theoretically, overall, Sjursen’s contribution, which sought to identify the meaning structures used to justify EU policy toward different candidate countries and explain the different policy choices on that basis, reflected thin-liberal constructivist premises.

As relations between the EU and Turkey took a more positive turn, culminating in the launching of accession talks between the two sides in 2005, the focus of thin-liberal constructivist scholars shifted toward explaining Turkey’s later inclusion in the enlargement project despite the fundamental disagreements between the member states and the social, political, and economic challenges that the country was perceived to pose. Frank Schimmelfennig responded to this conundrum with his concept of ‘rhetorical entrapment’, which focused on the role of norms in the accession process (see also Schimmelfennig, Chapter 6). According to this thesis, which he had first developed to explain the EU’s decision to enlarge to the CEECs, member states had agreed to the opening of accession negotiations with Turkey not due to the convergence of their national preferences but because they were normatively constrained by the liberal-democratic identity through which the EU defined itself. As Turkey undertook key political reforms on the way to fulfilling the Copenhagen political criteria, objections to Turkish accession on culturalist, institutionalist, or economic grounds began to lose traction, and member states that no longer had legitimate grounds to deny accession gave the green light to the start of accession talks (Schimmelfennig, 2009).

In the early 2000s, Bahar Rumelili (2004) sought to make sense of the EU’s different treatment of various neighboring/candidate states and their changing approach toward Turkey within a thick-critical constructivist framework. She argued that while European identity is constituted in relation to difference, its Othering of outside states takes different forms, and constitutes different aspects of European identity. Contra Schimmelfennig, who argued that the EU’s liberal identity normatively constrained the member states in their approach toward Turkey, Rumelili claimed that European identity embodies both inclusive and exclusive

¹In later years, the same analytical framework drawing from Habermas’ theory of communicative action was also used in analyzing the ways in which Turkish political parties justified their views on Turkish accession to the EU (see Balkır & Eylemer, 2016).

aspects, which are invoked in relation to different Others at different times. She argued that the discourses on European identity situate Turkey in a ‘liminal’, ‘partly Self-partly Other’ position, which makes the EU both inclusionary and exclusionary toward Turkey.

Shortly after accession negotiations began between Turkey and the EU in 2005, incoming center-right governments in Germany and France reverted to exclusionary rhetoric toward Turkey, and the impasse over Cyprus led to the partial suspension of negotiations in 2006. Following Schimmelfennig’s thin-liberal constructivist argument, Engert claimed that both the EU’s decision to open accession negotiations with Turkey in 2005 and the subsequent partial suspension of negotiation chapters were the results of the EU’s adherence to liberal-democratic norms. In the former instance, the EU rewarded Turkey’s ‘norm confirmative behaviour’, but the refusal of Turkey to extend the Customs Union Additional Protocol to Cyprus constituted a violation of fundamental EU norms (Engert, 2010: 67).

Simultaneously, the case of EU–Turkey relations became embedded in the literature on European identity and normative debates about the future direction of the European polity. Thomas Diez (2004), for instance, criticized the claims that the EU constituted a fundamental challenge to the modern territoriality of the nation-state by resembling a ‘postmodern polity’ (Wæver, 1998). He noted that the presence of geographic and cultural Otherings in the EU’s discourses on third countries such as Turkey shed considerable doubt on whether the EU could actually be defined as a ‘postmodern polity’ (Diez, 2004). Thomas Risse identified two broad contours of European identity: an inclusive, cosmopolitan Europe that is more open to the idea of Turkey’s accession to the EU and an exclusive, essentialist understanding of Europe that rejects seeing Turkey as a member country (Risse, 2010: 213–220). Baban and Keyman (2008) explored the potential conceptual implications of Turkish membership for constructions of European identity along this exclusivist/cosmopolitan nexus. As such, they found that ‘the potential for a pluralistic cosmopolitan future for the EU depends on the possibility of a post-national, multicultural, and global Europe with the capacity to contribute to the creation of democratic global governance’ and that this would largely depend on the EU’s approach to Turkish membership and Turkey’s success in consolidating its democracy (Baban & Keyman, 2008: 109).

It was in this period that thick-critical constructivist studies began to delve deeper into the political debates on Turkish accession in the EU and specific EU member states. Adopting a constructivist ontology of identity as relational and discursively constructed, Tekin (2010) analyzed French oppositional discourses on Turkish accession, and by using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as her method, demonstrated the discursive strategies through which Turkey had been subject to Othering in France. The example illustrates how toward the end of this period, constructivist approaches started to pay closer attention to methodology as well as to the need to differentiate between sites of authority in the EU, such as the specific EU institutions and the EU member states, in their analyses.

3.3.3 *2011–2020: Freezing of Accession Negotiations and the Period of Conflictual Cooperation*

Attention to methodology and differentiation between sites of analysis became a more dominant characteristic of the constructivist contributions in this period. For instance, Catherine MacMillan (2013) conducted an in-depth discourse analysis of the EU elites' discourses on Turkey to study the diverging national discourses on 'state' and the 'nation' in selected EU member states (France and Britain) as well as in Turkey to understand how these discourses impacted these states' overall discourses on European identity. Paul Levin took up the point expressed in earlier works by Neumann on the need for empirical historical research by conducting a detailed study of the historical evolution of the concept of Europe in relation to its encounters with the Muslims and the Turks over the entire history of their interaction. By theorizing identity as a dramatic reenactment where past representations are reproduced in novel ways, he argued in line with Neumann that this rich historical repertoire had largely penetrated contemporary European representations of Turkey. To illustrate his point, he analyzed the European Parliament debates (1996–2010) on Turkey, where he found that 'the historical legacy and repertoire of images generated over the course of centuries of hostile attitudes toward Islam and Ottoman Turks continue to influence perceptions of Turks and Turkey in the EU' (Levin, 2011: 182). Selin Türkeş-Kılıç also analyzed European Parliament debates (2005–2012) on Turkey, but from a Habermasian perspective focusing on justifications that the parliamentarians used in arguing for or against privileged partnership with Turkey. She found that the members of right-wing political party groups who

supported ‘privileged partnership’ rather than full membership for Turkey discursively constructed an essentialist European identity that excluded Turkey (Türkeş-Kılıç, 2020).

Aydın-Düzgit (2012) employed CDA to analyze EU elite discourses on Turkey in EU institutions and selected member states (France, Germany, and Britain). While also engaging with the normative debates on the modern/postmodern identity of the EU, she concluded that there are multiple ‘Europes’ that are being constructed through the discourses on Turkey, depending on the national, institutional, and the ideological milieus within which the discourses are (re)produced. Her analysis of EU texts revealed that the construction of European identity in the EU takes on complex dimensions that are impossible to reduce to the binary dichotomy of the modern/postmodern constructs of identity. She argued that the degree to which the modern state’s designation of territory and identity is employed in the discursive construction of European identity is dependent not only on the entity against which a relational identity is established but also on the nodal points (such as security) around which identities are constructed (Aydın-Düzgit, 2013). Similarly, Münevver Cebeci also looked at the type of Europe articulated through its foreign policy and claimed that an ‘ideal Europe narrative’ is discursively constructed by academics and the policymaking community to present Europe as a power that acts in ‘ideal ways’ on the world stage to ‘colonise’/‘influence’ others (including Turkey) (Cebeci, 2012: 583).

Toward the end of the 2000s, as Turkey under the single-party rule of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) began to turn further away from democratic consolidation and EU accession, poststructuralist scholars began to focus on the changing discourses on Europe within Turkey, hence shifting the level of analysis from the European to the Turkish national level. Alpan was among the first to point out the discursive shift that took place among the governing elite in Turkey after the opening of accession negotiations with the EU. By using Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory and its concept of ‘hegemony’, she claimed that while Europe was the central point of reference and thus ‘the main focus of the political struggle’ among the Turkish political elite in the period between 1999 and 2005, it ‘lost its central role in the political debates’ from then onwards (Alpan, 2014: 80). In her later work, she centered her analysis specifically on the AKP’s discourse on Europe, arguing that although Europe lost its

centrality in political debates in 2005, the AKP still utilized it as a reference point in giving meaning to its empty signifiers such as ‘advanced democracy’, where Europe was construed as an ‘unwanted partner’ and/or a ‘partner in crime’ (Alpan, 2016: 20–24). These findings were confirmed also in Aydın-Düzgıt’s critical discourse analysis of President Erdoğan’s speeches on Europe, where she identified that the president discursively constructed Europe as an ‘unwanted intruder’, ‘inherently discriminatory’, or having an ‘inferior democracy’ (Aydın-Düzgıt, 2016: 50–55). She argued that these representations in turn helped dismantle the discursive legitimacy of the EU’s democratic demands on Turkey and create a more difficult climate for the adoption of democratic reforms in the country (Aydın-Düzgıt, 2016: 56). Adopting a focus on the reception and contestation of European discourses in Turkey, but focusing on their relationship with domestic governance, others have argued that the neo-conservative ‘style of thought’ espoused by the AKP allowed it to ‘sublimate the position of the ‘Other’ in the ideational structure of Europe’, which helped in turn ‘reconstitute the identity’ of Turkey through neo-conservative ideas (Ertuğrul, 2012).

Meanwhile, Rumelili focused on the impact that changes in Turkish discourses had on Europe. She argued that Turkish discourses criticizing Europe as a Christian club and situating Turkey as both European and Islamic had a contestatory and subversive impact on discourses on European identity (Rumelili, 2007, 2008: 97–110). Subsequently, with Morozov, she comparatively analyzed how Russia and Turkey responded differently to exclusionary European discourses (Morozov & Rumelili, 2012). They found that the discursive debates and practices in Russia and Turkey have enabled certain articulations of European identity and constrained others. While Turkey challenges the constitution of Europe and Islam as mutually exclusive and inherently incompatible identities, Russia advances alternatives to the dominant Western liberal interpretation of European values.

Aydın-Düzgıt’s more recent work moved the focus from elite constructions of national identity to those of the public by exploring via focus group methodology whether the discursive shifts in the AKP’s debate on Europe led to changes in public constructs of national identity. She found that the AKP’s representation of Europe as politically and/or economically inferior to Turkey and Turkey’s representation as a superior nation to Europe, thanks to its unique Ottoman history, had penetrated public

discourse; however, Europe was also increasingly associated with normative values such as democracy and human rights in Turkey, particularly among those who identified themselves with the left-wing opposition parties (Aydın-Düzgit, 2018a, 2018b).

3.4 FUTURE OF CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACHES TO EU–TURKEY RELATIONS

This chapter first outlined the main contours of the constructivist school of thought in international relations with a discussion of how the different variants of constructivism can be applied to the study of EU–Turkey relations, followed by an illustrative survey of the academic contributions in the field of EU–Turkey relations that base their accounts on constructivist theoretical premises.

Metatheoretical debates in IR are on the wane, and the rapid changes in EU–Turkey relations caution against teleological accounts. This context underlines the importance of change and urges constructivist scholars to explain the changes and continuities in identities and norms in both the history and the current state of the EU–Turkey relationship through systematic studies. As the more recent works in the field have shown, it is also imperative that future constructivist works in this area take into consideration mutual encounters and interactions in the (co) construction of identities and contestations of norms in the EU–Turkey relationship.

In line with this need, in their more recent studies, the authors of this chapter have attempted to display the changes and continuities in the identity representations between Europe and Turkey since the proclamation of the Tanzimat Edict in 1839. In line with this goal, they have studied cultural and identity interactions between Europe and Turkey from 1789 to 2016 in four key periods in the EU–Turkey relationship (1789–1922, 1923–1945, 1946–1998, 1999–2016). Conceptualising identity as discursive and relational, they have shown how representations of the European and the Turkish Other varied and evolved through cultural exchanges and political interactions in different historical periods (Aydın-Düzgit et al., 2017, 2018, 2020).

Overall, constructivist approaches to EU–Turkey relations have been particularly useful in showing how and when identity matters in the EU’s stance toward Turkish accession and, more recently, how it impacts Turkish policies toward Europe through shaping the Turkish elite and

public conceptions of identity. The key actors which have been studied in constructivist analyses were officials and politicians from the EU, its member states and Turkey as well as EU institutions and most notably the European Commission. While the main focus of interest has been the inclusion/exclusion of Turkey from the European project, it is important to note that there are few studies that apply a constructivist approach to specific policy areas of interest to both sides. One policy area where constructivist attention has recently been turning to is migration cooperation between Turkey and the EU and more specifically, how the migration deal between the two sides is compromising the EU's liberal identity (Martin, 2019). Constructivism has also proven useful in showing how Turkey competes with and contests the EU's development policy in sub-Saharan Africa by presenting itself as a 'virtuous actor' in the region as opposed to 'neocolonial Europe' (Langan, 2017).

External contestations of European normativity by Turkey through its foreign policies that extend beyond official development assistance in their shared neighborhood could also be another potential area of inquiry that could benefit from constructivist insights. Shifts and fluctuations in mutual identity representations in response to key contemporary developments in the EU and Turkey such as the EU migration crisis and Brexit could constitute other subjects of constructivist research. Finally, constructivism could be used in studying the implications of the changing nature of European integration toward further differentiation on mutual identity representations and normative expectations.

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Senem Aydın-Düzgit is professor of International Relations at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences of Sabancı University, Istanbul and a senior scholar and research and academic affairs coordinator at the Istanbul Policy Center. Her main research interests include European foreign policy, Turkish foreign policy, EU–Turkey relations, discourse studies and identity in international relations and

particularly in European foreign policy. She is the co-author of *Turkey and the European Union* (Palgrave, 2015) and author of *Constructions of European Identity* (Palgrave, 2012). Her articles have been published in the *Journal of Common Market Studies*, *West European Politics, Cooperation and Conflict*, *Third World Quarterly*, *Politics*, and *South European Society and Politics*, among others.

Bahar Rumelili is professor and Jean Monnet Chair at the Department of International Relations, Koç University, Istanbul. Her research focuses on international relations theory, processes of European identity construction, conflict resolution, and the interaction between the EU and Turkish politics and civil society. She is the author of *Constructing Regional Community and Order in Europe and Southeast Asia* (Palgrave, 2007) and the editor of *Conflict Resolution and Ontological Security: Peace Anxieties* (Routledge, 2015). Her articles have appeared in journals such as *European Journal of International Relations*, *Review of International Studies*, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, and *Journal of International Relations and Development*.

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