Abstract

This article seeks to explore how religion and culture were used as an indicator of European identity in the media representation of Turkey-EU relations in the British media. The study focuses on religious and cultural discussions in the news rather than on the overall tone of the coverage. The research sample comprises six different political events happening when discussions concerning Turkey-EU relations reached their peak during 1999 to 2006. The news about Turkey’s EU bid published in five British newspapers and one news portal will be examined. While the qualitative analysis on news items will show how religion and culture are used in excluding Turkey from the EU, the quantitative analysis will demonstrate how much Turkey is associated with different labels (e.g. Muslim, secular). The findings concerning these labels were backed up by in-depth interviews with journalists. By investigating journalists’ viewpoints, the study attempts to show why Turkey’s EU membership and the discussions concerning religion, culture and identity are framed in a particular way.

Keywords: Turkey; EU; religion; culture; identity.

“Despite Turkey’s attempts since the founding of the republic in the 1920s to project itself as European, Turkey and Islam have continued to be seen largely as synonymous as far as the dominant European perception is concerned” (Kösebalaban, 2007, p.101)

1. Introduction

Turkey offers great stories for a journalistic experience which is not easy to find in every country. In his book Crescent & Star, Stephen Kinzer, an American journalist, former chief of the Istanbul bureau of New York Times, says:

“Whenever I sit in a café beside the Bosphorus I sense the power of Turkey’s geography. Behind me lie Paris, Berlin and London. Across the narrow waterway is Asia, an unbroken land mass stretching from the streets of Istanbul to Baghdad, Delhi and Beijing” (Kinzer, 2001, p. 25).

However, Turkey’s interesting position on the world map has not always been beneficial for the country. Turkey has been trying to become part of the EU for more than 50 years. Im-
important events have occurred in the last decade and Turkey finally started membership negotiations1 in 2005. Yet seeking a membership while being an historical Other to Europe (Neumann & Welsh, 1991; Delanty, 1995; Neumann, 1999) makes Turkish accession to the EU a different case compared to the accession process of former candidate countries from Central and Eastern Europe. Thus, in addition to economic and political discussions, Turkish membership of the EU is a significant historical and cultural challenge for European politicians and citizens. According to McLaren’s study (2007, p. 273), EU citizens hesitate about the cultural differences of Turkey more than its economic and political incompatibilities. This means that even though Turkey can reach a sufficient economic and political level to join the EU, its membership bid may be blocked because of an essentialist approach towards the Turkish issue.

While bearing in mind the dominant religion in Turkey, the secular character of the Turkish Republic, and the accusations regarding the EU being a Christian club (Koenig, Mihelj, Downey & Bek, 2006), this study seeks to answer this question: How were religion and culture represented as an issue of European identity in news items concerning Turkey’s EU bid in the British media? An effort to answer this question can contribute to the lacuna in the existing empirical work concerning the media representation of Turkey-EU relations in the context of discussions regarding religion and culture and its relation with European identity.

2. Literature review

Morin (1987, p.49) claims that the only Christian Europe was the Middle-Age Europe. Furthermore, it is clearly known that the Copenhagen criteria for EU membership do not refer to religion and culture. However, Turkey’s differences in those issues from Europe are at least as debatable as Turkey’s geography, size and economy (Kirisci, 2008, p.29). The economic reservations and political issues were the most important discussions in the Eastern European Enlargement of the EU in 2004. However, when they evaluate their hesitations on Turkey’s bid to join the EU, European citizens give more importance to culture, way of life, symbols and values more than economic reservations (McLaren, 2007, p.273). This gives Turkey’s EU bid the unique position in the overall EU enlargement process.

More support in opinion polls in EU Member States for the membership of Ukraine, which is economically and politically further from fulfilling the EU membership criteria than Turkey, can be a sign of the impact of cultural issues on Turkey’s EU bid (Eurobarometer, 2010, p.62; also see Strasser, 2008, p.179). Moreover, no serious concern on Romanian and Bulgarian membership in 2007 unveiled the importance of cultural differences when it comes to discussions on Turkish membership.

The approach to the Turkish issue in terms of religion and culture is significantly influenced by how the EU is understood. If one had an essentialist view on what the EU means, then their view on the Turkish issue would most probably be negative. On the other hand, seeing the EU with a functionalist approach decreases the importance of religion and culture while discussing Turkey’s EU accession. Thus, this article argues that there are essentialist and functionalist approaches within the British coverage and it is performed by political actors and/or the British media itself towards Turkey and its EU membership bid. Therefore, how these different approaches are understood in the context of this article should be explained here. According to Kösebalaban,
“Today, there are two opposing perspectives in Europe on Turkey: Turkey as an integral part of Europe, and Turkey as the essential historical other of Europe. Underlying these two perspectives is the debate on the definition of European integration. Is European integration based on a single civilization, defined as European civilization and marked by distinct European cultural heritage and values? Or is Europe based on common ideals and a common destiny, a union that members of different civilizations can join on equal terms?” (2007, p.101)

Based on the first question of Kösebalaban above, the essentialist approach argues that some characteristics of Europe are the core of Europe and Europeanness, and that they are fundamental and unchanging. It follows that those characteristics of Turkey that cannot be changed – its essentialist characteristics – such as geography, culture, religion and history, comprise most of the essentialist arguments regarding Turkey’s EU membership. Therefore,

“[…] while the logic of raison d’état, through diplomatic and economic contact, extended the boundaries of the European international system to encompass ‘the Turk’, the prevalence of the logic of culture made his [sic] status ambiguous from a societal point of view” (Neumann & Welsh, 1991, p.348).

Even though the essentialist approach in EU affairs, including the discussions on culture, is not observable in the British Conservative Party’s politics, it is apparent in the right wing politics of continental Europe. Former French President Giscard d’Estaing’s comment (BBC News Online, 2002) that Turkish accession would be the end of Europe, and François Bayrou’s remark on the importance of “the legacy of the Rome–Athens–Jerusalem triptych’ […]” (Aissaoui, 2007, p.9) for Europe are significant examples of the essentialist approach. That is, it establishes characteristics that of themselves make Turkey’s accession impossible since these cannot be changed.

On the other hand, and in the context of the second question in the excerpt from Kösebalaban (2007), the functionalist view considers the EU at the level of economy and democracy. In this view, the EU is not a Christian club and its characteristics are universal. Therefore, the expectations of the functionalist approach from Turkey are not about culture, religion or geography but they have more to do with human rights, democracy, economy, geo-strategic considerations, and coming to terms with the problems of history (Tekin, 2010; Ramm, 2009). This means that the functionalist approach sees the problems between Turkey and the EU as alterable if both sides persist in finding solutions.

Having explained how this article defines the essentialist and functionalist approaches towards Turkey’s EU bid, the section below presents more examples concerning how two approaches are related to the Turkish issue in the literature.

2.1. Religious and cultural issues from an essentialist view

In 17th century England, in his work called “An Essay towards the Present and Future Peace of Europe by the Establishment of a European Diet, Parliament, or Estate”, William Penn proposed to establish a European Parliament which includes the Ottoman Empire and Russia (Ortayli, 2008, p.10). This proposal can be seen as an important step for the future of European integration. However, the precondition in order to be accepted by this bloc was to be converted to Christianity (Neumann & Welsh, 1991, p.340; Neumann, 1999, p.51; Karlsson, 2007, p.20). Today, there is nothing related to religion in the Copenhagen criteria but there are topical opinions towards Turkey’s Muslim identity. Some opponents refer to the impact
of religion in Turkish society and how it magnifies the cultural differences between Turkey and Europe. Some of them even think that accepting Turkey to the EU is the core danger for Europe’s Christian identity. They worry that when Turkey is welcomed to the EU, the ratio of Muslim people in the Union will increase significantly (Karlsson, 2007). Although the influence of religion in Europeans’ daily life is not as strong as before the Reform Movement, the Industrial Revolution and the rise of Communism, still today it cannot be claimed that European culture is free of the influences of Judeo-Christianity (Kahraman, 2002, p.10). The impact of religion has even produced a nickname for the EU which is ‘the Christian Club’. Regarding this, Pope Benedict XVI, when he was Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, once emphasised that the idea of a ‘Christian Club’ for Europe is acceptable (Morris, 2006, p.196).

Therefore, it can be argued that Turkey’s position vis-à-vis Europe concerning religion and culture is not welcomed by the essentialist camp. The core of the essentialist and anti-Turkish approach to European identity has been based on excluding the Other instead of finding common values, aims and an apprehension of belongingness. This makes the points of difference more important than the common heritage. As a result, historically, this approach defines European identity by negating Andalusian Arabs, the Ottoman Empire, overseas colonies, and the Soviet Union (Delanty, 1995). This type of understanding sees contemporary Turkey as the Other of Europe too. The exclusionary discourse of this approach is much stronger in the European countries which have “difficulties with their Muslim immigrants, including Turks” (Kirisci, 2008, p.31).

2.2. Religious and cultural issues from a functionalist view

In contrast to the essentialist view, a functionalist understanding of the EU does not see cultural and religious differences of Turkey as a problem for European identity. According to this view, the idea of Europe has been changing since it has existed. Therefore, Europe is more a product of history than its subject (Delanty, 1995). In Delanty’s words, in this view Europe can be defined as “a historically fabricated reality of ever-changing forms and dynamics” (1995, p.3). The same point of views’ loose definition for European civilisation even provides an in-group place for Turks as “[m]odern Turkey is a combination of the Ottoman heritage and westernization” (Delanty, 2010, p.16). This approach opens the door to Turkey which has had a relationship with Europe for 900 years (Ortayli, 2008, p.111). Particularly, European liberal and leftist politicians’ view puts forth that Turkey can find a place in the idea of Europe because

“[i]n the world of the twenty-first century there is no longer a closed space called ‘the Christian West’. With growing transnational interconnections and obligations, Europe is becoming an open network with fluid boundaries in which the outside is already inside” (Beck & Delanty, 2006, p.16).

In addition to the discussions in the overall literature on Turkey-EU relations above, there is a growing literature on the media representation of Turkey’s EU bid. The below section deals with the studies which are about media coverage analyses of the Turkish issue in the UK, France and Germany.
2.3. The studies on media, culture and religion in the context of Turkey-EU relations

Devran’s study (2007) put forth that the Orientalist discourse dominates the British coverage on Turkey. Moreover, the opinion polls from France and Germany where the results are significantly anti-Turkish can be frequently seen in the British coverage (Papathanassopoulos & Negrine, 2011, p.163). Besides, the British press does not hesitate to present cultural differences between Turkey and the EU member states. “Turkey has generally been deemed to be too populous, too poor, too undemocratic, too illiberal and too culturally different to become a full member of the EU” (Aksoy, 2009, p.470). Even some left-leaning or liberal-minded news organisations such as The Guardian have a tendency to emphasise the cultural dissimilarities (Schneeberger, 2009). The continuous representation of these differences may cause a mediated Othering of Turkey in the European context (Schneeberger, 2009, p.99). However, it should be also highlighted that several studies in the literature put forth that there was a cleavage between the Franco-German media and British media in their approach to Turkish membership (inter alia Oktem, 2005, p.10; Koenig et al., 2006; Devran, 2007; Negrine, Kejanioglu, Aissaoui & Papathanassopoulos, 2008, p.53; Wimmel, 2009). The reason of differences between the two can be categorised by Franco-German media’s essentialist and the British media’s functionalist understanding of the EU. Compared to the British media, the extent of illustrating Turkey as the Other is greater in the continental European press where the recontextualisation of the dichotomies “Orient and Occident, tradition and modernity, civilisation and barbarism” is frequently observable in the news items concerning Turkey-EU relations (Bischof, Oberhuber & Stögner, 2010, p.377). The reason of this manifest Othering in the European press can be explained by stances such as “ingroup favouritism” which refers to an essentialist understanding of Europe (Tekin, 2008).

In Koenig et al.’s research (2006, p.158), it was found that the discussions of Turkey’s EU accession in the British newspapers were framed in a more liberal multiculturalist way compared to the news items published in France and Germany. Regarding the same segmentation, Negrine et al., (2008, p.56-58) claimed that the UK and France had different experiences in relations with Turkey and the EU. Because of the dissimilarity in their experiences, the French media’s approach sees the incompatibilities between Turkey and the EU as permanent issues which do matter. On the contrary, the British coverage argues that Turkey’s problem on the way to reach EU membership can be dealt with, since being part of European identity depends on fulfilling the principles which were specified beforehand rather than the essentialist aspects of Europeanness (Schneeberger, 2009, p.99). Therefore, it can be argued that the British media often evaluates the Turkish issue by means of tangible topics such as economics and human rights while the French is more interested in identity issues such as questioning “‘Who are ‘we’? What is the ‘EU’?‘” (Negrine et al., 2008; also see Aissaoui, 2007, p.8; Tekin, 2008). The questioning is usually related to an essentialist understanding of European identity. The excerpt below from a French politician, François Bayrou, quoted in Le Figaro, is an explicit example to show the degree of the essentialist view.

“Bayrou argued that Europe is a cultural project as well as a political one and presented European culture as rooted in Christianity and the legacy of ancient Greece and Rome. He stated that ‘one cannot treat with disdain one’s heritage that draws on the legacy of the Rome–Athens–Jerusalem triptych’ […]” (Aissaoui, 2007, p.9).
Having illustrated the discussion in the literature concerning how religion and culture is employed in the media representation of Turkey-EU relations, the section below will present the scope and methodology of this study.

3. Research framework

National news media are still more important than pan-European media (e.g. Euronews, Financial Times Europe, International Herald Tribune, European Voice) in forming public opinion within the EU (de Vreese, 2001, p. 287). Thus, research on each European country’s news organisations, instead of pan-European media, could present more reliable data concerning how EU affairs are discussed in EU Member States. As the UK is one of the “Big Three” powers of the EU, together with Germany and France (Anastasakis, 2004, p. 10), its domestic media can be seen as some of the most important across the EU. Even though the relationship of the UK and its media with the EU is evaluated as awkward (see Anderson & Weymouth, 1999; Marcussen & Roscher, 2000, p. 345; Dougal, 2003; Öktem, 2005), the UK can still be accepted as a significant Member State of the Union. In Tony Blair’s leadership, the UK played an especially active role during the discussions of Turkey-EU relations. Accordingly, the British media can be accepted as influential on the EU political agenda as the news items published in the UK are often quoted in many other countries due to the importance of British politics and the leading position of English as the lingua franca of the EU (Corcoran & Fahy, 2009, p. 103). For instance, with the help of English, it is easier to write news reports about what the British media outlets said regarding the EU agenda. Furthermore, it can be argued that the news items on Turkey’s EU accession published in the UK may influence the editors of other EU Member States’ newspapers, and accordingly the wider European public sphere. Therefore, this study answers its research question by looking at the news items published in the British media which covered six important events between December 1999 and November 2006 and talking to the journalists who had written the items. These seven years can be evaluated as the period of the start and the end of intensive relations between Turkey and the EU and accordingly the rise and fall of media interest in Turkey’s EU bid.

The research sample consists of five prominent newspapers and a news website. These are: Financial Times (the FT), The Guardian, the Daily Mail, the Daily Mirror, The Daily Telegraph and BBC News Online. The databases LexisNexis, NewsBank, and Factiva were used to collect the majority of material from newspapers. To be selected for analysis, the item must have more than 100 words and the main context must be directly related to Turkey-EU relations. The items which only made a passing reference to Turkey’s EU bid were not included. All types of news items were incorporated into the sample as a unit of analysis while letters to editors and visual components were excluded. In addition to the search on the above mentioned databases, the news items from BBC News Online were gathered from its website. Moreover, some missing materials from The Daily Telegraph were provided from the paper’s own archive at its London headquarters.

Concerning the sample for the interviews, the aim of the project was not to talk to any journalist who had, at one point in time, written about Turkey-EU relations; the aim was to talk to the journalists who had written the news items between 1999 and 2006, particularly in the context of specific political events which were selected for the content analysis sample of the
Methodology
The study needs triangulation in order to find answers to the research question and make the findings more reliable. According to Jensen, “[…] triangulation is a general strategy for gaining several perspectives on the same phenomenon. In attempting to verify and validate findings, the strategy addresses aspects of both reliability and validity” (Jensen, 2002, p.272). Therefore, quantitative and qualitative findings can be merged and utilised within the consistency of triangulation (Gray, 2004, p.257). This increases the scope and quality of the research as using qualitative and quantitative approaches coherently together makes the analysis much stronger (Deacon, Murdock, Pickering & Golding, 1999, p.134). Therefore, the research was conducted by a triangulation of three methods which are quantitative and qualitative content analysis on news items and in-depth interviews with the journalists. In total 143 news items were analysed and interviews with 21 journalists were examined for the research.

Conducting a qualitative textual analysis in this study helped to “overcome the common limitations of traditional quantitative content analysis such as limitation to manifest content and to quantifiable categories” (Fürsich, 2009, pp. 240-241). By employing qualitative methods, the researcher became able to learn “the intricate details of phenomena” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.19) and “discern latent meaning, […] implicit patterns, assumptions and omissions of a text” (Fürsich, 2009, p.241). Besides, the quantitative content analysis in this study was employed to find and highlight broad aspects of the analysed material (e.g. labels). This kind of analysis puts forward the ‘big picture’ only by looking at labels and does not consider ‘the context’ as much as the qualitative analysis does. The study was not limited to analyses on the coverage because even a detailed analysis performed on content is not enough to explain the communicative event (Philo, 2007; also see Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Firms- stone, 2008). By means of conducting interviews with journalists from the British media, the article sought to unveil the journalists’ personal views and see why the coverage is produced in a certain way.

4. Research findings

The first sub-section below presents how Turkey was excluded from European integration by looking at the discussions concerning religion and culture in the coverage. Then, the following section focuses on the numerical data and reveals the labels that Turkey was associated the most in the news items. The same section also explains the reasons of categorising Turkey with certain labels by presenting the journalists’ comments on the issue.

4.1. Excluding Turkey from the European integration by using religious and cultural discussions

It can be claimed that the religious and cultural difference is one of the core discussions in Turkey’s EU bid (Tekin, 2008; Lazarou, 2010). This situation inevitably appears in the media representation too. For instance, a report published in the Daily Mirror underlined that Turkey could become “the first Muslim nation to join the Union” (The Daily Mirror, 2002).
This emphasis overtly shows that the EU does not have any Muslim member at the moment and it is important to mention Turkey’s religion because of its difference compared to the bloc which Turkey wants to join. There are more explicit comments concerning how much Turkey does not fit in the European context. A commentary published in *The Daily Telegraph* is one of the most powerful items in terms of building an argument showing up Turkey’s otherness in religion and culture. In the commentary, the author tries to cover almost all essentialist discussions in order to exclude Turkey while he overlooks some advantages of Turkish membership for the EU. Thus, the article (*The Daily Telegraph*, 2002a) is similar to the former French President Giscard d’Estaing’s view concerning the Turkish issue. It is overtly seen that the authors’ ideal Europe was shaped by Christian values even though he accepts the differences between different European countries. The headline of the article clearly underlines Turkey’s difference and incompetence for EU membership and calls Turkey “too different”, which is a signpost to deep discussions in the text: “Turkey must not join the Christian EU: Europe’s political and cultural heritage is just too different to accommodate its Eastern neighbour” (*The Daily Telegraph*, 2002a). However, in some sections of the article, the author’s justifications are not strong enough: “Turkey has a traditional pull towards both Central Asia and the Middle East” (*The Daily Telegraph*, 2002a). Significant ties with the Middle East are undeniable. However, mentioning this without Turkey’s close ties with Europe is not easily acceptable. Furthermore, arguing that Turkey has ‘a traditional pull towards Central Asia’ is too crude since Turkey’s cultural proximity to Central Asia is probably not more than Turkey’s cultural proximity to Europe and the Middle East.

Even though BBC News Online is careful in its language when it refers to religious and cultural differences, its quotation from the Spanish daily *El Mundo* highlights an explicit othering by constructing its argument in an essentialist way:

“Religion must not be an objection to Turkey’s accession, but its history and culture, which are not European, can be. The EU can assimilate the entry of small countries like Romania or Bulgaria but not a population of 70 million, with a mentality and standards of behaviour alien to its identity” (BBC News Online, 2004).

The first sentence in the quotation used by BBC News Online contains an overt contradiction. It is probably not easy to envisage or understand history and culture by excluding the impact of religion on societies. The second sentence has a more persuasive argument as the justification is supported by numbers, the population of Turkey. Excluding Turkey by using culture is not only associated with the Turkish people’s way of life or their spiritual choice. There are also examples that differentiate Turkish culture from European culture because of politics, namely the culture of the political act. For instance, as with the ‘bazaar’ concept, the quotation from the Greek paper *Kathimerini* on BBC News Online website criticises Turkey due to its attitudes in the membership negotiations. This time, othering is grounded on the equalisation of not being too much of a bargainer with being thoroughly European: “In effect, it [Turkey] wants Europe with its rights, but without its obligations! Its stance shows how alien it finds the European culture” (BBC News Online, 2004). Finally, an unusual example which is not representative of the whole sample is worth noting here because it is not easy to see the same argument in other items concerning Turkey’s EU bid. Without mentioning their name, a report in *The Daily Telegraph* refers to an EU diplomat who said “[w]ith a dismal human rights record, an overbearing military and a chaotic economy, Turkey would have faced blunt rejection if it had been Christian” (*The Daily Telegraph*, 2002b). The
argument made in *The Daily Telegraph* is not a usual one within the general representation of Turkey-EU relations in the British media as 21.7 per cent of all news items in the sample connected the reason for opposition to Turkish membership with religion, culture and Turkish identity. It is even possible to argue that calling Turkey “culturally too different” [...] in many circles in Europe has become a polite code word for opposing Turkish membership on the grounds that Turkey is not Christian and hence is not European and cannot actually become European” (Kirisci, 2008, p.19). The same diplomat in *The Daily Telegraph* also said “Turkey has been given kidglove treatment precisely because it is a Muslim nation. Europe has bent over backwards to prevent a clash between the Christian and Muslim worlds in the volatile climate since the September 11 attacks” (*The Daily Telegraph*, 2002b). The reference to 9/11, referring to Turkey as a solution for the clash of civilisations, was uttered by the British politicians many times in the sample. However, this one claimed that Turkish membership of the EU would be rejected if Turkey had been a Christian country.

The second empirical section below focuses on the labels that describe Turkey in the news items. The reasons concerning the usage of the labels are also discussed by the help of the interviews, conducted with the journalists who work or had worked for the British media.

4.2. Describing Turkey through labelling

This section looks at the labels used to describe Turkey in the British media. All of 143 news items were analysed and the exact labels (adjectives, words or phrases) that refer to Turkey listed in Table 1 below. It was found that 77.6 per cent of news items employed at least one label while describing Turkey. According to the findings, Turkey is associated with its religion in 63 per cent of all news items. In most cases, the label ‘Muslim’ was used in order to depict the cultural and religious differences. Occasionally, Turkey’s religion was stressed with the aim of proving that the EU is not a Christian club. The British politicians especially mentioned the issue of religion in order to propose a solution to the clash of civilisations. However, in most cases, the attribution to Turkey’s religion was made in order to depict Turkey’s difference from EU Member States. Interestingly, the FT underlined the label ‘Muslim’ only once in the whole sample.

Although the news items did not usually explain if they referred to people or the state when they used the word ‘Muslim’, in some news items Turkey was noticeably represented as a secular country (12%). However, this “antithetical knowledge” (Said, 1997, p.157) produced by some journalists in the British media cannot be a strong alternative to the existing orthodox coverage of Turkey and Islam. This is because references to Turkey with the words such as ‘Secular’ and ‘Secularism’ are more than five times fewer than those indicating that Turkey is Muslim. In addition to numerical data, the lack of Turkey’s secular character in the content was also detected by the qualitative content analysis which took into account the context of the news items. Some examples are even striking. For instance, calling Turkey a ‘Muslim country’ is common and acceptable but calling Turkey – although it is ambiguous if the state or the public referred in the example – ‘Muslim state’ is inappropriate: “Europe turning its back on a predominantly Muslim state would suggest the EU is a Christian club.” (*The Guardian*, 2005).
Table 1. Distribution of the labels* among news organisations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paper</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>TOTAL %**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Muslim (including the labels which refer to Islam)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A full partner for Europe / Pro-western / European public / European power / A NATO member / Modern</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large and populous (or big, vast), (emphasising the population)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secular</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy / Democratic</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different from Europe (Not European)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A bridge between two civilisations</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committed to reform (courageous in reforms)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A holiday destination</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stable society / country</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other labels that were used only once</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total of analysed news items</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Up to 3 conditions were coded in each news item. For this reason, the total of percentages is more than 100%.

** n=143 (total of analysed news items).

Moreover, in the Daily Mail, the author portrayed Turkey with the issues that the majority of Muslim countries are usually associated with when they are covered in the Western media (e.g. fundamentalism, religious freedom for non-Muslims, problems with woman rights) (See Kirisci, 2008, p.31). Therefore, it can be argued that the author does not evaluate each Muslim country with its own characteristics. However, at this point, one should take into account news reports’ general characteristics, especially their tendency to include negative events; i.e. anti-Turkey framings bring conflict to news stories (Papathanassopoulos & Negrine, 2011, p.163), or negativity as news value (O’Neill & Harcup, 2009, p.166). The world in the post 9/11 world has made relating political issues with Islam more interesting. Representing Turkey in this way may cause many generalisations and misunderstandings, especially if the discussion is about a country which is run by a secular state like Turkey (The Daily Mail, 2006).

Mentioning that Turkey is a full partner for Europe and referring to the size of Turkey were other common labels as seen in the table. The labels, used only once in total of all news
items and not listed in the table, are: Non-Arab; Great civilization; Urbanised; Turkish independent-mindedness; Uneasy; Pivot state; Lame; Blind; Wobbly democracy; A model country; Qualified; Literate; Young; A long-time associate EU member; Market economy; Noble land; Hard-working; Friendly; Neighbour; Terrorism; Nationalist; Prickly; Powerful; Developed society.

After presenting the numerical data concerning how Turkey was labelled in the British media, it is meaningful to look at the journalists’ view concerning the reasons for this remarkable number of attributions to religion and how it comes to outnumber other labels.

4.2.1. Journalists’ views on why the British media constantly refer to Turkey as a Muslim nation

Even though the context of the news items was not always about religion or culture, the coverage somehow mentioned that Turkey is a Muslim country or has a Muslim nation. As mentioned above, this association outnumbers the attributions to Turkey’s ‘secular’ character which was found in 12 per cent of all news items. If the discussion was about Bulgarian membership to the EU, it would be unlikely to see attributions to sectarian difference such as calling it as an Orthodox nation. Thus, there should be some reasons which can justify the insistence of the British media on calling constantly Turkey as a ‘Muslim’ country or nation. Journalists were asked why the British media always prefer to say ‘the Muslim nation’ instead of simply calling it ‘Turkish public’ in the news items. When all answers from the journalists are analysed, it is possible to categorise the three main reasons: the circumstances in the post 9/11 world and Islamophobia; journalistic tricks; and relevance.

The circumstances in the post 9/11 World and Islamophobia

Several journalists said that one of the most important facts about Turkey is that it is a Muslim country. According to J21 (The Daily Telegraph), using the word Muslim has a political meaning now which was not the case before 2001. Also, J2 (the FT) says: “[this] is just the way it is in the first decade of the 21st century”. He thinks that if the war in Iraq and 9/11 have not happened, all that kind of things would be irrelevant. Similarly, J19 (The Guardian) thinks that the reason is European and British publics’ obsession with terrorism and militant Islam. According to some journalists, the word ‘Muslim’ could serve the newspapers ideology if they are against multicultural society and migration to Europe. J11 (The Guardian) argues that if the newspaper is hostile to Turkish membership, it might use this word in order to remind its readers that Turks are Muslims. For all these reasons, J14 (The Daily Mirror) thinks that the word ‘Muslim’ might convey something more like a threat instead of simply mentioning one nation’s major religion.

Journalistic tricks

Some journalists argued that emphasising Turkey’s religion should not necessarily be ideological or pejorative. Several journalists mentioned that technically it is a necessity in a news item to use a different word or adjective instead of ‘Turkey’ after mentioning Turkey more than once. J11 (The Guardian) claims that sometimes journalists get tired with the same thing and think of another way to describe the thing. He says “you can’t say ‘Turkey Turkey’ all the time”. J6 (BBC News Online) claimed that it could be just journalistic shorthand. He says “if you have only 500 words, I have got to remind people that Turkey is mainly Muslim”. Besides, he argues that it could be related to lazy journalism such as copying things from agency
wires. According to him, most wires tend to write things in a very summarised and superficial way. He thinks that some readers may need some basic information and constantly emphasising ‘Turkey is a Muslim country’ does not have to have a negative impact. Furthermore, J18 (the FT) argued that most journalists have kind of lazy appetite and they apply this to all companies, individuals, countries, etc while they are writing. He does not think that there is anything sinister into the Turkish issue. He said “when we write about Indonesia for example, we often write it is the most populous Muslim nation”.

Concerning the journalistic dimension of the issue, J4 (The Daily Telegraph) argued that this could be related to seeking more attention from the readers. She thinks that while the world is getting more obsessed with Muslims, the news organisations could attempt to make their news items more interesting by connecting them with Islam. She says “After 9/11, this obsession increased. So, if the news item is about a Muslim country, it gives importance to the item even starting from the first sentence. I think […] they use it to make it (the news item) interesting”.

Relevance
Some journalists think that calling Turkey usually as ‘Muslim’ is relevant to the context. The interviewees said that Turkey has an overwhelmingly Muslim population and it is relevant in some elements of the debate when it comes to EU membership. J2 (the FT) thinks that using the word ‘Muslim’ all the time is not irrelevant. He says “it would be misleading not to mention [it] in a news report or any kind of piece about Turkey. You have to mention it”. According to J17 (the FT), Turkish membership to the EU is a rare and interesting event. If Turkey joins the EU, it would be a big change in the EU to have a non-Christian nation. That is why it is relevant to emphasise that it is a Muslim country or nation. Also J1 (The Guardian) thinks that it is relevant to mention Turkey is a Muslim country in a responsibly written report but he also warns “where you can get dangerous is if there is any sort of undertone of prejudice in there, and then you are getting into the Giscard d’Estaing territory of ‘too big, too poor and too different’”.

Several journalists think that both pro-Turkish membership and anti-Turkish membership arguments put forward by politicians are usually based on culture and religion. Thus, it is normal to see religion’s reflection in news items. J8 (The Daily Telegraph) says:

“All the British politicians who have made the case like Tony Blair and David Cameron have identified the attraction of having a big Muslim country in. It is relevant to those who are in favour of it because it is an argument has been used by Tony Blair and David Cameron”.

Hence, it can be argued that associating Turkey with being ‘Muslim’ could sometimes have positive aspects in terms of support for Turkey’s EU membership when Turkey is defined as the only Muslim democracy or shown as a model for the Muslim world.

Before concluding this section, it is important to pay attention to what Shoemaker and Reese advised:

“Many studies make observations at one level of analysis and interpret those findings at a higher level. For example, many scholars have examined individual journalists and then drawn conclusions about media organizations as a whole. Individual bias, however, does not translate automatically into media bias. Similarly, ideological analyses may yield elegant theories of media and society, but individuals still have latitude in their behavior. Their actions, although constrained, are not automatically determined by higher-level social forces” (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996, p.271).
Therefore, this study does not seek to draw concrete conclusions about the news production mechanisms of media organisations by means of interviewing only individual journalists. Since making an analysis of the whole media production system is a much more complex process, the results of the interviews can only explain the journalists’ experiences and views. However, the journalists who participated in this research are generally senior staff (some of them are even leader writers) and their views, to some extent, can represent a broad picture of their news organisations.

5. Conclusion

This article attempted to answer the research question ‘how were religion and culture represented as an issue of European identity in news items concerning Turkey’s EU bid in the British media?’ It was seen in the coverage that Turkey’s Muslim character was represented as a significant difference compared to European culture. In terms of the adjectives, words, and phrases that were used the most to describe Turkey, it was ascertained that Turkey was usually associated with the label ‘Muslim’. It was even possible to observe that some of left-leaning or liberal-minded news organisations such as The Guardian have a tendency to emphasise the cultural dissimilarities between Turkey and Europe (See Schneeberger, 2009).

As it may refer to an eccentricity, it would have been journalistically more interesting to underline that Turkey is ‘Muslim’ and ‘secular’ at the same time. However, the secular character of Turkish Republic was underrepresented in the coverage compared to Turkey’s Muslim image. Accordingly, in some cases, the coverage overlooked Turkey’s differences from other Muslim countries.

The article also benefited from the views of the journalists who had written the news items of the sample. The journalists were asked the reason of the insistence of the British media on calling constantly Turkey as ‘Muslim’ in the coverage. In a nutshell, the journalists’ answers can be categorised in three ways: the circumstances in the post 9/11 world and Islamophobia; journalistic tricks; and relevance of calling Turkey Muslim.

All in all, it is a fact that Turkey has been used as negation in the identity building process of Europe and it will be hard to delete this from European identity’s memory (Chatzistavrou, 2008). However, it is clear that the cultural differences and religion are not the only factor in order to be accepted by Europe. For instance, Turkey’s long EU journey would finish if Europe’s reaction was as clear as the answer to Morocco. When Turkey applied for full membership in 1987, it took 32 months to make a decision to reject Turkey. The reasons of the rejection were political and economic. However, Morocco’s EU bid was instantly rejected on the grounds that it was not a European country which has never officially been a reason for the Turkish case (Karlsson, 2007, p.66; Ahtisaari et al., 2004, p.13; Rumelili, 2004, p.42). Therefore, one can argue that the relations between Turkey and the EU is not a basic Muslim-Christian identities’ clash. It is a product of a complex structure which includes all political, economic, geographical, and cultural aspects. However, the religious and cultural differences are remarkably salient in the media coverage.
include reflectarea în știri a șase evenimente politice diferite referitoare la relația Turcia-EU, între 1999 și 2006. Analiza calitativă a știrilor va arăta modul în care religia și cultura au fost utilizate ca argument pentru excluderea Turciei din UE, în timp ce analiza cantitativă va prezenta etichetele asociate cu Turcia (ex. Islam, secular).

Cuvinte-cheie: Turcia; Uniunea Europeană; religie; cultură; identitate.

Notes
1 The membership negotiations are about adopting the EU acquis communautaire. Throughout the negotiation process, Turkish national law will import almost 80.000 pages of EU rules (Grabbe, 2005, p.71).
2 As BBC News Online is also included in the sample, the total of the sample is called ‘the British media’ instead of ‘the British newspapers’ throughout the paper.
3 Former French President Giscard d’Estaing (2002) once said that Turkey’s membership to the EU would be the end of Europe.
4 The Daily Express was categorised as ‘Eurosceptic’ in Anderson and Weymouth (1999). However, the same study argues that the paper is in the period of a change in its stance (1999, p.184). Therefore, the table above used Geddes’s (2004) classification which evaluated The Daily Express as Europhile.

References
59. The Daily Mail (2006). ‘A Minister told me recently the papacy is banjaxed. This critical Turkish visit proves he is wrong’, November 29.
60. The Daily Mirror (2002). ‘Poodle is brought to heel in Euro row’, 14 December.
Appendix

Research sample:
The events in Table 2 constitute the time sample of the study. They were compiled from different sources such as Birand (2001), Dedeoglu (2003), Faucompret and Konings (2008), and chronological data of the Turkish Ministry for EU Affairs, formerly known as Secretariat at General for EU Affairs (Secretariat, 2010). In order to place these events in context, one week before and one week after the events were included in the time sample. Sundays were excluded.

Table 2. Distribution of the selected events in the research sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Events’ date</th>
<th>Events’ content</th>
<th>The period added to the research sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10th – 11th December 1999</td>
<td>Turkey became an official EU membership candidate at the Helsinki Summit.</td>
<td>From 02-12-1999 until 20-12-1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd August 2002</td>
<td>The Turkish Parliament abolished capital punishment and gave broadcasting rights for different mother tongues and dialects, including Kurdish in order to meet EU standards.</td>
<td>From 26-07-2002 until 12-08-2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th – 13th December 2002</td>
<td>In the European Council Summit in Copenhagen, it was declared that a decision for “Turkey-EU negotiations starting date” would be made in December 2004.</td>
<td>From 04-12-2002 until 21-12-2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16th – 17th December 2004</td>
<td>In the European Council Summit in Brussels, the Commission’s report, which advised to start membership negotiations with Turkey, was accepted.</td>
<td>From 08-12-2004 until 25-12-2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd October 2005</td>
<td>Turkey started membership negotiations with the EU.</td>
<td>From 24-09-2005 until 11-10-2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29th November 2006</td>
<td>Because of a lack of compromise on the Cyprus issue, namely the port problem between Turkey and Cyprus, the EU Commission froze some of the negotiation chapters with Turkey.</td>
<td>From 21-11-2006 until 07-12-2006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 below was prepared according to market type, political stance on the EU affairs (Anderson & Weymouth, 1999; Swatridge, 2003; Geddes, 2004, p.219; Aksoy, 2009), and the circulation figures provided from the Audit Bureau of Circulations (2005). The figures originate from the average numbers per day in October 2005 when the frequency of news items on Turkey-EU relations culminated in the British media. The highlighted papers in the table are the ones which were selected for the analysis.
Table 3. Newspapers’ distribution according to their market type, circulation figures (October 2005) and broad stance on European integration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Market Type</th>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Total daily circulation (October – 2005)</th>
<th>Broad stance on European integration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TABLOID</td>
<td>The Sun</td>
<td>3,224,327</td>
<td>Eurosceptic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Daily Mirror</td>
<td>1,684,660</td>
<td>Europhile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Daily Star</td>
<td>820,028</td>
<td>Europhile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Daily Record</td>
<td>453,354</td>
<td>Europhile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MID-MARKET</td>
<td>The Daily Mail</td>
<td>2,246,243</td>
<td>Eurosceptic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Daily Express</td>
<td>810,827</td>
<td>Europhile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BROADSHEET</td>
<td>The Daily Telegraph</td>
<td>847,311</td>
<td>Eurosceptic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Times</td>
<td>659,510</td>
<td>Eurosceptic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Guardian</td>
<td>387,524</td>
<td>Europhile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Financial Times</td>
<td>384,615</td>
<td>Europhile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Independent</td>
<td>231,092</td>
<td>Europhile</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 below illustrates the journalists who participated in the interviews and the number of news items they had published about Turkey-EU relations within the time sample of this study.
Table 4. Distribution of the interviewees, their news items and postings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journalist</th>
<th>Number of news items</th>
<th>Posting while writing about Turkey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J1 (The Guardian)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Brussels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J2 (The FT)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Istanbul-Ankara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J3 (The Telegraph)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Brussels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J4 (The Telegraph)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Istanbul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J5 (The Guardian)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J6 (BBC News)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Istanbul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J7 (The Guardian)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Paris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J8 (The Telegraph)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brussels-London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J9 (BBC News)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brussels-Istanbul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J10 (The Guardian)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J11 (The Guardian)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J12 (The Guardian)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Istanbul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J13 (The Guardian)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J14 (The Mirror)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Brussels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J15 (BBC News)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J16 (BBC News)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J17 (the FT)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J18 (the FT)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Paris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J19 (The Guardian)</td>
<td>1+Leaders</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J20 (The Guardian)</td>
<td>Leader writer</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J21 (The Telegraph)</td>
<td>Leader writer</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>59+Leaders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>