

## **The Impact of Ethno-Religious Demography on Strengthening Secularism and the Dynamics of Multiculturalism: Turkey's Accession into the European Union**

**Abstract:** This essay makes an argument linking theories of multicultural inclusion to the origins and expansion of the European Union (EU), and explicates the promise of Turkey's accession to the EU for the dynamics of multiculturalism. First, I argue that a diverse religious demography is a strong foundation for secularism and religious liberties. Second, I argue that the political foundations of multiculturalism also assume and rely on an ethno-linguistically diverse population for power-sharing and long-term sustainability. Third, I argue that EU was founded on the basis of ending historical enmities, starting with the Franco-German reconciliation, then overcoming a cultural divide with every EU expansion, first including Britain and Nordic countries (1973), continuing with Southern Europe (1980s), post-Communist countries of Eastern Europe (2004), and finally extending into the Balkans to include Orthodox post-Communist countries (2007), hence overcoming the supposed fault line between Western and non-Western civilizations. Turkey's accession would be the culmination of this progressive movement. Fourth, I illustrate that a similar process of multicultural expansion also took place in the United States, with the original Protestant states of different denominations first accommodating each other, than accepting the Catholic, Orthodox, and Jewish immigrants in successive waves, culminating with the opening to Hindu, Buddhist, and Muslim immigration. I suggest that the American experience provides an interesting heuristic for the EU expansion as well. Fifth, I argue that the idea of Europe was originally conceived in the Middle Ages as the political space of Catholic states, and that this is what some in the Catholic Church and among Christian Democrats are harkening back to in pushing for the inclusion of Europe's Christian heritage in EU's constitution. Sixth, I argue that the accession of Turkey is essential for removing Islamic "bogeyman" from the public discourse in Europe, since such demonization of Muslims may erode democratic values and institutions. Seventh, I argue that Turkey also needs the EU in strengthening its secular and democratic institutions, as well as guaranteeing the rights of all religious minorities. Turkey's experience in managing and accommodating religiosity in a Muslim-majority country in the context of a multiparty democracy and a secular state would benefit the EU. In conclusion, Turkey's accession into the EU is a *sine qua non* for the deepening of secularism and religious freedoms, both in the EU and in Turkey. (Word count exclusive of abstract and bio: 12,852)