

TURKISH PARTIES' POSITIONS TOWARDS THE EU: BETWEEN EUROPHILIA AND EUROPHOBIA

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Abstract: *This research is a case study meant to find out whether the arguments put forward by Szczerbiak and Taggart analyzing Euroscepticism in the party systems of the EU candidate states of Central and Eastern Europe hold true for party-based Euroscepticism in Turkish politics.¹ The primary argument of this article is that the Turkish party system displays many similarities with its Central and Eastern European counterparts despite some differences. In order to test this argument, firstly the nature of Euroscepticism in Turkey and Turkish political parties is clarified. Then, the characteristics of Euroscepticism in Turkish political parties are tested against Szczerbiak and Taggart's hypotheses with respect to the Central and Eastern European candidate countries. Among the propositions tested are the influence of a party's position in the left-right spectrum on the expression of Euroscepticism, the relationship between the level of public Euroscepticism and the level of Euroscepticism in the party-system, the variation between soft-Euroscepticism and hard-Euroscepticism in the candidate and member states of the EU, the correlation between the level of Euroscepticism and the prospect for EU membership, the link between state development and the level of party-based Euroscepticism, and the relationship between public Euroscepticism and party-based Euroscepticism.*

Keywords: *Euroscepticism, Turkey, EU integration and enlargement, political parties*

1. Introduction

While Turkey has had relations with the then EEC since 1960, when an association agreement was signed between the parties, the idea of Turkey's integration to the EC was still of an ambiguous nature and the EC issue therefore had little impact on Turkey's domestic political debates. When Ankara established a Customs Union with the EU in 1996, the parties came closer. Yet, Turkey-EU relations were still marked

by an anchor-credibility dilemma.² In other words, Turkey's European orientation was not credible enough. Nor was the EU ready to play the role of an effective anchor for Turkey's reform process. Therefore, during this period, from Turkey's perspective, the EU issue was more a matter of foreign policy rather than a dynamic of domestic politics. It was at the Helsinki Summit in 1999 that the anchor-credibility dilemma governing Ankara-Brussels relations started to mitigate, as the EU gave Turkey official candidate

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¹ Paul Taggart and Aleks Szczerbiak, "Parties, Positions and Europe: Euroscepticism in the EU Candidate States of Central and Eastern Europe", *Opposing Europe Working Paper No. 2*, May 2001, at <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/sei/documents/wp46.pdf>, p. 11

² Mehmet Uğur, *The European Union and Turkey: An Anchor/Credibility Dilemma*, (Ashgate: Aldershot, 1999).

status. From that time on, a substantial process of the Europeanization of Turkish politics started. This watershed event led to some new realignments in Turkish domestic politics. Apart from the traditional divide between the left and the right, Turkish political parties realigned themselves along pro-European and EU-sceptic stances. Due to the challenge of substantial domestic transformation as a result of EU-induced reforms, Turkey's political actors were involved in wide-ranging debates and discussions as to the meaning and implications of the EU integration process for their respective parties and Turkey.

The primary argument of this article is that the Turkish party system displays many similarities with its Central and Eastern European counterparts despite there being some differences. In order to test this argument, firstly the nature of Euroscepticism in Turkey is clarified. In this part, the dual role of Europe in the Turkish mentality, both as a model for modernization and as a source of threat, is highlighted. The subsequent section draws attention to the features inherent in Turkish politics which distinguish them from the political system in Western Europe. Then, the Turkish political parties' stance vis-a-vis Europe and EU reforms is explained. Afterwards, the characteristics of Euroscepticism in Turkish political parties are tested against the hypotheses of Szczerbiak and Taggart regarding the Central and Eastern European candidate countries.

2. Dual Image of Europe in the Turkish Public Opinion

Turkey has had a complex relationship with Europe. In a contradictory manner, Europe has been historically perceived both as an example and as an enemy in Turkey.

It is a model against which Ottoman and Turkish modernizers measured their efforts to reform their political, educational and military systems. Atatürk, the founder of the modern Turkish Republic, set the level of modernization represented by the West as the final stage of civilization which Turkey should struggle to attain.

However, in stark contrast to "model" image of Europe, in the eyes of the Turkish people, Europe also embodies a source of threat, ready to dismember Turkey, as occurred during the final phase preceding the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The European occupying powers imposed the Treaty of Sevres (August 1920) on the Ottoman state, which was defeated in the First World War. According to the Sevres Treaty, entire Anatolia, except for a minor part in Central Anatolia, would be transferred to the victorious European states, the Greeks, the Kurds, and the Armenians. Thus, the Treaty of Sevres became the most important symbol of Turkish distrust towards Europe, which is deeply ingrained in Turkish political culture. As a corollary of the perception of Europe as a potential "enemy," Turkey remains cautious and vigilant towards Europe.

It is against this continuing Turkish perception of Europe both as a "historical threat and model" that Euroscepticism in Turkey should be understood. Thus, it should not be surprising at all to find two contradictory opinions regarding Turkey's view of Europe: "Turkey wants to be part of Europe although it believes that the EU wants to divide Turkey." According to an opinion poll, which was conducted in Spring 2009, 76 per cent of the respondents claimed that one of the primary aims of the USA and the EU was to divide up Turkey.³ Almost all the respondents (93 %) opine that the EU does not treat Turkey in the same way as the other

³ Şahin Alpay, "AB'ye ve ABD'ye Güvensizlik Neden" (Why Distrust towards the EU and the USA), *Zaman*, June 09, 2009.

EU candidates. Therefore, an overwhelming majority of the respondents (80 %) are of the opinion that Turkey would not be allowed to join the EU, even if it fulfilled all the criteria. Despite this, the majority of the respondents (57 %) support Turkey's full membership to the EU. As compared to the traditionally Eurosceptic British (48 %), fewer Turks (32 %) hold favorable view of the EU.⁴

3. The Peculiarities and Paradoxes of the Left-Right Cleavage in the Turkish Party-System

In Turkey, the left-right partition does not correspond neatly to their counterparts in advanced Western democracies. While in European and Western political systems, whether a party is left or right is determined by that party's stance on socio-economic issues, in Turkey the distinguishing characteristic of the left from the right is their position on secularism. In the European context, social-democratic parties are traditionally more sensitive to the socio-economic well-being of the poorer segments of the population; they put a special emphasis on the measures for redistributing income evenly across various classes in the society. Christian-democratic, center-right, or conservative parties, on the other hand, are more concerned with economic growth and are therefore usually supported by well-off segments of society. Moreover, while the conservative/right-wing parties attach more importance to the preservation of religious and traditional values, social-democratic/left-wing parties are more secular in outlook.

However, in the Turkish context, the major dividing line between the left and the right is not a party's position on socio-economic policies. As pointed out by one of the leading scholars, in the Turkish context "the 'right' refers to a commitment to religious, conservative and nationalist values while the 'left' is defined primarily in terms of secularism."⁵ Moreover, the fact that center-right parties in Turkey have been responsive to the issue of redistribution of national wealth in favor of the disadvantaged groups in society, has brought them closer to social-democratic parties in Europe.

Another significant feature which differentiates the left-wing/social-democratic parties from their European counterparts is that the center-left parties in Turkey have historically been strongly associated with the state. Being affiliated with the state and detached from the society, they have had difficulty in representing the population at large. By contrast, center-right parties in Turkey are more society-oriented and are the product of a movement from below unlike center-left parties which are the product of the top-down modernization experience. This is why some scholars in Turkey claimed that in fact, the left is the right and the right is the left in Turkey.⁶ Besides, unlike many of its Western European counterparts, center-left parties in Turkey also carry the heavy baggage of nationalism.

⁴ Transatlantic Trends, Key Findings 2009, *German Marshall Fund of the USA*, p. 25.

⁵ Ergun Özbudun in Ziya Öniş, "Conservative Globalists versus Defensive Nationalists: Political Parties and Paradoxes of Europeanization in Turkey", *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans*, Vol. 9, No. 3, December 2007, p. 248.

⁶ This argument was first put forward by İdris Küçükömer. For further discussion of this argument, see: İdris Küçükömer, *Düzenin Yabancılaşması: Batılışma* (Alienation of the Order: Westernization), (İstanbul: Ant Yayınları, 1969).

4. The Pattern of Opposition and Support for the EU among Turkish Parties

4.1. Nationalist Right: MHP (Nationalist Action Party)

Commonly known as the “grey wolves” (*bozkurtlar*) or the “idealists” (*ülküçüler*), the MHP is one of the main political parties in Turkey with serious reservations about Turkey’s EU accession, along with the CHP (Republican People’s Party). While the party leader Devlet Bahçeli stated that his party has “no enmity against Europe”, he, on the other hand, stressed that Turkey should preserve its national character, unity and sovereignty.⁷ According to him, Turkey can not and does not have to make concessions on a number of issues which might undermine national unity, territorial integrity and national interests. MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli maintains that EU membership is a state policy and Turkey should enter the EU in an honorable way.

After the MHP came to power in 1999 in a three-party coalition which included Ecevit’s centre-left DSP (Democratic Left Party) and Yılmaz’s centre-right ANAP (Motherland Party), it realized that it had to balance the responsibilities of being a partner in the coalition government with its ties to its nationalist grass-roots supporters. Therefore, despite being a coalition partner, it appeared to have adopted a tough stance on critical issues such as the Cyprus question, Kurdish separatism and the death penalty, in an effort not to lose face with its core nationalist electorate.

When the chance for early elections emerged due to Ecevit’s illness in the summer of 2002, the MHP toughened its position on the EU in the hope of winning back some of its lost nationalist votes and blocked

the EU reforms. The MHP appealed to the Constitutional Court against the abolition of the death penalty and six Articles in the harmonization laws in a bid to force the Parliament to reverse its decision regarding the death penalty and minority rights.

After the Parliament set the elections for November 3rd, 2002, the MHP hardened its attitude toward the EU reforms. When on August 3rd, 2002, the Parliament voted to approve a package of human rights reforms, which it hoped would clear the way for Ankara to join the Union, the MHP voted “no” *en bloc* on all of the reform items in the package. This indicated that as it was certain that the government would no longer exist after November 2002, the MHP could adopt a more uncompromising attitude and behave like a real opposition party. It was no longer restricted by the duties of the coalition government and could now improve its “moderate image” in the eyes of its electors. During this period, the MHP sought on every possible occasion to show the electorate that it had not, in fact, changed its stance on critical national issues.

After the political earthquake in the November 2002 elections, which allowed only two major parties, the AKP and the CHP to enter the parliament, the MHP was forced to remain outside of the parliament. The MHP managed to make a comeback to the parliament in the 2007 elections with the help of the protest votes amid Euroscepticism and rising nationalism in response to the resumption of attacks by the separatist organization PKK. This time occupying the opposition benches in the parliament, the MHP hardened its Eurosceptic stance as opposed to its soft-Euroscepticism when it was part of the coalition government during 1999–2002. Under these circumstances the

⁷ *Turkish Daily News*, Interview with Devlet Bahçeli, April 27, 1999.

MHP claimed that Turkey's relations to the EU should be questioned and maintained that under these conditions it would not be possible for Turkey to be a member of the EU.⁸

The MHP opposed the efforts of the AKP government to align the Turkish political system with that of the EU. In terms of its opposition to the AKP government and the EU reforms, it pursued a quite similar pattern to that of the main opposition party CHP, with which it cooperated against the reform process. The reforms the MHP were opposed to include amending Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code to reduce the punishment given to those who insult "Turkishness" and "the Turkish state". They raised their objection to the adoption of the Law of Foundations improving the status of non-Muslim minority foundations, the possibility of the opening of the Halki Seminary in Istanbul to give religious education to the Greek minority in Turkey, and the recognition of the ecumenical status of the Orthodox Patriarchate in Istanbul. They have also declined to cooperate with the AKP government regarding the so-called Kurdish and Armenian openings. They have avoided supporting the efforts of the AKP government to overhaul the authoritarian aspects of the Turkish Constitution, which is the product of the 1980 military intervention.

4.2. Nationalist Left: CHP (Republican People's Party)

As the major social-democratic party in Turkish politics, the CHP has displayed a highly nationalistic and restrictive stance when it came to relations with the EU and

EU democratization reforms in the recent years. Why has the CHP progressively turned so Eurosceptic?

Historically, the CHP has been under the influence of two political traditions: Kemalism and European social democracy. Regarding the Kemalist tradition, the CHP inherited an interventionist and authoritarian legacy from the early years of the Republic.⁹ The understanding of modernization during this era involved the top-down enforcement of new western values and lifestyles on the Anatolian population which held traditional values. Moreover, the CHP has also taken over the state-centric legacy from the Ottoman State in which the Ottoman elite sought to "save the state" which had been in decline over the last few hundred years. Therefore, democracy and the liberties and freedom of the population became secondary to the drive to "save the state." In time, the instinct of "saving the state" was complemented by such motives as "national unity and togetherness" and "to safeguard national interests." Thus, the left became increasingly detached from its universal norms based on democracy, human rights and freedom. Furthermore, the CHP's historical alliance with the military, which established the Turkish Republic and helped modernize the country, led it to adopt an inconsistent policy with respect to civil-military relations.

Despite the fact that prior to 2002, the CHP under Deniz Baykal attempted to make some inroads on the promotion of social democratic values within the party, he shelved the agenda for ideological renewal after the AKP, a party with an Islamist pedigree, assumed power following

⁸ "AB Raporu" (The EU Report), *MHP Araştırma Geliştirme ve Değerlendirme Merkezi*, February 9, 2009, p. 9.

⁹ For a detailed criticism of the CHP, which oscillated between an authoritarian form of Kemalism and the universal values of social democracy, see a recently published study: Sinan Ciddi, *Kemalism in Turkish Politics: the Republican People's Party, Secularism and Nationalism*, (New York: Routledge, 2009).

the 2002 Parliamentary Elections. In other words, in particular from 2005 onwards, the CHP has tended toward an authoritarian form of Kemalism, adopting an overly secularist and nationalist agenda. In the run up to the 2007 General and Presidential Elections, the CHP's ultra-secularist and ultra-nationalist rhetoric peaked.

In addition to the motive to oppose the AKP government, the other reason why the CHP was not cooperative with the AKP in passing EU reforms in the parliament in the post-2005 era was due to the dramatic rise in Euroscepticism among the Turkish public because of the higher perceived costs of the EU accession against uncertain membership prospects. Therefore, by playing on the fears of the Turkish public stemming from the EU accession process such as the loss of Cyprus, the threat of disintegration as a result of the expansion of minority rights, the CHP sought to enhance its political position against the AKP government.

After the 2002 elections the CHP opposed the reforms and appealed to the Constitutional Court to annul some democratization bills and laws adopted by the Parliament, which are closely linked with meeting EU membership criteria. In 2008, the CHP applied to the Constitutional Court for the cancellation of the Law of Foundations, which improved the status of the foundations owned by non-Muslim minorities. The CHP's objection to the Law stemmed from the fact that the Law was in violation of the principle of reciprocity in the Lausanne Treaty of 1923 and that similar rights have not been granted to the Turks in Northern Thrace by the Greek authorities.¹⁰ Regarding its attitude on civil-military relations, upon the CHP's application in 2009 to the Constitutional Court, a law

that allows military officers to be judged in civilian courts for non-military crimes was annulled. Furthermore, Baykal did not criticize the e-memorandum from the Armed Forces on the eve of the election of the President in 2007 in order to prevent the AKP from electing a President with Islamist inclinations.

CHP has also ensured the annulment of a constitutional amendment lifting the ban on headscarves on university campuses and the presidential election held in parliament in 2007, in which AKP's candidate Abdullah Gül was elected president on the grounds that at least 367 deputies had to be present in the parliamentary session for the election to be valid. Furthermore, CHP has adopted a highly security-oriented approach with respect to the AKP's Kurdish opening and the amendment of Article 301 in the Turkish Penal Code which penalizes insulting Turkishness. They have sided with former Turkish Cypriot President Rauf Denktaş, who campaigned for the rejection of the Annan Plan during the simultaneous referenda held in both parts of Cyprus. Baykal rejected cooperation with the AKP government on the amending the Constitution. They have condemned the AKP government's initiative to normalize relations with Armenia.

4.3. Muslim Democrats: AKP (Justice and Development Party)

It would not be too far-fetched to label the AKP the Muslim Democrats of Turkish politics drawing a parallel to the Christian democratic parties of Western Europe. Notwithstanding significant differences between the AKP and the Christian democratic parties of Western Europe, there are striking similarities between the

¹⁰ "Baykal: Vakıflar Yasası Lozan'ı Ortadan Kaldırır" (Baykal: Law of Foundations would remove Lausanne), *Hürriyet*, September 21, 2006.

two when it comes to their approaches to moral, educational and cultural matters, their international attitudes and their support base.¹¹ Most important of all, they both advocate liberal democratic values and place an emphasis on the rights of the individual rather than the power of the state.

Ironically, although the AKP had an Islamic pedigree and its predecessors had adopted a strong anti-Western posture, it was during the tenure of the AKP government in which Turkey achieved the most radical democratization reforms, which have brought Turkey closer to Europe. Denying that it was an Islamist party, the AKP managed to convince the electorate that it would not pursue a confrontational agenda against the secular establishment. On coming to power in 2002, the AKP focused on the EU issue and took steps to meet the Copenhagen criteria. It revised the authoritarian aspects of the 1982 Constitution and adopted five democratization packages known as harmonization laws.

After the so-called 28th February process (1997), in which the staunchly secular military cracked down on the Islamists in power, the expansion of democratic freedoms via European integration were regarded by the Islam-sensitive parties as the best possible means of protecting themselves from the restrictive provisions of Turkish legislation and the Constitution. After all, the head of the AKP, Erdoğan, had himself been banned from politics by the Kemalist judiciary for reciting a poem by a republican poet.

The AKP government, as it had pledged in its programme, expanded the cultural

rights of the Kurds in Turkey. It also amended legislation regarding freedom of expression, opening the way for the release of Kurdish politicians from prison. On June 9, 2004, in line with the changes in the RTÜK law (The Radio and Television Supreme Council), the Turkish state television, TRT, started to broadcast Kurdish language programmes. At the same time, as part of the judicial reforms, four prominent Kurdish activists, including Leyla Zana, who had been sentenced in 1994 for having connections with the secessionist PKK, were released following a retrial in April 2004. These developments demonstrated the AKP government's determination to secure an affirmative decision at the Summit on December 17th, 2005, which was to take place in a few months' time.

As for the Cyprus issue, with a view to securing a date to start accession talks with Brussels, Erdoğan gave the green light to a solution in Cyprus on the basis of the Annan Plan, which foresaw the unification of the island following a referendum in both parts.

In short, it can be suggested that both interest and ideology-related reasons account for the AKP government's commitment to political reforms and EU accession.

Since in the post-2005 era the AKP found itself in a domestic environment where the popularity of the EU among the Turkish public was at an all-time low, the party has slowly come to lose its initial zeal for the EU project. At the end of the day as the AKP's electoral fortunes rely on the support of the people, the AKP has quietly shelved the EU issue and has committed its attention to domestic challenges.

¹¹ For a further discussion of similarities between Christian democratic parties in Western Europe and the AKP, see: William Hale, "Christian Democracy and the AKP: Parallels and Contrasts", *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2, pp. June 2005, 293-310.

4.4. Fringe Parties: SP (Party of Happiness), IP (Workers' Party) and GP (Young Party)

4.4.1. FP/SP (Party of Happiness)

The SP is the last incarnation of the Islamist parties in Turkey which come from the National Outlook (*Milli Görüş*) tradition. The National Outlook is a form of religious nationalism blending anti-Westernism and religiosity with a sense of the greatness and leadership of Turkey in the world. National Outlook parties have permanently come under pressure from the secular establishment and have been consecutively shut down for being a source of anti-secular activities. Finally, when they were ousted from power by the military in 1997, they were forced somehow to moderate their views regarding secularism and the role of Islam in politics. Despite these cosmetic changes, they maintained their National Outlook nature in essence.

The SP strives to emphasize its uniqueness and distinction from the rest of the parties so that they can tap into the niche segments of the population, which are angry with the EU and have been negatively affected by the EU reforms. In this context, they point out that all the other parties but the SP are competing with each other to promote EU membership and relations with the USA and the other imperialist powers and side with these powers.¹²

Despite the fact that they pay lip service to the importance of universal human rights and freedoms and the global economic system (a change which occurred to a significant extent after their predecessor the RP [Welfare Party] was ousted from power in 1997 by the

secular establishment), the SP use anti-system rhetoric to appeal to the electorate. They call for a change in the existing world order and the status quo in Turkey. Therefore, they are critical of privatization, the interest-based capitalistic economic system and the institutions associated with it like the IMF. They use a highly threat-based rhetoric on relations with the EU and maintain that Cyprus is about to be lost. They maintain that the EU's demands from Turkey to redefine minorities, on missionary activities, the possibility of the establishment of a Greek Pontus state in Turkey's Black Sea region, and the granting of ecumenical status to the Orthodox Church in Istanbul (which has a universally accepted status as the religious head of the world wide Orthodox community) pose a threat to the unity of Turkey.¹³

Regarding the EU membership of Turkey, they tend to a hard-Eurosceptical stance, as they state that they are definitely against Turkey's EU membership. They assert that full membership in the EU, which is led by racist imperialists, would result in Turkey giving up its independence, submission to Western culture and civilization, and the step-by-step disintegration of Turkey. Instead of the EU, they place a special importance on relations with the developing Muslim world. In their opinion, through the D-8, which is composed of eight largest developing Muslim countries, it would be possible to establish a "new just world order," 50 years after the Yalta Conference where the post-World World II global order was designed. They believe that this would counterbalance the power of the strong western countries which come together under initiatives such as the G-8.¹⁴

¹² "Saadet'ten 'Fark Var Saadet Var' Açıklaması", (Clarification from the SP for the Slogan "There is Saadet; there is difference"), *Milli Gazete*, February 26, 2009.

¹³ "Program of the Party of Happiness", available at <http://www.saadet.org.tr/kurumsal/program/678> (last accessed March 14, 2010).

¹⁴ Ibid.

4.4.2. IP (Workers' Party)

Another anti-system party is the IP. Like the SP, the IP sought to emphasize its uniqueness and difference from the rest of the parties in the political system. Ideologically, it can be categorized as nationalist-left, as it tries to nationalize socialistic ideology. Although the IP defines itself as a leftist party, it espouses a highly nationalistic and state-centric line. It emphasizes the independence of Turkey. It blames the other "establishment" parties for defending the interests of the imperialists of the EU and the USA. It equates the EU membership process with the Sevres Treaty¹⁵ (a treaty signed in 1920 whereby Turkey was partitioned among the victorious Western powers at the end of the First World War). It rejects EU membership as it believes that EU accession undermines the revolutions of Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic. Another feature characterizing the IP is its xenophobic attitude towards foreigners. In this context, it characterizes Christian missionary activities as crusades and opposes the recognition of the Istanbul Patriarchate as eucumenic. It maintains that sale of territories to foreigners should be stopped. Instead of NATO and the EU, it proposes a regional alliance encompassing such countries as Syria, Iran, Iraq, Azerbaijan and Northern Cyprus. Another alternative proposed by the IP to the EU is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, in which Turkey could cooperate with such Eurasian countries as Russia and China.¹⁶

4.4.3. GP (Young Party)

This is a short-lived party set up by a young businessman, who has been living in self-imposed exile in France because of the cases opened against him for involvement in fraud against the Turkish state and international firms. It is comparable to populist Jörg Haider's FPÖ in Austria. It has a populist agenda and declared its opposition to Turkey's EU membership.

4.5. Regional Parties: HADEP/DEHAP/DTP/BDP (Peace and Democracy Party)

Like the Islamist parties, ethnic Kurdish parties have suffered the fate of periodic closure by the Kemalist judiciary due to their perceived links to the armed terrorist organization PKK. The last ethnic Kurdish party to befall the same end as its predecessors was the DTP (Democratic Society Party) in December 2009. It was quickly replaced by a new ethnic Kurdish Party, the BDP (Peace and Democracy Party).

It has been the Turkish citizens of Kurdish origin who have benefited most from the democratization and the opening up of the regime along the EU integration process. Since the 1990s, the Kurds saw their cultural rights broadened. Rights granted to the Kurds increased in scope and scale in the post-Helsinki era of 1999, when Turkey was given official candidate status by the EU. Thus, it is not surprising to find that ethnic Kurdish parties were among the most ardent supporters of Turkey's EU vocation.¹⁷

¹⁵ "İşçi Partisi Seçim Bildirgesi: Ne ABD ne AB Tam Bağımsız Türkiye", (Workers Party Election Manifesto: Neither the USA nor the EU; fully independent Turkey), available at: www.ip.org.tr (last accessed March 14, 2010).

¹⁶ "İşçi Partisi Milli Hükümet Programı", (Workers Party National Government Program) available at www.ip.org.tr (last accessed March 14, 2010).

¹⁷ For instance see: "Kürtler % 100 AB'yi istiyor." (Kurds want the EU 100 %), available at http://www.tempodergisi.com.tr/toplum_politika/09759/ (last accessed March 17, 2010) and "AB'yi istiyoruz ama..." (We want the EU, but...), available at <http://www.haber3.com/abyi-istiyoruz-ama-175864h.htm> (last accessed March 17, 2010).

Following the EU accession process, the state of emergency was lifted in the predominantly Kurdish populated provinces in southeastern Turkey. The expression of pro-Kurdish views was made possible through amendments in Anti-Terror Law, the Turkish Penal Code and the Constitution. Broadcasting in Kurdish was permitted. Restrictions on the use of Kurdish in education were eased. Kurdish parliamentarians who had been in jail for a decade were released in 2003. The AKP government's recent Kurdish initiative promises further expansion of rights for the Kurdish segments of the population.

4.6. Center-Right/Liberal: DYP/DP (Democrat Party)

The history of the DP dates back to the 1950s, when Turkey introduced the multi-party system. However, it has lost its relative importance in the Turkish political system since 2002 when the newly established AKP managed to fill the vacuum left in the centre-right. Today, in terms of electoral support, the DP enjoys a peripheral status. The DP has a liberal, pro-EU agenda.

5. Assessment and Comparison

Euroscepticism is defined as "the idea of contingent or qualified opposition, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration."¹⁸ It is divided into two categories: soft and hard Euroscepticism. Hard Euroscepticism is "outright rejection of

the entire project of European political and economic integration and opposition to their country joining or remaining members of the EU." Soft Euroscepticism, on the other hand, implies "contingent or qualified opposition to European integration."¹⁹

Factors having a bearing on party-based Euroscepticism include identity politics/ideology, position on the most appropriate site for conflict resolution, and relative position in the political system. The Turkish parties' positions on the EU will, therefore, be evaluated in relation to the above factors.²⁰ While one can not ignore the significance of ideological factors in explaining party-based Euroscepticism, one should also take into consideration the parties' positions in the party system. That is, whether they are in government, in opposition or at the fringes of the party system. The relationship between ideology and party position is that ideology serves as a constraining factor on the party's position and vice versa. In other words, parties occupying particular positions in the national party systems legitimize their actions and policies with reference to their ideologies.

The first proposition is that a party's position on the left-right spectrum is independent from whether it is Eurosceptical or not. As the Turkish case demonstrates, not only the far-right (MHP) and Islamist parties (SP), but also the radical-left (IP) and center-left parties (CHP) can be Eurosceptical. As expressed by Szczerbiak and Taggart, Euroscepticism brings together "strange bed fellows" of some very different ideologies.²¹

¹⁸ Paul Taggart, "A Touchstone of dissent: Euroscepticism in contemporary Western European party systems", *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 33, 1998, p. 366.

¹⁹ Taggart and Szczerbiak (2001), op.cit. p. 10.

²⁰ Taggart, op.cit. p. 379.

²¹ Aleks Szczerbiak and Paul Taggart, "Opposing Europe: Party Systems and Opposition to the Union, the Euro and Europeanisation", *Opposing Europe Working Paper No: 1*, October 2000, available at <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/sei/documents/wp36.pdf>, p. 5, (last accessed April 15, 2010).

All of these parties, while subscribing to opposing ideologies, raise their objection to the EU and EU reforms in varying degrees. On the other hand, it is important to note that all the Turkish parties have been heavily influenced by nationalism. This fact distorts the categorization of parties solely on the basis of their ideologies. For instance, the major center-left/social democratic party CHP has a heavily nationalistic legacy unlike its Western counterparts. The CHP as a social-democratic party is not the party of the working class like in the West either. By western standards one could not, therefore, easily classify it as a social-democratic party. Thus, if looked at from this perspective, this argument by Szczerbiak and Taggart might not be applicable to the case of Turkey, as one could categorize all the above Turkish parties as nationalistic. Taggart and Szczerbiak also find that while Euroscepticism transcends party types, in comparison with Western European cases, Eurosceptic parties in the Central and Eastern candidate states are inclined to be on the right of the spectrum.²² If the CHP is described as a social-democratic party, then this argument would not apply to the case of Turkey as a candidate country because of the CHP's soft-Euroscepticism as a party on the left of the ideological spectrum. In that sense, the Turkish party system would be more comparable to its Western European counterparts, where one can also find social-democratic parties expressing Euroscepticism.

The second hypothesis is that there is a meaningful link between the positions of the parties in their party systems and the expression of Euroscepticism. As the ruling party, the AKP is responsible for

representing the general consensus in the country, which overwhelmingly supports Turkey's membership to the EU. Moreover, as a mainstream party, it would not take the risk of opposing Turkey's EU integration, as cutting off ties with the EU or objecting to the EU membership would have far-reaching implications, hitting first and foremost the party in power itself. One can also observe that the far-right party MHP was forced to moderate its stance vis-a-vis EU when it came to power in the three-party coalition in 1999. It tried to strike a balance between its nationalist ideology and the responsibility of being in power. After it became clear that the coalition government would not continue and new elections were imminent, the MHP then turned to its nationalistic agenda, fiercely criticizing the EU and EU reforms. Agreeing with integration with the EU in principle, but holding significant reservations, it can be categorized as a soft-Eurosceptical party. When the MHP occupied the opposition benches following the 2007 elections, it strenuously opposed the AKP government's EU reforms and asserted that Turkey's relations with the EU had to be questioned. Therefore, nature of its opposition to the EU shifted from soft- to hard-Euroscepticism, once it lost its government-party status. It is also noted that while in Western Europe Euroscepticism is almost completely absent from mainstream governmental parties, Euroscepticism exists in many major parties in Central and Eastern Europe.²³ Like in the Central and Eastern European countries, both the major opposition parties (CHP) and parties in government (MHP in the coalition government between 1999 and 2002) express Euroscepticism in Turkey. In this

²² Paul Taggart and Aleks Szczerbiak, "The Party Politics of Euroscepticism in EU Member and Candidate States", *Opposing Europe Working Paper No: 6*, April 2002, available at <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/sei/documents/wp51.pdf>, p. 21, (last accessed 14 April, 2010).

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

sense, the Turkish party system is similar to those in Central and Eastern Europe.

In addition, as they do not have the responsibility that comes with being in power and ruling Turkey, peripheral parties such as the SP and the IP have explicitly and vociferously rejected Turkey's EU membership. Opposing Turkey's EU membership is costless for these parties as they are located at the margins of the Turkish political system. Another reason why they are hard-Eurosceptical is that these parties use their opposition to the EU as a vehicle through which to showcase their fringe-party status and emphasize their distinction from the other "order" parties in the political system. As the mainstream parties take a pro-EU line, the peripheral parties seek to occupy the remaining niche of opposing the EU, in which they have an undoubted advantage when compared to the mainstream parties. As in Western Europe and the Central and Eastern European states, all hard-Eurosceptical parties in Turkey enjoy a peripheral status in the party-system.

Although ethnic Kurdish parties are peripheral in terms of voter support, they are not Eurosceptical unlike the other peripheral parties in Turkish political system. Their attitude towards Turkey's EU membership follows a similar pattern to other regional parties around Europe, which seek to circumvent the national central authority and enhance their positions via European integration.

The third proposition is that the level of public Euroscepticism does not necessarily correspond to the level of Euroscepticism in the party-system. In other words, parties are independent actors, whose behaviour may not always reflect that of the public. Testing

this proposition, Taggart and Szczerbiak conclude that there is no simple link between party-based Euroscepticism and public opinion on European integration. They showed that while countries with low levels of public Euroscepticism enjoy high levels of party-based Euroscepticism, countries with high levels of public Euroscepticism have the potential for low-party based Euroscepticism. However, Turkey does not support this hypothesis. According to a survey conducted by Open Society Institute in 2007, 32.4% of the Turks interviewed said that they would vote no if there were to be a referendum today on Turkey's membership in the EU, which is a considerably high figure.²⁴ As for party-based Euroscepticism, Eurosceptical parties received 42.06% of the votes cast in the July 2007 Parliamentary Election elections in Turkey. This indicates that both public-Euroscepticism and party-based Euroscepticism are high in Turkey.

The fourth proposition is that in those candidate countries where accession becomes a more immediate prospect, Euroscepticism rises, whereas Euroscepticism is lower in those candidate states where it is perceived as a distant possibility. Taggart and Szczerbiak find little relationship between the prospects for accession and the level of Euroscepticism. The Turkish case, however, supports this hypothesis. Prior to the start of accession talks between the EU and Turkey in 2005, a great number of Turkish people were enthusiastically supportive of Turkey's EU membership and the idea of EU integration without contemplating much about what it could involve. However, when the accession talks started in 2005, it became much clearer that Turkey's EU membership could entail costs. For instance, the Turkish Republic of

²⁴ Hakan Yılmaz, "Türkiye'de Orta Sınıfı Tanımlamak" (Depicting the Middle Class in Turkey), Open Society Institute, October 22, 2007, p. 25, available at http://www.osiaf.org.tr/images/basin/pdf/OSI_OrtaSinif_Sunus.pdf (last accessed May 13, 2010).

Northern Cyprus could lose its sovereignty after unification with the South and accession could be disadvantageous for some sectors of the economy such as agriculture, which had previously been heavily subsidized by the state. Also, the granting of rights to minorities as a result of EU democratization reforms led to the resurfacing of the fear of disintegration among the Turkish people. In contrast, the benefits arising from accession are long-term. Free-circulation of Turkish people in the EU is for instance not foreseen for more than a decade. Some of these benefits are not concrete, such as higher democratic standards. Therefore, coupled with the lukewarm attitude of the European public as well as the elite towards Turkey's accession, the initial zeal for EU integration has dramatically diminished among the Turkish people during the accession process.

The fifth argument is that soft Euroscepticism is more prevalent in the candidate states to the EU than hard Euroscepticism. Taggart and Szczesbiak find much evidence from the candidate states of Central and Eastern Europe to support this hypothesis. The Turkish case provides further evidence showing the validity of this argument. As seen in the Table, the total share of votes for soft-Eurosceptical parties (35.15%) in the 2007 general elections is overwhelmingly higher than the total percentage of votes for hard-Eurosceptical parties in the table (6.91%), which are all peripheral parties. Because of the perceived benefits of EU membership, there is a general consensus among the political elite in favour of Turkey's EU accession whereas outright objection to EU membership is not widespread.

The sixth proposition is that party-based Euroscepticism in the newly independent states is much stronger than that in the older states. As national identities in the

newly independent states have not been consolidated to the full extent, joining a larger supra-national body like the EU is perceived as a blow to national identity. Taggart and Szczesbiak conclude that there is no meaningful link between state development and levels of party-based Euroscepticism. For instance, although Hungary is an established state, it is marked by a high level of party-based Euroscepticism. A similar conclusion can be drawn regarding the case of Turkey. Although Turkey is an established state, level of party-based Euroscepticism is quite high at 42.06 per cent (the Table). This can be explained by the latent mistrust towards the West and Europe in Turkish public opinion. Although Turkey has been historically among the most ardent supporters of joining the EU, when the relations with the EU sour, then the negative aspect of the European image governs the Turkish attitude towards the EU. Moreover, in the post-2005 era, after accession talks with the EU started, the costs of accession to the EU have come into the spotlight on the part of the Turkish public opinion. More importantly, the EU capitals' expression of Turkey-scepticism have fed the Eurosceptic backlash both at the elite and public level.

6. Conclusion

From the analysis of party-based Euroscepticism in Turkey, some conclusions can be drawn. First, Euroscepticism is a phenomenon which makes no distinction among party families, with Eurosceptic parties being from both the left and the right side of the political spectrum. Second, some fringe parties emphasize their Euroscepticism to underline their peripheral status. Third, soft Euroscepticism is mainly expressed by mainstream parties. Fourth, soft-Euroscepticism is much more widespread

than hard Euroscepticism. Fifth, the level of stateness does not correlate with the level of party-based Euroscepticism.

Comparing the Turkish case to the party-based Euroscepticism in the Central and Eastern European candidate states, like in the central and Eastern European candidate countries, the phenomenon of Euroscepticism in Turkey is a “minority component”, albeit a significant one. One of the significant differences of party-based Euroscepticism in Turkey from that in the Central and Eastern European candidate states is that Euroscepticism is spread across the political spectrum and is not concentrated at the right end of the spectrum. One of the factors responsible for this difference is the peculiarity inherent in the left in general and social-democracy in particular in Turkey. First, social-democracy and the left in Turkey are not wholly comparable to the Western European political systems. Universal values of social democracy, such as human rights and rights of minorities are not firmly rooted in the social democratic movement in Turkey. One of the peculiarities of social democracy in Turkey is that it was established from above by the state, rather than through

a movement from the below. Therefore, it is associated with the state. Social-democracy in Turkey has been heavily colored by state-centric attitudes and nationalism rather than the Western models of social democracy. That is one of the reasons why the CHP, the major social-democratic party in Turkey, has leaned towards Euroscepticism, rather than embracing Turkey's EU Project wholeheartedly.

Another similarity between party-based Euroscepticism in the Central and Eastern European candidate states and that in Turkey is that there is no single-issue anti-EU party in Turkey. Nevertheless, such single-issue anti-EU parties are present in EU member states. As Taggart and Szczerbiak explain, this is indicative of the fact that the European issue is to a great extent inclined to be a “second order” issue in states that have not joined the EU yet.²⁵

As in the Central and Eastern European countries, one of the most important differences of party-based Euroscepticism in Turkey from Western Europe is the fact that Euroscepticism is present in the mainstream and governmental parties in Turkey.

²⁵ Taggart and Szczerbiak (2002), op.cit. p. 29.

ANNEX

Table: Categorization of Turkish Parties in terms of Euroscepticism or Eurosupportiveness

Parties	Position of the Party in the Political System	Ideology of the Party	Nature of Euroscepticism	Vote (%) in 2007 Elections
AKP	Center-right	Conservative Democrat	Eurosupportive	46.58
CHP	Center-left	Social Democrat/ Nationalist Left	Soft-Eurosceptic	20.88
MHP	Center-right/Far-right	Ultra-Nationalist	Soft-Eurosceptic/ Hard-Eurosceptic	14.27
DTP/BDP	Ethnic/Regional Party	Kurdish Nationalist	Eurosupportive	5.35
FP/SP	Fringe Party	Islamist	Hard-Eurosceptic	2.34
IP	Fringe Party	Radical nationalist-left	Hard-Eurosceptic	0.36
DYP/DP	Center-right	Liberal	Eurosupportive	5.41
GP	Fringe Party	Nationalist/populist	Hard-Eurosceptic	3.04
BTP	Fringe Party	Islamist	Hard-Eurosceptic	0.52
HYP	Fringe Party	Nationalist	Hard-Eurosceptic	0.50
ÖDP	Fringe Party	Socialist	Hard-Eurosceptic	0.15

Source: <http://www.belgenet.net/>

Cumulative Share of the Vote for Party-Based soft- and hard-Euroscepticism in 2007 General Elections in Turkey

Hard Euroscepticism	Soft Euroscepticism	Total
6.91	35.15	42.06

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