

**UNDERSTANDING  
THE EUROSCEPTICISM IN  
TURKISH POLITICS**

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## **Declaration of Authorship**

I .....**SECKIN BARIS GULMEZ**.... hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_18 December 2013\_\_\_\_

## ABSTRACT

This PhD project scrutinizes why Turkish mainstream politics turned against EU membership. By taking into account three mainstream parties (AKP, CHP and MHP) in comparison with the views of the BDP, a pro-Kurdish party, this study seeks to explain the main determinants of the rising scepticism against EU accession engulfing Turkish politics since 2002. Accordingly, the study applies the term Euroscepticism to candidate countries and Turkey in particular by (i) categorizing domestic political reactions based on the complex nature of EU conditionality involving both formal issue-specific and additional country-specific pressures; (ii) focusing on both domestic and external factors behind domestic resistance to accession process; and (iii) comparing the Turkish case with other candidate countries focusing on the negotiation process. The study argues that Euroscepticism in Turkey and candidate countries in general develops as a response to the complex nature of EU conditionality comprising both *issue-specific* and *country-specific* accession conditions. Euroscepticism in reaction to issue-specific conditions involves an opposition to particular reforms deriving from the EU's formal membership conditionality. Euroscepticism in response to country-specific conditionality, however, involves broader political resistance against the EU's extra conditionality which targets a particular candidate. To grasp Turkish Euroscepticism, two reform areas under the EU's issue-specific conditionality (minority rights and foreign land ownership) and two cases of country-specific pressures (the EU's Cyprus conditionality and the rising Turkish suspicion that the EU won't accept Turkey's membership) are studied. Outlining six hypotheses regarding the effects of party ideology, strategy, and EU-driven factors on the development of Eurosceptic politics in Turkey, the study overall reveals that until 2006, ideology explains the opposition's attitudes while the governmental approach follows strategy. Since the partial suspension of negotiations in 2006, both opposition and government reflect similar scepticism towards the EU irrespective of their ideology and competition strategies. Instead, they provide a case for strong Euroscepticism by emphasizing the role of EU-driven factors –especially, the rising uncertainty of membership and the EU's 'perceived' reluctance to accept Turkish accession–in complicating Turkey-EU relations.

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## INTRODUCTION

Turkey–EU relations are in a state of crisis. The golden era of Turkey’s European vocation spearheaded by the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government has been shattered with the partial suspension of the accession negotiations. Several years after the initiation of the negotiations, only one chapter has been closed and Turkey’s eventual European Union (EU) accession remains dubious. The positive atmosphere in Turkey and Europe regarding the prospects for Turkey’s EU accession has been replaced with pessimism. On 21-22 September 2012, an interdisciplinary workshop at Tilburg University entitled ‘Turkey and the EU: Rethinking a Multifaceted Relationship’ brought together leading academics on Turkey-EU relations to discuss the future of Turkey’s EU membership quest. The argument shared by almost all participants was that Turkey’s EU accession prospects had never been more uncertain. The remarks of the conference participants reflected how the initial bursts of optimism for Turkey’s EU accession had faltered. As one participant stated; ‘the EU made a confession that they have almost reached a dead-end with Turkey’ (Kubicek 2013).

Turkey has always attached great importance to become a member of the EU since the early 1960s. Initiating the formal association with the European Community (EC) with the signature of the Ankara Association agreement in 1963, Turkey made its official membership application in 1987 and was granted official candidate status in 1999. Throughout this long process, Turkish political elites perceived EU membership as an ideal for Turkey and highlighted their commitment to the realization of Turkish accession to the EU. Coming to power in 2002, the AKP government took unprecedented steps pioneering the initiation of accession negotiations with the EU on 3 October 2005. The golden era of Turkey–EU relations, however, suffered a serious stalemate shortly after the curtailment of negotiations due to the EU’s Cyprus conditionality.

On 29 July 2005, the Turkish government signed the additional protocol extending the association agreement to the new EU members, fulfilling the last obligation for initiating the accession negotiations. Not officially recognizing the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) as representing the entire island, the Turkish government issued a

unilateral declaration rejecting to extend its commitments to the RoC, an EU member since May 2004. However, the EU rejected Turkey's declaration and pressurized the Turkish government to open its airspace and harbours to all EU membership including the RoC. After Turkey's firm denial, the EU partially suspended the accession negotiations by freezing eight negotiation chapters<sup>1</sup> (European Commission 2012: 5). The suspension of the negotiations constitutes a watershed in Turkey-EU relations as the reform process has considerably slowed down and the EU membership quest has lost its popularity in Turkey.

This study investigates the underlying factors behind the loss of momentum in Turkish politics towards EU membership. Accordingly, the main research question of the study is "Why have the main Turkish political actors become sceptical of Turkey's EU accession in the last decade?" Is it solely the EU's Cyprus conditionality that explains the rising Turkish scepticism towards the EU or are there other factors at play? Accordingly, the changing EU stances of three mainstream political parties; the AKP, the Republican People's Party (CHP) and the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) will be scrutinized comparatively in order to better understand the main determinants of the current rise in reluctance towards EU accession engulfing Turkish politics since 2002.

The AKP was founded in 2001 as a centre-right party despite its organic ties to the pro-Islamic Welfare Party (RP) in the sense that many founding members of the AKP including the party leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan came from the ranks of the RP. The 1980 military *coup d'état* had abolished all political parties and the military regime promoted 'Turkish-Islam Synthesis' in order to eliminate the left-right clash and to nurture unity within the Turkish public. In this turbulent context, the military junta encouraged and supported political Islam as they saw it as "an antidote to all forms of left-wing politics" (Ahmad 1993: 214). Hence, political Islam found a fertile ground to flourish in Turkey which enabled the RP to be established under the leadership of Necmettin Erbakan. Forming a coalition government in the early 1990s, the RP was however closed down following the 28 February military memorandum in 1997 on the grounds that its pro-Islamic activities constituted a serious threat to the Secular

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<sup>1</sup> The frozen chapters are namely; Free Movement of Goods, Right of Establishment and Freedom to Provide Services, Financial Services, Agriculture and Rural Development, Fisheries, Transport Policy, Customs Union, and External Relations.

identity of the Republic of Turkey. The successors of Erbakan were divided into two political camps, namely ‘traditionalists’ and ‘innovationists’; the former was represented by the Felicity Party (SP) that followed the RP tradition, while the reformist cadre established the AKP (Çağlıyan-İçener 2009: 596).

Erdoğan, the former mayor of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality formed the AKP with 50 former RP officials. Defending social conservatism and economic liberalism, the AKP refused to be identified as an ‘ideology-based Islamic party’ and aimed to be a catch-all party (Keyman and Öniş 2007: 220). Gathering 34.4% of the total votes in the 2002 elections, the AKP acquired 64% of the seats in the Parliament and formed a single party government. The economic crisis in Turkey and liberal rhetoric of the AKP became the deciding factors behind its popularity in almost all segments of Turkish society who hoped that the AKP government would bring more economic and political stability and expand liberties (ibid.). Besides, the AKP’s successful ‘mobilization strategy’ forming a ‘grand coalition’ with the combination of former centre-right, centre-left and conservative politicians, and its ‘organizational effectiveness’ recruiting 3 million party members played a major role in its electoral success (Saatçioğlu and El Basani 2013: 146). The AKP government’s landslide victory was interpreted in Turkish academia as a sign of Turkey’s return to fully functioning democracy after the 1980 *coup d’état* (İnsel 2003: 306; Özbudun 2006: 546).

Once in power, the AKP concentrated on the realization of Turkey’s EU membership. The AKP government adopted numerous laws to comply with the EU’s accession criteria and lobbied for Turkey’s accession among EU officials and political leaders of EU member states in a proactive manner. Prime Minister Erdoğan even organized an amateur soccer match with EU statesmen in order to increase dialogue with ‘Turkey-sceptic’ leaders such as the Austrian chancellor, Wolfgang Schüssel (Robinson 2006). He also worked in close cooperation with Luis Zapatero, the Spanish Prime Minister for the ‘Alliance of Civilizations’ project to develop better relations between Europe and the Islamic World. The AKP’s cosmopolitan rhetoric nurtured with this project proved successful for the AKP to convince the EU to start accession negotiations with Turkey (İçener and Çağlıyan-İçener 2011). However, the AKP’s EU-enthusiasm faltered after the partial suspension of the negotiations due to Turkey’s failure to

comply with the EU's Cyprus conditionality. Winning three elections in a row, however the AKP government has hardly returned to its former pro-EU stance.

The main opposition party, the CHP is the founding party of the Turkish Republic. Established by Ataturk himself in 1923, the CHP stands as the oldest political party in Turkey. Formed as an establishment party of traditionalism, authority, and nationalism, the CHP's economic Left rhetoric was first installed by Bülent Ecevit in the early 1970s aiming to 'defend those who could not benefit from the welfare system of the society, did not exploit others, could not obtain undue privileges, and could not defend their own interests and rights' (Güneş-Ayata 2002: 103). Despite its emphasis on the Left, Keyman and Öniş (2007: 214) argue that the CHP has failed to reflect the true image of a European-style Social Democratic party due to its historical role in the Turkish political system and 'failure to break away from it'. The establishment of the Turkish Republic was a top-down process in which the Republic was 'made' by Ataturk and his aides (ibid.). The CHP was formed as an 'engine ... of this state-centric modernization and its top-down attempt to create an economically advanced and culturally secular nation' (ibid.).

Having won two elections in 1973 and 1977, the CHP faced a similar fate with other political parties which were all closed down after the 1980 *coup d'état* by the military regime. The post-1980 coup period led to the criticisms of statist and ultra-secularist policies that constituted the key principles of the CHP (Öniş and Grigoriadis 2010: 264). Closed for eleven years, the party was re-opened by Deniz Baykal in 1992 who used a similar Left rhetoric to the previous CHP leadership. However, the CHP has not won any elections since then. The CHP's inability to adapt to the changing demands of the masses, its failure to transform the party's ideological stance, and the unending leadership struggles coupled with factions within the party following its re-opening have led to big electoral failures; in 1999 obtaining only eight percent of the total votes the CHP even failed to enter the parliament (Keyman and Öniş 2007). Although the CHP successfully rose to be the main opposition in the Turkish parliament after obtaining 19.38 percent of the total votes in the 2002 elections, Baykal was generally held responsible for the party's ill-performance in elections for so long and accused of having detached the party from the masses and polarized the

public treating them as being either ‘secular or a religious fundamentalist; a republican or a separatist; a Kemalist or a second Republican; a patriot or a traitor’ (Öniş and Grigoriadis 2010: 267; Ciddi 2008: 446).

The CHP under Baykal’s leadership proclaimed itself a pro-EU party since the 1960s (when the Ankara Association agreement had been concluded) by defining Turkey’s EU bids as part of the modernization project that would consolidate the Turkish Republic. Baykal (2003) considered Turkey’s EU membership as a ‘national cause’ and devoted much energy to the realization of a customs union with the EU in the early 1990s during his short term as the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Ayata and Güneş-Ayata 2007: 223). After the 2002 elections however, the CHP’s pro-EU stance has remained at the rhetorical level since it adopted a highly critical stance towards the EU and opposed many aspects of the EU-led reform process in Turkey (such as foreigner and minority rights) with the preoccupation to protect the integrity of the Turkish Republic. Since May 2010, the leadership of Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, who replaced Baykal aimed to highlight the CHP’s social democratic identity by abandoning Baykal’s nationalistic rhetoric and toning down its criticisms against the EU. However, Kılıçdaroğlu conducted a ‘NO’ campaign against the referendum in September 2010 which put to vote the adoption of Constitutional amendments that were supported by the EU, showing that it was too early to conclude that the CHP had become a pro-EU party (Öniş 2012).

The junior opposition party, the MHP was formed in 1969 to spread Turkish nationalism and ‘ward off the communist threat’ (Heper and İnce 2006: 873). Representing the far right in Turkey, the MHP initially demonstrated poor performance in the general elections of 1969, 1973 and 1977 (Arıkan 1998: 121). Besides, it was increasingly perceived as supporting undemocratic and ultra-nationalistic groups who contributed to the eruption of country-wide violence based on a left-right conflict, which claimed around 5000 lives and led to the 1980 military *coup d’état* (Arıkan 1998: 120; Heper and İnce 2006: 873). Closed down immediately after the *coup*, the party was reopened with the name of the Party of Nationalist Work (MÇP - Milliyetçi Çalışma Partisi) in 1985; yet it failed to enter the parliament during the 1987 elections. Forming an electoral coalition with the RP, the MÇP managed to

enter parliament in the 1991 elections. The party was renamed as the MHP once again in 1993 but failed to enter the parliament in the 1995 elections. The electoral misfortune of the MHP changed after the death of the party leader Alparslan Türkeş in 1997. The new MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli aimed to wipe out criminal elements from the party, stay away from political patronage and clientelism, and improve the MHP's image as a legitimate political actor (Heper and İnce 2006: 875). The MHP acquired 17% of total votes in the 1999 elections and became a partner of the coalition government in which Bahçeli became a deputy Prime Minister. The most important factor behind the electoral success of the MHP was its focus on the fight against PKK terrorism during its election campaign (Öniş 2003). However, the 2000 economic crisis in Turkey had a remarkable impact in the coalition parties. Held responsible for the eruption of the crisis, Turkish voters punished the MHP as well as other governing parties by leaving them outside the parliament in the 2002 elections (Keyman and Öniş 2007). The MHP returned to the Turkish Parliament in 2007 and has been a junior opposition party represented in the Turkish Parliament since then. Although detached from its extremist attitudes of the 1970s, the MHP is still regarded as a far-right ultra-nationalistic party which remains a strong critic of Turkey's EU membership considering many aspects of the EU-led reform process detrimental to Turkey's national sovereignty (Avcı 2011b).

Overall, the study will focus on the EU policies of these three mainstream political parties represented in the Turkish Parliament in the last decade and seek to find out the main determinants of their sceptical stances towards the EU. Besides this, it will analyze the EU policy of a single-issue party, the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) as a control case in order to demonstrate the varying effects of political ideology on party stances towards the EU. Established in 2008 right after its predecessor the Democratic Society Party (DTP) was closed down by the Constitutional Court on the grounds that its pro-Kurdish stance incited separatist violence; the BDP entered its first elections in the 2009 local elections. It won 97 municipalities primarily in the South-eastern Anatolia overwhelmingly populated by Kurds. The BDP enjoyed a bigger victory in the 2011 general elections. The BDP managed to gain 36 seats in the Turkish Parliament. In addition to its Leftist and anti-imperialist rhetoric, the BDP is known for its Kurdish nationalism and close affinity with the PKK, listed as a terrorist

organization by Turkey, the USA and the EU. It stands as a single-issue party since its primary political objective is to promote rights and liberties for people of Kurdish origin in Turkey. Comparison of its EU policy with other parties is important since its policies remarkably diverge from mainstream politics in key policy areas such as minority rights and the Cyprus problem. If such a different party as the BDP shows similar reactions to EU conditionality, this will help draw important conclusions regarding the determinants of party contestations in Turkey against EU membership.

In order to grasp the interplay between different factors that explain the dynamics of Turkish political opposition to EU membership, the study will benefit from the term Euroscepticism, which is defined as ‘the idea of contingent or qualified opposition, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration’ (Taggart, 1998: 366). However, Euroscepticism is generally used to explain party attitudes in member states. Due to its particular focus on the negotiation process of a candidate country, this study aims to apply Euroscepticism to candidate countries by (i) categorizing domestic political reactions based on the complex nature of EU conditionality involving both formal *issue-specific* and additional *country-specific* pressures; (ii) focusing on both domestic and external/EU-driven factors behind domestic resistance to the accession process; and (iii) comparing Turkey with other candidate countries with a special focus on the negotiation process. The scope of Euroscepticism in candidate countries is narrower than the traditional definition of Euroscepticism essentially because it analyzes party responses to the EU’s membership conditionality during the EU accession process, whereas the latter aims to explain political contestations against European integration in a broader sense.

Overall, the study will evaluate the attitudes of selected political parties in Turkey towards the EU’s conditional pressures in different policy areas, including minority rights, foreign land ownership and the EU’s Cyprus conditionality and allow comparison with the political reactions to similar EU pressures in other accession countries. The main objective of the study is to find out: (i) whether political parties give different responses to *issue-specific* and *country-specific* EU pressures; (ii) to what extent domestic factors such as ideology and strategy explain domestic responses to the EU’s conditional pressures; (iii) whether external/EU-driven factors



(such as the EU's selectivity in its conditionality and its perceived 'reluctance' towards the accession of Turkey) play a major role in party contestations against the EU; and finally, (iv) whether the critical EU stance of Turkish political parties is *exceptional* or similar to their counterparts in other accession countries.

Accordingly, the study proposes six hypotheses regarding the effects of ideology, strategy and EU-driven factors on the development of Euroscepticism in candidate countries in general and Turkey in particular. The first three hypotheses investigate the validity of ideological alignments in determining Eurosceptic politics. The study examines the ideological standpoints of parties by not only looking at their Leftist or Rightist economic views but also relying on their Libertarian or Authoritarian stance over social, political and cultural issues, such as individual freedoms and environmental awareness (Hooghe et al 2002). Accordingly, the study will discuss to what extent Leftist/Rightist and Libertarian/Authoritarian views of political parties affect their stance on the EU accession process. The study will then test the credibility of political ideology in inducing Euroscepticism when EU-driven factors<sup>2</sup> are at play. The last three hypotheses will inquire about the explanatory power of strategic party competition regarding the development of Euroscepticism. The study will examine whether a party's position in the domestic political system affects its stance over EU accession. Therefore, it will focus on mainstream parties as well as marginal/fringe parties, comparing their propensity to raise criticisms against the EU accession process. Moreover, governing parties as well as opposition parties will be investigated to find out whether Euroscepticism is an opposition phenomenon or whether governing parties reflect Eurosceptic reactions as well. Finally, the explanatory power of strategic party competition will be tested when EU-driven factors materialize. Accordingly, the hypotheses are summarized as follows:

**H1:** The Left-Right ideological distinction does not have a significant role in explaining Euroscepticism.

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<sup>2</sup> EU-driven factors are summarized as follows: the EU's conditionality is selective; the EU offers no credible membership perspective; the EU is perceived to be reluctant towards accession.

**H2:** TAN (Traditional/Authoritarian/Nationalist) parties in accession countries are more likely to adopt Euroscepticism than GAL (Green/Alternative/Liberal) parties.

**H3:** Both TAN and GAL parties in accession countries are likely to embrace Euroscepticism as a reaction to EU-driven factors.

**H4:** Electoral popularity does not explain Euroscepticism because both mainstream and fringe parties reflect Euroscepticism.

**H5:** Opposition parties in accession countries are more likely to adopt Eurosceptic policies than governing parties.

**H6:** Governing parties in accession countries are likely to embrace Euroscepticism as a response to EU-driven factors.

This study argues that the explanatory power of domestic factors namely, party ideology and strategic party competition diminishes when the EU's conditionality is perceived as selective and discriminatory in the domestic arena, and/or the EU is perceived by domestic political actors as reluctant towards the accession of a candidate country (Turkey in this study). Therefore, if domestic political actors are convinced that the EU discriminates against their country or seems reluctant to allow their country's accession, all domestic political actors are likely to grow sceptical of the EU's membership conditionality and reluctant for EU membership regardless of their ideological alignments and their positions in the political system. The study also assumes that this critical stance is not specific to the Turkish case, since political parties in other countries unite in resisting similar types of EU pressures. Throughout the thesis, the validity of these arguments will be tested relying on the discussion of domestic responses to EU pressures in three cases, namely: minority rights, foreign land ownership and the EU's Cyprus conditionality. Minority rights and foreign land ownership imply the EU's *issue-specific* pressures since they are both part of the EU's standard membership criteria applicable to all candidates, whereas Cyprus conditionality is an additional condition that is specific to a particular country, Turkey. Other candidates have also faced additional *country-specific* pressures of the EU, which mainly derive from a bilateral conflict between a candidate and an EU

member state. While both minority rights and foreign land ownership represent cases of *issue-specific* pressures, they differ in terms of the domestic perceptions about their application. The conditionality of foreign land ownership is conventionally treated as a fundamental part of economic integration and is governed by the ‘Community method’ allowing supranational institutions to impose standard practice on member states (rather than the intergovernmental method that is dominant in the domains of foreign policy and justice and home affairs). However, the EU’s application of minority rights conditionality has often been described as inconsistent, selective and uneven (Ram 2003). By taking this difference into consideration, the study investigates whether the perception that the EU’s conditionality is selective ‘matters’ in determining domestic attitudes towards the EU negotiations. Moreover, the discussion of the EU’s additional conditionality on particular candidates as a separate case allows refining the prevailing accounts that focus on solely domestic factors and neglect the interplay between domestic and EU-level factors.

Finally, the study will also devote a separate chapter to the discussion of an increasing Turkish perception that the EU remains reluctant towards Turkey’s membership and scrutinize whether (and if so, how) the EU’s ‘perceived’ reluctance is influential on Turkish political attitudes towards EU accession. This is an important question to address, because if the EU discourses of Turkish political actors are primarily based on the EU’s ‘reluctance’ towards Turkey’s accession, then their EU policies can be considered as exceptional or *sui generis*, implying that Turkish party attitudes are not comparable to other cases in Europe, i.e. the EU stances of political actors in other accession countries (in particular, the Central and Eastern European countries whose accession was framed as ‘return to Europe’ by EU circles). On the flip side, if the EU’s perceived reluctance towards Turkey does not alone capture Turkish party attitudes towards EU conditionality, then the findings on the Turkish case can be applied to other cases as well. Accordingly, the outline of the thesis is as follows:

The first chapter of the study reviews the relevant literature on EU stances on political parties across Europe and that of Turkish mainstream parties in particular. The notion of Euroscepticism has particularly inspired scholarly discussions on party contestations towards European integration and led to the development of different

models of Euroscepticism (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2004). However, the application of the term Euroscepticism to accession countries can be problematic because political actors in candidate countries primarily focus their criticisms on the accession process rather than European integration and its trajectory. Studies that employ models of Euroscepticism in investigating party politics in candidate countries tend to confound ‘opposition to Europe’ with ‘opposition to EU membership’ and lump them together as examples of Euroscepticism. However, a party’s opposition to EU membership does not give sufficient information about its deeper stance on European integration (defined in a broader sense) (Szczurbiak and Taggart 2008b). Therefore, it is useful to re-evaluate the term Euroscepticism in order to better explain political party stances in accession countries that focus on EU membership *per se*. The main objective of this study is to contribute to the refinement of the term Euroscepticism so that it can better explain party positions in EU candidate countries in general, and to Turkey in particular.

In addition, this chapter provides a review of the literature on Turkish political parties and stresses the fact that existing analyses on the Turkish political stance towards EU membership are either focused on domestic factors such as party competition and ideology or the Cyprus conflict as an external constraint on Turkey’s EU membership. Some studies also claim that a historical distrust of Europe, the so-called Sèvres Syndrome, has been influential in structuring the EU stances of Turkish political actors (Yılmaz 2009; Nefes 2013). Finally, there is an emerging literature stressing the rising scepticism in Europe against Turkish membership, associating the rise of Turkish reluctance to EU membership with it (Öniş 2010 and 2012; Oğuzlu 2012). This study will discuss the interaction between these factors arguing that Turkey’s critical stance towards EU accession can be better explained by taking into account both domestic and EU-driven factors together.

Chapter II discusses in more detail Euroscepticism in candidate countries putting a special emphasis on the changing political party attitudes in accession countries towards EU membership. Accordingly, the study aims to emphasize the contextual character of Turkish political party stances towards Turkey’s accession to the EU through a special focus on the complex nature of EU conditionality. The EU’s

membership conditionality is complex in the sense that the EU not only imposes formal issue-specific accession conditions applicable to all candidate countries, but also puts forward additional conditions for certain candidates (generally due to a bilateral conflict between an EU member and the candidate in question) and is often criticized for applying some of its political conditionality in a selective (if not, discriminatory) manner. Accordingly, the study argues that Euroscepticism in candidate countries develops in response to the EU's both issue-specific and country-specific conditionality, reflecting the complex nature and differential impact of the EU's accession criteria. In the case of issue-specific conditionality deriving from the EU's formal membership criteria that are applicable to all candidates, domestic opposition is generally limited to particular reforms and tends to reflect ideological differences amongst political parties in the domestic arena. Domestic political actors resist certain EU-led reforms either due to high costs of compliance or the perceived threats against national sovereignty. However, country-specific conditionality triggers a more intensive political resistance that transcends ideological differences, as domestic political actors oppose the EU's extra conditionality which specifically targets their own country. The chapter will give a detailed account of candidate country Euroscepticism in response to the EU's issue-specific and country-specific conditions relying on examples from Turkey and other accession countries..

Chapter III explains the research design and provides justifications for the methodological choices based on a single-case study and elite interviewing. Accordingly, it explains why the Turkish case has been selected as a test case for the analysis of political party constestations against EU accession. The chapter also offers justifications on the selection of particular Turkish political actors (the AKP, the CHP, the MHP and the BDP) and reform areas (minority rights, foreign land ownership and the EU's Cyprus conditionality) in the analysis of Turkish responses to EU conditionality. Finally, the chapter discusses why elite interviewing has been used as a primary data collection technique and explains the details of interviews the author conducted with 45 members of the Turkish Parliament between November 2012 and April 2013.

The empirical chapters (IV, V, VI and VII) provide a detailed analysis of Turkish responses to the EU's accession criteria focusing on two problematic reform areas

under the EU's formal conditionality (minority rights and foreign land ownership) and two cases of country-specific pressures (the EU's Cyprus conditionality and the rising Turkish suspicion that the EU won't accept Turkey's membership). Chapter IV studies domestic responses in Turkey to the EU's conditionality of minority rights and Chapter V discusses findings on the reform of foreign land ownership. Both chapters demonstrate that in the case of issue-specific conditionality, ideological factors such as nationalistic concerns to protect the integrity of state against foreigners constitute the basis of the Eurosceptic politics of Turkish political parties. The chapters find that Turkish attitudes are highly similar to those of political parties in other accession countries.

Chapter VI discusses Turkish responses to the EU's Cyprus conditionality. The chapter argues that all political actors, despite ideological differences, are united in their criticisms of the EU's membership pressures involving the de facto recognition of the RoC. This points to a more intensive Euroscepticism developed as a reaction to the EU's extra conditionality arising out of a bilateral conflict between a candidate country and an EU member state. It is crucial to note that such a critical stance is not peculiar to the Turkish case, as political actors in other candidate countries such as Macedonia and Croatia show similar reactions to similar extra country-specific pressures coming from the EU. On the other hand, Chapter VII deals with a particular claim peculiar to Turkey about the EU's reluctance to accept Turkey's membership and investigates to what extent the general perception of the EU as discriminatory against Turkey resonates with the rising Eurosceptic stances of Turkish political actors.

The concluding chapter provides a tentative analysis of the findings derived from the studied cases with the main argument that Turkish reluctance for EU membership is multi-causal and does not only depend on domestic factors such as ideology or strategy but also involves a reactionary dimension. In other words, not only domestic but also EU-driven factors explain the rise of Euroscepticism in Turkey at different stages: domestic factors such as ideology and party competition had considerable explanatory power over Eurosceptic responses of the Turkish political elites when there were clear incentives towards Turkey's EU accession (2002-2006). However, after the partial suspension of the negotiations (2006 to present), EU-driven factors

including the rising uncertainty of membership and the EU's 'reluctance' towards Turkish accession, have become more crucial in explaining the rise of Euroscepticism in Turkish politics.

# CHAPTER I

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter discusses the prevailing scholarly accounts of party contestations against European integration. Accordingly, it will focus on the term Euroscepticism which is predominantly employed to explain contending political attitudes towards European integration and EU accession in particular. Scrutinizing how Euroscepticism is defined and categorized in the mainstream literature, the chapter will also examine the scholarly discussions regarding the determinants of party-based Euroscepticism. Finally, the chapter will critically evaluate how scholars explain the contending EU stances of political parties in accession countries and Turkey in particular.

### **1.1. Political Party Contestations towards European Integration: Definition and Classification**

The mainstream literature abounds with analyses of contending party positions towards European integration which are overwhelmingly explained with the term ‘Euroscepticism’ generally defined as ‘the idea of contingent or qualified opposition, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration’ (Taggart, 1998: 366). Numerous scholarly works offered various typologies of Euroscepticism to explain party contestations towards Europe. The most popular discussion has been introduced by Taggart and Szczerbiak (2004) who argue that Euroscepticism involves two different forms of opposition to European integration: ‘Hard’ and ‘Soft’ Euroscepticism. *Hard Euroscepticism* implies an ‘outright’ and ‘unqualified’ rejection of European integration both in economic and political terms. ‘Hard Eurosceptics’ reject the idea of EU membership, since they never desire to be a part of such a Union. Alternatively, *Soft Euroscepticism* suggests a ‘contingent and qualified opposition to European integration’. This means that ‘Soft Eurosceptic’ parties are generally in favour of European integration but oppose



particular EU policies, or exert opposition with the motivation to preserve national interest on a specific domain (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2004: 4).

The Hard-Soft typology has been widely used in the party politics literature as a blueprint for categorising political parties in Europe. For instance, the PDS/Left Party in Germany is deemed as 'Soft Eurosceptic' due to its critique of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and its effects on the German economy (Lees 2008: 21). Moreover, the National Alliance in Italy and the Francophone Christian Democrats in Belgium could be considered as Soft Eurosceptic since their criticisms exclusively focus on certain policy areas such as EMU rather than European integration as a whole (Quaglia 2008; Deschouwer and Van Assche 2008). Besides, not only peripheral parties but also mainstream parties are depicted as Soft Eurosceptic; take the British Conservative Party which is not opposed to European integration outright but object to certain EU policies such as the adoption of a single currency across the EU (Gifford 2006). On the other hand, Hard Eurosceptic parties mainly tend to be on the extreme edges of the political spectrum. Extreme Right parties such as the Northern League in Italy, the Vlaams Belang in Belgium, the Front National (FN) in France, and the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) and the British National Party (BNP) in the UK are generally considered as Hard Eurosceptics (Quaglia, 2008; Deschouwer and Van Assche, 2008; Grunberg, 2008; Gifford, 2006).

Moreover, Usherwood and Sartin (2013: 5-6) categorize Eurosceptic parties into four in order to locate them in the context of the Hard-Soft typology. Accordingly, single-issue parties such as UKIP, radical right-wing parties including the FN in France and the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), and radical left-wing parties such as the Danish Socialist People's Party and the Swedish Left Party are considered Hard Eurosceptic; while mainstream parties such as the British Conservative party and the French UMP are seen as Soft Eurosceptic (*ibid.*).

However, despite its popularity, the Hard-Soft typology has been criticized mainly due to the all-inclusive nature of Soft Euroscepticism which causes the confusion that any political party which at some point criticizes the EU might be considered as Soft Eurosceptic (Riishøj 2007; Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008b; Kaniok 2009). Conti (2003: 16) offers a detailed account of Soft Euroscepticism in order to prevent

confusion over its scope. He explains Soft Euroscepticism as ‘a reaction to one or a number of European policies, a negative evaluation of the European institutional setting whose reform is proposed, or a negative evaluation of the impact of Europe on the domestic system that can be still corrected through reforms’. Conti (2003: 16) states that unlike Hard Euroscepticism, Soft Euroscepticism neither questions the legitimacy of the entire European integration process, nor suggests a country’s withdrawal from the EU. Instead, Soft Eurosceptics offer solutions to the problems of integration through ‘pro-active’ but ‘non-radical’ proposals of reform (ibid.).

Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008b: 250) refine the term by focusing on both the quantity and the quality of opposition to EU policies in order to determine who is (Soft) Eurosceptic and who isn’t. Accordingly, they reject the consideration of political parties which only oppose one or two EU policy areas as Eurosceptic (ibid.). They suggest differentiating between ‘core’ and ‘peripheral’ policies of the EU. In this respect, parties which oppose core EU policies such as EMU qualify as Eurosceptic, while those who oppose only peripheral EU policies such as the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) do not (ibid.). Similarly, they also distinguish between opposition to the ‘deepening’ and the ‘widening’ of European integration. Accordingly, Eurosceptics are those who oppose the deepening of the EU, while opposition to the widening of the EU (i.e. opposition to further EU enlargement) doesn’t necessarily count as Euroscepticism (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008b: 251).

With the aim of refining the Hard-Soft Euroscepticism typology, Conti (2003: 17) introduces neutral and pro-EU elements to the analysis of party positions towards Europe. Accordingly, he suggests ‘No commitment/No mention’ as evidence for a neutral stance towards European integration. He also offers pro-EU categories which are ‘Functional Europeanism’ and ‘Identity Europeanism’. While Functional Europeanism indicates a strategic support for European integration based on domestic interests, Identity Europeanism involves a principled support aiming for an advancement towards Federal Europe and European citizenship (ibid.). However, Conti (2003: 19) admits the measurement problems associated with this classification. Actually, it is difficult to decide whether a party is Soft Eurosceptic or Functional Europeanist based on its attitudes towards European integration. The difference between ‘qualified opposition’ defined as Soft Euroscepticism and ‘qualified support’

implying Functional Europeanism is unclear. Both Functional Europeanism and Soft Euroscepticism condition their support for European integration on the preservation of domestic interests. In a recent contribution co-authored with Memoli, Conti, contrary to his early work, has refused to lock Euroscepticism 'into one static definition of categorical or typological nature' (Conti and Memoli 2012: 105). Yet, they still tend to differentiate between Euroscepticism and Euro-criticism which is more or less similar to the Hard-Soft typology (*ibid.*).

Kopecký and Mudde (2002) suggest an alternative classification. They differentiate between Eurosceptics and Euro-rejects by advancing four new categories: 'Europhiles' vs. 'Europhobes' (depending on the level of one's support to European integration), and 'EU-optimists' vs. 'EU-pessimists' (depending on one's attitude towards the current and future directions of the EU as a polity). In this context, Euroscepticism refers to a combination of 'Europhiles' and 'EU-pessimists', while 'Euro-rejects' are simultaneously both 'Europhobe' and 'EU-pessimist'. Eurosceptics are not against the cooperation of European states for greater peace and prosperity in Europe; but they are pessimistic about the current and/or future direction towards which European integration is heading (Kopecký and Mudde 2002: 304).

Kopecký and Mudde also propose two other categories to explain pro-EU circles. Accordingly, parties which are both Europhile and EU-optimists are considered as Euroenthusiasts; whereas parties that are Europhobe but optimist about the EU's future (EU-optimists) are deemed as Europragmatists (Kopecký and Mudde 2002: 303). The model advanced by Kopecký and Mudde innovatively suggests that all Eurosceptics are Europhiles since they favour the idea of European integration in principle; and thus excludes 'Hard Euroscepticism'/outright rejection of European integration/'Euro-rejects' from the definition of Euroscepticism. Although not as popular as the Hard/Soft typology, their model has attracted much academic attention (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008a).

Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008b: 243) however extend certain criticisms to this alternative typology. They argue that the classification of Kopecký and Mudde (2002), although having merits, does not fit in the Western European political context (*ibid.*). Accordingly, the alternative categorization they offer confines the term

Euroscepticism 'to a subset of what would generally be considered Eurosceptic attitudes' (ibid.). By introducing the terms Europhobes and Eurorejects, Kopecký and Mudde (2002) altered the meaning and the scope of Euroscepticism which led to a confusion in the categorization of certain political parties such as UKIP as Eurosceptic (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008b: 244). Moreover, the category of 'Europragmatism' paradoxically suggests that a party that demonstrates a principled opposition to European integration could support the deepening of the European integration project (ibid.). According to Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008b: 244), it is very difficult to find a party in 'old' EU members that fits into this category.

Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008b: 244) also claim that the 'Euroenthusiast' category is too inclusive generating 'strange bedfellows' placing irrelevant parties 'in the same box'. For instance, Kopecký and Mudde (2002) place the Polish Peasant Party and Hungarian Fidesz party in the same box as the Polish Civic Platform and Hungarian Alliance of Free Democrats, although those parties have different views about the development of European integration (ibid.). Therefore, the Kopecký–Mudde classification fails to acknowledge the fact that 'just as opposition to the European integration project as embodied in the EU can be both principled and contingent so can support for it' (ibid.). Overall, Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008b: 246) criticize Kopecký and Mudde (2002) for attempting to formulate a new framework of Euroscepticism just focusing on candidate countries in which 'it is difficult to identify a party's stance on either European integration through the EU in principle or on the EU's current trajectory because most of them do not articulate them, or simply have not even considered them'.

Another scholarly attempt to categorize party-based Euroscepticism is advanced by Flood and Soborski (2011). They criticize the prevailing literature for isolating 'opposition to integration from support for it' (Flood and Soborski 2011: 4). They think that 'most groups described as Eurosceptical do not have simple positions but complex mixtures which include support for some aspects of integration' (ibid.). In order to remedy the gap in the literature, they offer a new typology comprising six categories based not only on the degree of support for, but also opposition to, 'EU integration in general or some specified aspect(s) of it' (Flood and Soborski 2011: 5). Pro-EU parties include (i) *Maximalists* desiring integration to be pushed 'as far and as

fast as' possible; (ii) *Reformists* who endorse further integration provided that 'the deficiencies of what has already been achieved' are remedied; and (iii) *Gradualists* who accept 'some advance of integration, as long as it is slow and piecemeal'; while Eurosceptics include (iv) *Minimalists* who accept the status quo and aim to prevent further integration; (v) *Revisionists* who wish to 'return to an earlier state, usually before a treaty revision', and finally (vi) *Rejectionists* who reject European integration outright (Flood and Soborski 2011: 6).

Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008b: 246) bring two main criticisms to this typology. First, since these categories are not mutually exclusive, 'some parties might comfortably be located in more than one of them' (ibid.). Second, and more importantly such a 'complex and fine-grained' typology (similar to that of Kopecký and Mudde (2002)) necessitates 'a lot of data in order to categorize broad underlying party positions with the degree of precision that is required to fully operationalize them'; but such detailed information is often not available, because 'parties rarely elaborate their policies on the key issues on European integration in such detail that we can properly categorize them' (ibid.).

Finally, Riishøj (2007: 508-509) offers an exhaustive list explaining different categories of Euroscepticism. He introduces nine types of Euroscepticism including (i) *Identity-based* Euroscepticism 'involving a contradiction between national identity and European identity', (ii) *Cleavage-based* Euroscepticism focusing on main divisions in a society such as 'town-country, work-capital, religion-secularism', (iii) *Policy-based* Euroscepticism identifying 'resistance against concrete policies and single issues' such as the Common Agricultural Policy and the EMU, (iv) *Institutionally based* Euroscepticism arising out of low level of trust in EU institutions, (v) *National interest-based* Euroscepticism due to 'contradiction(s) between common European goals and national goals', (vi) *Experience-based* Euroscepticism stemming from unfair and asymmetric accession negotiation process, (vii) *Party-based* Euroscepticism which is formed 'in a top-down manner from political parties and charismatic political leaders', (viii) *Atlantic-based* scepticism pointing to 'a contradiction or dilemma between pro-Americanism and pro-Europeanism', and finally (ix) *Practice-based* Euroscepticism due to differences

between the EU and candidate countries in the interpretation of the Copenhagen criteria.

However, this typology is far from offering a robust and parsimonious approach to the study of Euroscepticism due to a couple of reasons. First, the typology of Riishøj (2007) does not pay much attention to differences between stances towards European integration and EU membership; some categories he offers focus on European integration while some others including the practice-based and the experience-based Euroscepticism limit their focus to EU accession. Furthermore, it discusses the EU stances of member states and accession countries together as if they operate in the same political context. Therefore, it disregards the asymmetrical relationship between accession states and the EU, which implies the candidate states' inability to directly affect the EU decisions and rules that are imposed on them as membership criteria (Börzel and Risse 2012: 195). However, some types of Euroscepticism Riishøj (2007) offers are only applicable to candidate countries as they exclusively focus on the accession process. Moreover, the practice-based and the experience-based types of Euroscepticism do not seem to be different from each other as they both indicate scepticism towards the accession process. Finally, to reiterate the argument of Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008b: 246), 'the more complex and fine-grained the typology, the more difficult it is to operationalize and categorize the parties'. This issue is also applicable to the typology of Riishøj (2007) as he attempts to introduce too many concepts and arguments under the term Euroscepticism.

Overall, despite numerous scholarly attempts to classify Euroscepticism, the most widely used classification is the Hard-Soft categorization; because, despite some limitations, it offers a parsimonious typology which facilitates the operationalization and the mapping of Eurosceptic political parties across Europe. However, there is one important issue with the Hard-Soft typology. It primarily focuses on European integration which leads the authors to attach priority to EU member states rather than accession countries. This is mainly because, political parties in candidate countries do not tend to elaborate on European integration but rather concentrate on their own accession process (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008b: 246). Therefore, it becomes problematic to associate candidate countries with Euroscepticism, because Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008b: 243) argue that attitudes towards EU membership do not

necessarily explain a party's 'deeper position' on European integration in a broader sense. In this sense, there emerges a necessity to formulate a framework to better explain party-based Euroscepticism in accession countries. As discussed in Chapter II, the study applies the term Euroscepticism to candidate countries by distinguishing between opposition to Europe (i.e. objection to European integration as a whole), and opposition to the EU (i.e. resistance to the EU's accession conditionality).

## **1.2. Determinants of Party Stances towards European Integration**

The academic literature is particularly interested in the underlying causes of political party attitudes towards European integration. The main question is about 'what determines a political party's support for or opposition to European integration'. In the prevailing literature, the causes are primarily divided into those that privilege either party ideology or strategic party competition (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008b: 254). If ideology determines party politics, then parties are expected to act in accordance with their predetermined approach even though this proves detrimental to party interests. Alternatively, if strategy influences party behaviours, then parties are expected to act according to their interests which rely upon, for instance, voter preferences, the political agenda of party leaders and political competition with other parties. The bulk of the prevailing studies dealing with party stances towards European integration emphasize the importance of party ideology. Alternatively, a developing literature puts forward party strategy as another important factor in the explanation of attitudinal variation towards European integration. Finally, there are studies that reject the 'either/or' approach and criticize the binary thinking that reduces explanatory factors to the categories of ideology and strategy. They thus 'bring back' domestic cultural peculiarities such as religion in the analysis of political party stances towards European integration.

### *1.2.1. Ideology*

There are voluminous scholarly works which attach priority to ideological alignments in order to explain the EU stances of political parties. Accordingly, the Left/Right and

Libertarian/Authoritarian divide as well as social and political cleavages have been introduced as the root causes of party contestations against European integration. For instance, Aspinwall (2002: 82) claims that the location of parties in the Left-Right spectrum explains their preferences on European integration. He categorizes ideological alignments of parties as centre, left and right, and claims that both left and right parties are likely to reflect sceptical attitudes towards European integration for different reasons. Leftist parties are reserved about 'its market orientation and the potential erosion of state welfare institutions', while rightist parties fear 'the erosion of national power and the threat to national identity' that European integration might bring (Aspinwall 2002: 87). On the other hand, centre parties tend to take a 'pragmatic view of integration, seeing it as a useful step for ensuring economic prosperity and peace' (Aspinwall 2002: 86). Therefore, he argues that parties with centrist ideologies (either centre-right or centre-left parties) are more likely to favour European integration while the ones with non-centrist ideologies (either extreme right or extreme left parties) tend to be against European integration (Aspinwall 2002: 105).

In a more recent analysis, Aspinwall (2007) argues that ideology not only determines the EU stances of political parties but governments as well. Accordingly, leftist governments are more supportive of European integration than rightist governments (*ibid.*). For instance, in the Council of Ministers, leftist governments tend to choose 'co-operation', while rightist governments are more inclined to defend 'autonomy' (Aspinwall 2007: 112). Challenging the mainstream International Relations literature which highlights 'national interests' and 'distribution of power' as the determinants of government preference, Aspinwall (2007: 112) considers ideology as an important explanatory factor, because 'governments are made up of parties, who appear to bring their ideological predispositions to government policy choice'.

Similar to Aspinwall (2002), Conti and Memoli (2012: 104) find that Euroscepticism is mostly associated with extreme right and extreme left parties, while centre parties are generally supportive of European integration. They explain that unconditional opposition to European integration (Hard Euroscepticism) is largely attributed to extreme right parties since extreme left tends to express less radical and more reformist criticisms against the European project (Conti and Memoli 2012: 105).



Previous studies that accepted the importance of the Left/Right ideological divide to explain political contestations against European integration did not necessarily rely upon the difference between extreme and centre ideologies. For instance, Hix and Lord (1997) introduced the independence/integration dimension to better explain the effects of the 'national sovereignty' argument in the formulation of domestic stances towards the EU project. In other words, the Left/Right division is not sufficient to explain party stances towards European integration because, both left and right parties are internally divided between party members who emphasize national sovereignty and independence and those who have a more transnational outlook. In this context, it is possible to depict the European political space as essentially 'two-dimensional' including 'an Integration-Independence dimension, arising from the different identities and interests of national and territorial groups; and a Left-Right dimension, arising from the different interests of (transnational) socio-economic groups (i.e. classes)' (Hix 1999: 92). The independence/integration dimension emphasizes that political parties are positioned on 'a continuum from 'more' to 'less' integration' (Hix 1999: 73). Accordingly, there are four possible types of party attitudes towards European integration, namely; Left/more integration, Left/less integration, Right/more integration, and Right/less integration (Hix and Lord 1997).

Alternatively, Marks and Steenbergen (2002: 883) explain that the mainstream study of International Relations considers European integration free from ideological contestations. Realist scholars argue that national leaders formulate their EU policies according to national interests; Liberal intergovernmentalists claim that economic pressures determine domestic attitudes towards European integration, and Neofunctionalists believe in the cost-benefit assessments of elite actors (not only leaders, party officials but also bureaucrats) to determine their approach towards European integration 'in a dynamic context of problem solving, spillover, and learning' (ibid.). Therefore, despite their differences in the analysis of elite response to European integration, they have a common argument: 'contestation [against European integration] is independent of the Left/Right concerns that frame domestic politics' (Marks and Steenbergen 2002: 884). However, Marks and Steenbergen (2002: 889) claim that EU positions of political actors are coherently structured on the basis of Left/Right ideological alignments since the Left/Right dimension primarily

determines ‘the opinions, stances, and behavior of citizens, social movements, and political parties’. Referring to Marks et al (2002), they suggest adding the ‘libertarian-authoritarian’ dimension into the analysis (Marks and Steenbergen 2002: 890). Accordingly, libertarian parties are more likely to be pro-EU, while authoritarian parties rather tend to be Eurosceptic (ibid.).

Building upon the independence/integration dyad advanced by Hix and Lord (1997) and the libertarian-authoritarian dichotomy discussed by Marks et al (2002), a new ideological category has been introduced by Marks et al. (2006: 157); namely, the *GAL* (green/alternative/libertarian) - *TAN* (traditionalism/authority/nationalism) distinction that is informed by party preferences on non-economic issues such as environmental protection, traditional values rooted in secular-religious divide and/or immigration and preservation of national community (ibid.). A political party categorized as TAN party is likely to defend nationalism, conservatism and traditional cultural values; oppose immigrants and minority rights, and remain indifferent to environmental degradation; prefer order to ‘unbridled participation and freedom’ and claim that ‘the government should be a firm authority that expresses moral voice’. (Hooghe et al 2002: 967). Alternatively, a political party can be qualified as a GAL party, if it supports equal chances for everybody regardless of religion, ethnicity, gender and race; supports abortion, doctor-assisted suicide, same-sex marriages; favours increased democratic participation and freedom of speech; gives priority to environmental concerns and urges expansion of rights for immigrants and minorities (ibid.). Marks et al. (2006) argue that *GAL* parties tend to be pro-EU while *TAN* parties show more Eurosceptic reflexes in both Western and Eastern European countries. It is actually not surprising for *GAL* parties to support European integration, because the main principles of the European integration project (in particular, the ‘four freedoms’ promoting the free movement of people, goods, capital and services) emphasize the notion of human rights and social, cultural, economic and political exchange at the expense of national boundaries, much in line with the liberal outlook of *GAL* parties. Likewise, *TAN* parties are expected to reflect Euroscepticism as they tend to oppose supranational decision-making which undermines national sovereignty.

Similarly, Hooghe and Marks (2008: 15) explain that the Left/Right contestation can structure party competition on European integration; yet they admit that economic Left/Right approaches are not sufficient to determine the EU stances of political parties. For instance, it is not possible to measure the effects of ‘national identity’ on party attitudes towards Europe by only relying on a Left/Right distinction (Hooghe and Marks 2008: 17). Therefore, they suggest employing the GAL/TAN distinction in order to identify the effects of non-economic determinants of party positions towards European integration (ibid.). For instance, TAN parties (such as the FN that represents the extreme right in France) oppose European integration which allegedly weakens national sovereignty and damages national identity (ibid.). Conservative parties only reflect a moderate TAN stance since although they defend national sovereignty and identity, their economic neo-liberalism supports pooling national sovereignty to achieve more economic integration (ibid.). Therefore, conservative parties, including the British Conservatives, the French Gaullist party and the German Christian Democrats often face a dilemma between nationalist and neoliberal elements sending mixed signals regarding their EU stances (ibid.).

For their part, Left/GAL parties find the European project’s emphasis on market policies incompatible with Leftist economic policies (Hooghe and Marks 2008: 17). Nevertheless, Left/GAL parties such as Green Parties mostly endorse European integration due to its support for the establishment of ‘a multi-cultural European society’ notwithstanding its different economic approach and the so-called ‘democratic deficit’ it suffers from (ibid.). Therefore, their GAL stance determines their support for European integration although their Leftist economic approach contests the economic liberalism of the European integration project. However, this often leads to internal divisions within Left/GAL parties as in the example of the 2005 French and Dutch Referenda on the European Constitution which led to the creation of ‘NO’ camps within Social Democrat parties (ibid.). On the other hand, party stances towards European integration in the CEECs are more clearly polarized ‘because GAL/TAN and Left/Right positions reinforce, rather than crosscut, each other’ (Hooghe and Marks 2008: 18). For instance, Left parties, including the unreformed Communist parties, tend to be TAN, and TAN parties, including agrarian and populist parties, tend to be Left (ibid.). Therefore, in the CEECs, Left/TAN

parties tend to be Eurosceptics while Right/GAL parties are likely to be pro-EU (ibid.).

Flood and Soborski (2011: 22) believe that the GAL-TAN model is valuable in the analysis of party ideology since 'it is more hard-edged, less fuzzy and capable of covering much larger numbers of cases in a more economical way'. However, they criticize it for overlooking significant factors that may explain ideological variation within and between parties, and thus can have an important bearing on their behaviour (ibid.). For instance, the significant influence of 'traditional Catholicism' in Polish politics make both rightist and leftist parties adopt TAN ideology disproving Marks et al (2006) who claim that 'in Central and Eastern Europe TAN values correlate with left-wing positions in favour of state economic control, and GAL values with economic liberalism' (ibid.).

To further elaborate on party ideology, some scholars emphasize the importance of long standing cleavages within societies which shape political ideologies and structure party positions. For instance, Marks and Wilson (2000: 433) rely on social and political cleavages to explain the determinants of party attitudes towards European integration. They investigate to what extent the response of political parties to European integration is 'filtered by historical predispositions rooted in social cleavages that structure political competition in West European party systems' (ibid.). Benefitting from the cleavage theory of Lipset and Rokkan (1967), they explain that the era from the Protestant Reformation to the Industrial Revolution in which modern European party systems were shaped through 'a series of historical conflicts about state building, religion and class', resulted into the creation of 'distinct and highly durable identities, social institutions and patterns of political contestation' (ibid.). According to Marks and Wilson (2000: 434), these long standing ideological stances determine how today's political parties react to new issues such as European integration. They don't consider political parties as 'empty vessels into which issue positions are poured in response to electoral or constituency pressures', but as organizations with 'historically rooted orientations that guide their response to new issues' (ibid.). In this line of thinking, it is the long standing cleavages rather than strategic party competition which primarily govern the EU policies of political parties. Marks and Wilson (2000: 437-9) give examples of party positions towards the EU

stimulated by (class, religious and core-periphery) cleavages. European integration has both an economic and political character which creates tension for political parties competing on the class (or Left/Right) cleavage (Marks and Wilson 2000: 437). For instance, social democratic parties are challenged by the fact that economic integration threatens their regulatory economic approach for their own country, while political integration offers a prospect for establishing authoritative regulation at the European level (ibid.). For right wing parties, it is the same logic in reverse. European integration is economically advantageous since it promotes free market economy but politically it is undesirable because it ‘threatens to create a supranational government for the EU as a whole that can regulate markets while negating regime competition among individual states’ (Marks and Wilson 2000: 438). Therefore, European integration is both desirable and irritating at the same time for these political parties having contending ideological stances.

Moreover, religious cleavages can structure party positions towards Europe as well. For instance, a Catholic party can support European integration because it is ‘consistent with the supranational aspirations of the Catholic Church and the anti-national bias of Catholic parties’, whereas the nationalistic character of Protestant churches is likely to lead Protestant parties to be rather sceptical of European supranationalism (ibid.). Finally, the centre–periphery cleavage is useful, in particular, to explain the EU policies of peripheral minority parties. Peripheral parties oppose centralization of authority; therefore, they are more likely to support European integration which facilitates decentralization (ibid.). On the other hand, nationalist parties are more likely to oppose European integration as it diffuses central authority and undermines state sovereignty (Marks and Wilson 2000: 439).

Similarly, Marks et al (2002: 585) stress the importance of cleavages which ‘give rise to ideological commitments or “prisms” through which political parties respond to ... European integration’ in Western Europe. Political parties formulate policies in conformity with their ‘long-lasting’ political agendas; therefore the ideological location of a party in a party family stands as a crucial determinant of its position towards European integration (Marks et al 2002: 585). Accordingly, liberals, conservatives, Christian democrats, social democrats, green and regionalist parties are listed as Europhile parties; while agrarian, extreme right and communist/extreme left

parties are generally considered as Eurosceptic (Marks et al 2002: 590). Similar to Aspinwall (2002), they point out that parties on the opposite edges of ideological spectrum tend to oppose European integration while centre parties tend to be more supportive of the EU project (Marks et al 2002).

### *1.2.2. Strategy*

On the other hand, it is claimed that party stances towards European integration are rather strategic choices of parties due to stiff domestic competition with other parties and changing voter preferences. For instance, Sitter (2001), relying on the cases of Nordic countries, attributes a greater role to party competition in the analysis of party-based Euroscepticism. He claims that Euroscepticism is ‘the politics of opposition’. Being in government or opposition, according to Sitter (2001), makes a significant difference in the EU policies of political parties. For instance, ‘catch-all’ parties when in opposition experience difficulties in pursuing pro-EU policies, especially if party electorate is divided over the issue of European integration creating opposing factions within the party (Sitter 2001: 25). According to this argument, if a party is relegated from government to opposition, it tends to pursue Eurosceptic policies. On the other hand, Sitter (2001: 27) also argues that Eurosceptic parties are likely ‘to modify or avoid Euro-scepticism to the extent that they aspire to or actually participate in governing coalitions’. Therefore, ‘strategies of opposition and coalition-building’ change the dynamics of Euroscepticism and Euro-supportiveness in party politics (ibid.). Overall, Sitter (2001: 37) does not accept Euroscepticism as ‘a single coherent stance on the EU as a polity’, because not only ideology but also strategic decision-making due to government-opposition positioning contributes to the development of Eurosceptic party politics. Similarly, Gaffney (1996: 19) downgrades the importance of party ideology arguing that ‘the EU can in principle engender allegiance or hostility from any ideological perspective’. He argues that once in government, political parties turn out to be more supportive of the EU project; for instance the French Communist Party toned down its critical stance towards the European Community after securing a place in the coalition government of 1981 (ibid.). Likewise, Taggart and Szczerbiak (2013: 21-29), although highlighting the fact that

not only opposition parties but also governments pursue Eurosceptic policies, explain how some Eurosceptic parties, such as AKEL in Cyprus, the Centre Party in Estonia and the Green Party in Sweden, moderated their Euroscepticism and decreased the salience of the European issue when they were in government.

Kopecký and Mudde (2002) argue that both ideology and strategy play a role in political party attitudes towards European integration. They suggest distinguishing those who support 'the ideas underlying the process of European integration' and criticize 'the current and/or future direction of the EU' from those who support both the ideas behind EU integration and the current state of the EU (including EU institutions and policies). In their opinion, ideology determines 'a party's support for the ideas underlying the process of European integration' but fails to explain whether a party will support the current EU polity or not (Kopecký and Mudde 2002: 319-320). They argue that the likelihood of a party's support for the idea of European integration can be inferred by looking at which party family it belongs to. Beyme (1985) identifies nine party families including liberal/radical, socialist/social democrat, conservative, communist, Christian democratic, agrarian, regional/ethnic, extreme right, and ecologist. Accordingly, parties that are affiliated with social democratic, conservative, Christian democrat, regional/ethnic and liberal traditions tend to generally endorse European integration whereas extreme right and extreme left/communist parties tend to reject the idea of European integration outright (Kopecký and Mudde 2002: 320). However, it is difficult, if not impossible to understand their attitudinal variation towards the EU institutions and policies by simply looking at political parties' ideological alignments. It is thus necessary to consider the factor of strategy. For instance, in support of Gaffney (1996) and Sitter (2001), Kopecký and Mudde (2002: 321) claim that being in opposition or government influences party stances towards the EU. Accordingly, those in opposition tend to be more sceptical of EU policies and institutional rules than governing parties.

Hooghe and Marks (2008: 19) stress the fact that party leaders may extend strategic support for European integration if it carries an important potential to provide electoral popularity (*ibid.*). However, they claim that 'the ability of party leaders to chase votes by strategic positioning is constrained by reputational considerations and

the ideological commitment of party activists' (ibid.). According to Hooghe and Marks (2008: 19), political parties have long-term ideological commitments which 'constrain strategic positioning'; therefore, party leaders will not risk dividing the party, because 'disunity not only reduces a party's electoral popularity; it is the most frequent cause of party death'.

Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008b) approach the 'ideology vs strategy' debate from a different angle. They stand against the arguments presenting the effects of ideology and strategy in dichotomous terms (as 'either/or'), and they suggest acknowledging the significance of both ideology and strategy as the key determinants of party Euroscepticism (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008b: 239). Accordingly, party preferences on the EU project are determined by two underlying factors: (1) a party's ideological profile and values, and (2) the perceived interests of party supporters (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008b: 256). Which factor plays a greater role in party preferences depends on whether the party under scrutiny 'is primarily a more ideological, value-based goal-seeking or a more pragmatic office-seeking party' (ibid.). A goal-seeking party will base its actions on its ideology whereas the office-seeking party will 'undertake a cruder economic cost-benefit analysis of how European integration is likely to benefit its supporters' (ibid.). It is not an easy task 'to "read" a party's position [on European integration] from whatever ideological family it belongs to', because not all parties act in accordance with their ideological traditions (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008b: 257). Overall, contrary to the expectation of Hooghe and Marks (2008), there is no 'straightforward linear relationship between general party ideology and party position on Europe' (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008b: 257).

### *1.2.3. Other factors*

Ideology and strategy are not the sole determinant factors influencing party behaviours towards European integration. National specificities are also depicted as important triggers of Euroscepticism. For instance, Gaffney (1996: 5) highlights the 'national character' of political parties and challenges the effects of party families on attitudes towards European integration. He argues that numerous parties which are considered within the same party family, such as the German SPD and the Spanish



Socialists, turn out to be very much different from each other due to their 'national specificities' (Gaffney 1996: 4).

Similarly, Flood and Soborski (2011: 3) find that positive and negative perceptions of EU integration in general, and of specific EU policies in particular, cannot be directly explained by 'the broad ideological orientations associated with a given party family or its characteristic location on the left/right axis'. For example, the British Conservative Party, the French UMP, the Polish PO and the PiS are all considered as centre right parties but they demonstrate varying degrees of support for and opposition to European integration (ibid.). Flood and Soborski (2011: 4) believe that domestic specificities such as factions within parties, varying degrees of nationalism and the role of religion in domestic politics are influential for parties to prioritize their policy choices regarding the 'relative costs and benefits of integration'. For instance, although the UMP in France was largely a pro-EU party, the emergence of a nationalist faction against the adoption of the Treaty of European Union (TEU) in 1992 constituted a significant challenge to the UMP's support for European integration (Flood and Soborski 2011: 9). Moreover, the strong attachment of the PiS in Poland to traditional Catholicism jeopardizes its support for European integration due to the secular character of EU politics (Flood and Soborski 2011: 24).

Finally, Conti and Memoli (2012) argue that party attitudes to European integration are different in new and old member states. They claim that parties in new member states (including mainstream parties) rather remain cautious to further advancement in the EU project and grow more reluctant than parties in old member states about 'the supranational mode of decision-making', as they are 'more concerned about the defence of national identity' (Conti and Memoli 2012: 106).

Overall, the extant literature focuses on ideology and strategic choices as well as national character and religion as the underlying factors which determine whether a political party supports or opposes European integration. However, these factors are all domestic in nature and fail to offer a definitive explanation to the changing party positions towards the EU especially in accession countries. This study claims that not only domestic factors such as ideology and party competition but also external factors (caused by the EU) determine party stances in candidate countries towards the EU and

their EU accession in particular, because, as elaborated in Chapter II, opposition to the EU often materializes as a reaction to the EU's accession conditionality which is perceived as selective and discriminatory in accession countries. For instance, the EU's selectivity in the application of its minority rights condition led many political parties in different candidate countries to revise their support for EU accession (Fawn 2001; Jovic 2006; Koinova, 2011).

### **1.3. Euroscepticism in Accession Countries**

As elaborated in Chapter II, concerning party-based Euroscepticism, Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008a:242) attach priority to 'underlying support for or opposition to the European integration project as embodied in the EU' and 'attitudes towards further actual or planned extensions of EU competencies' rather than 'a party's support for or opposition to their country's membership at any given time'. They differentiate between opposition to European integration and opposition to EU membership, because it is not possible to trace a party's 'deeper position' on European integration from its attitudes towards EU membership (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008b: 243). Therefore, it is difficult to apply Euroscepticism to candidate countries because domestic political actors are not much interested in broader discussions on European integration; they rather focus on the membership process (Szczerbiak 2008). The most popular exception is the Civic Democratic Party (ODS) in the Czech Republic whose leader Vaclav Klaus denounced the EU as 'too bureaucratic and too economically interventionist as a result of its origins in the post-war West European social and Christian democracy' (Hanley 2008: 255).

Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008a: 4) emphasize that one 'must be wary of confusing the tough negotiating positions of parties when in government and engaged in the negotiations for EU membership with "Euroscepticism"'. However, the mainstream literature is replete with analyses which fail to differentiate between opposition to European integration and opposition to EU membership, and use the Hard-Soft typology for candidate countries. For instance, scrutinizing Polish political parties during the accession process, Markowski and Tucker (2010) treat any critical stance against Polish membership process as an example of Euroscepticism. Ladrech (2009:

11) depicts critical party responses to EU accession conditionality in Croatia, Montenegro, and Serbia as Soft Euroscepticism. Agapiou-Josephides (2011: 169) discusses the EU policies of Cypriot political parties in the context of a transition from Hard Euroscepticism to Soft Euroscepticism, implying a shift from opposing EU entry to 'accepting EU membership but [remaining] critical of it'. Similarly, Batory (2008) applies the Hard-Soft typology to Hungarian political parties based on their critical stance towards their country's EU negotiation process. Accordingly, she considers the Justice and Life Party (MIEP) as Hard Eurosceptic since the MIEP rejects EU membership outright; on the other hand, the Hungarian Fidesz party is Soft Eurosceptic due to its criticisms against the negotiation process (ibid.).

Moreover, Rohrschneider and Whitefield (2006: 143) explain the increasing number of party contestations against EU membership in accession countries as the accumulation of Euroscepticism triggered by both nationalism and domestic cost-benefit calculation. This argument supports Lindstrom (2002) who claims that Euroscepticism in Croatia is essentially triggered by nationalist sentiments while political contestations against EU membership in Slovenia are mainly of pragmatic nature.

Finally, Hughes et al (2002) discuss party contestations in the CEECs and tend to use opposition to European integration and opposition to EU membership interchangeably. They define Soft Euroscepticism in accession countries as a critical position against 'the impact of EU membership as regards (a) specific sectoral interests and policy areas, (b) the purchase of land by foreigners, or (c) national interests and loss of sovereignty', 'without opposing membership outright' (Hughes et al 2002: 334). They nevertheless revise their approach to Euroscepticism in a recent article admitting the fact that critical stance in accession countries against EU membership negotiations is prone to be confused with Euroscepticism (Hughes et al 2008: 190).

The application of Hard and Soft Euroscepticism to candidate countries is observed in scholarly works on the Turkish case as well (Güneş-Ayata, 2003; Spiering 2007; Gülmez, 2008, Gülmez and Buhari-Gülmez, 2008; Taraktaş, 2008; Yıldırım et al., 2008; Avcı 2011b; Celep 2011; Verney 2011; Yılmaz 2011). The main opposition

party in Turkey, the CHP has often been depicted as a Soft Eurosceptic party due to its hard-line position against EU-led reforms despite its traditional pro-EU orientation (Spiering 2007; Gülmez, 2008; Gülmez & Buhari-Gülmez, 2008; Celep 2011; Verney 2011; Yılmaz 2011). The MHP's EU stance on the other hand has been more controversial due to its far right nationalism. Güneş-Ayata (2003: 212) and Spiering (2007: 176) consider the MHP as a Hard Eurosceptic party since party officials had called for the withdrawal of Turkey's EU membership bid, and stressed the necessity for Turkey to seek new alliances outside Europe. Avcı (2011b: 445) and Yılmaz (2011: 195) explain that the MHP often navigates between Hard and Soft Euroscepticism due to strategic considerations: it becomes Soft Eurosceptic when in government and Hard Eurosceptic when in opposition. On the other hand, the AKP government and the pro-Kurdish BDP have been considered as the only true pro-EU parties in the Turkish parliament (Yılmaz 2011).

The Hard-Soft typology has become so popular in Turkish academia that it has even been used to explain the EU stances of public opinion and trade unions in Turkey (Güneş-Ayata 2003; Yıldırım et al 2008). Güneş-Ayata (2003: 206) depicts the Turkish public as Soft Eurosceptic due to its tendency to oppose EU-led reforms despite its traditionally high level of support for membership. Yıldırım et al (2008) consider Turkish trade unions as Soft Eurosceptic relying on their official statements finding particular EU reforms (such as reforms of minority rights) detrimental to national sovereignty.

Overall, the relevant literature tends to apply the typology of Hard-Soft Euroscepticism to accession countries despite the fact that party contestations against EU membership do not necessarily qualify as Euroscepticism. Some scholars seek to escape this tendency by emphasizing the difference between opposition to European integration and opposition to EU accession. For instance, Rulikova (2004) highlights the distinct context of the accession process which makes party-based Euroscepticism in candidate countries completely different from Eurosceptic attitudes in EU member states. She states that political parties in accession countries take a critical stance against their own EU accession process rather than European integration as a whole (Rulikova 2004: 34). As the accession process dictates a candidate to 'tacitly adapt most, if not all, external outputs to its legal domestic order', domestic political actors

tend to react to such top-down reforms (ibid.). Accordingly, most political parties officially support membership but ‘schizophrenically’ react to membership conditions which would allegedly ‘damage’ the country (Rulikova 2004:40). However, Rulikova (2004) does not elaborate on how party-based Euroscepticism in candidate countries develops as a reaction to the complexities deriving from the application of the EU’s membership conditionality. Stojic (2011: 4) admits the fact that it is difficult to identify Serbian political parties as Eurosceptical as no Serbian party shares any views on European integration; instead, they all concentrate upon Serbia’s membership process (ibid.). However, Stojic does not offer a framework to apply Euroscepticism to candidate countries. The main objective of this study is to fill the gap in the literature by developing a framework based on Euroscepticism that better explains the case of accession countries and Turkey in particular.

#### **1.4. Party attitudes towards European integration in Turkey**

Opposition to EU accession had penetrated into the rhetoric of political forces located on the fringes of the Turkish political system since the 1960s (Yılmaz 2009a). Radical leftist groups perceived Turkey’s EU membership as ‘an appendage of American imperialism’, Islamist groups opposed it since they considered the EU as a ‘Christian club’, and finally radical right groups rejected membership as it would disintegrate the Turkish Republic (ibid.). For their part, mainstream political parties rather praised EU membership as the fulfilment of Ataturk’s modernization project emphasizing the economic and democratic developments Turkey’s EU accession would bring (Gülmez 2008; Celep 2011).

Initiating the formal association with the European Community (EC) through the signature of the Ankara association agreement in 1963, Turkey sought to become a part of the EC ever since. Although the 1980 *coup d’état* jeopardized its European vocation for a brief period, Turkey made its official membership application in 1987 and was granted the official candidate status in 1999 (Öniş and Grigoriadis 2010: 264). The AKP’s rise to power in 2002 remarkably increased Turkey’s EU accession prospects. Shortly after its electoral victory, the AKP government devoted much energy to comply with the Copenhagen criteria through a series of economic and

political reforms which triggered the golden age of Turkey-EU relations resulting in the initiation of accession negotiations (Öniş 2008: 38). The AKP's active Europeanism divided the scholarly literature. On the one hand, some scholars explained the AKP's EU policy with its liberal agenda aiming to democratize Turkey more than ever. The AKP was depicted as a 'conservative globalist' which successfully mobilized the masses to achieve democratization through EU membership (Öniş 2007). It was also praised by some as the bringer of Kantian peace to Turkey that had long been struggling with internal conflicts (Kirişci 2006). Accordingly, the AKP's pro-EU policies carried a great potential to establish 'New Turkey' which is conservative but more democratic and prosperous (Fuller 2008).

On the other hand, numerous scholars argue that the AKP's pro-EU stance was purely strategic. As a pro-Islamic political actor, the AKP approached EU accession process as a survival strategy through which it aimed to gain political leverage against Kemalist veto players including the Army, the Judiciary and the CHP that had closed down the Welfare Party (RP), the predecessor of the AKP (Çınar 2008; Yavuz 2009; Öniş 2010; Saatçioğlu 2010; Baudner 2012; Kaliber 2013; Saatçioğlu and El Basani 2013). The AKP government supported EU membership as long as the accession criteria aligned with its political preferences and survival strategies (Kirişci 2009; Kubicek 2011; Baudner 2012; Börzel 2012). The AKP's commitment to EU reforms is often criticized as 'arbitrary and functional' (if not 'phony'), and there is a question mark over whether the party is ever devoted to 'European collective identity, norms and rules, or policy coordination' (Rahigh-Aghsan 2011: 44). After the suspension of negotiations in 2006, the AKP resorted to 'loose Europeanization' implying that 'the EU will be no longer at the center-stage' of the AKP's foreign policy agenda (Öniş and Yılmaz 2009: 20). According to Avcı (2011a: 419) and Oğuzlu (2012: 233), this 'passive activism' involving a minimum stay in the EU game is necessary for the AKP, since abandoning the EU quest might damage the AKP's external credibility and even give credit to the accusations of its secular rivals that the AKP had a hidden-agenda to Islamize Turkey. On the other hand, others claim that the AKP no longer needs to hide its pro-Islamic political agenda and it no longer requires a pro-EU outlook in its policy making, since it has already consolidated its authority and power

at home neutralising its secular rivals including the Turkish army and the Judiciary (Baudner 2013; Kubicek 2013; Saatçioğlu and El Basani 2013).

The EU policy of the CHP, the main opposition party is rather contradictory. The party has long been supporting EU membership with the justification that EU accession will help the realization of Kemal Atatürk's ideals for a modern and Westernized Turkey. However, its self-proclaimed historical legacy to preserve Atatürk's Republic forces the CHP to resist the EU-led reform processes that have sought to empower domestic rivals of the Kemalist establishment, including the Kurdish minority and political Islamist groups (Keyman and Öniş 2007: 214). Therefore, it is the Kemalist principles which make the CHP support and criticize EU membership at the same time (Celep 2011). The CHP's hard-line approach towards Turkey's EU membership process has become stronger during the leadership of Deniz Baykal whose self-declared duty was to protect the integrity of the Turkish Republic against internal and external threats (Yılmaz 2011). Öniş (2010: 361) explains that the CHP as well as other secular political elites in Turkey supported EU membership in order to consolidate the secular and modern character of Turkey and prevent the Islamisation of Turkish society, but they were annoyed by the EU's support for the pro-Islamic AKP government's reformist policies.

The literature offers two main explanations (strategy and ideology) to the CHP's critical stance towards EU membership. For instance, Celep (2011) explains the CHP's critical stance towards the EU with government-opposition dynamics. He argues that the CHP adopted a critical position against EU accession in order to challenge the AKP government's pro-EU policy and weaken its electoral popularity (Celep 2011: 424). Likewise, Baudner (2012: 935) contends that the CHP's critical EU policy did not necessarily stem from 'a pure vote-maximizing strategy'; it was rather based on a more comprehensive strategy to delegitimize and even overthrow the pro-Islamic AKP government.

On the other hand, Keyman and Öniş (2007: 214) highlight the CHP's ideological commitment to Republican principles which structure its position towards Turkey's EU membership. Although the CHP proclaims to be a Social Democrat party, its historical attachment to the protection of the Republic constrains its liberal rhetoric

and restricts its pro-EU stance (ibid.). The CHP's hard-line stance against the EU further intensified with the realization that the EU membership process shifted 'the balance of forces in Turkish politics in the direction of strengthening religious conservatives' (Öniş 2010: 369). Accordingly, there emerged a paradoxical political climate in Turkey whereby the pro-Islamic AKP established itself as a vigorous supporter of EU accession, while the 'Social democrat' CHP turned out to be a 'defensive nationalist' resisting the EU-led reform process (Öniş 2007: 247).

Contrary to his predecessor (Deniz Baykal), the new leader of the CHP (Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu) embraced a liberal rhetoric aiming to revive Turkey's EU accession perspective (Celep 2011; Baudner 2012; Kaliber 2013). He refrained from resorting to Baykal's nationalism during his first election campaign and rather focused on domestic economic problems and fight against corruption (Cengiz and Hoffmann 2012: 261). He also abandoned Baykal's hard-line EU stance and often reiterated the CHP's commitment to Turkey's EU accession. Many scholars are convinced that the leadership change initiated a reform process within the CHP to abandon its conservative and nationalist rhetoric; yet they find it too early to talk about a liberal and pro-EU transformation of the CHP (Celep 2011; Baudner 2012; Oğuzlu 2012; Öniş 2012; Özipek 2012; Yanık 2012; Kaliber 2013).

The MHP, as a far-right ultra-nationalist party, approaches EU membership with suspicion. Europeanization has never been an objective for the MHP since party officials rather consider Turkey-EU relations as 'a matter of primarily economical and security-related alliances' (Canefe and Bora 2003: 144). Despite several scholars who consider the MHP as Hard Eurosceptic, Öniş (2010: 369) states that the MHP's opposition is 'not to the idea of a EU membership per se, but to the conditions attached to a membership' (similar to the CHP's EU stance). Its long-standing dismissal of Turkey's Kurdish problem and assumption that the EU-led reforms granting more rights to Kurds will ensure the partition of Turkey mainly structure its critical stance towards Turkey's EU accession process (Avcı, 2011b: 441; Öniş, 2003: 45). During its term in the office as a coalition partner between 1999 and 2002, the MHP opposed many EU-led reforms such as the freedom of speech and the abolition of the death penalty in order to protect the Turkish state against Kurdish separatism (Avcı, 2011b: 440). Nevertheless, the MHP's EU stance is not only guided by its



nationalist ideology but it also follows strategy. As previously pointed out, the MHP adopted a softer stance towards EU membership when in government (1999-2002), whereas it has demonstrated a hard-line stance when in opposition (Avcı 2011b: 445).

Finally, the pro-Kurdish BDP has often been taken for granted as a pro-EU party without much elaboration (Öniş 2010; Yılmaz 2011; Oğuzlu 2012). There are a few scholarly works scrutinizing the EU policy of the BDP in detail. A recent study by Balcı (2013) argues that it is the combination of ideological commitments and strategic party competition which has forced the BDP to reflect an ‘in-between’ position towards EU membership. Accordingly, since the party is ideologically affiliated with the PKK that is accepted as a terrorist organization by the EU, the BDP had to revise its pro-EU stance after the PKK’s recent critical turn towards EU accession (ibid.). However, the BDP did not totally abandon its support for EU accession and party officials did not desire to be identified as Eurosceptic, because they had no intention to be considered in the same camp with their traditional Kemalist rivals including the CHP and the MHP (Balcı 2013: 15).

The Cyprus problem and the EU’s Cyprus conditionality have also been discussed by some as important external triggers of party contestations against EU membership in Turkey (Eylemer and Taş 2007; Spiering 2007; Gülmez and Buhari-Gülmez 2008; Öniş and Yılmaz 2009; Öniş 2010; Oğuzlu 2012). Until the AKP era, there was a consensus among Turkish political parties to attach priority to Turkey’s Cyprus policy over EU membership (Gülmez and Buhari-Gülmez 2008). The AKP government’s support for the Annan Plan changed the traditionally conservative Turkish approach towards the Cyprus problem and was faced with strong resistance at home mainly led by the opposition parties, the CHP and the MHP (ibid.). However, the failure of the Annan Plan and the partial suspension of accession negotiations in 2006 due to Turkey’s failure to comply with the EU’s Cyprus conditionality diminished the enthusiasm of the AKP government not only to solve the Cyprus problem but also work for the realization of Turkey’s EU membership (Öniş and Yılmaz 2009; Öniş 2010; Oğuzlu 2012).

Another explanatory factor that is emphasized in the Turkish case is the ‘Sèvres Syndrome’ which may structure the critical EU stances of Turkish political parties.

The ‘Sèvres Syndrome’ refers to ‘fear of plots by external enemies, especially the Western countries, and their alleged internal collaborators –ethnic and religious minorities in Turkey– to weaken, carve up and terminate the existence of the Turkish Republic’ (Nefes 2013: 252). Fear of division is well-entrenched within Turkish society. Recent studies indicate that an important portion of the Turkish public believes in the existence of foreign conspiracies to dismantle the Turkish Republic (Guida 2008; Yılmaz 2006 and 2009a).

The ‘Sèvres Syndrome’ has also a religious connotation as it secures a deep-seated conviction that the West (in particular, Europe) acts with a Crusader mentality to sweep Muslim Turks away from Anatolia and return those lands back to their rightful owners, i.e. the Christians (Yılmaz 2006: 36-37). Therefore, it is not only embraced by Republicans but also conservative Muslims who fear the reincarnation of the Crusader spirit to destroy the Muslim presence in Anatolia (Yılmaz 2006; Guida 2008). The recent murders of several Christians in Turkey including a reverend in Trabzon have been explained in the literature as the culmination of this ‘insecurity complex’ in the public against foreigners who are often seen as missionaries and conspirators against Turkey (Guida 2008: 38-42).

The CHP and the MHP are depicted in the literature as the primary political actors reflecting the Sèvres Syndrome due to their strong bonds with the Republican regime and their self-proclaimed duty to protect it against foreign conspiracies (Guida 2008; Göçek 2011; Nefes 2013). According to this line of thinking, the CHP and the MHP grow sceptical of EU membership because they inherited a historical lack of trust against Europeans. On the other hand, the AKP government is often considered ‘immune’ to the Sèvres Syndrome, since it does not share a Republican and statist ideology and its policies are mostly reformist in nature (Guida 2008; Göçek 2011; Nefes 2013).

Finally, the literature points to the burgeoning Turkey-scepticism within the EU as an impediment to Turkey’s eventual accession. Utilitarian concerns such as a possible rise in unemployment and inflation in Europe after Turkey’s membership due to its large population and ailing economy; as well as its alarming human rights records,

Kurdish problem, its exposure to PKK terrorism, proximity to the troubled regions such as the Middle East are emphasized as the main justifications behind the growing reluctance of public and political elite in the EU against Turkish accession (Ruiz-Jiménez & Torreblanca, 2007:2-3, Vreese et al., 2008: 513, Taraktas, 2008: 254). Moreover, according to some authors (Güneş-Ayata 2003; Yılmaz 2007; Canan-Sokullu 2011), Turkey is not desired in the EU because it is not considered European. Güneş-Ayata (2003: 218) argues that throughout history, Europeans always perceived Turks as brutes and invaders, and European opposition to Turkey's EU accession stands as the reincarnation of this mentality. Yılmaz (2007: 293) claims that Turkey is treated as an 'other' in the mental maps of many Europeans, primarily because Turks do not share the Christian tradition. A common fear within the European public is that Turkish membership will result in a step towards the Islamisation of Europe (Canan-Sokullu 2011: 484). Overall, it is increasingly assumed that there is a significant trend of political opposition within Europe against Turkey's EU entry. Recent scholarly works associate the rising Euroscepticism in Turkish politics with the increasing questioning of the very basis of Turkish membership by important European political figures such as Nicholas Sarkozy in France and Angela Merkel in Germany (Öniş and Yılmaz 2009; Öniş 2010 and 2012; Oğuzlu 2012). However, the existing literature fails to discuss to what extent the EU stances of Turkish political actors can be associated with 'opposition' to Turkey coming from within the EU.

Overall, this chapter discussed the prevailing literature about political contestations against European integration as a whole and the EU membership process. There are two problematic tendencies in the relevant literature. First, scholars use Euroscepticism to discuss party politics in accession countries although political actors in candidate countries primarily focus their criticisms on their country's accession process rather than European integration and its trajectory. Second, the difference between opposition to Europe and opposition to the EU membership process often go unnoticed, since scholars lump them together as Euroscepticism. The Turkish case reflects a similar tendency. Turkish political parties focus on Turkey's EU accession only. Hence, the scholarly works use Euroscepticism to explain Turkish opposition to EU membership, because of the general indifference in Turkish politics to wider discussions about European integration. However, opposition to EU

membership does not necessarily qualify as Euroscepticism in a broader sense since it does not give a clear idea about a party's deeper stance on European integration. Therefore, it is necessary to develop a framework that explains Euroscepticism in candidate countries by distinguishing between opposition to European integration and party opposition to the membership process. Moreover, the scholarly works focusing on Turkey's EU membership primarily explain the EU stances of Turkish political parties with domestic factors; namely strategy and ideology. Some studies also highlight the Cyprus conflict as an external trigger of political scepticism against EU membership in Turkey, while others emphasize the effects of the Sèvres Syndrome on the Euroscepticism of Turkish political parties. However, the prevailing tendency is to discuss domestic factors as if they are independent from external developments. Even though there is a growing literature that seeks to take into account EU-level factors such as European 'reluctance' towards Turkey's accession, it fails to explain whether or how such 'reluctance' in Europe influences party politics in Turkey. This study suggests considering the interaction between domestic and external factors by discussing their effects on Turkish political parties comparatively. The study thus investigates whether Turkish political elites perceive an emerging opposition to Turkey in Europe and (if so), whether or how this perception structures their stance towards EU membership. Finally, the prevailing literature often offers only single-party studies in the discussion of Turkish EU membership with a clear omission of the BDP's EU policy. In order to remedy this gap, the study compares and contrasts the EU stances of all four political parties represented in the Turkish Parliament relying on original primary data gathered through elite interviews conducted by the author.

The next chapter will offer a detailed discussion of the term Euroscepticism to explain political party contestations in candidate countries against the EU accession process. Identifying Euroscepticism reflected by political actors in accession countries as a critical stance against EU membership in response to the complex nature of the EU's membership conditionality (consisting of both issue-specific and country-specific conditions), the chapter will finally specify six main hypotheses in order to find out the main determinants of Eurosceptic politics in accession countries and Turkey in particular.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: EUROSCEPTICISM IN CANDIDATE COUNTRIES**

This thesis follows the suggestion that there is a need for a different analytical framework for the study of political party positions towards European Union (EU) membership in candidate countries. It demonstrates that the explanatory power of models based on Euroscepticism –defined as opposing Europe– diminishes when the focus of the study shifts from member countries to the accession countries and from a holistic view of European integration process to the particular stage of accession negotiations. A critical stance embraced in candidate countries does not necessarily qualify as opposition to Europe as a whole, but it rather tends to target EU membership conditionality and its membership negotiations. In order to highlight this point, the study suggests applying the term Euroscepticism to candidate countries emphasizing the domestic resistance against EU membership in reaction to the complications and the uncertainty that arise from bilateral negotiations over EU membership. Euroscepticism in candidate countries can be distinguished from Euroscepticism in member states by its specific focus on accession negotiations and a strong emphasis on the reactionary nature of sceptical attitudes in candidate countries as opposed to a broader perspective that is applied mostly to member states.

In this context, Euroscepticism in candidate countries stresses the rise of negative reactions during accession negotiations, deriving not only from domestic considerations (domestic cost-benefit calculations and threat perceptions) but also from the EU's perceived selectivity in the application of its conditionality. The EU's application of conditionality is perceived as highly selective when it expands its membership criteria by introducing additional conditions or applies its conditions in a selective and discriminatory manner. This sparks negative reactions because of the

uncertainty it generates. Assuming that different degrees and forms of uncertainty create different types of reactions in candidate countries, this study will examine the reactionary nature of Euroscepticism and the significance of the EU's selectivity in its accession conditionality as a key determinant factor in explaining Eurosceptic party attitudes.

Developing six hypotheses concerning the effects of party ideology and party competition (government-opposition positioning and electoral popularity) on Eurosceptic party behaviour, the chapter suggests that party-based Euroscepticism in candidate countries is only partly explained by political ideology and party competition. The explanatory power of these factors tends to diminish as the perception of selectivity in the application of EU's conditionality increases. Accordingly, dissimilar parties (with different ideologies and positions in domestic political system) in candidate states tend to take a common stance towards EU membership process: they resist the EU accession process by claiming that the EU treats their candidacy unfairly. In this regard, focusing on political attitudes of a candidate country during the accession negotiations with the EU, this study aims to go beyond the prevailing accounts that explain scepticism towards the EU as merely reflecting domestic dispositions (like ideology or strategic choices). In order to grasp the reactionary nature of scepticism towards EU membership in a candidate country, it is necessary to consider the context in which the candidate country and the EU interact and how the EU's treatment of accession negotiations is perceived by the candidate country.

This chapter will first elaborate on Euroscepticism in candidate countries, which seeks to emphasize the interactionary context of the accession process. Euroscepticism is embraced by political actors against two types of EU conditionality (issue-specific and country-specific). Then, it will discuss the main determinants of party attitudes towards the EU in accession countries during membership negotiations under two categories: ideological and strategic. It will propose six hypotheses based on ideology (Left-Right and GAL/TAN dimensions of party ideology) and on strategy (party-competition based on mainstream-fringe and government-opposition positioning). The main innovation of this research is to consider the effect of the EU-driven factors as a key determinant in explaining Euroscepticism in accession states.

## **2.1. A particular focus on the stage of EU accession negotiations in accession countries**

As previously discussed, the prevailing literature mainly explains party positions towards the EU with reference to the term ‘Euroscepticism’ defined as ‘the idea of contingent or qualified opposition, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration’ (Taggart 1998: 366). Despite the abundance of scholarly efforts to categorize Euroscepticism (Kopecký and Mudde 2002; Conti 2003; Riishøj 2007; Flood and Soborski 2011), the most popular classification has been introduced by Taggart and Szczerbiak (2004) who argue that Euroscepticism involves two different forms of opposition to European integration: ‘Hard’ and ‘Soft’ Euroscepticisms. ‘Hard Euroscepticism’ implies an ‘outright’ and ‘unqualified’ rejection of European integration, while ‘Soft Euroscepticism’ suggests a ‘contingent and qualified opposition to European integration’. However, the Euroscepticism-based categories have been mainly designed for EU member states. Scholars often replicated the same categories in candidate countries rather than developing new models (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2004: 2). This suggests some limitations. For instance while defining ‘Hard Eurosceptics’, Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008a: 2) more specifically refer to ‘parties who think that their countries should withdraw from membership’. Since candidate countries are not yet EU members, rather than demanding withdrawal from membership, hard Eurosceptics would be inclined to campaign for the withdrawal of their candidacy for EU membership. Application of the Kopecký and Mudde typology to candidate countries seems to be more problematic. For instance, Eurosceptics defined as both Europhile and EU-pessimist do not make sense for a candidate country (Batory 2008: 267). If you are pessimistic about the EU’s current or future projection, why would you wish to join the EU in the first place?

In response to critics, Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008b) refined their typology, which in the end better emphasized its focus on member states at the expense of candidate states. Accordingly, the priority is to grasp the ‘underlying support for or opposition to the European integration project as embodied in the EU’ and ‘attitudes towards

further actual or planned extensions of EU competencies' rather than 'a party's support for or opposition to their country's membership at any given time' (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008b:242). In other words, Euroscepticism in a broader sense is essentially used to categorize parties which oppose European integration, not necessarily the parties which only oppose their country's accession to that project. The publications of other prominent scholars on European studies support Taggart and Szczerbiak as they associate Euroscepticism exclusively with opposition to European integration, not EU accession and they focus on member states, not candidate countries (Hix 2007). Hence, numerous academic works which used the same typology for analysing party reactions during the accession negotiation process have proven limited. An important reason is that, rather than the idea of integration or particular policy fields, it is the membership prospects which gather much attention in the candidate states (Szczerbiak 2008). Overall, this chapter aims to go beyond the mainstream literature by studying party attitudes towards EU membership in candidate countries and thus, focusing on the accession process rather than the post-accession phase. In so doing, the study will use the concept of Euroscepticism to specifically scrutinize party attitudes in candidate countries towards EU membership. The next section explains the constitutive elements and varieties of Euroscepticism in candidate countries that distinguish it from Euroscepticism in member states.

## **2.2. Why is Euroscepticism in candidate countries different from Euroscepticism in member states?**

Existing frameworks based on Euroscepticism investigate domestic attitudes towards overall European integration and its trajectory in member states, while neglecting the fact that the main concerns of political parties in candidate countries concentrate upon the prospects for their country's membership. In this respect, there is a need to differentiate between opposition to Europe and opposition to EU membership as they imply two distinct phenomena. Therefore, in order to better evaluate party positions in accession countries, this study suggests differentiating between *Euroscepticism in candidate countries* and *Euroscepticism in member states*. Accordingly, Euroscepticism in candidate countries involves criticisms of, and reluctance for EU



accession reflected as a reaction to EU membership conditions. Euroscepticism in candidate countries differs from Euroscepticism in member states because its focus is limited to the temporal phase that follows the officialisation of a country's EU candidacy until its accession to the EU. Hence, it scrutinizes the process through which a candidate country makes active efforts to comply with EU membership conditionality and negotiates the terms of its membership in line with the EU membership criteria.

Overall, Euroscepticism in candidate countries assumes that (1) domestic political actors are more likely to concentrate their energy on membership conditionality rather than general issues of European integration; and (2) as compliance becomes costly for the candidate, and/or the EU fails to give enough incentives for membership, the political actors tend to react against EU-led reforms and show reluctance for membership.

What essentially separates Euroscepticism in candidate countries from Euroscepticism in a broader sense is its focus on a different phase of European integration. Euroscepticism explains a broader process (European integration as a whole), while Euroscepticism in candidate countries elaborates on a particular stage (EU accession) of this process. Therefore, while Euroscepticism deals with an opposition to European integration in general, Euroscepticism in candidate countries primarily aims to explain opposition to the EU's membership conditionality in particular. Moreover, Euroscepticism in member states reflects a view from the inside since it evaluates European integration through the lenses of member states. On the other hand, Euroscepticism in candidate countries brings an outside-in approach since it particularly examines the EU accession process through the lenses of candidate countries.

Euroscepticism often signifies an opposition due to certain pre-existing negative views about what 'Europe' and/or 'Union' stand for with regard to historical collective memory or domestic ideological standpoints. Therefore, technically, not only political actors in member states but also candidate countries may reflect Euroscepticism, because negative preconceptions fuel nationalist sentiments and thus trigger strong reservations towards joining the EU in the first place. Here, opposition does not stem from the EU's membership conditionality but from the previous

experiences of a country with Europe, Europeans and/or other Unions. The main focus is opposition to European integration rather than the EU membership. Naturally, if you are already opposed to European integration, as a non-member, you automatically stand opposed to accession as well. Such negative memories are essentially entrenched within the public which is mostly not well-informed about the European integration project, and tends to oppose it with reference to the negative collective memory they had against Europe, Europeans or other unions. For instance, due to their past experiences with the Soviet Union, public opinion in Baltic States and Estonia in particular, was negative towards the idea of joining another union, i.e. the European 'Union' (Mikkel and Kasekamp 2008). Vetik et al (2006: 1086) claim that the feeling of inferiority against Germans and the fear of Germanization led the Estonian public to forge a 'reactive identity' against assimilation under the EU umbrella. Moreover, the Munich Agreement of 1938 which resulted in the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia and the fall of the country into the hands of Nazi Germany under the appeasement policies of Britain and France constitutes a historical justification for the Czech hesitation to identify themselves with Western Europe (Hanley 2008: 244).

Political parties on the other hand are less reflective of ancient hatred against Europe but there were still political actors during accession process who stood opposed to European integration with similar justifications. For instance, the League of Polish Families (LPR) reflects a negative preconception towards European integration depicting the EU as reinforcing the Germanisation of Poland. The LPR leader Roman Giertych dismissed the EU as the unwanted realization of a hundred years old plan of Bismarck and claimed that with the Polish membership, Germany would finally re-access Polish lands which Poland had liberated from Germans fifty years ago (Lindstrom 2002: 16). Therefore, past experiences with Germany constitute the main basis of the LPR's anti-EU policy. The party could be deemed as Hard Eurosceptic since it criticized all aspects of the EU, economic, political and ideological (Zuba 2009: 334). The LPR campaigned against the 2003 membership referendum and even demanded the rejection of the accession treaty (Ibid).

Based on the above examples, critics might argue that negative preconception could only explain *Hard* Euroscepticism and/or Euro-rejection. However, negative views about Europe and Union do not necessarily culminate into *Hard* Euroscepticism. It also triggers *Soft* Euroscepticism. As an example, Vaclav Klaus, the leader of the Civic Democrats (ODS), even before the Czech Republic started accession negotiations, defied European integration claiming it to be ‘too bureaucratic and too economically interventionist as a result of its origins in the post-war West European social and Christian democracy’ (Hanley 2008: 245-255). Klaus based his criticism on the claim that after the signature of the Maastricht Treaty, the EU deviated from its original objective of economic partnership to an unrealistic political union ‘to create a federal European superstate rivalling the USA’ (Ibid). Nevertheless, he never questioned the necessity or desirability of the EU membership for the Czech Republic (Ibid). His party, especially while in government, consistently supported the country’s EU bid (Ibid). Klaus specifically opposed certain EU policies during the Czech Candidacy such as the European Defence Capacity which he found ‘unnecessary, impractical and undermining NATO’ (Riishøj 2007: 527-528). Besides, negative preconceptions towards Europe or/and Union however might not be automatically translated into Euroscepticism. As coined with the term ‘Europragmatism’ by Kopecký and Mudde (2002), political parties may still support membership and European integration with strategic motivations, for instance, to guarantee the survival of the party and the rights of its supporters (e.g. regional parties).

By assuming that opposition to European integration encompasses opposition to EU membership, several studies treat negative attitudes in candidate countries as similar to Euroscepticism embraced by member states. Such studies overlook the fact that party programmes, policy documents, speeches and press statements in candidate countries do not reflect much interest in the overall integration project during the accession process but rather focus on the candidate’s membership prospects. Szczerbiak (2008) suggests that after they refined the concept of Euroscepticism, it became nearly impossible to identify who was Eurosceptic in candidate states; because, for instance, Polish political parties primarily focused on Polish membership prospects during the Polish candidature rather than European integration and its trajectory. Such a pragmatic stance is not only applicable to political parties but also

to other sub-national actors in the economic domain. Rather than a normative commitment to European integration, they are more concerned with the potential benefits of membership such as free trade and economic cohesion (Hughes et al 2002: 335-336). Hence, their reactions to the EU are based on the 'troubling' accession process rather than the more elaborate discussions on the deepening or widening of the EU project (Ibid). Therefore, since Euroscepticism in candidate countries is different from Euroscepticism embraced by member states, there is a need to elaborate more on how political actors in candidate countries reflect Euroscepticism.

Euroscepticism in candidate countries stresses the emerging reactions to the EU's accession conditionality in candidate countries during the membership negotiations. It explains that rather than the withdrawal of candidacy, the main motivation behind Euroscepticism in candidate countries is to guarantee membership with full benefits. In this respect, Euroscepticism in candidate countries emerges out of a candidate country's concerns related to the complicated negotiation process with the EU. It is basically a domestic reaction to the uncertainty arising out of the accession negotiations with the EU. Political actors remain uncertain on what terms their country will be admitted to the EU. That's primarily the reason behind domestic resistance to an EU-led reform process. They don't desire accession through unilateral 'concessions' to the EU in areas deemed important for national wealth, security and sovereignty. They rather aim for membership in their own terms. Besides, the EU's failure to provide concrete and credible membership prospects increase the uncertainty and give national political parties more impetus to react against the EU-led reforms in candidate countries (Rulikova 2004: 36-37). None of the candidate countries in the Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs) -except for the LPR (Zuba 2009)- witnessed the rise of an explicitly anti-European party during the pre-accession process (Rulikova 2004: 40). Instead, most political parties officially support membership but 'schizophrenically' react to membership conditions which would allegedly 'damage' the country (Ibid). It is not easy to call all of them 'Soft Eurosceptic' because their main agenda is EU membership rather than the overall European integration project. They do not necessarily challenge the main tenets of European integration or its trajectory; they essentially react against the EU's membership conditionality towards their country. Neumayer labels this type of stance

observed in the CEECs as ‘Eurorealism’, i.e. a pragmatic way of saying ‘yes, but’ to accession without any risk of facing de-legitimization or marginalization (Neumayer 2008: 142-143). Eurorealism is very much similar to Euroscepticism in candidate countries in terms of narrowing down the scope of the study into the sceptical reactions arising out of the accession negotiations. Therefore, there is no need to formulate a new term, especially when critical EU stances of candidate countries can already be explained with the term Euroscepticism. Besides, unlike Eurorealism, Euroscepticism used for candidate countries not only reflects domestic calculations in response to EU conditionality but it also highlights the domestic responses arising out of the EU’s perceived selectivity and discriminations in the application of its conditionality. Moreover, Euroscepticism in candidate countries is likely to be reversible. More credible membership prospects coupled with the dissipation of the perception of bias in the application of EU conditionality can help to dissipate negative reactions that arise during the accession negotiations in candidate countries.

### **2.3. What drives Euroscepticism in candidate countries?**

The EU accession process is essentially depicted in the literature as an asymmetrical top-down process, in which a candidate country carries out the reforms and adopts the norms that the EU dictates for the sake of membership. During this process, according to Schimmelfennig (2008: 921), the success of political conditionality is contingent on three factors: (a) credible membership conditionality in which the EU promises eventual membership provided that a candidate complies with the accession criteria; (b) normative consistency which dictates that the EU should be ‘guided only by the democratic and human rights performance of the target countries’, without any discrimination based on nationality or culture; and finally (c) low political costs of domestic compliance with the EU. He argues that most of the times, (a) and (b) are met but the fulfilment of (c) has proven problematic; in other words, the main reason for non-compliance with EU criteria is the candidate states’ perception that compliance with the EU is too costly. Therefore, Schimmelfennig puts forward domestic cost-benefit calculations of candidates as determining domestic attitudes towards EU conditionality. On the other hand, Schimmelfennig put an emphasis on the diminishing credibility of the EU’s conditionality in Turkey following the EU’s

selective actions such as the introduction of absorption capacity which led to further uncertainty for Turkish membership (Schimmelfennig 2008: 933). Building upon the last point, the study aims to emphasize that domestic opposition not only stems from domestic considerations but also develops as a reaction to the EU's selectivity in the application of its accession criteria. It is necessary to avoid considering the EU as a unified body. On the contrary, it could rather be considered as a multiplicity composed of (clashing) multiple actors, societies and cultures; thus it is prone to contradictions in its course of action (Biebuyck and Rumford 2012). The existence of multiple EU institutions with different agendas and capabilities, and numerous member states with differing cultures, social and political structures and interests supports the thesis of multiplicity. The unanimity rule behind the EU enlargement policy contradicts the depiction of enlargement as a solely technical process and emphasizes its political nature. The differing agendas of both member states and institutions complicate the decision making over the accession of new members hampering a standardized EU approach to each candidate's accession process. Therefore, non-compliance in candidate countries also develops as a reaction to the EU's failure to meet the conditions (a) and (b) outlined by Schimmelfennig (2008).

Overall, there are both domestic and external/EU-led determinants of Euroscepticism. Accordingly, first, it develops as a reaction against the EU's conditional pressures due to *domestic* considerations including, domestic cost-benefit calculations and/or threat perceptions (the criterion 'c' in Schimmelfennig's account). Second, it materializes against selective *external* pressures from the EU and its member states (the criteria 'a' and 'b' according to Schimmelfennig). Several important domestic and EU-driven determinants of Euroscepticism are outlined in more detail below:

### *2.3.1. Domestic factors*

*Costs of adjustment*: Political actors are likely to resort to Euroscepticism if they are convinced that social, economic and political costs of compliance with EU conditionality outweigh the benefits associated with membership. During the negotiation process, candidate countries suffer immediate economic costs (e.g. budgetary costs) in return for potential benefits in the medium and long term (Hughes et al 2002: 333). These short-term economic costs might also be translated into

political costs since domestic electorate may punish politicians who consented to the economic burden of the accession process (Ibid). Accordingly, domestic political actors take position against the reform process focusing on the costs it will bring to the national economy. For instance, in several accession countries including Poland and the Czech Republic, domestic opposition to the reform of foreign land ownership stemmed from economic concerns that foreign ownership would increase land prices enormously at the expense of local buyers (Tesser 2004: 214). Hungarian political actors justified their resistance with the claim that the foreign purchase of land would create land scarcity (Burger 2006).

*Threat Perceptions:* Political actors are also likely to adopt Euroscepticism, if they believe that compliance with EU conditionality will threaten the integrity of state, domestic culture and identity. For instance, the EU-led reforms conferring greater rights to minorities were opposed by many political actors in accession countries with the justification that such laws would endanger national integrity and sovereignty (Morris 2004; Kelley 2004; Solska 2011). Especially, far right parties dismissed the EU's membership conditionality as a threat for national sovereignty and economic independence (Neumayer 2008: 147). The Hungarian MIÉP (Hungarian Justice and Life Party) even associated the EU membership conditions with the terms of the Trianon Treaty that had resulted in the division of Hungarian lands after the First World War (Neumayer 2008: 147; Tunkrova 2010: 99).

### 2.3.2. EU-driven Factors

*Uncertainty of membership:* Political actors are likely to resort to Euroscepticism, if there is an uncertainty of membership in return for the fulfilment of accession criteria. The EU's selective conditionality creates uncertainty regarding the terms of accession. However, this does not necessarily translate into uncertainty of the entire accession process. In some other instances, the EU's pressures result in such a situation where domestic actors remain uncertain about the prospects of membership. It is acknowledged that new candidates face much more uncertainty in their accession process than the previous EU applicants since the institutionalization of the Copenhagen criteria (Schimmelfennig 2008: 919). However, the EU's emphasis on

‘integration capacity’ coupled with the decision to put future enlargements to referendum creates even higher uncertainty about admission even after full compliance with membership criteria (Schimmelfennig 2008: 933). Moreover, the lack of clear membership perspective due to a clash between a candidate and a member state stimulates Eurosceptic reaction. In the cases of Macedonia, Croatia and Turkey, bilateral problems with an EU member state prevented the EU from guaranteeing accession. Domestic political actors found the EU’s position vis-à-vis the bilateral conflict as discriminatory, and grew further reluctant for EU accession (Gülmez and Buhari-Gülmez 2008; Koinova 2011; Zorić 2008).

*The EU’s selectivity in applying its membership conditionality:* Political actors are likely to reflect Euroscepticism, if they find the EU’s conditionality selective and/or discriminatory. The EU’s conditionality is depicted in the literature as a ‘moving target’ which incorporates more and more conditions enforceable to new candidates over time (Hughes et al 2002: 333). Besides, it is no longer sufficient for the EU candidates to simply adopt the *acquis communautaire*. The EU has ‘shifted its emphasis from the adoption of the *acquis*, which is seen as a ‘formal’ requirement, to a vaguely defined notion of ‘capacity’ for its implementation’ (Ibid). Moreover, the consideration of strategic or economic goals can result into an inconsistent approach adopted by the EU in pushing for domestic change in different countries (Börzel 2012). For instance, while the EU is less inclined to put pressure on candidate countries having resources (oil, gas) that the EU needs; it tends to put extra pressures on countries which are prone to illegal immigration and cross-border crime (Börzel 2012: 14). Finally, on certain issues such as minority rights, the EU fails to force its member states to comply with its conditionality it started to apply to new candidates. This differential treatment of members and candidates draws negative reactions in many candidate countries (Ram 2003; Schweltnus 2005; Yılmaz 2012). For instance, political actors in Poland, the Czech Republic, Macedonia and Croatia explicitly justified their reluctance to proceed with the reforms of minority rights on the ground that the EU’s application of minority-rights conditionality had been highly inconsistent and constituted double standards (Fawn 2001; Koinova 2011; Tesser 2003).



*The EU's 'perceived' reluctance towards the accession of a particular country:*

Political actors are likely to become Eurosceptic, if they perceive a remarkable lack of will in the EU concerning their accession. There are two main determinants for the spread of domestic perception about the EU's lack of political will. First, the EU puts additional preconditions either targeting specifically the membership of a particular candidate country or slowing down the overall EU enlargement process. Second, political statements of leading European figures against the accession of a particular country or propositions such as 'privileged partnership' in lieu of full membership, provoke negative reactions in the candidate country in question. The Turkish case indicates that domestic political actors perceive a strong opposition within the EU against Turkish accession. The introduction of additional preconditions such as 'absorption capacity', 'open-ended negotiations' and 'permanent derogations' to the official EU documents of Turkey's membership negotiations has sparked strong protests in the country as it has generally been perceived as an indication of the EU's reluctance against Turkey's membership (Kirişci 2004; Öniş 2008).

***2.4. Varieties of Euroscepticism in candidate countries***

It is possible to distinguish two types of Eurosceptic attitudes in candidate countries depending on the nature of the EU's membership conditionality. The first type is limited to certain issue areas, consisting of negative reactions against particular reforms deriving from the formal EU conditionality. Second, political actors also react negatively when the EU applies extra conditionality which specifically targets their country. Domestic political actors reject the additional conditions that are designed specifically for their own country.

#### 2.4.1. *Euroscepticism as reaction to the EU's issue-specific conditionality*

Euroscepticism in candidate countries primarily develops during the negotiation process whereby domestic political actors oppose particular EU reforms, either due to high costs of compliance or to the perceived threats that those reforms pose to national sovereignty and identity (Schimmelfennig 2008; Hooghe and Marks 2008). This issue-specific reaction is frequently witnessed in most candidates having to fulfil the Copenhagen Criteria. Certain EU-sponsored reforms may be perceived as threatening to a country's sovereignty and/or national interests since they often challenge domestic social and political norms and practices, and thus have the potential to make significant changes in people's daily lives. For instance, in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, a common negative reaction among political parties was observed against 'the sale of real estate [to foreigners], agricultural and regional subsidies and the free movement of labour' with the motivation to preserve national sovereignty and Catholic values (Henderson 2008b: 122). In such case, high costs of compliance draw domestic reaction and render the fulfilment of EU conditionality in particular sectors problematic. Besides, as in the case of minority rights, the EU's perceived inconsistency in the application of its conditionality to different candidates further triggers Euroscepticism. Accordingly, domestic political actors frequently point to the EU's differential treatment of member states or other candidates (Ram 2003; Schweltnus 2005; Yılmaz 2012).

Overall, domestic reaction against the EU's issue-specific conditionality is a form of Euroscepticism observed in many (if not all) candidate countries against particular EU-led reforms deriving from the Copenhagen criteria. Political parties tend to resort not only to domestic factors –such as national sovereignty and pride, national and sectoral interests or identity– but also to such EU-led factors as the EU's inconsistent and unfair treatment of a particular policy area in order to justify their issue-specific opposition. One of the reforms that draw *such Euroscepticism* is the reform of foreign land ownership (FLO). Domestic factors mainly play a prominent role against the reform of FLO ranging from purely economic fears that foreign ownership may increase land prices enormously at the expense of local buyers, to patriotic concerns over the loss of national sovereignty and fear of 're-Germanisation' (Tesser 2004: 214). For instance, in the Polish case, most opposition parties stood against this

reform. The Polish Peasant Party (PSL), an agrarian party with 9 % popularity in the 2001 elections supported Polish membership to the EU but it strongly opposed the foreign acquisition of land, forests, or areas containing water sources (Tesser 2004: 220). Party officials demanded an 18-year prohibition on foreigners purchasing agricultural land in Poland (Zuba 2009: 332). The centre-right Solidarity coalition (AWS) also opposed land liberalization because of the fear of the ‘German return’ to Poland (Tesser 2004: 220). Similarly, the Law and Justice Party (PiS) proposed a ‘land turnover law’ in order to protect Polish farmers from foreign land speculators (Szczerbiak 2008: 232), and party officials threatened to vote NO in the referendum unless the ‘membership package’ offered to Poland was substantially improved (Ibid.).

Hungary is another example of a state with Eurosceptic political parties opposing land liberalisation during accession negotiations. The Hungarian Civic Party (Fidesz), a mainstream right-wing party with 41 % popularity in the 2002 elections, was one of the most Euro-enthusiast political actors in Hungary, endorsing the ‘return to Europe’ motto. However, its eagerness shifted to Euroscepticism as the country started the EU membership negotiations. Defending ‘hard bargaining with Brussels’, the party declared itself the protector of Hungarian land, and proposed a referendum to prevent the EU-led reforms that would enable foreign land ownership in Hungary (Batory 2008: 270-271).

Another issue that raises tension in candidate countries is the question of agricultural subsidies. The EU offered its recent candidates only 25% of what farmers in older member countries received. In particular, the countries that heavily rely upon the agricultural sector, such as Poland, Estonia and Czech Republic, protested against this. In Poland, the PSL, the main party defending the rights of local farmers, strongly opposed the EU’s offer to Polish farmers and demanded full subsidies for them (Szczerbiak 2008: 237; Riishøj 2007: 517; Zuba 2009: 332). The Self-Defence (Samoobrona), a nationalist right-wing party with 10% popularity in 2001 also prioritized agricultural subsidies in its EU policy. Denoting the negotiations as a threat to Polish farmers, party leaders claimed that with the deal offered by the EU, Poland would be permanently relegated to the role of a second-class member (Zuba

2009: 333; Szczerbiak 2008: 228-229). Instead, the party explicitly demanded that Polish membership be based on equal rights (Szczerbiak 2008: 230).

Other issues that trigger Euroscepticism include identity, human rights and minority rights whose reform has proven problematic in candidate countries. In Slovakia, even pro-EU parties, the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) (8.3%) and the Social Democrat SMER (13.5%), criticized the EU's negotiation process intensively. While the KDH attacked particular EU-led reforms, such as same-sex partnership and abortion (Henderson 2008a: 287), SMER defended in its election campaign the preservation of the Bohunice nuclear reactor, standing firm against the EU pressures to close it down, and depicting it as 'a pillar of Slovak economy' and national pride (Ivanov 2008: 161). SMER also demanded the re-opening of various negotiation chapters that had already been closed in order not to accept EU membership at all costs (Henderson 2008a: 288). The reform of minority rights has been a source of intense opposition in Romania. The far-right nationalist Greater Romania Party, although giving strategic support to Romania's EU membership, stood against the reforms on the rights of Hungarian and Roma minorities. Its leader, Vadim Tudor, even demanded that all 'Gypsies' be put in jail, for there was no other solution (Goldston 2002: 155).

During the accession process, political party views towards EU integration in candidate countries were mainly formed through the prism of membership negotiations and there was no tangible reference to the European project and its trajectory (Szczerbiak 2008: 237). The criticisms discussed above therefore qualify for Euroscepticism applicable to candidate countries. Their reactions can be categorized as *issue-specific* because opposition against EU conditionality is limited to particular policy issues.

#### *2.4.2. Euroscepticism in response to the EU's country-specific conditionality*

The second type of Euroscepticism derives from a general resentment in a candidate country against the introduction of additional preconditions for the latter's accession to the EU. Additional membership preconditions on a candidate country usually

derive from an ongoing bilateral issue between the candidate country in question and an EU member state. The EU either remains indifferent to the constraints inflicted upon the candidate in question by an EU member state or puts extra conditions on that candidate country to solve the bilateral problem before joining the Union. The main reason for this is the member state's veto power to block the initiation of accession negotiations or even freeze an ongoing negotiation process by blocking certain negotiation chapters. This triggers resentment in the political parties of the accession country towards the EU, which they criticize for failing to be an impartial arbiter. In this context, Euroscepticism emerges as a particular reaction to the instrumentalisation of the EU's accession negotiations by an individual member state which seeks to get concessions from a candidate country on a bilateral issue that is not directly related to EU's formal membership criteria. The mitigation of such Euroscepticism is directly contingent upon the solution of the bilateral issue either through unilateral or reciprocal concessions in return for the EU's membership guarantees.

Unlike the first type of Euroscepticism, *Euroscepticism as a reaction to the EU's country-specific conditionality* indicates a much bigger uncertainty in the accession process because failure to comply with the EU's additional country-specific conditionality threatens to suspend all membership prospects. Besides, the member state which is party to the ongoing bilateral issue can block the initiation of accession negotiations by using its veto power based on the unanimity rule in the EU's enlargement policy. Correspondingly, domestic political actors in the candidate country, which faces such additional pressures, grow increasingly reluctant towards EU membership. For instance, Macedonia, a candidate since 2005, has been put under pressure by Greece, an EU member since 1981, which has a historical claim on the name 'Macedonia'. Greece has been blocking Macedonia's EU accession talks since 2009 despite the European Commission's recommendation to initiate the negotiations with the country. Political actors in Macedonia have reacted strongly to Greece and condemned Brussels for being one-sided and precluding Macedonia's EU bid (Marusic 2011). Accusing the EU of inflicting double-standards, the officials of the ruling party VMRO-DPMNE even likened the EU's Macedonian policy to 'the Holocaust' (Balkan Insight 2011).

As previously stated, a member state in conflict with a candidate country can even curtail an ongoing negotiation process by blocking the negotiation chapters. For instance, the Exclusive Economic Zone issue between Croatia and Slovenia caused the curtailment of Croatia's EU membership negotiations for up to ten months due to a Slovenian veto. Correspondingly, reluctance towards membership rose among all Croatian political actors, who felt threatened by the Slovenian-led EU pressure to choose either the fisheries zone or membership (Zorić 2008). The Croatian Prime Minister Ivo Sanader accused Slovenia of 'blackmailing' them, and asserted that they did not intend to 'buy the EU membership with the [Slovenian] territory' (Vuceva 2008). The Croatian accession negotiations resumed only after Croatia and Slovenia agreed to the EU plan of referring the issue to an *ad hoc* international arbitration court. Croatia consented to the plan since the issue of the fisheries zone had become the final obstacle to Croatia's EU membership.

In the Turkish case, the EU's additional conditionality includes the opening of Turkish harbours and aerospace to the Republic of Cyprus and other new member states since May 2004 as part of Turkey's obligations arising out of the additional protocol. Turkey defied the EU's pressures, since it does not officially recognize the Republic of Cyprus as the governing authority of the entire island. Correspondingly, the EU has partially halted the Turkish accession negotiations by blocking eight chapters. Led by the French and Cypriot vetoes, 18 negotiation chapters of Turkey remain frozen and this has practically halted the entire accession process. The suspension of negotiations with the EU due to the Cyprus question has sparked a significant amount of negative reaction in both the government and the opposition in Turkey (Gülmez and Buhari-Gülmez 2008). Both claimed that Cyprus conditionality was illegitimately introduced due to the political pressures of the Republic of Cyprus, which became an EU member in May 2004 despite the ongoing political conflict in Cyprus. The main opposition party in Turkey, the Republican People's Party (CHP), criticized that the Cyprus problem took Turkey-EU relations 'hostage' prohibiting Turkey's eventual EU membership. Deniz Baykal, the party leader claimed: 'If Turkey fails or is prevented from becoming a member, this is not the end of the world' (Hürriyet 2005). The governing party, the Justice and Development Party (AKP), accused the EU of 'sacrificing' Turkey for the Greek Cypriots and froze its

relations with the EU for six months after the Republic of Cyprus was granted the EU Presidency (Vatan 2011a).

*Euroscepticism* also emerges when domestic political actors perceive strong reluctance or indecisiveness within the EU towards their country's membership. Political actors in candidate countries often show reluctance for membership because of the perception that the EU's strategy towards them is 'unfair' and discriminatory. The ultimate example for such Euroscepticism is the Turkish case<sup>3</sup>. Turkey's Euroscepticism signals that there is almost no membership incentive for the candidate country and the future relations with the EU are in danger. Turkey stands out as the only candidate country whose political actors reflect such extreme Euroscepticism due to the increasing Turkish perception that the EU remains reluctant towards Turkish accession. As previously discussed, the EU introduced additional provisions such as 'absorption capacity', 'open-ended negotiations' and 'permanent derogations' to the official documents regarding Turkey's accession. Those expressions constituted a novelty for the EU's enlargement policy since they were first introduced to Turkey (Kirişci 2004). Another novelty is that a number of top EU politicians<sup>4</sup> overtly stood against Turkey's accession and offered instead, cooperation short of full membership such as 'privileged partnership'. In the meantime, due to Turkey's persistent refusal to open its harbours and aerospace to Cyprus, Turkey's accession negotiations remain frozen. Additional preconditions and the lack of clear membership impetus decrease the EU's political leverage on Turkey (Yılmaz 2009b). Therefore, especially after the postponement of the accession negotiations, the Turkish government has become even less motivated to continue with the EU-led reform process. Government officials accused the EU of being indecisive vis-à-vis Turkey's membership. The Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan argued that the EU has been dragging its feet over Turkey for more than fifty years and he urged EU officials to clearly announce whether they really want Turkey in or not (Hürriyet 2011a). Erdoğan claimed that no other

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<sup>3</sup> British accession process may be compared due to French successive vetoes, but there are two essential differences: 1) the EU was not a Political Union back then and had not institutionalized its accession conditionality, 2) the UK did not perceive the cultural and religious opposition of the European Communities. Instead, it was a strategic rejection of the French President Charles De Gaulle who resented Britain as a primary rival to France and grew suspicious of British ties with the USA (Bhagwati 1993: 157; Dinan 2004: 6).

<sup>4</sup> such as the former French President Nicholas Sarkozy, German Prime Minister Angela Merkel, Austrian chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel and the EU President Herman van Rompuy.

candidate country had faced such unfair treatment Turkey had been suffering from (Vatan 2011a) and accused the EU of becoming a unified block against Turkey's accession (Erdoğan 2011). Baykal, the CHP leader, criticized the open-ended nature of the negotiations, the absorption capacity of the EU and permanent safeguard clauses against Turkey. The CHP leader claimed that such expressions were proof that the EU had never considered Turkey's membership seriously (Hürriyet 2004a). Contrary to other cases, such as Croatia and Macedonia in which the end of uncertainty for EU accession is primarily contingent on the solution of the bilateral problem; the uncertainty towards Turkey's EU membership is rather multifaceted; it thus reinforces the pessimistic opinion that even though Turkey successfully fulfils the accession criteria (including the Cyprus conditionality), it will never be admitted to the EU (Schimmelfennig 2008: 933).

## **2.5. 'Ideology vs. Strategy' or pure reaction to the EU?: Specifying the main hypotheses**

So far it has been established that Euroscepticism in candidate countries involves domestic resistance to the EU accession process whereby political parties either oppose certain EU-led reforms which contradict the domestic economic and political status quo, or stand against the EU's additional conditionality specific to the candidate country in question. Both domestic and EU-led factors have been considered as constitutive elements of party-based Euroscepticism. In this regard, the chapter will benefit from the existing scholarly debates on Euroscepticism in general and discuss their relevance for specifying party-based Euroscepticism in candidate countries. Accordingly, the main question in the literature is whether party-based Euroscepticism is an ideological or strategic choice (Hooghe 2007; Neumayer 2008). At this point, the viable question is whether and how party ideology and position within the domestic political system have an effect on party stances vis-à-vis their country's EU accession process.

Some scholars are primarily interested in explaining party-based Euroscepticism with reference to party ideology (Hooghe et al 2002; Taggart and Szcerbiak 2004; De



Vries and Edwards 2009; Conti and Memoli 2012). Accordingly, the main research question seems to be ‘to what extent Left-Right divide and Liberal-Conservative dyad explain Eurosceptic party behaviours’. Others argue that Euroscepticism is not only a reflection of ideological positioning but it also derives from the strategic choice of political actors vis-à-vis each other in the domestic political context (Hooghe 2007; Neumayer 2008). Rather than ideology, party competition is proposed as a key determinant for party attitudes towards the EU. Scrutinizing the positions of parties in the national political system, much scholarly attention is devoted to find out whether Euroscepticism is essentially adopted by fringe parties having limited electoral impact or mainstream parties (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2004; Hix 2007; De Vries and Edwards 2009). If it is a fringe party attitude, it can thus be argued that the effect of Euroscepticism on national politics remains negligible. Another relevant question may be based on the government-opposition positioning. Governing parties are usually expected to adopt a softer and more cautious policy stance against the EU than when they are in opposition (Paterson 1981; Aspinwall 2007). If governing parties reflect a Eurosceptic policy line, this will have serious implications on national policy-making towards the EU.

Following the ‘ideology vs. strategy’ debate as the main base of discussion for Euroscepticism in accession countries, this study will examine whether party ideology and/or strategy (party’s electoral popularity and government-opposition positioning) have an impact on party attitudes towards the EU accession process. At this point, different from the existing literature on Euroscepticism, the study will also take into account EU-led factors such as the perception of the EU’s conditionality by the political parties of a candidate country. The study will specify six hypotheses to test the explanatory power of these three variables (ideology, party competition and the EU’s selectivity) on the Eurosceptic reactions of political parties in accession countries.

Party Ideology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Left vs Right</li> <li>• GAL vs TAN</li> </ul>
Party Competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fringe vs Mainstream</li> <li>• Government vs Opposition</li> </ul>
EU-driven factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EU's ambivalence/selectivity</li> <li>• uncertainty of membership</li> <li>• EU's perceived reluctance</li> </ul>

**Table 1:** Key variables concerning party Euroscepticism in candidate countries

### 2.5.1. Party Ideology: Does ideology explain Euroscepticism in candidate countries?

Party ideology is a construction created ‘through inter- and intra-party competition by political actors seeking to differentiate themselves from their rivals and gain political capital (legitimacy and various forms of support from citizens such as votes, party members, etc.)’ (Neumayer 2008: 137). It is essentially discussed in the literature with reference to two main aspects: an economic Left-Right distinction and the *GAL* (green/alternative/libertarian) - *TAN* (traditionalism/authority/nationalism) dyad (Marks et al 2006). The scholarship is rather divided concerning the effects of the left-right divide on Euroscepticism. Left represents economic equality while Right signifies individual economic freedom (Marks et al 2006: 156). Taggart and Szczerbiak (2004: 14) argue that ideological positioning on the left-right spectrum does not determine whether parties oppose European integration or not. While they state that right wing parties seem to be more associated with Euroscepticism in the CEECs, they emphasize that there is no clear pattern towards this direction (Ibid). On the other hand, although Marks et al (2006: 167-168) do not find a clear association between opposing European integration and being either a left wing or right wing party in Western Europe, they claim that it is the radical Left parties which may turn

out to be more Eurosceptic than the right parties in the CEECs. Others reflect a rather eclectic approach claiming that both radical Right and radical Left parties embrace Eurosceptic rhetoric in the CEECs (De Vries and Edwards 2009; Markowski and Tucker 2010; Conti and Memoli 2012). What differs is their arguments underlying their Eurosceptic stances; extreme Right parties tend to protect national sovereignty whereas extreme Left parties oppose neo-liberal economic policies that govern European integration (De Vries and Edwards 2009). Therefore, the key determinant is not their leanings to left or right but their radical political stance (Ibid). In this respect, the GAL-TAN distinction of Marks et al (2006) becomes more valuable. Marks et al (2006) argue that *GAL* parties tend to be pro-EU while *TAN* parties show more Eurosceptic reflexes in both Western and Eastern European countries. Regarding the effects on Euroscepticism in candidate countries, the extant literature supports this thesis in the sense that opposition to EU-led reform process is essentially adopted by *TAN* parties while there is no clear-cut evidence concerning the explanatory power of the left-right distinction. Polish politics is a viable example for this. As a Right/*TAN* party, the LPR opposes EU membership in order to preserve national sovereignty while Left/*TAN* party Self-Defence stands against the neo-liberal character of EU-led reforms (Markowski and Tucker 2010). Moreover, it is primarily Right/*TAN* parties (the MDF, the FIDESZ-MPP and the MIEP) in Hungary which stood against the reform of foreign land ownership, while parties from both Left/*TAN* (HZDS) and Right/*TAN* (KDH) resisted the same reform in Slovakia (Burger 2006; Tesser 2004). Moreover, both the ODS (Right/*TAN*) in the Czech Republic and the SDSM (Left/*TAN*) in Macedonia stood critical of the EU-led reforms of minority rights (Fawn 2001; Koinova 2011). Therefore, the left-right distinction fails to explain the observed scepticism in the CEECs during the eastern enlargement process. While *TAN* parties from both left and right demonstrate a critical attitude towards the negotiation process, *GAL* parties advocate the EU-led reforms and are usually less critical of the EU as in the cases of the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) in Poland and the Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD).

Therefore, there seems to be a pattern that *TAN* parties are more likely to embrace EU-sceptic rhetoric than *GAL* parties. However, this does not necessarily mean that all *TAN* parties are automatically Eurosceptic. Popular *TAN* parties may pursue pro-

EU policies on a selective basis in line with their own political agenda. Börzel (2012: 15) explains that the EU does not only empower liberal (GAL) parties but it also empowers non-liberal (TAN) political forces as long as the EU conditionality aligns with the latter's political preferences and survival strategies. That's why, for instance, the EU accession process has been embraced by the Justice and Development Party (AKP) of Turkey although the party does not necessarily fall into a pro-Western and liberal camp (or *GAL* category) (Börzel 2012: 16). Similarly, Neumayer (2008: 139) argues that the EU accession process may encourage some conservative or ex-communist TAN parties to embrace pro-EU rhetoric, while some liberal GAL parties may end up revising their pro-EU stances due to the difficulties in EU accession negotiations. Accordingly, it is important to remember that party ideology in line with GAL/TAN dichotomy cannot explain Euroscepticism alone. It is necessary to consider other factors such as party competition (mainstream-fringe and government-opposition positions) and the perception of the EU's conditionality. In particular, the explanatory power of party ideology is likely to diminish when external factors such as the EU's selective application of its conditions and the lack of credible membership perspective are considered: such external factors can trigger Euroscepticism in not only TAN parties but GAL parties as well. For instance, concerning the European debate over the Beneš decrees, not only TAN parties in the Czech Republic, but also the Social Democrat ČSSD (GAL) stood against the German and Austrian demands for the annulment of the decrees in return for the Czech accession to the EU (Petrovic and Solingen 2005: 295). In the light of the discussions above, the study has come up with three hypotheses in association with party ideology:

**H1:** The Left-Right distinction does not have a significant role in explaining Euroscepticism.

**H2:** TAN parties in accession countries are more likely to adopt Euroscepticism than GAL parties.

**H3:** Both TAN and GAL parties in accession countries are likely to embrace Euroscepticism when the EU's conditionality is selective or there is no credible membership perspective or the EU is perceived to be reluctant towards accession.

## 2.5.2. Party Competition

### 2.5.2.1. *Is Euroscepticism only embraced by fringe parties in candidate countries?*

Opposition to European integration is predominantly associated with peripheral parties in Western Europe either at the right or left edge of the national political spectrum, while mainstream parties primarily reflect a pro-EU image (Taggart 1998; Taggart and Szczerbiak 2004; De Vries and Edwards 2009). Mainstream parties have a lot to lose from Eurosceptic discourse because ‘the general consensus around the benefits of EU accession are most strongly represented at the ideological heart of a country’s party system’ (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2004: 5). Fringe parties on the other hand, are peripheral in the national political system. They may thus exert anti-establishment populism. Hence, ‘if the (moderate) establishment is pro-EU, then those groups that are likely to gain from undermining the position of the centrist parties and the elites are likely to oppose the EU’ (Hix 2007: 137).

Mainstream parties in accession countries are expected to take a pro-EU stance during the accession process because EU accession generally empowers and legitimates mainstream politics while illegitimizing peripheral and anti-establishment political forces (Neumayer 2008: 137; Börzel 2012: 13). Mainstream parties are also likely to refrain from overtly taking sceptic attitudes towards the EU when public support for EU membership is relatively high. Otherwise, they would be perceived as undermining their country’s EU membership agenda and their sceptical attitude may be counter-productive for their party in terms of losing voters in the elections. For example, in the case of Slovakia, the ruling parties which opposed EU membership lost their office (Henderson 2008b). Therefore, office-seeking mainstream parties aim to ‘defuse the salience of [the European issue] by taking median positions with respect to it’ (Marks et al 2002: 588).

However, many candidate countries and the CEECs in particular provide paradoxical cases because both the mainstream and fringe parties have commonly taken a critical stance against the EU during their accession negotiations (Taggart and Szczerbiak

2004: 15). The ODS in the Czech Republic, the Centre Party in Estonia, the HZDS in Slovakia are some of many examples of mainstream parties which take a hard-line stance against the EU in accession countries. Hard-line stance in the CEECs towards the EU is a depiction of Euroscepticism peculiar to candidate countries, as political actors did not emphasize their opposing stance towards European integration but the terms of EU membership conditionality (Szczurbiak 2008). European integration is extensively considered as a 'second-order issue' in Western Europe, whereas EU accession remains a popular topic in accession countries since EU-led reforms help transform the economic, legal and political structures of candidate countries. During the reform process, not only peripheral but also mainstream parties adopt a critical stance towards EU conditionality. As previously stated, domestic actors mainly react against the uncertainty of the accession process and they aim for EU membership with their own terms. In this respect, the hypothesis could be summarized below as:

**H4:** Electoral popularity does not explain Euroscepticism because both mainstream and fringe parties reflect Eurosceptic policies.

#### *2.5.2.2. Is Euroscepticism an opposition phenomenon in candidate countries?*

There are certain reasons which may lead one to think that governments are less prone to be Eurosceptic than the opposition in candidate countries. Governments are officially responsive to an international environment, which may discourage a populist stance towards the EU during membership negotiations (Paterson 1981: 232). Moreover, negotiations have a 'lock-in effect' on government; once the EU-led reforms have been processed it proves costly to reverse them (Schimmelfennig 2005: 837; Vachudova 2008: 864). As the country proceeds with the negotiations, government is 'path-dependent/locked-in' into a predictable course of policy making. Finally, the EU accession process provides 'external legitimation' that enables national governments to 'sell policies they have long supported' (Grabbe 2006 in Vachudova 2008:864). The EU accession process gives national governments an opportunity to push for domestic change without suffering many political consequences: the EU process is to blame for all problems associated with costly

reforms. For its part, the opposition enjoys little responsibility for the continuation of the accession process and tends to criticize the government for being too submissive vis-à-vis the demands of an external organization (the EU) and readily advise the government to withdraw from the negotiations with the EU (Hanley 2008; Gülmez 2008). Moreover, during the accession process, the EU empowers liberal pro-reformist segments of the domestic political elite against nationalist, authoritarian and/or post-socialist political parties (Börzel 2012: 13). The EU confers greater legitimacy on those liberal political forces which rally popular support to become pro-EU governments (Ibid). In this respect, governing parties and their supporters are expected to be less likely to oppose the EU (Hix 2007: 137). On the contrary, the nationalist and authoritarian political actors against whom the EU bolsters liberal political actors are expected to take a critical stance against the EU-led reform process in their country.

The idea of delegating sovereignty to Brussels in certain fields draws a negative reaction especially from opposition parties. Accession negotiations have often witnessed the rise of protests from opposition parties accusing governments of being ‘too soft’/submissive to the EU’s demands at the expense of national sovereignty and pride. Opposition often tried to ‘de-legitimize’ governments by blaming them for neglecting ‘national interests’ for the sake of EU membership (Neumayer 2008: 148). In Poland, the PiS and the PO criticized the EU-led negotiations as relegating Poland to a ‘second-class’ membership (Szczerbiak 2008: 232; Riishøj 2007: 522). Both parties criticized the government for remaining ‘too soft’ (submissive) during the negotiations with the EU (Riishøj 2007: 519-520). Concerning the foreign land ownership issue, the Polish opposition including the PiS, the Self Defence and the LPR even proposed a no confidence vote for the government (Tesser 2004: 224). Similarly, the main opposition parties in the Czech Republic criticized the government for its policy of hasty, unconditional and unequal accession which would only lead to a ‘second-class’ position for the Czech Republic (Hanley 2008: 253). In Hungary, the FIDESz (Alliance of Young Democrats) charged the government with ‘servility’ towards EU member states by comparing it to ‘Hungary’s obedience to Moscow before 1989’ (Neumayer 2008: 149).

However, it is notable that Euroscepticism is not only an opposition phenomenon; governments may embrace Euroscepticism as well. Especially when there is a general perception in the candidate country that accession negotiations have shown an inconsistent and unfair treatment by the EU, not only the opposition but also the national government of the accession country is likely to resort to Euroscepticism. In such cases, opposition and governments usually rally around the idea of ‘national cause’ and pride in order to defend the *status quo*. If the government chooses not to ally with the opposition, it risks losing its public support and domestic legitimacy. For instance, governing parties in Macedonia, Croatia and Turkey reacted to the EU’s pressures to solve a bilateral conflict with an EU member before acceding to the Union. In this context, the study advances two hypotheses:

**H5:** Opposition parties in accession countries are more likely to adopt Eurosceptic policies than governing parties.

**H6:** Governing parties in accession countries are likely to embrace Euroscepticism when the EU’s conditionality is selective and inconsistent or there is no credible membership perspective and/or the EU is perceived to be reluctant towards accession.

## **2.6. Conclusion**

This chapter aimed to offer a detailed discussion of Euroscepticism to analyse oppositional stances of political parties against EU membership in recent candidate countries in general, and in Turkey in particular. With this motivation, the study focused on Euroscepticism in candidate countries in order to emphasize that critical attitudes of political parties in candidate countries do not reflect a wholesale opposition to European integration. It is rather a reaction against the complex nature of EU’s membership conditionality. Euroscepticism in candidate countries is driven by both domestic factors (cost-benefit calculus and threat perceptions) and EU-driven factors that emphasize the interactionary context between the EU and candidate countries (the EU’s selectivity, uncertainty of membership and the EU’s perceived reluctance). Accordingly, the chapter introduces two different forms of Euroscepticism to explain the nature of domestic reactions against the EU in



candidate countries: (1) Euroscepticism as a reaction to the EU's issue-specific conditionality and (2) Euroscepticism in response to the EU's country-specific conditionality. The former indicates resistance to particular issues/EU-led reforms and mainly derives from domestic but in some cases, also external factors. The latter involves reactions to the EU's additional conditions due to a bilateral conflict which renders accession rather uncertain or due to the EU's 'perceived' reluctance for accession. It hence primarily stems from external/EU factors highlighting the context in which the EU and a candidate country interact. Furthermore, the chapter discusses whether all parties show Euroscepticism under similar conditions, or whether party ideology and electoral strategy play a determining role behind the emergence of party-based Euroscepticism. With this motivation, the chapter advances three research questions to find out whether party ideology, electoral popularity and government-opposition distinction affect party preferences for Euroscepticism. The study has come up with six hypotheses taking also into consideration the EU-driven factors such as the EU's selective application of its conditionality, lack of credible membership perspective and the EU's perceived reluctance for a particular country's accession. The proposed hypotheses in this study suggest that party ideology explains Eurosceptic behaviour in the sense that Conservative, Nationalist and Authoritarian parties (TAN) are more likely to adopt Euroscepticism while liberal (GAL) parties tend to support EU membership process. This argument is in line with the existing literature on Euroscepticism. However, there is a need to consider the EU-driven factors which are likely to diminish the explanatory power of party ideology in the accession process. Furthermore, a party's electoral potential is likely to hold only limited explanatory power over Euroscepticism. Not only fringe parties but also mainstream parties reflect Eurosceptic reactions against EU-led reforms. Finally, opposition parties are more inclined to reflect Eurosceptic reaction as a strategy to weaken pro-reform governments. However, the EU-led factors may undermine the explanatory power of government-opposition positioning by forcing governments to reflect similar reactions with opposition parties during the accession negotiations.

In the empirical chapters, the dissertation will test the possible effects of the EU-driven factors and scrutinize the validity of the hypotheses in accession countries, and in the Turkish case in particular. Relying on the reforms of minority rights and foreign

land ownership, the study will first discuss the relevance of Euroscepticism in accession countries in response to the EU's issue-specific conditionality, and scrutinize the credibility of hypotheses in those cases. Afterwards, the research will focus on Euroscepticism as a response to the EU's country-specific conditionality dwelling on domestic reactions to the EU's additional conditions due to a bilateral conflict with an EU member state. In the Turkish case, Euroscepticism is not only reflected upon the EU's Cyprus conditionality but it also stems from the perceived reluctance of the EU towards Turkey's accession (if not, 'Turkey-scepticism' as claimed by Turkish political and academic circles).

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGICAL CHOICES**

This chapter discusses the methodological choices of the study in order to build a qualitative enquiry on Turkey's EU accession process. Qualitative research does not aim to discover the reality which is 'out there'; instead, it seeks to reveal the descriptions and narratives of informants about their own 'reality' (Guillaume 2002). In this respect, the study mainly scrutinizes how Turkish political actors view Turkey's EU accession process and approach the EU's membership conditionality. Nevertheless, qualitative inquiry does not prevent the researcher from using quasi-quantitative terms such as 'many', 'frequently' and 'some'. (Bryman 1988: 127; Read and Marsh 2002: 233). The results of a qualitative study can be presented in the form of numeric data (Bryman 1988: 127). Hence, the study resorts to simple quantitative terms (e.g. the number of interviewees who endorsed the EU-led reforms) for exploratory purposes rather than making statistical inferences.

Adopting a single case study as its primary approach, the study concentrates on Turkey and its EU accession process. After explaining why the study adopts a single case study, this chapter justifies the selection of political parties and reform areas in order to scrutinize domestic political perceptions on Turkey's EU accession. It also explains its choices of categorization as Left/Right and GAL/TAN to differentiate the ideological alignments of political parties. Finally, it discusses elite interviewing with Turkish parliamentarians as the preferred data collection technique to extract insights on current issues associated with Turkey's EU accession and the usage of supplementary sources to check the validity of interview results. The last section deals with the challenges and the ethical considerations associated with the methodological choices of the study.

### **3.1. Case Study**

This study relies upon the case study method focusing on the Turkish case in order to develop in-depth knowledge about the varying domestic political responses to EU membership conditionality. A case study is identified as an intensive inquiry scrutinizing ‘multiple perspectives of the complexity of a particular project, policy, institution, program or system in a real life context’ with an objective to generalize across a larger set of projects. (Gerring 2004: 341; Simons 2009: 21). This study benefits from a case study as the primary research method because case studies (i) provide proximity to reality, (ii) generate an in-depth learning process and (iii) produce generalizable data (Flyvbjerg 2006: 236). A case study enables proximity to reality since it examines social complexities in ‘real life’ context and tests the ‘views directly in relation to phenomena as they unfold in practice’ (Flyvbjerg 2006: 235; Simons 2009: 21; Thomas 2011a and 2011b). Accordingly, the study provides the first-hand experiences of politicians regarding Turkey’s EU accession process. The study examines domestic political reactions to the EU’s membership conditionality through open-ended interviews, the review of parliamentary debates and press review.

A case study also generates a learning process which enables in-depth knowledge of a single phenomenon (Flyvbjerg 2006: 224). Such an in-depth analysis permits researchers to understand the boundaries of social processes by looking at the complex interaction of many factors in few cases which cannot be possible through a statistical analysis (Harper 1992: 139; Thomas 2011b: 512). Even if the research data acquired from a case study do not aim to make statistical generalizations, their rich content provides ‘a path toward scientific innovation’ as it reveals what has not previously been discussed in great depth (Flyvbjerg 2006: 227). In this respect, using the case study method enables the author to gain a deeper understanding of how Turkish politics is affected by the EU membership process and on which grounds Turkish political actors justify their stance towards the EU. Having conducted face-to-face interviews with politicians and scanned minutes from parliamentary debates, the study reveals how Turkish politicians perceive the EU and approach Turkey’s membership process in great depth. As discussed in the empirical chapters, the study

finds that Turkish scepticism towards EU membership primarily stands as a reaction to the complex nature of EU conditionality rather than a deep-seated resentment towards Europe and its values. Besides, not only domestic factors such as political ideology and strategic decision-making but also EU-driven factors such as the EU's selective and discriminatory approach, as well as its perceived reluctance towards Turkish accession constitute the main pillars of domestic political contestations towards EU membership.

Finally, a case study can be a useful method for generalization through the employment of 'falsification' and 'verification' (Liebersson 1992: 107). Accordingly, it is well-suited for identifying 'black swans' in the area of scrutiny (Flyvbjerg 2006: 228). Especially single-N case study adds to the generalizability of research findings since it enables a strategic selection of 'critical cases' in order to reach information that facilitates logical deduction (Flyvbjerg 2006: 230). Critical cases are the 'black swans' of social inquiry revealing either 'most likely' or 'least likely' situations through which deductive conclusions such as 'if this is (not) valid for this case, then it applies to all (no) cases' could be reached (ibid.). 'Most likely' cases are primarily instrumental in the falsification of an argument. A most likely case for one proposition is 'the least likely for its negation' (Flyvbjerg 2006: 232). Therefore, if a thesis proves false in the most favourable case, then it is most likely to be false for intermediate cases (Flyvbjerg 2006: 226). On the other hand, 'least likely' cases are useful for verification. If a thesis is valid in the least favourable case, then it is likely to be valid for intermediate cases (Flyvbjerg 2006: 232). Such deductions enable single-N case study to make analytical generalizations, which differ from the statistical inferences of quantitative studies (Yin 1994: 10).

In the literature, Turkey is depicted as an *a-typical* or 'least likely' country in comparison to other candidate countries due to its different historical, cultural, political, social and economic background (Engert 2010). Unlike the CEECs, Turkey did not experience a 'return to Europe' during its candidature; conversely, its European credentials have often been questioned (İçener et al 2010: 218). Turkey's large population, Islamic identity and geographic proximity to the Middle East have frequently been coined to emphasize how different Turkey is from other countries (Güneş-Ayata 2003; Ruiz-Jiménez and Torreblanca 2007; İçener et al 2010; Canan-

Sokullu 2011). Besides, Turkey stands as the only accession country that has been waiting for more than four decades to become an EU member and yet its membership prospects are still unclear. Therefore, at a first glance, Turkey's exceptionalism seems to preclude its comparability to other countries and compromise the generalizability of data generated from the Turkish case. Therefore, Turkish responses to EU conditions are generally expected to be different from other candidate countries. However, the study finds that there are many overlaps between the responses of Turkish political elites and those in other EU accession countries. Similar to the CEECs, Turkish political actors particularly construct their EU policy on Turkey's accession with an apparent indifference towards European integration and its trajectory. Moreover, reluctance for membership in both Turkey and the CEECs involve reactions stemming from the complex nature of the EU's membership pressures in different policy domains, which eventually challenge the domestic political and economic *status quo*. In this respect, ideology and strategy, as well as the EU's selectivity in its conditionality explain domestic responses to EU pressures not only in Turkey but also in other accession countries in general. Therefore, studying Turkey as a 'least likely' case does not preclude deductions. It helps to verify the validity of the thesis of Euroscepticism concerning domestic political responses to EU conditionality during the accession process.

### **3.2. On the selection of actors**

This study examines the EU policies of primary Turkish political actors namely, the AKP, the governing party, and the CHP and the MHP, the main opposition parties. These three political actors are the most popular parties representative of the majority of the Turkish electorate. Their combined electoral popularity was around 82% in the 2007 elections and 89% in 2011. Moreover, while the AKP and the MHP represent both liberal and conservative voters standing on the right of the ideological spectrum, the CHP represents leftist and social democratic voters. The AKP is the successor of the pro-Islamic Welfare Party which traditionally opposed EU membership emphasizing the EU's Christian identity (Dikici-Bilgin 2008). However, upon its electoral success, the AKP pursued a pro-EU policy defying the legacy of its

conservative predecessor. With the objective to become a catch-all party, the AKP won three elections in a row between 2002 and 2011 and currently stands as the most popular political party in Turkey. The CHP on the other hand is the oldest political party in Turkey. Having embraced a leftist ideology since the 1970s, the CHP has been acting as the main opposition party since 2002. Idolizing the EU membership as a modernization project, the party however remains sceptical of a variety of EU preconditions. The MHP as a far-right party is the second biggest opposition party represented in the Turkish Parliament since 2007. Despite its strategic support for Turkey's EU membership, the MHP advances strong criticisms to the EU's membership criteria. Therefore, a special focus on these three parties generates comprehensive data on how Turkish mainstream politics approaches EU accession and respond to EU membership conditionality. Moreover, the study also examines the attitudes of the BDP, a pro-Kurdish party, as a controlling case in order to better understand the role of political ideology and strategy on domestic responses to EU membership conditionality. The BDP can be considered as a single-issue party since the party's main objective is to work for the solution of the Kurdish problem in Turkey. It is a regionalist party implying that the party is primarily organized in the South-eastern Anatolia and secures strong electoral potentials in that particular region. It is also an anti-establishment party since party officials aim to transform the Republic into a loose federation of several autonomous states including a Kurdish state. Therefore, its views mostly diverge from those of other parties in the parliament. For instance, unlike the mainstream parties who embrace Cyprus as a national cause for Turkey, the BDP blames Turkey for invading Northern Cyprus and preventing a peaceful settlement in the island. At the same time, the BDP is one of the most pro-EU political parties in Turkey, because as a regional party it aims to defend 'the ethno-territorial minority against the centre and demand for political autonomy' through EU accession (Marks et al 2002: 587). The EU stands as an 'unwitting ally' for regionalist parties such as the BDP against central governments (Jolly 2007: 110). EU membership hence becomes a crucial survival strategy for the BDP. According to this line of thinking, the BDP is the least-likely party to grow sceptical of EU accession. If the BDP reflects similar political attitudes towards the EU conditionality with other Turkish parties, then this will capture the reactionary dimension of Euroscepticism that transcends purely strategic or ideological competition. If a pro-

EU single-issue party whose well-being rests on the realization of Turkey's EU membership criticizes the EU and remains reluctant towards membership, then it is plausible to argue that EU-driven factors such as the EU's selective and discriminatory conditionality play a decisive role behind the rising political contestations in Turkey against EU membership.

The time period between 2002 and 2013 has been the focus of the study, because it comprises two important periods: (i) the years between 2002 and 2006 when Turkey-EU relations entered a Golden era with the adoption of numerous reform packages which triggered the initiation of accession negotiations; and (ii) the period between 2006 and 2013 during which the bilateral relations entered a dark age with the suspension of the negotiations and the remarkable uncertainty of Turkey's membership prospects. The comparison of these two time periods will provide rich data in explaining the changing EU stances of Turkish political actors.

The study particularly concentrates on Turkish political parties rather than public opinion because political parties are the prime actors of policy making (Morlino 2009), while it is an ongoing debate whether public opinion has a remarkable impact on political decision-making (Page and Shapiro 1983; Holsti 1992; Burnstein 2003). Some studies emphasize the role of public opinion in inducing change in policy-making (Holsti 1992; Stimson et al 1995; Burnstein 2003); whereas others find its effects negligible essentially because (i) policy-making is too complex for public to have an opinion on, (ii) most political issues are not salient to the mass public, and (iii) policy makers are not necessarily responsive to citizens' preferences unless during elections (Zaller 1990; Jones 1994; Lindaman and Haider-Markel 2002). Studies on Turkey indicate a limited impact of public opinion on policy-making especially regarding Turkey's EU accession (Güneş-Ayata 2003; Spiering 2007; Yılmaz 2009b). This is not only due to the highly centralized state structure in Turkey but also, it is observed that the Turkish public is one of the least informed publics among accession countries about the European Union (Güneş-Ayata 2003). The Turkish electorate tends to act in line with the EU policies of the political parties they vote for. For instance, although the majority of AKP voters is critical of EU accession believing that the EU is a Christian Club, the AKP electorate nevertheless supports the AKP's pro-EU policies (Spiering 2007: 177; Yılmaz 2009b: 8-9). Similarly, albeit



one of the most Europhile segments of Turkish society, the CHP electorate mostly supports the Eurosceptic policies of their party (Yılmaz 2011: 202-204). Moreover, analysing political parties is particularly beneficial in terms of obtaining deeper insights about Turkey-EU relations through elite interviews, while research on public opinion primarily rests on opinion surveys which, albeit important to explain the determinants of public support for EU membership (Çarkoğlu and Kentmen 2011), fall short of generating in-depth knowledge about the nature of burgeoning Turkish scepticism towards EU accession.

### **3.3. On the selection of cases**

As for the selection of empirical cases, the study focuses on the cases that are representative of the EU's formal conditionality and its additional (country-specific) pressures on accession countries. The EU's formal accession conditionality embodies 'the publicly stated preconditions as set out in the broad principles of the Copenhagen criteria and the legal framework of the *acquis*' (Hughes et al 2004: 526). The EU exerts its formal conditionality through adaptational pressures on candidate countries in line with the economic and political membership criteria (Saatçioğlu 2009). The study selected two examples of the EU's formal conditionality: the difficult reforms of minority rights and foreign land ownership. There are four main reasons behind the selection of these reforms as the test cases for the scrutiny of Euroscepticism in Turkey. First, the selection of minority rights and foreign land ownership as the main cases can be justified with the central place of these reforms in the EU's membership conditionality: the EU attaches crucial value to both minority rights and the liberalisation of foreign land ownership, and thus candidate countries' non-compliance with those reforms is punishable by suspension of negotiations. Second, the reforms under scrutiny are highly politicized cases which may bring major shifts in domestic politics and thus generate heated domestic debates, providing a solid ground for comparing political party attitudes across accession countries. Besides, in the Turkish case, the selected reforms have been adopted despite both strong domestic opposition and lack of credible prospects for Turkey's EU membership. Therefore, it is crucial to scrutinize the justifications behind domestic attitudes towards these

reforms. Third, the EU enforces a reform process based on the application of the Copenhagen criteria<sup>5</sup>, which was introduced in 1993 and significantly changed the traditional (and economistic) ways through which the EU enlargement had been approached. For instance, compliance with such norms as minority rights has become part of the official preconditions for membership after the introduction of the Copenhagen Criteria (Wiener and Wobbe 2002). The selected cases, namely minority rights and foreign land ownership, represent the EU's conditional pressures based on both political and economic Copenhagen criteria respectively. Accordingly, the reform of minority rights is a good representative of the political accession criteria while the EU associates foreign land ownership reform with the economic criteria (under the title 'free movement of capital' that is a fundamental part of single market).

Finally, the EU's formal membership conditionality cannot be taken for granted as a standard and non-discriminatory set of conditions. For instance, Rechel (2008) and Ram (2003) criticize the EU's differential treatment of candidates and member states concerning the protection of minority rights. Also, Wiener and Schweltnus (2004) highlight the selectivity (if not arbitrariness) in the EU's application of human rights conditionality to candidates. Therefore, the study selected minority rights as a case that is representative of the EU's selective conditionality and chose foreign land ownership as an example of the EU's standard conditionality (exerting similar pressures on candidate countries) in order to understand whether the EU's selectivity 'matters' in triggering Eurosceptic responses in candidate countries in general and Turkey in particular.

In summary, the case of minority rights represents a reform area in which the EU's application of conditionality has often been described as selective, whereas foreign land ownership illustrates a reform area in which the EU adopts a relatively standardized approach exerting similar pressures on candidate countries. Freedom to buy land across the EU is guaranteed under Article 56 of the Treaty Establishing the

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<sup>5</sup>Membership requires that candidate country has achieved stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights, respect for and protection of minorities, the existence of a functioning market economy as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union. Membership presupposes the candidate's ability to take on the obligations of membership including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union (EU Council 1993).

European Community prohibiting all restrictions on the movement of capital (Trzeciak 2012: 103). The EU attaches priority to the reform since it considers the foreign purchase of property having significant impact on competition and the smooth functioning of the internal market (Trzeciak 2012: 113). The EU's approach concerning the foreign land ownership reform is standard and rigid in the sense that members and candidates do not have an option to permanently opt out (only some of them can secure the right to issue temporary derogation up to 7 years if they meet the Commission's specific criteria, as observed in the CEECs). Member states' failure to ensure free movement of capital to nationals of EU Member states is penalized by the European Court of Justice (ECJ). However, the case of minority rights is different: there is no monitoring instrument adopted in the *acquis communautaire* to nurture the protection of minorities, or any sanctioning mechanism to force member states to sign and ratify treaties on minority rights (Pospisil 2006: 5). Besides, ECJ case-law demonstrates that the protection of specific minorities might be interpreted as contravening the principle of non-discrimination enshrined in EU law; consequently, the ECJ privileges the principle of non-discrimination at the expense of minority protection (ibid.).

Apart from its formal conditionality, the EU also issued country-specific pressures on Turkey. The study adopts the EU's Cyprus conditionality as the third empirical case representative of the EU's additional country-specific conditionality. It is crucial to study the EU's Cyprus conditionality because; (i) it is an EU precondition specifically targeting Turkey, (ii) it has remarkable impact on Turkish foreign policy, because it forces Turkey to open its harbours and airspace to the RoC that Turkey does not recognize as the official authority in Cyprus and (iii) Turkey's failure to comply with the EU's Cyprus conditionality has immediately led to the partial suspension of its EU membership negotiations. Turkey long pursued its traditional Cyprus policy defending a two-states solution to the long festering Cyprus problem which contributed to a deadlock keeping both nations of the island separated. The AKP government abandoned this policy and supported the Annan Plan which would unite the two communities under a single state. However, the failure of UN plan of reunification (the so-called 'Annan Plan') in 2004, the admission of the RoC to the EU, and the EU's ensuing pressure on Turkey to open its harbours and airspace to the RoC

remarkably shifted the AKP government's Cyprus policy away from reformism. The government's failure to comply with the EU's Cyprus condition resulted in a partial suspension of the accession negotiations in 2006. Although it previously blamed the opposition's hard-line Cyprus approach for preventing solution to the Cyprus problem, the AKP started to reflect a similar hard-line stance after the suspension of the negotiations. Therefore, analysing the Turkish political responses to the EU's Cyprus conditionality enables a better understanding of the development of Euroscepticism in Turkish politics. If all the political parties under scrutiny demonstrate similar reactions to the EU's conditional pressures concerning Cyprus, then their opposition to EU conditionality is not merely shaped by their ideology or strategy, but it develops as a reaction to the EU's precondition specifically targeting Turkey.

Apart from these three cases under scrutiny, the study also devoted a chapter to the spreading perception in Turkey about the EU's reluctance towards Turkish accession in order to examine how domestic perceptions influence attitudes towards EU accession process. It is crucial to include this chapter because there is a burgeoning conviction in Turkey that the EU will never accept Turkish accession due to different reasons such as cultural and religious differences. If this conviction proves to be the main determinant of Euroscepticism in Turkish politics, then it could be argued that the Turkish case is exceptional because other such claims are not observed in other candidate countries. In that case, political responses to EU accession criteria are supposed to be primarily stimulated by the perception of being unwanted by the EU. The CEECs whose membership was facilitated with the frame of 'return to Europe' did not share a similar experience with Turkey. However, if there are other significant causes of Turkish Euroscepticism similar to other accession countries, then Turkey is not entirely a distinct case and findings on Turkish political attitudes towards EU accession can be comparable to other countries.

### **3.4. On the selection of ideological categories**

The 'ideology versus strategy' debate is popular within the academic literature in the analysis of party attitudes towards European integration (Hooghe 2007; Neumayer

2008). The study will benefit from this scholarly debate in examining the development of scepticism in Turkish politics towards EU accession. The study will also evaluate whether this debate still holds true when domestic political actors feel discriminated by the EU's conditionality. Examining the impact of ideology and strategy permits comparison between Turkey and other accession countries. This comparison necessitates categorization of political parties in accession countries and Turkey in particular on the basis of their ideological alignments. The study employs classical Left-Right distinction as well as *GAL* (green/alternative/libertarian) - *TAN* (traditionalism/authority/nationalism) dyad, because being leftist or rightist does not necessarily explain whether party has an authoritarian or libertarian political outlook (Marks et al 2006). The GAL/TAN classification is claimed to be 'the most general and powerful predictor of party positioning on the issues that arise from European integration' because it focuses on a 'new politics dimension tapping communal, environmental, and cultural issues' (Hooghe et al 2002: 966). Through GAL/TAN categorization, the study will classify political parties not only relying on their economic, but also political and cultural views of the world. It will compare and contrast the EU policies of traditionalist and libertarian political parties in candidate countries. The study not only employs the GAL/TAN distinction to categorize parties but also benefits from the findings of the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) of 2002 and that of 2010 in order to determine the identification of the ideological alignments of political parties in different accession countries. However, there are some limitations to the GAL/TAN classification of the survey. For instance, the suggestions of the survey are based on expert feedbacks. Although relying on the views of experts is a viable way to estimate political party positions which cannot be directly measured (Hooghe et al 2010: 689), expert feedbacks at times produce contradictory and thus misleading results concerning the ideological alignment of political parties. For instance, according to CHES 2010, multiple Turkish experts evaluated the GAL/TAN status of the CHP on a ten-point scale (where 0 is extreme left, 10 is extreme right, and 5 is centre). Some experts gave 10 points to the CHP associating it with extreme right/TAN, while some gave 0 or 1 identifying it as extreme left/TAN. Moreover, some political parties in the CEECs which are depicted as GAL parties by the CHES 2002 and 2010 can be considered as TAN because of their oppressive policies towards civil society and media during their time in government. For instance, the

Civic Democratic Party (ODS) in the Czech Republic and the Hungarian Civic Party (FIDESZ-MPP) are accepted by the expert surveys as Right/GAL parties. However, the ODS governments in the 1990s ‘made blatant efforts to suppress political party competition, restrict information and obstruct the regeneration of a politically active civil society’ and ‘neglect[ed] to establish an independent civil service, undermin[ed] poles of opinion outside of the government, such as universities, non-governmental organizations and interest groups’ (Vachudova 2005: 194-195). Similarly, the FIDESZ-MPP government pursued a process of ‘systematic destruction of checks and balances in the government’, moving Hungary in a more ‘conservative, corporatist-authoritarian direction’ (Tomini 2012: 2). Therefore, it is more plausible to consider these parties as TAN rather than GAL. Even if these parties today claim to pursue liberal policies, the study chose to classify them as TAN due to their conservative attitudes during the EU accession process.

Finally, identifying which party is GAL proves problematic for the CEECs due to the lack of democratic culture, a consolidated party system and a high degree of uncertainty over a successful transformation to market economy and liberal democracy (Bielasiak 1997: 24). Therefore, ideological models designed for Western European political parties do not fit well in the political context of the CEECs. For instance, while Left is identified with ‘change’ and ‘equality’ in the Western context, Left represents conservatism and *ancien régime* in the CEECs (Markowski 1997: 223). Left parties are the successors of the Communist regime and stand as the ‘transition losers’ (Marks et al 2006: 159). Carrying the nostalgia for the past, they resist liberalisation. It is rather the right-wing parties which defend liberal change (Markowski 1997: 223). Moreover, some ex-communist parties ‘liberalized’ their political outlook in order not to be marginalized after the fall of communism (Ziblatt 1998: 135). They embraced ‘social democracy’ as their new political identity, and abandoned Marxist rhetoric (ibid.). Some became successful in presenting themselves as credible social democrats, while others experienced major difficulties in ‘selling’ this vision to the electorate due to their deep-rooted authoritarian image during the communist era (Ishiyama and Shafqat 2000: 440). Therefore, it will be misleading to automatically accept all ‘social democratic’ parties in the CEECs as GAL.

On the other hand, the lack of a broad middle class during the communist years further blurred the ideological alignments of political actors in the CEECs after the fall of communism. For instance, strong public support for privatization in the initial years of independence quickly waned after a massive privatization wave in the CEECs. The new generation of political parties including Meciar's HZDS in Slovakia responded by highlighting 'national and cultural themes and economic nationalism rather than economic liberalization' (Markowski 1997: 234). Therefore, the GAL agendas of newly established political parties after communism got swiftly replaced with TAN rhetoric. Notwithstanding these limitations, both the GAL/TAN distinction and the CHES data give a general idea about the ideological alignments of political parties in accession countries facilitating comparison.

### **3.5. Data collection**

The study uses interviews as its primary data collection method because it essentially aims to learn how Turkish political actors approach Turkey-EU relations. Conducting interviews with Turkish parliamentarians provides detailed reflections on Turkey's EU bid and facilitates a better understanding of the current stalemate in Turkey's accession process. It should be noted that interviews do not provide the researcher with direct access to 'facts' and 'experiences' but produce data on how interviewees interpret and display their perspectives upon them (Silverman 2011: 168). Accordingly, the study will also rely on other primary and secondary sources such as parliamentary minutes, official documents (EU reports, party documents), press statements of politicians in order to examine the validity of interview findings. The author takes note of certain issues associated with the usage of supplementary sources such as accession restriction and the issue of reliability, which necessitates the cross-checking of the source, the context, the targeted audiences and the original intention of the document (Dale 2006: 81).

### **3.5.1. Elite interviews**

The study particularly focuses on elite interviewing in order to gather detailed information about the EU policies of Turkish political parties, because Turkey's EU accession is primarily an elite-driven process (Akşit et al 2011: 397). Elite interviews provide useful insights about 'the inner workings of the political process, the machinations between influential actors and how a sequence of events [i]s viewed and responded to within the political machine' (Lilleker 2003: 208). They enable the researcher to gain access to the personal remarks of politicians which cannot be reached from 'official published documents or contemporary media accounts' (ibid.). What happens in politics is mostly inaccessible because it is either 'unrecorded or it is locked away under 30 or 50 year rule' (Lilleker 2003: 213). Therefore, conducting interviews with people who are actively involved in the political process is 'often the only way of uncovering details' about the topics of academic inquiry (ibid.).

The EU accession process necessitates the adoption of certain EU-led reforms for which the Turkish government needs to acquire the approval of the Parliament, and this makes the Turkish Parliament 'one of the most important actors' in the membership process (Akşit et al 2011: 397). Therefore, it is necessary to conduct interviews with Turkish parliamentarians primarily due to two reasons. First, they are the main actors of legislation actively taking part in the adoption of EU-led reforms. They act as members of important parliamentary committees including constitutional, foreign affairs and EU harmonization committees. Therefore, they are informed about Turkey's EU accession process and the EU-led reforms under scrutiny. Second, parliamentarians are almost always affiliated with political parties. Top party officials are usually parliamentarians, while some members of the Parliament are also members of their party's own assembly. Therefore, Turkish parliamentarians are in a position to give feedback about both the workings of their own party about EU membership and the EU-led reforms brought before the Turkish Parliament.

Researchers must already have a good knowledge of the facts about their academic research before conducting interviews (Lilleker 2003: 212). This not only gives them more academic credibility, but more importantly it ensures that 'the interviewee cannot offer a completely false account of events without being questioned' (ibid.).



Therefore, some scholars claim that interviews should be conducted towards the end of the research programme (ibid.). Interviews were conducted in the final years of the PhD program between November 2012 and April 2013, mostly because the author wanted to gain a detailed knowledge about the EU stances of Turkish political elite before conducting the interviews. With this motivation, he consulted the academic literature and scanned the official gazette, the national press and parliamentary minutes. This provided the author not only the opportunity to find out whether the interviewees diverge from the official stance of their parties but it also enabled the author to intervene in the case of ambiguous accounts given by respondents during the interviews.

The Turkish Parliament located in the Turkish capital city, Ankara was where the bulk of interviews were conducted. Parliamentarians often chose to take the interviews either in their parliamentary offices or in the main building where plenary sessions take place. In addition, three interviews were held with the deputy leaders of the MHP, the CHP and the BDP in party headquarters. There are currently 327 AKP, 134 CHP, 52 MHP and 26 BDP deputies in the Parliament. The author interviewed 45 of them (25 AKP, 15 CHP, 4 MHP and 1 BDP). Interviews account for 8% of Turkish parliamentarians in total (45 out of 550). The CHP deputies were comparably over-represented (11%), while other parties were slightly under-represented (7.7% AKP, 7.7% MHP, 4% BDP). There are several reasons for such an inconvenience. First, officials of the CHP reflected an image of ‘conventional elites’ who ‘regard academic investigations as fruitful and valuable to society as a whole’ (Sabot 1999: 330), therefore they were comparably much more approachable. On the other hand, most officials of the MHP and the BDP with whom the author contacted turned out to be ‘defensive elites’ reluctant to cooperate (ibid.). AKP deputies rather reflected as mixed image, while some made themselves available for academic interviews, others proved difficult to reach. Second, there was an issue of attendance. Even though the author was present in the Parliament almost every working day during three months, he could not find most of the MHP and the BDP officials either in their offices or elsewhere in the Parliament. Finally, it was particularly challenging to interview BDP officials, because most declined to answer the interview questions as they claimed that interviewing with the party’s deputy leader would be sufficient. Difficulty to

conduct interviews with BDP officials had already been experienced by others and this is mainly explained with the party's hierarchical structure and single-issue agenda (Akşit et al 2011: 398).

Nevertheless, given the traditionally hierarchical structure of Turkish political parties, the study has successfully interviewed the top officials of the four parties including Burhan Kuzu (AKP - chairman of the Constitutional Committee), Mehmet Sayım Tekelioğlu (AKP- chairman of the EU harmonization committee), Afif Demirkıran (AKP – chairman of Turkey-EU joint parliamentary committee), Burak Erdenir (AKP - deputy undersecretary of the EU Ministry of Turkey), Faruk Loğoğlu (deputy leader of the CHP), Zuhâl Topçu (deputy leader of the MHP) and Yüksel Mutlu (deputy leader of the BDP). Moreover, the sample of the study reflects a regional balance. The parliamentarians represent 25 different cities from all seven regions of Turkey. Naturally, the biggest cities; namely İstanbul, Ankara and İzmir are represented more than other cities in the interview sample, as they have the largest portion of seats in the parliament. The sample also reflects a gender balance since the proportion of female respondents (17.7%) is slightly over the total ratio of women deputies in the Parliament (14.4%).

This study is particularly useful in terms of providing the accounts of Turkish parliamentarians who work in the parliamentary commissions such as the EU harmonization committee, Constitutional committee, Foreign affairs committee and Turkey-EU joint parliamentary committee and personally participate in the making of draft EU laws. Therefore, they can offer rich insights concerning the reforms under scrutiny and Turkey's EU membership process. The author interviewed ten members (out of 25) of the EU harmonization committee and nine members (out of 25) of Turkey-EU joint parliamentary committee in order to obtain in-depth feedback of the parliamentarians who played an active role during the EU-led reform process.

There are several problems associated with elite interviewing. First of all, it is difficult to reach political elites although compared to non-elites, locating them 'might seem relatively easy due to their high visibility' (Mikecz 2012: 482). Turkish parliamentarians usually don't respond to emails. The author could only get response from two parliamentarians through electronic correspondence. There are also many

gatekeepers in the Turkish Parliament proving the realization of interviews difficult. For instance, intensive security measures made it challenging for the author to gain access to the Parliament compound. The usage of voice recorder was subject to the approval of the parliamentary media office, and it was obligatory to obtain a written confirmation from the office every time the author visited the Parliament. Furthermore, it was not possible to get an appointment directly from parliamentarians bypassing their secretaries and advisors. Besides, booking an appointment was not a viable method for successfully conducting interviews with parliamentarians in Turkey. They don't give appointments over the phone; hence the author had to personally visit the office of every parliamentarian he aimed to interview, he presented a letter of statement explaining why he wanted to conduct interviews, his curriculum vitae and business card in order to prove the authenticity of his academic credentials. Most parliamentarians refuse to give an appointment at a particular time; hence the author had to be present in the Parliament almost 4-5 days a week for a three-months period from morning until evening in order not to miss the opportunity to interview parliamentarians whenever they were available. Therefore, interviewing Turkish political elites proved to be an extremely intensive and exhaustive process.

Besides, building rapport with the political elite and gaining their trust is a necessary but challenging task (Lilleker 2003; Mikecz 2012). The existing literature explains that positionality is either a problem or blessing for researchers to obtain valid data through elite interviewing (Morris 2009; Mikecz 2012). For instance, being a foreigner or outsider may be beneficial for a researcher to achieve a better response rate from political elites in some countries such as France, the United States and the United Kingdom; while being an outsider can be problematic to reach political elites in others such as Jamaica and Estonia due to linguistic barriers, cultural conventions and distrust against outsiders (Herod 1999; Sabot 1999; Mullings 1999; Mikecz 2012). As a citizen of the Turkish Republic, the author was not a foreigner but his academic credentials as a PHD candidate from a UK institution attached him an 'outsider' status and actually granted his research an external legitimacy which enabled the author to extract detailed views and interpretations from respondents. The interviews yielded the fact that Turkish political elites perceive UK universities as top

quality and prestigious institutions; they thus tend to take their research seriously. Therefore, coming from a UK university proved to be an advantage for the author.

Finally, the author asked open-ended questions as they provide better access to 'interviewee's views, interpretations of events, understandings, experiences and opinions' (Byrne 2004: 182 in Silverman 2011: 167). Political elites 'do not like being put in the straitjacket of close-ended questions' (Aberbach and Rockman 2002: 674). They rather prefer to articulate their views 'explaining why they think what they think' (ibid.). Open-ended questions thus provide them with the latitude to articulate their responses, and give them opportunity to organize their answers within their own frameworks (ibid.). The author prepared 6 open-ended questions five of which aimed to reveal the approaches of political elites to the reforms of minority rights, foreign land ownership, the EU's Cyprus conditionality and the EU's 'perceived' reluctance towards Turkish accession. The author simply asked them to give their personal account on those issues. Moreover respondents were asked about the most important obstacles to Turkey's EU membership in order to gain their views about the (internal and external) sources of the current stalemate in bilateral relations.

There are certain shortcomings of asking open-ended questions. In qualitative interviews, most of the analytical decisions are made during or after the interview data are collected, because open-ended questions force the interviewer to make different decisions and ask additional questions according to the reactions of respondents in each session (Gomm 2008: 239-240). Naturally, responses to open-ended questions are also open-ended. Some respondents devoted much energy to discuss issues that may not be directly related to the questions. The author was hence forced to ask probing questions to prevent side-tracking and ensure that a valid answer was provided. Conducting interviews with open-ended questions is also a time consuming process. Compared to close-ended questions, it takes much longer for respondents to answer open-ended questions (Aberbach and Rockman 2002: 674). The interviews took around 20-30 minutes on average, while some even lasted about an hour. Therefore, it took longer to transcribe and analyse the interview findings (ibid.). There are also financial costs. Since these interviews take longer time, it was not possible to conduct more than 3-4 interviews a day. The author thus had to come to the Parliament quite often and spend more than 3 months in Ankara.

### **3.5.2. Ethical considerations**

There are several ethical considerations the author took into account while conducting interviews. Informed consent was a key principle the author sought to fulfil. Informed consent is the consent of an interviewee which is essentially taken after giving him or her a detailed account of the nature and aims of the research and the assurance that interviewee can withdraw from the research at any time (Lilleker 2003: 209; Silverman 2011: 98). With this motivation, the author prepared a formal letter outlining the aims and the usage of the interviews as well as brief information about the research. The author emailed these letters to the secretaries of parliamentarians. He also orally presented the same information to the parliamentarians at the beginning of each interview to make sure he was granted informed consent. Moreover, the researcher must convince the respondents that his academic credentials are authentic and the interview data will be used for academic purposes only (Jones 2004: 259). In order to prove his authenticity, the author provided each parliamentarian with his curriculum vitae and business card before the interview. Moreover, the author asked for the respondents' permission for the usage of audiotape recorder during the interviews. He both took notes and electronically recorded the interviews in order to prevent data loss. He compared the recorded data and his notes in order to receive optimum output from interviews. He only took notes when a few parliamentarians declined the electronic recording of the interview. As regards anonymity and confidentiality, all respondents gave their consent for the usage of their original names in the study.

Obtaining the initial consent of interviewees is not always sufficient for a researcher may sometimes be obliged to seek respondent's consent to use/publish the collected data (Lilleker 2003: 212-213; Silverman 2011: 102). Some parliamentarians firmly stated that the author must consult with them first before using their names and comments in his future publications. Moreover, some respondents preferred to give some 'off the record' information which they did not want the author to publish. The author turned off the audio recorder for brief time periods and remained loyal to

respondent demands by not sharing the ‘off-the-record’ interview findings of the study.

Moreover, it is crucial to be aware of the social desirability bias that may compromise the findings of self-reporting techniques such as interviewing. According to some, giving the impression that the researcher is taking the side of the respondents might encourage them ‘to respond favourably, open up to [the interviewer] and give a good account of, at least, what they thought about the issue and the debates surrounding events (Lilleker 2003: 211). However, this attitude compromises the scientific objectivity of the researcher and causes social desirability bias in the respondent’s answers. A balanced-impression is a must for acquiring reliable interview data (ibid.). During the interviews, the author sought to look neutral and asked additional questions in order to check the validity of the answers when he suspected the risk of social desirability bias.

Finally, during the writing-up phase of the PHD thesis, researchers should avoid using any sexist or racist language, acknowledge the contributions of other researchers to the topic under scrutiny, devote a section to the discussion of the limitations of the data used, and explain the implications of the research for the relevant scholarship (De Vaus 1991; Homan 1991).

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **THE REFORM OF MINORITY RIGHTS**

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the variation of Turkish political party responses to the EU's (issue-specific) conditional pressures regarding the reform of minority rights. The chapter argues that the main attitudes of Turkish political parties to the EU-led reforms of minority rights primarily stem from (1) domestic political considerations, i.e. cost-benefit calculations and threat perceptions regarding the EU accession, and from (2) the perception that the EU's pressures of formal conditionality are often applied in a selective manner. The findings emphasize that domestic resistance to EU-led reforms of minority rights is not peculiar to the Turkish case because similar reactions to EU-led reforms of minority rights have been witnessed in other accession countries dissimilar to Turkey in terms of economic development, political culture, and national identity. Accordingly, the chapter will first discuss the EU's minority rights conditionality and its overall approach towards minority rights. It will then scrutinize the political resistance in candidate countries to the EU-led minority rights reforms. Turning to the Turkish case, the chapter will first focus on the evolution of the minority rights regime in Turkey and then assess the political resistance to the EU's minority rights conditionality in Turkey. Accordingly, Turkish political parties (especially the opposition parties, the CHP and the MHP) tend to embrace a highly nationalistic stance perceiving the reforms within the scope of foreign policy and dismiss them as unilateral concessions to foreigners. The observed rise of Euroscepticism in Turkish politics as a response to the EU's conditionality of minority rights also feeds and 'brings back' the traditional Turkish mistrust against Europeans embodied in the Sèvres Syndrome. After discussing why and to what extent major Turkish political parties resist the reforms of minority rights, the chapter will compare the official party line with the views of parliamentarians through the discussion of interview findings. The interviews suggest that government respondents sometimes diverge from the government's reformist rhetoric and actually

reflect Euroscepticism; i.e. they remain reluctant towards the reforms the AKP government supports. Moreover, the leadership change in the CHP, the main opposition party, has actually had a limited effect on the party's stance over minority rights. The CHP respondents are divided over the expansion of minority rights. The interviews, on the other hand, support the hard-line stance of the junior opposition party, the MHP. Overall, the chapter seeks to find out whether strategic party competition and ideological dispositions determine party attitudes concerning minority rights, or Turkish political actors simply react against the EU's selective application of its minority rights conditionality.

#### **4.1. The EU Conditionality on Minority Rights and Responses from Accession Countries**

The notion of minority rights was first introduced in 1993 as a political Copenhagen criterion enshrining 'the respect for and protection of national minorities' in the EU (Sasse 2005: 1). The reform has been praised as 'a prime example of the EU's positive stabilising impact in Central and Eastern Europe' (ibid.). The expectation is that conditionality on minority rights would contribute to the consolidation of democracy and human rights in the accession countries and would particularly improve the living standards of the long oppressed minority groups. However, the application of the EU-led reform remains problematic due to certain impediments concerning minority rights. To clarify, despite the intensive efforts of the UN, OSCE and the Council of Europe, there is a lack of a consensus in international politics and law on what constitutes a 'national minority' which remains susceptible to a wide range of interpretations (Schwellnus 2005: 56; G. Yılmaz 2012: 121). There are no universally accepted practices on a number of minority issues, including minority-language education, collective versus individual rights, and autonomy versus integration (Ram 2003: 47). The minority criterion hence lacks a firm foundation not only in international law but in EU law as well (Hughes and Sasse 2003: 5; Sasse 2005: 5). Moreover, no European standard of minority rights has been established within the *acquis communautaire* to be firmly applicable to each EU member state (De Witte 2000; Pentassuglia 2001; Schwellnus 2005). This prevents the EU from



offering an ‘easy fix’ to the minority issues in Europe (Ram 2003: 47). Besides, different practices of member states prevent common community behaviour towards minorities within the EU (Sasse 2005: 5; Schweltnus 2005: 56).

Additionally, the remarkable difference in the EU’s approach towards members and its treatment of candidates concerning minority rights is a major concern raised in the academic literature (Ram 2003; Schweltnus 2005; G. Yılmaz 2012). The EU’s strong pressures on candidate countries concerning the protection of minority rights while remaining indifferent to malpractices against minorities in member states are perceived as ‘double standards’ by candidates and thus, decrease the legitimacy of the EU’s conditionality during its negotiations with candidate countries (Rechel 2008: 181; G. Yılmaz 2012: 121). For instance, France under the leadership of Nicholas Sarkozy deported more than a thousand Roma holding EU passports (nationals of Bulgaria and Romania). Lacking necessary enforcement measures, the EU only condemned the French government and threatened to take legal action but failed to convince France to step back (Traynor 2010). The repressive policy of France against Roma still continues even after the Sarkozy administration (Sayare 2012). Moreover, while the signature and ratification of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the Charter of Regional and Minority Languages was enforced by the EU to candidate countries as a precondition for accession, those documents had not been ratified by a number of member states including Belgium, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Greece (Ram 2003: 48). The EU does not only discriminate between member and candidate states. It has also applied the conditionality of minority rights to accession countries on a selective basis (Wiener and Schweltnus 2004: 463). Accordingly, countries experiencing serious problems related to minority issues such as Romania with a sizeable Roma community are taken into an intensive monitoring and continuous scrutiny while it is adequate for others to comply with the minority criterion in general (ibid.). Given such discrepancies, it is often argued that the minority rights regime remains a grey area in the EU (Schweltnus 2005: 51).

As far as the minority criterion is concerned, the EU believes in the importance of the enforcement of certain instruments such as ‘the acceptance of ‘group-specific’

cultural and linguistic rights, power-sharing arrangements, and socio-economic rights' to accommodate between minorities and majorities in a democratic regime (Hughes and Sasse 2003: 3). However, concerning the accession process, such political steps prove contested and controversial in the recipient countries for they are perceived as a threat to nation-state and national sovereignty. This conundrum renders the reform of minority rights susceptible to strong domestic opposition during the accession process. Nationalistic justifications, such as the preoccupation to protect national sovereignty and integrity, and the danger of foreign interference have been raised as the main causes for the denial of expanding the rights of minorities. In Estonia, the Centre Party [Left/TAN] opposed the EU-led reforms expanding the citizenship rights of minorities and vetoed the removal of the Estonian language requirement for minority candidates who participate in national elections. Claiming that such reforms would constitute a threat to Estonian identity, party officials condemned the government for 'giving in' to Western institutions' demands on such sensitive issues (Feldman 2001: 16).

Along with the support of opposition parties, Vladimir Meciar's governing party, Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) [Left/TAN] rejected all EU-led reforms on minority rights and proclaimed Slovak as the only official language, minimizing the political influence of the Hungarian minority and limiting the authority of local communities (Sasse 2005: 16; Tesser 2003: 512-513). Meciar particularly opposed the idea of giving any rights to Roma. He claimed that 'the Roma are a social problem and simply a great burden on this society' (Kohn 1996: 179). He even argued 'if we don't deal with them now, they will deal with us in time' (ibid.). Consequently, the European Commission reported that Slovakia was unable to fulfil the political accession criteria and excluded Slovakia from the first wave of accession. Slovakia's accession process was revitalized only after a new government took over in October 1998 and agreed to comply with the EU membership criteria.

Similarly, in the Czech Republic, the construction of the Maticni street wall in 1999 physically separating the Czechs from the Roma minority created much controversy. EU officials condemned the construction of the wall and warned the Czech government that such a discriminatory decision would threaten their entry to the EU

(Fawn 2001: 1204). Vaclav Klaus, the leader of Civic Democratic Party (ODS) [Right/TAN], the main opposition of the time, initially defied criticisms and declared: 'I see walls in Northern Ireland which are far greater in significance than that in Maticni Street and no one threatens to expel Britain from the EU' (Fawn 2001: 1209). Mayor Pavel Tosovsky, a member of the ODS who ordered the construction of the wall dismissed the warnings of Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission and replied; 'Prodi? Isn't his first name Romany? We don't want to belong to a European Union that makes this wall an obstacle to our membership' (Fawn 2001: 1204).

Upon foreign pressures, the Czech Parliament adopted a resolution halting the wall's construction. Although the official policy of the ODS was to vote against the construction, several party officials supported Mayor Tosovsky and stood against the rights of Roma (Fawn 2001: 1203). For instance, the ODS Deputy Chairman Ivan Langer stated that people were 'right to enact private initiatives' [to protect themselves from Roma] (Fawn 2001: 1209). Even during the ODS government, some party officials highlighted their opposition to the Roma minority despite condemnation from within the party. For instance, the ODS Senator Zdenek Klausner proposed relocating Roma from out of Prague and the ODS mayor of Ostrava Liana Janackova proposed municipal funding for one-way air tickets for Roma who opted to leave for Canada (Fawn 2001: 1203).

In Poland, a draft bill granting greater rights to minorities in 1999 attracted much criticism among political parties. The draft EU-led reform foresaw the usage of minority languages at state departments and the establishment of a department exclusively responsible for minority affairs (Tesser 2003: 500). The officials of the agrarian Polish Peasant Party (PSL) [Left/TAN] and the centre-right Solidarity coalition (AWS) [Left/TAN] opposed the EU reform for it constituted 'a threat to the integrity of the republic as well as an attempt to ridicule the majesty of the state' (Tesser 2003: 501). The parties justified their opposition on the fear of re-domination by Poland's powerful neighbour Germany (ibid.). They also highlighted the lack of a consensual and binding definition of national minority within the EU, diminishing the

credibility of the EU-led minority reform further in the eyes of the Polish public (ibid.).

The EU's non-standard conditionality on minority rights depleted the enthusiasm for reform in Macedonia. The Macedonian government led by the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM) [Left/TAN], pioneered the adoption of the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA) in 2001 to end the armed conflict with ethnic Albanians and expand the rights of minorities in line with the EU's condition for pre-accession. However, the government then referred to the EU's deficits in its minority-rights regime in order to justify its loss of motivation for the reform (Koinova 2011: 826). The government charged the EU with failing to pressurize Greece and Bulgaria to recognize their Macedonian minorities. The main tendency among the Macedonian decision-makers was that 'if neither country was able to change its narrow historical vision with regard to the Macedonian nationality, then Macedonians should not be obliged to further support ethnic diversity in their own country' (ibid.). Likewise, officials of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) [Right/TAN] stressed the EU's indifference to France's non-recognition of its minorities and condemned the EU's pressures on Croatia as double standard (Jovic 2006: 93).

Minority rights became a source of intense opposition in Romania as well. The government's initiative to introduce an EU-sponsored Education Law in July 1997 which granted 'national minorities the right of education in their mother tongue from primary to university education and the possibility of establishing a Hungarian-language university' faced fierce opposition in the parliament (Ram 2003: 44). The opposition parties especially the Party of Social Democracy (PSDR) [Left/TAN] and the Romanian National Unity Party (PUNR) [Right/TAN] strongly opposed the legislation that would considerably expand minority rights in the country (ibid.). The Romanian government was forced to withdraw the bill but attempted to grant similar rights to minorities by issuing an emergency ordinance. However, its enactment was again prevented by the opposition votes in the parliament shortly after the Luxembourg Council accepted the Commission's recommendation not to start accession negotiations with Romania (Ram 2003: 45). Moreover, the far-right nationalist Greater Romania Party (PRM) [Right/TAN] which had given strategic

support to Romania's EU membership, stood against the reforms expanding the rights of Hungarian and Roma minorities. The PRM determined a wide range of 'unacceptable aliens' such as Roma, Jews, Hungarians, Chinese and Arabs living in Romania and opposed any reform granting further rights to those communities (Borz 2012: 177-178). During the zenith of the party's electoral popularity between 2000 and 2004, Vadim Tudor, the party leader even demanded all 'Gypsies' to be put in jail for there was no other solution [to prevent crime] (Goldston 2002: 155).

Latvian politics under weak coalition governments had a more difficult experience concerning the reforms of minority rights since not only opposition but also coalition partners opposed the reforms to the point of withdrawing from coalition. The EU pressurized the Latvian government to amend Latvian Language Law and Naturalization Law 'to allow Russian-speaking non-citizens to become better integrated into Latvian society' (Bhatia, unknown: 17). The citizenship reform was strongly opposed by the For Fatherland and Freedom/Latvian National Independence Party (TB/LNNK) [Right/TAN], a far right nationalist party that feared such amendments would render Latvia more susceptible to Russian influence. The party officials argued that 'if all non-citizens were suddenly given voting rights they would vote to destabilize Latvia's shaky political scene and even re-annex Latvia to Russia' (Morris 2004: 554). Even during its term in office, the TB/LNNK persistently opposed the minority rights laws which 'grant[ed] citizenship to stateless children and eas[ed] language requirements for citizenship applicants over the age of 65' (Solska 2011: 1096). The party eventually gave in to the pressures of the EU and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and adopted the reforms (ibid.). The party officials announced that it was in Latvia's strategic interest to become an EU member to offset future threats from Russia (Morris 2004: 558). However, the legislation created a crisis within the government since the biggest coalition partner; the Democratic Party-Saimnieks (DP-S) [Left/TAN] accused the coalition government of being 'too lenient' towards the external bodies and withdrew from the government (ibid.).

The resignation of the DP-S resulted in a popular referendum in which 53% of the voters approved the disputed reforms in October 1998 (Kelley 2004: 91-92; Solska

2011: 1096). The new Latvian government formed after the withdrawal of the DP-S comprised a coalition of TB/LNNK, the People's Party (TP) [Right/TAN] and the Latvian Way (LC) [Right/GAL]. Despite EU pressure, the coalition government was adamant to adopt a new language law placing high priority on 'protecting Latvian language and culture' and announced it as more important than 'strengthening relations with the EU' (Kelley 2004: 82). The law put very difficult language barriers on the Russian-speaking minority as the criteria for employment and legal services amongst others (Kelley 2004: 81). The EU Presidency firmly warned the government that the language law would 'hurt Latvia's chance to join the EU' (Kelley 2004: 82). The government's insistence in the nationalistic language law lasted until the Helsinki Summit in December 1999 when finally, the governing parties decided that a liberal amendment would actually open the EU's door to Latvia; thus the incentive to join the EU prevailed over nationalist stance against minorities in the last minute (Kelley 2004: 83).

The above examples reflect the fact that EU-led reforms for the protection of minority rights became a remarkable source of Euroscepticism in numerous candidate countries. The opposing domestic political actors perceived minorities not as an integral part of the host society but as foreigners open to manipulation by their country of origin. Hence the nationalistic urge to preserve political stability and national sovereignty against foreign intrusion played a crucial role behind domestic resistance to the expansion of minority rights. Moreover, the EU's differential approach towards members and candidates decreased the credibility of its formal conditionality. For instance, the ratification of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities was contested in the national parliaments of accession countries not only because the ratification would mean the official recognition of minorities that had previously been denied such status (Rechel 2009: 79-80), but also because the convention was neither signed nor ratified by a significant number of EU member states (Kochenov 2011: 37). Moreover, as the cases of Poland, Macedonia and the Czech Republic illustrate, domestic reluctance to proceed with minority reforms was often justified with the EU's differential, if not 'discriminatory', treatment of member states and candidates over the issue.

Concerning the effects of party dispositions on the development of an Eurosceptics stance, the findings of the study suggest that parties in accession countries which opposed the EU-led reform of minority rights hold mainly TAN ideology (H2), while Left/Right distinction (H1) does not play a decisive role in the responses of political parties against the EU. It is the TAN ideology which represents a nationalist and conservative front that tends to treat the country as a single nation and minorities as a threat to the nation or unwanted outsiders. Moreover, some of the mainstream parties such as the centre-right ODS in Czech Republic and the centre-left SDSM in Macedonia which identified themselves as liberal could be considered as TAN parties due to their repressive policies against media and civil society during their term in office. This supports the Hypotheses I and II regarding the effects of party ideology on Euroscepticism. Moreover, there is evidence in the literature that TAN parties including the ODS, the SDSM, and the HDZ in Croatia criticized the EU's selectivity regarding the reform of minority rights. However, there is no tangible evidence indicating that GAL parties such as the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) in Poland, the Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) and Slovak Democratic and Christian Union – Democratic Party (SDKÚ-DS) embrace Euroscepticism in response to the EU's selective minority rights conditionality. Therefore, comprehensive research on the CEECs is needed to provide supporting evidence for Hypothesis III.

Regarding party competition over the reforms, the evidence suggests that resistance to minority rights reforms is embraced not only by fringe parties but mainstream parties as well (H4). The Centre party in Estonia, the PSDR in Romania, the HZDS in Slovakia, the LW in Latvia and the ODS could be considered as mainstream parties having important electoral potentials. Even the PRM and the PUNR in Romania and the TB/LNNK in Latvia which are now considered as fringe parties had once gathered considerable public support and experience in office during the EU accession process. Their reactions to the EU-led reforms are not to be neglected. Therefore, the evidence on minority rights supports Hypothesis IV. Moreover, it is difficult to argue that Eurosceptic response to the EU's conditionality of minority rights is an opposition phenomenon (H5). Often, resistance to minority reforms was adopted by opposition parties that seek to gain ground against reformist governments through nationalist and protectionist rhetoric. However, governing parties too have shown similar reactions in

the domain of minority rights and announced their lack of enthusiasm to proceed with the EU membership process. Especially, shaky coalitions were shattered due to the differences over minority rights as in the case of Latvia. In this respect, TAN ideology has a better explanatory power than opposition-government distinction, since governing parties with TAN ideology including the HZDS, the TB/LNNK, the SDSM and the HDZ primarily stood against the reforms of minority rights. Moreover, the EU's selective attitude towards members and candidates over the issue of minority rights met with nationalistic responses from governing parties with TAN ideology and inertia in the adoption of the reform as in the case of Macedonia (H6). In this respect, there is some supporting evidence for Hypothesis VI, although comprehensive research is necessary to understand to what extent the EU stances of governing parties are affected by the EU's selective application of formal accession conditionality.

The reform on minorities had a similar impact in Turkish politics. Opposition parties with TAN rhetoric criticized EU-led reforms of minority rights with the preoccupation to protect national sovereignty and prevent foreign interference, while the government remained selective in the adoption of reforms.

#### **4.2. The minority rights regime in Turkey**

Minority rights in Turkey have long been governed according to the provisions of the Lausanne Treaty of 1923 which granted official minority status only to non-Muslims such as Greeks, Jews and Armenians in order to put them on an equal footing with Muslim citizens (Toktaş and Aras 2009: 700). Although the status of minority was not exclusively based on religion but also included differences in race and language after the First World War in Europe, the signatories to the Lausanne Treaty accepted the Turkish offer to recognize only non-Muslims as minority in Turkey. According to Oran (2007: 37), the Turkish perception of minority dates back to the Ottoman era when Muslims regardless of their ethnic origin were portrayed as 'one nation' [Ümmet] and first-class members of the society whereas non-Muslims were treated as foreigners; thus minority.



Moreover, it is argued that the founders of the Turkish Republic barely re-assembled the nation divided in the First World War and did not want to further disintegrate the country by granting ‘international minority rights to the Muslim flank of the population, which formed the bulk of the mosaic inherited from the Ottoman Empire’ (Oran 2007: 38). Therefore, communities other than non-Muslims such as Kurds and Alevis as well as other non-Muslim groups such as Syriacs, Chaldeans, Assyrians, and Nestorians have been traditionally considered outside the scope of Turkey’s minority rights regime (Toktaş and Aras 2009: 700; Kızıllan-Kısacık 2010: 12-13). Nevertheless, Article 39 of the Lausanne Treaty partially granted de-facto minority status to those communities liberalizing the usage of any language in the private and public sphere except for the right to education. Paragraph 4 of Article 39 explicitly stipulates: ‘No restrictions shall be imposed on the free use by any Turkish national of any language in private intercourse, in commerce, religion, in the press, or in publications of any kind or at public meetings’. However, Turkish governments continuously violated those provisions and failed to implement liberty of language (Oran 2007: 44). Besides, the anti-terrorism law enacted in 1991 depicted ‘the existence of minority groups based on ethnic and linguistic differences’ as a threat to national unity and territorial integrity (Oran 2007: 46).

During the accession process, the EU pressurized Turkey to redefine its minority policy in order to include the groups whose minority rights had long been neglected. The EU conditionality foresaw a series of reforms including the rights of non-Sunni Muslims (Alevis), property rights of non-Muslim religious foundations, the question of internally displaced persons, elimination of restrictions on education, revision of the curricula at schools in order to remove discriminatory language from textbooks, and broadcasting in languages other than Turkish, amongst others (G. Yılmaz 2011: 7-11).

The AKP government devoted its energy for the implementation of the EU conditionality of minority rights from the outset. The EU membership stimulus has become an important trigger for the AKP to push for an unprecedented transformation of Turkey concerning minority rights (Kızıllan-Kısacık 2010: 19). The AKP brought numerous reforms ameliorating the rights of minorities. For instance, the reforms authorized the State’s TV Channel TRT to broadcast in different minority languages,

including Kurdish, Arabic, Bosnian, Zaza, and Circassian, allowed the opening of private courses for minority languages, legalized the education of minority languages at schools, replaced the Turkish names of South-eastern Anatolian villages and towns with their former names in other languages and authorized the public use of the letters ‘q’, ‘w’ and ‘x’ used in the Kurdish alphabet. Although the implementation of those reforms has often been problematic, such legislative steps were nevertheless praised in the literature as a ‘big leap forward’ for Turkey (Kirişci 2011; G. Yılmaz 2011; Kızılkın-Kısacık 2010).

The AKP government’s efforts to solve the Kurdish problem can also be considered in the context of EU conditionality of minority rights. It can be argued that the bulk of the EU-led reforms about minorities have been adopted with the AKP’s motivation to grant greater cultural rights for the sizeable Kurdish minority in the country. However, the long association of the Kurdish problem with the PKK terrorist insurgency rendered the impact of the EU-led reforms severely limited. The AKP’s reform agenda entitled ‘Kurdish initiative’ faltered as early as 2009 when the infamous ‘Habur’ incident resulted in a nation-wide public outcry<sup>6</sup>.

#### *4.2.1. Political resistance to the reforms of minority rights in Turkey*

EU-led reforms of minority rights attracted severe criticisms from the Turkish opposition. Both the CHP and the MHP perceived the minority reforms as an attempt to legalize the minority status of Kurds (and legitimize Kurdish separatism), breaching the Lausanne Treaty and threatening national integrity. The CHP during the Baykal leadership adopted a narrow definition of minority as stipulated by the Lausanne Treaty and strictly opposed all EU-led reforms that undermine the Treaty provisions. Since the Lausanne Treaty extends recognition only to non-Muslim minorities, the CHP opposed the EU’s conditionality to broaden the scope of

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<sup>6</sup>The AKP government permitted several PKK militants to pass the Habur border gate between Turkey and Iraq. An *ad hoc* court was assembled to try the militants and the court swiftly decided to release them. The mass celebrations of the freed militants were revealed in national media and drew strong public reaction. The opposition held the AKP government responsible for such ‘humiliating’ scenes. The AKP abandoned its Kurdish initiative shortly after the incident. For detailed analyses on the AKP’s Kurdish initiative, the Habur incident and the Kurdish issue in general, see Somer and Liaras (2010); Kirişci (2011).

minorities to include other communities such as Kurds and Alevis. Despite the fact that the CHP proclaims itself as Social Democrat (Left/GAL), its self-proclaimed historical legacy to protect and nurture the Republican regime forced the party officials to defy further democratization and gave the CHP a Left/TAN identity. The resistance to the EU-led reforms of minority rights in defence of the Lausanne Treaty consolidated the party's image as a Left/TAN party. For instance, the CHP leadership opposed the re-opening of the Orthodox Halki Seminary<sup>7</sup> relying on the provisions of the Lausanne Treaty ordering the strict application of the reciprocity principle concerning the question of minorities between Greece and Turkey. Onur Öymen, the deputy chairman of the CHP defended the party's objection as legitimate as long as Greece kept denying similar rights to the Turkish minority in Western Thrace (NTVMSNBC 2009). Öymen (2007) opposed the redefinition of the notion of minority and the expansion of minority rights in Turkey while turning a blind eye to the Greek oppressions and violations against the rights of the Turkish minority. He accused the EU of creating a double standard by pressurizing Turkey to amend its laws on minorities while remaining silent and indifferent to Greek oppressions (ibid.).

Overall, the CHP's definition of minority is strictly confined to the provisions of the Lausanne Treaty which considers minority rights as a matter of foreign policy rather than within the scope of domestic rights and freedoms. Hence, the party has a general tendency to interpret any reform of minorities as a concession to foreigners. However, the party's attachment to the Lausanne Treaty does not entirely explain its opposition to the reforms. The CHP's rhetoric on minorities during the Baykal leadership was not devoid of nationalistic connotations. Baykal rejected the existence of minorities in Turkey considering all different communities as an integral part of the Turkish nation and accused the EU of inciting secessionism (Milliyet 2006). In particular, Baykal's CHP refused to recognize Kurds as minorities. In Baykal's view, Kurds and Turks had been living together, getting married together for centuries; therefore almost everyone from Western Turkey (identified as mostly Turkish) has family ties in Eastern Anatolia (inhabited by large Kurdish population) (Baykal 2006a). He argued

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<sup>7</sup> It is a Greek Orthodox theological school at the Halki Island (Heybeli Ada in Turkish) near Istanbul officially tied to the Greek Orthodox Patriarchy. It was closed down in 1971 according to a law which prohibited the establishment of private religious and military schools. The EU pressurizes the Turkish government to reopen it as a membership precondition. For a detailed account on the issue of Halki Seminary, see Toktaş and Aras (2010).

that Kurds didn't want to be treated separately and what the EU dictated (defining Kurds as a minority) would definitely separate Turks from Kurds (ibid.). Baykal's remarks also revealed his negative preconceptions about Europeans. He firmly dismissed the notion of minority as a plot used by Europeans against Turks through capitulations since the Ottoman era and claimed that the minority issue will be brought in front of Turkey time and again as a 'blackmail device' (Hürriyet 2004c).

As a far-right political party, the MHP's stance on minority rights, especially the rights of the Kurdish minority has always been negative similar to its counterparts in Western Europe (Öniş 2003). Its firm denial of the notion of 'Kurdish minority' and conspicuous objection to the Kurdish problem in Turkey has often been considered as the main reason behind its electoral success in the late 1990s (Öniş 2003: 34). The party has long dismissed any cultural and linguistic rights to Kurdish people claiming such acts would reward PKK<sup>8</sup> terrorism and constitute a step for the partition of Turkey (Avcı 2011b: 441; Öniş 2003: 45). During its term in the office as a coalition partner between 1999 and 2002, the MHP objected to substantial EU-led reforms such as minority rights, freedom of speech and the abolition of the death penalty with the same justification to maintain the integrity of the Turkish state against Kurdish separatism (Avcı 2011b: 440). This hard-line stance led to a temporary gridlock in Turkey's reform process. Today, the MHP still denies granting minority status to Kurds and rejects the existence of the Kurdish problem. Party officials even charge the EU with compromising the integrity of the nation state through a series of reforms granting cultural rights to Kurds. The MHP is equally concerned with the EU's attitudes towards the PKK. The party leader demands the EU to play an influential role in forcing PKK to surrender and its leader Abdullah Öcalan to be executed (Bahçeli 2007). Instead, he claims, the EU remains oblivious to the ever-expanding and sophisticated networks of the PKK located in several EU member states (ibid.).

Similar to Baykal's CHP, the MHP officials firmly oppose the reopening of the Halki seminary and dismiss it as a new form of capitulations<sup>9</sup> (NTVMSNBC 2009).

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<sup>8</sup> pro-Kurdish militant organization recognized by the EU and the US as terrorist.

<sup>9</sup> Capitulations are the bilateral agreements between the Ottoman Empire and European States conferring rights and privileges in favour of their citizens who resided and/or traded in the Ottoman territories. Those special arrangements were first made with France and then extended to other European states. They were abolished with the Lausanne Treaty. The MHP attaches a pejorative

Embracing a narrow definition of minority rights relying upon the Lausanne Treaty, the MHP leader Bahçeli seeks Greek compliance with the principle of reciprocity before granting any further rights to the non-Muslim minorities in Turkey. He dismisses the possibility of reopening the Halki seminary unless Greek government decides to extend cultural and religious rights to the Turkish minority in Greece. Similar to the CHP officials, Bahçeli condemns the EU's membership pressures as pro-Greek, thus as a double standard (Habertürk 2012). The remarks of Semih Yalçın (2012), the deputy leader of MHP are even more antagonistic in terms of depicting the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate as 'traitors who backstabbed Turks' and joined the ranks of the enemy during Turkey's war of independence in the 1920s. He urges Turkey to stand firm against the demands of the Patriarchate. He also defends the closure of the Halki Seminary in 1971 as a legitimate act in response to the Greek indifference to the deteriorating living conditions of the Turkish minority in Greece (ibid.).

In addition to the main opposition parties, the intolerance of highly conservative Turkish society towards minorities proves the adoption of any reform of minority rights controversial and encourages the populist stances of political actors against minorities. The 2009 report of Binnaz Toprak, a prominent Turkish scholar reveals how social pressures and segregation are deeply at work within Turkish society against people from different ethnic backgrounds such as Kurds, having religious beliefs other than Islam such as Christianity and Judaism, being a member of a different sect of Islam such as Alevi, or being a non-believer (Toprak et al 2009).

Public reactions to the 2004 'minority rights report' drafted by the Human Rights Advisory Council affiliated with the Turkish Prime Ministry particularly illustrates the widespread scepticism towards minorities in Turkey. The Human Rights Advisory Council bringing together bureaucrats, civil society organizations and academics/experts, was established by the coalition government in 2001 in order to comply with the EU political criteria. İbrahim Kaboğlu (the president) and Baskın Oran (a leading member), two academic members of the Human Rights Advisory Council drafted a critical report on minority rights regime in Turkey, making suggestions such as: de-emphasizing the ethno-nationalist terms such as Turk, re-

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meaning to the term as 'unilateral concessions'. For scholarly research on capitulations, see Bentwich (1923); Shaw (1975); İnalçık (2003).

writing the Turkish Constitution and all related laws to ‘have a liberal, pluralistic and democratic content and with the participation of all organisations of civil society’ and ratifying international conventions including the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (Human Rights Advisory Board 2004: 7-8). Several civil society organizations such as ‘Toplumsal Düşünce Derneği’ [Association for Societal Thought] and Kamu-Sen, political parties including the CHP, the MHP and the DYP (True Path Party) accused the authors of committing treason against the Turkish nation and demanded the dismissal of the report (Oran 2004: 20-21). The AKP government criticized the report as a ‘vain intellectual effort’ which was neither solicited nor supported by the government (Oran, 2004: 21). A lawsuit was opened against the authors of the report charging them with insult against the Turkish nation. However, Sadullah Ergin, the Minister of Justice did not give authorization for the trial of the authors (Radikal 2009).

In sum, the Turkish minority rights regime implies a restrictive understanding of minority rights reflected in public opinion, political parties, the legislature, judiciary and the government. The EU’s interference in this domain has faced serious opposition from various segments of Turkish society and politics transcending Left-Right ideological divisions.

#### *4.2.2. The Reform of Minority Foundations*

One of the most intense debates over minority rights reforms was observed during the enactment of the EU-led reform granting Turkish non-Muslim minority foundations the right to own immovable property. The reform under discussion foresaw certain amendments in the Turkish law of foundations (no.5737) in order to bring greater liberties to non-Muslim communities and the foundations they own. Currently there are one hundred and sixty one active foundations established by non-Muslims since 1924. With the law regulating the property ownership in 1936 those foundations freely acquired immovable property with the sole obligation to declare their purchases officially. However, the Turkish Court of Cassation (Yargıtay) ordered in 1974 the immovable properties bought after 1936 by minority foundations to be sent to the

State Treasury denying the property rights of minorities. Turkish legal experts are divided over the issue. Some interpret the issue as a matter of foreign policy (and define minority as foreigner) and defend the principle of reciprocity between the state of origin of the minority group in question and Turkey. They hence urge both Greece and Turkey to jointly grant property rights to their own minority foundations (Aytaş 2008). Others oppose this argument on the grounds that minorities are Turkish citizens and therefore must be entitled to the same rights as the rest of the Turkish population without requiring reciprocation from their country of origin (Çağatay 2011). Hence, this issue should not be read as a question of sovereignty in Turkish foreign policy but must be understood as a matter of citizenship rights under domestic law (*ibid.*). The same division over the issue is also visible among Turkish political parties. The argument goes that the AKP government approaches the law as a matter of citizenship rights and dismisses the reciprocity principle; whereas the opposition interprets the immovable property ownership of minorities as a matter of foreign policy violating the Treaty of Lausanne. Since the Lausanne Treaty is exalted as the founding treaty of the Turkish Republic, the main opposition parties; namely the CHP and the MHP dismiss any deviation from the Treaty provisions as a threat to national sovereignty.

The new law of foundations was first introduced to the Turkish Parliament in 2006 as part of the EU harmonization process. Although it was enacted by the Parliament, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, the President of the time vetoed the law on the grounds that it was in contravention with the provisions of the Lausanne Treaty. The law was re-introduced to the Parliament in February 2008 and accepted by AKP votes. The scope of the Law on Foundations was considerably extended. It granted minority groups the liberty to establish foundations much more easily, select board members, acquire and sell properties, receive funds from abroad, and enjoy tax exemption for the repair and restoration of their cultural properties (European Commission 2008: 17). After the law went into force, the AKP government returned 181 immovable properties that had been confiscated since 1974 to their owners, i.e. minority foundations such as the foundation of Aya Yorgi (Hagia Georgios) Church and Kumkapı Meryem Ana (Mother Marry) foundation.

Again, the opposition firmly dismissed the law alleging that such legislation would be in contravention with Article 45 of the Lausanne Treaty enforcing the principle of reciprocity with Greece concerning the rights of minorities (Hürriyet 2006a). The CHP argued that the EU undermined the reciprocity principle by pressurizing Turkey to change its laws while saying nothing to Greece (ibid.). The CHP clearly saw the reform as a breach of the Lausanne Treaty and thus a threat against national sovereignty (TBMM 2008c). Rahmi Güner, deputy for Ordu dismissed the reform as an imposition of the EU and claimed that there was no need in Turkey for such an amendment (ibid.). Halil Ünlütepe, deputy for Afyon asserted that the CHP had firmly rejected any proposals that would jeopardize the validity of the Lausanne Treaty and that reform was no exception (TBMM 2008d). According to Onur Öymen, deputy for Bursa and deputy chairman of the party, the reciprocity principle should be seen as a ‘crucial weapon’ for Turkey without which Turkey would lose its right to have a say regarding the rights of Turkish minority in Greece (TBMM 2008f). Tayfur Süner, deputy for Antalya criticized the law of minority foundations as an example of the EU’s double standards on Turkey (TBMM 2008e). Ali Rıza Öztürk, deputy for Mersin explained that the CHP was not against minority rights; it was simply asking the Turkish minorities in Greece to have the same rights in return, and without reciprocity, the adoption of this law would mean ‘submission to imperialism’ (ibid.). The party leader Baykal (2006b) claimed that there was no established EU-norm concerning the property rights of minority foundations, and Turkish foundations were not entitled the right to own immovable property in Greece; therefore such a reform in Turkey would be detrimental to Turkey’s strategic interests. He emphasized the fact that the adoption of the new law would abrogate the 1974 decision of the Court of Cassation (Yargıtay) (ibid.). In his opinion, this was unacceptable because bypassing the Court decision; Turkey would admit that it had acted unlawfully in 1974 (ibid.).

The MHP’s reactions were focused on the lack of a clear EU norm over the issue and the Greek indifference to the reciprocity clause. The party officials argued that the notion of ‘minority foundations’ existed only in Greece among all EU members, and there was no common EU norm concerning the law under question or an EU position regarding Greek denial of rights to the Turkish minority living in Western Thrace (TBMM 2008c). The party thus dismissed the EU’s conditionality as contradictory



since the EU was pressing Turkey to adopt a law that had no consistent application in Europe (TBMM 2008e). Also, MHP officials shared the CHP's concern that such legislation would compromise the validity of the Lausanne treaty. Nevzat Korkmaz, deputy for Isparta criticized the law for granting excessive rights to non-Muslim communities in Turkey; and thus, being incompatible with the 'spirit' of the Lausanne treaty (TBMM 2008g). For instance, he claimed that the debated law would facilitate the re-acquisition of historical sites such Hagia Sophia by the Orthodox Church (ibid.). To conclude, after the parliament passed the law for the second time in 2008, the CHP applied to the Turkish Constitutional Court for its abrogation with the allegation that the law was in contravention with the Lausanne treaty and the basic principles of the Turkish Republic. The Court decided in June 2010 endorsed the reformist provisions about the property rights of minority foundations.

#### *4.2.3. Symptoms of the Sèvres syndrome*

The reactions to the law of minority foundations show that the EU's conditionality of minority rights has reignited the inherent 'Sèvres syndrome' within the opposition. The main opposition parties frame the EU-led reforms as the return of the 1920 Sèvres treaty undermining Turkey's territorial integrity. However, since the Turkish political parties under scrutiny announce their official support for EU membership as a desirable goal for Turkey's economic, political and democratic development, it can be argued that the Sèvres syndrome did not necessarily determine the EU policies of Turkish mainstream political parties because they support Turkey's EU accession. Nevertheless, it was used by TAN parties during the membership negotiations for accusing the EU of trying to gain as many political concessions as possible from Turkey -similar to the defunct Sèvres Treaty- without giving concrete membership prospects.

The CHP claimed that the EU-led reform on minority rights was no different than the provisions of the 1920 Sèvres treaty dismembering Turkey; and the same provisions were brought in front of Turkey once again (Baykal 2006b). Turgut Dibek, deputy for Kırklareli argued that a similar provision concerning the rights of minority foundations was already included in Article 140 of the Sèvres Treaty (TBMM 2008g).

He claimed that the EU holds the same agenda with Europeans of the past who sought to impose the question of minorities to Turkey since the late Ottoman era in order to gain leverage against Turks and weaken the Turkish state (ibid.). The party officials particularly criticized the AKP government's reluctance to defend the reciprocity principle and claimed that the removal of that principle would make Turkey highly susceptible to foreign interference (TBMM 2008f). Öymen, the deputy chairman of the CHP even accused the AKP government of treason against the Turkish nation (ibid.).

The MHP's reactions were even more dramatic. The party officials interpreted the introduction of the reform as a reflection of European historical claims over Turkey. İsmet Büyükataman, deputy for Bursa blamed the EU for bolstering the everlasting Greek agenda to weaken Turkey through the introduction of this law (TBMM 2008e). He even claimed that such a reform would facilitate missionary activities to convert more and more Turks to Christianity; thus the law carries the potential to 'dynamite' the foundations of Turkish national identity (ibid.). According to Süleyman Turan Çirkin, deputy for Hatay, the provisions of the proposed law were much worse than those of the Sèvres treaty because the law, if enacted, would severely damage Turkey's hard-won sovereign rights and bring down the Turkish Republic (ibid.). Similarly, Mehmet Şandır, deputy for Mersin dismissed the law as a 'law of treason' revealing the hidden intentions of Europeans towards Turkey. According to Şandır, the adoption of the law on minorities would demonstrate that Europeans may succeed in taking the revenge of their defeat in the Turkish war of independence and hence make Turkey accept some of the provisions of the Treaty of Sèvres (TBMM 2008g). Behiç Çelik, deputy for Mersin went even further to claim that the law had been drafted -and later submitted to the AKP government- by the Open Democracy Foundation owned by George Soros and the lawyers of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate (ibid.). He claimed that such legislation had been designed to bolster non-Muslim minorities in Turkey and allow them to conduct country-wide missionary activities to convert at least 10 per cent of the Turkish population to Christianity in the next couple of decades (ibid.).

### **4.3. Reflections of Turkish Parliamentarians on minority rights**

Face-to-face interviews with parliamentarians yield important results which raise serious challenges to the credibility of the official stances of the AKP and CHP towards minority rights. While the MHP respondents unanimously support their party's official line, the AKP respondents remain somewhat reluctant to the minority rights reforms undertaken by their own government. The CHP respondents are divided over the expansion of minority rights despite a liberal change of rhetoric toward minority rights triggered by the leadership change within the party. Finally, it is remarkable that respondents of all three parties share similar views on many grounds concerning minority rights.

#### *4.3.1. The AKP Responses*

The AKP respondents essentially develop two main approaches to minority rights in Turkey. First, contrary to the allegations of the opposition, government officials actually embrace the provisions of the Lausanne Treaty. They acknowledge the rights of non-Muslim minorities and emphasize the necessity of conferring even greater rights for them. Most respondents also claim that minorities gained considerable rights during the AKP government:

We accept the provisions of the Lausanne Treaty which only recognizes non-Muslims as minority. Our minorities have long suffered from the ill-practices of the state, but the AKP government has become their medicine. We helped them a lot. We returned properties to minority foundations. We are also sympathetic to the opening of the Halki Seminary but technicalities prevent us for the time being. We will eventually solve that problem too (Interview with Afif Demirkıran).

We have been acting in accordance with the provisions of the Lausanne Treaty and conferring greater right to non-Muslims in Turkey. For instance, we have returned numerous properties to minority foundations wrongfully confiscated in the past. (Interview with Mehmet Sayım Tekelioğlu).

Some government officials including Afif Demirkıran, Ali Şahin and Haluk Özdalga claim that minorities long suffered in Turkey because the provisions of the Lausanne Treaty had never been effectively implemented:

Turkey did not entirely remain loyal to the Lausanne Treaty. Turkish governments at times undermined the rights of non-Muslim minorities and breached the Treaty provisions. The Balkan states party to the Treaty such as Greece too undermined the Treaty and turned a blind eye to the Turkish minority. We are talking about a multilateral breach of the Lausanne Treaty (Interview with Haluk Özdalga).

However, an important number of the AKP respondents<sup>10</sup> disagree with Demirkıran and Özdalga. They believe that minorities live in a much better condition than Muslims in Turkey. Belma Satır and Tülin Erkal Kara claim that non-Muslims are much better-off than Muslims in Turkey, and apart from a few issues, Turkey solved almost all their problems. Mehmet Sayım Tekelioğlu argues that Turkey doesn't have any problems in its treatment of minorities. Mehmet Erdoğan and Mücahit Fındıklı even believe that as regards minority rights, Turkey is in a better condition than some West European countries such as Belgium which is culturally split between Flemish and Walloons.

There is also a split within the party over whether to treat minorities as locals or foreigners. An important number of the respondents<sup>11</sup> highlights citizenship as the only determinant for being a local and embrace every citizen as the privileged member of the Turkish society. For instance, Mehmet Erdoğan, Mücahit Fındıklı, Ruhi Açıkgöz, Fatih Çiftçi, Bilal Macit and Afif Demirkıran stress that every citizen is a first-class citizen regardless of religion and ethnicity because every citizen is entitled to equal rights and freedoms in Turkey:

These people (minorities) are the citizens of the Turkish Republic. They have been living in these lands for years. Nationalism has become obsolete. Today, citizenship is the main determinant of democracy. Every citizen is entitled to same rights (Interview with Bilal Macit).

However, others<sup>12</sup> tend to consider non-Muslims as foreigners. For instance, Tülin Erkal Kara tends to depict non-Muslim minorities as the close friends of Turkey but outsiders anyway. She believes that minorities live in Turkey very comfortably as if they are living in their own country.

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<sup>10</sup> Mehmet Erdoğan, Mücahit Fındıklı, Tülin Erkal Kara, Mehmet Sayım Tekelioğlu, Burak Erdenir, Belma Satır.

<sup>11</sup> Mehmet Erdoğan, Mücahit Fındıklı, Ruhi Açıkgöz, Afif Demirkıran, Ali Şahin, Ali Rıza Alaboyun, Burak Erdenir, Fatih Çiftçi, Haluk Özdalga, and Bilal Macit.

<sup>12</sup> Tülin Erkal Kara, Belma Satır, Mehmet Kastal and Ülker Güzel.

The second aspect of the AKP officials' approach to the concept of minority relates to Kurds. The AKP respondents refuse to consider Kurds as minorities. Although government officials defend minority rights and an important number of the respondents claim that they consider minorities as locals not foreigners, their views regarding the status of Kurds reveal the tendency to attribute an inferior status to minorities. The AKP respondents emphasize that they consider Kurds as the primary component of the Turkish nation. Hence, they do not want to relegate Kurds to such a lesser category as minority. Afif Demirkıran believes that people with different ethnic background such as Kurds are not minorities but the primary elements of the country (Interview with Afif Demirkıran):

We endorse the Lausanne Treaty and only accept non-Muslims as minorities, while we consider all other ethnic groups as the founding communities of the Turkish Republic and integral part of the Turkish nation. Besides, every citizen is a first-class citizen in Turkey. No ethnic group has a privilege over others. We will guarantee this in our new Constitution (Interview with Ruhi Açıkgöz).

We cannot consider Kurds in the context of the Lausanne Treaty since the treaty clearly singles out non-Muslim as minorities. However, we must confer greater rights to Kurds which we have long denied (Interview with Haluk Özdalga).

Although rejecting to see Kurds as a minority, the AKP respondents nevertheless acknowledge that Kurds have been segregated and their freedom has been restrained. Party officials admit the existence of the Kurdish problem and call for greater rights and liberties for Kurdish people. For instance, according to Muzaffer Çakar, Turkey must officially recognize the fact that Kurds suffered too long, and confer them their long deserved social and political rights without delay. Mehmet Sayım Tekelioğlu argues that as long as Kurds learn Turkish, the official language, there is no harm in educating in their mother tongue. Mehmet Erdoğan believes that cultural rights such as education in mother tongue are the most pressing problems of Kurds to be tackled immediately. Moreover, party officials essentially blame the previous government for the maltreatment of Kurds and praise their government for improving the living standards of the Kurdish population in Turkey:

The real problem is that the Turkish state has long refused the Kurdish identity and sought assimilation. The long festering social problem became political and eventually led to terrorism. We, the AKP government, have separated terrorism from the Kurdish problem. We aim to solve the problems of the Kurdish community. We have taken unprecedented steps. We have lifted the state of emergency in the Kurdish region, dismantled the state security courts, enabled broadcasting in Kurdish language etc... These steps were unthinkable fifteen years ago. These are the rights of Kurds, not a privilege for them. (Interview with Afif Demirkıran).

Before the AKP government, Turkey treated Kurds horribly. Kurdish villages were ransacked. Kurds were massacred. Kurdish identity was denied. With the AKP government, such atrocities ceased. We have taken important steps to solve their problems. We still have a long way to go before granting all the rights Kurds deserve. Yet, I can firmly say that we are on the right path (Interview with Haluk Özdalga).

Contrary to the AKP's official stance, the majority of government respondents emphasize the necessity of respecting the principle of reciprocity in the improvement of minority rights in Turkey. Although supporting the amelioration of the living standards of minorities in Turkey, party officials<sup>13</sup> expect to see similar positive steps from other countries especially Greece having a sizeable Turkish minority:

Religious minorities have been granted greater rights including the restitution of immovable properties. We support them but we also desire reciprocity. Greece must improve the living conditions of its Turkish minority in return. For instance, I wish there had been a mosque in Athens. Reciprocal tolerance is what we need in order to secure a permanent peace with Greece (Interview with Muzaffer Çakar).

During the AKP government; minorities were given many rights including the restitution of properties. However, the principle of reciprocity is crucial. Greece must confer similar rights to its Turkish minority in return (Interview with Tülin Erkal Kara).

There is the issue of reciprocity. We show our goodwill and ameliorate the living conditions of our minorities, while Greece still persists in its oppressive policies towards its Turkish minority. This is unacceptable (Interview with Ercan Candan).

No matter how unprecedented the steps we take for our minorities, Greece continues to undermine their Turkish minority. We desire a win-win

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<sup>13</sup> Tülin Erkal Kara, Belma Satır, Muzaffer Çakar, Mehmet Kastal, Ercan Candan, Burak Erdenir, Ahmet Baha Ögütken,

bargain with Greece. For every positive step we take, Greece must do the same. After witnessing the ailing condition of Turks in the Western Thrace, I am convinced that the principle of reciprocity is a necessity (Interview with Ahmet Baha Öğütken).

Some AKP officials claim that they are forced to maintain the principle of reciprocity on their agenda essentially due to a massive public pressure in Turkey:

The AKP government's policies to ameliorate the rights of minorities have been quite successful. However, Turkish public still perceives non-Muslims as foreigners and requires reciprocity when it comes to the extension of minority rights. When we tell them about the rights we have given to our non-Muslim minorities, they always ask what Turkish minority in the Balkans will get in return. They are right to be concerned about their kinsmen abroad but our minorities are not strangers, they are our people too. Therefore, we have the duty to take care of them (Interview with Burak Erdenir).

Only a minority of respondents considers reciprocity as unimportant:

The uncompromising behaviours of Greece and the ambivalence of the EU can never justify the ill-treatment of our own minorities. We must take a good care of them unconditionally (Interview with Haluk Özdalga).

There are controversies in the responses of the AKP officials. The rights they demand for Kurds such as right to education in mother tongue are recognized as minority rights in the EU. Resistance to similar reforms in other candidate countries has already been discussed in the previous section. There is a consensus in the academic literature about the redefinition of the concept of minority in Turkey incorporating other ethnic and religious groups such as Kurds and Alevi (Nas 2012, G. Yılmaz 2012, Buhari-Gülmez and Gülmez 2013). Then, why do the government officials insist on excluding Kurds from the category of minority? Also a remarkable number of the AKP respondents claim that all citizens are entitled to same rights regardless of ethnicity and religion. Then, why do they keep advocating the principle of reciprocity? Such controversies may have stemmed from the Sèvres Syndrome well-entrenched within Turkish politics. In the mindset of many government officials, minority is still equal to foreign settler rendering Turkey vulnerable to foreign

intrusion. Some respondents refer to negative popular sentiments against minorities dating back to the Ottoman era:

During the Tanzimat reform process in the Ottoman era, European states intensively pressurized Ottomans to confer greater rights to non-Muslims. Such foreign pressures consolidated the public perception that non-Muslims were traitors (Interview with Burak Erdenir).

Some party officials refer to the consolidation of hatred against Europeans after the Turkish independence war, and consider the confiscation of properties of minority foundations by Turkish Republic as a reflection of such negative sentiments against foreigners:

Due to the social and political traumas experienced before and during the War of Independence, Turkey developed certain negative reflexes against minorities. The establishment of nation-state and nationalism it fuelled contributed to negative sentiments against minorities in Turkey. Turkey hence developed policies to control and restrict the living space of minorities. The confiscation of properties is an outcome of such policies (Interview with Ali Rıza Alaboyun).

After the initial years of the Republic, state authorities confiscated these properties based on certain threat perceptions. I understand their sensitivities because it was an infant regime trying to maintain its survival against foreign intrusion, but today we have a well-established and self-confident Turkish Republic which will not hesitate to return those properties to minority foundations (Interview with Ruhi Açıkgöz).

Moreover, the AKP officials maintain the fear that the expansion of minority rights may result in the division of the country. An important number of the government respondents highlight the vitality of preserving national security regarding the development of minority rights. For instance, Ülker Güzel warns that the EU's pressures for minority rights should not carry a potential to disintegrate Turkey. Similarly, Ercan Candan reports that Turkey embraces people from different religious and ethnic background as long as they do not constitute a threat to national integrity and security. Rıfat Sait contends; 'if the EU's pressures for minority rights have a potential to divide Turkey, I will resolutely oppose them'. Similarly, Mehmet Erdoğan and Mücahit Fındıklı mention possible European attempts to divide Turkey:



If Europe forces us to recognize the establishment of an independent Kurdish state within our territories, we consider such an act as *casus belli*. We know that some European states including Britain have such agendas but we will never let that happen. We will never let Turkey be divided (Interview with Mehmet Erdoğan).

References to old hatreds against non-Muslims and the fear that minorities have a potential to divide the country point to the Sèvres Syndrome embedded within the AKP respondents. Some party officials even share concerns that categorizing Kurds as minority carries a potential to divide Turkey. That's why the respondents stand against the idea of categorizing Kurds as minority.

Party officials also reflect discontent with the EU's minority rights pressures which they deem as 'discriminatory':

The Ottoman Empire was a land of minorities. The Ottomans successfully governed the Empire with numerous minorities living within its borders. On the contrary, throughout history, European imperialism has long denied conferring rights to minorities. Today, Europe with such imperialistic past pressurizes Turkey to improve its minority rights regime. Europe is highly inconsistent and insincere towards Turkey (Interview with Rıfat Sait).

Holding similarity with the reactions against the EU in numerous candidate countries, the AKP respondents essentially stress the EU's selective minority rights policy which is applied much more differently to candidate countries than member states. Party officials often compare the EU's 'carefree' approach to the minority policies of Greece and France with its pressures on Turkey:

The Turkish minority in Greece cannot even use the word 'Turk' in public. The irony is that Greece, an EU member, is expected to be more advanced than Turkey, a candidate, concerning minority rights; but its approach towards minorities is much worse than Turkey. The EU is to be blamed for such an outcome, because the EU puts strong pressures on Turkey while not putting any pressure on Greece at all. This is a clear evidence of the EU's selective approach towards Turkey (Interview with Haluk Özdalga).

Turkish community in Western Thrace have rights conferred by the Lausanne Treaty but Greece never let them use these rights. Why does the

EU not pay attention to the injustice against Turks living in Greece but only concentrate on the minority rights in Turkey? (Interview with Rıfat Sait).

While we enact reforms of minority rights, Sarkozy forces Roma communities out of France. We try to integrate Roma while France tries to get rid of Roma, and the EU remains oblivious to France. This diminishes the credibility of the EU's minority rights policy in our eyes (Interview with Bilal Macit).

#### *4.3.2. The CHP Responses*

Responses of the CHP officials hold similarity to the AKP respondents on many grounds. The majority of the CHP deputies embrace the provisions of the Lausanne Treaty and defend the principle of reciprocity. They also stand against the redefinition of the concept of minority to include Kurds and Alevis. Finally, many party officials criticize the EU's minority rights policy as discriminatory. Most responses indicate that the Sèvres Syndrome is remarkably embedded within the CHP officials who participated in the interviews. On the other hand, there is a clear split within the party over the amelioration of minority rights especially concerning the restitution of properties to minority foundations. There is also a small faction within the party who reflect a more liberal outlook calling for the redefinition of the concept of minority and the revision of the Lausanne Treaty.

The Lausanne Treaty is overwhelmingly embraced by party officials as the sole determinant for minority rights. Hence, the redefinition of the concept of minority is firmly dismissed by the majority. Similar to the government officials, the CHP respondents express the fear of division considering such an act as detrimental to the integrity of the nation state:

Turkey is a nation state. There may be different ethnic or religious communities within the nation but nation state is an umbrella representing all differences. Redefining the concept of minority will shift the balance in the Turkish society and prove detrimental to the integrity of the Turkish state (Interview with Emre Köprülü).

Every member of Turkish nation must have equal rights. Our understanding of 'Turkish nation' embraces all people living in Turkey regardless of their ethnicity and religion. Thus, we are against racism.

However, we are also against any approaches which will divide people based on ethnicity and religion, and eventually threaten the integrity of our nation state. Our unity must be preserved. External interferences fostering minority rights in Turkey have a potential to damage the unity of our nation state (Interview with Ali İhsan Köktürk).

We don't have to redefine the concept of minority in Turkey, because the EU does not consider minorities as a sociological and societal phenomenon but a political one. Due to the ongoing Kurdish problem in Turkey, the EU automatically considers Kurds as minority. There is no need for this. We, the CHP, aim to solve every aspect (economic, social, cultural, political, and legal) of the problem based on democratic rules (Interview with Faruk Loğoğlu).

Similarly, the majority of the respondents refuse to categorize Kurds and Alevi as minorities since they believe such an act undermines the Lausanne Treaty and carries a potential to divide the country. Besides, some party officials believe that Alevi and Kurds only demand basic human rights which have long been denied by the Turkish state. Erdal Aksünger refuses to categorize Alevi as minority but admits that their religious and cultural rights have long been undermined. He also accuses the AKP government of turning a blind eye to numerous problems of Alevi. Concerning Kurds, Atilla Kart argues that Kurds do not see themselves as minority as they only demand their basic rights and freedoms. On the other hand, Ramazan Kerim Özkan does not believe Kurds suffer from inequality. He claims that in spite of their incessant demands for more rights to Kurdish people, they are actually entitled to the same rights Turks have. 'We had a President of Kurdish origin in the past and we have Kurdish Ministers in the government's cabinet today. Therefore, there is no inequality between Turks and Kurds', he contends. Orhan Düzgün claims that the extension of minority status to Kurds will be detrimental for themselves:

Turks have never treated Kurds as minority. Turks and Kurds have equal rights in legal terms. Kurdish demands for education in Kurdish language do not qualify for minority rights but general human rights. Similar human rights problems are not only visible in Kurdish populated areas but throughout the country. If Kurds are recognized as minority, it will not be beneficial but harmful for them (Interview with Orhan Düzgün).

Only a minority within the party embrace a more liberal approach towards minority rights and urge for the revision of the Lausanne Treaty. Osman Korutürk admits that the CHP doesn't have a unified view on minority rights and emphasizes the importance of redefining the concept to confer greater rights to any group currently unrecognized as minority by the Lausanne Treaty:

The Lausanne Treaty was a necessity of the time and successfully governed the minority rights regime in Turkey, but now minority rights must be redefined in accordance with today's necessities. This redefinition must attach priority to freedom and equality regardless of ethnicity, religion and gender. In this respect, the minority rights reforms led by the EU are mostly positive reforms, although the usefulness of some is open to debate (Interview with Osman Korutürk).

Similarly, Aykan Erdemir believes in the necessity of transcending the Lausanne Treaty in order to successfully govern minority rights in Turkey:

We, the social democrats, believe that Turkey must embrace the highest standards of human rights without any reservation. Lausanne is a reality but our aim is to advance Turkey to a full-fledged democracy with a fully functioning human rights regime; and when such a day comes, we will no longer need the provisions of the Lausanne Treaty to govern minority rights in Turkey (Interview with Aykan Erdemir).

Although a minority opinion, such a liberal voice within the CHP is remarkably distinct in Turkish politics. Contrary to the allegations of the opposition, the government officials overwhelmingly declare support for the Lausanne Treaty. During the interviews, the AKP respondents actually never questioned the provisions of the Lausanne Treaty governing minority rights. Instead, a critical opinion came from the main opposition known for its stalwart attachment to the Lausanne Treaty. This, in a sense, points to the split within the party which is much more remarkable in the approaches to the improvement of minority rights. Especially party officials are divided over the restitution of properties to minority foundations. Accordingly, half of the CHP respondents<sup>14</sup> believe that minority foundations are the true owners of those properties confiscated by the state and support the EU's pressures for their restitution:

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<sup>14</sup> Ramazan Kerim Özkan, Gülsün Bilgehan, Atilla Kart, Faruk Loğoğlu, Osman Korutürk, Aykan Erdemir and Süheyl Batum.

Minorities are our internal affair; we must see their problems as a matter of human rights and take necessary steps to solve them. The restitution of properties to minority foundations is a positive step in this regard. The attitude of the Turkish state in 1974 to confiscate their properties was wrong and Turkey has fixed its past mistake by returning those properties to their rightful owners (Interview with Gülsün Bilgehan).

We must return those properties to the minority foundations. Actually, we must solve all the problems of the people accepted as minorities by the Lausanne Treaty. The AKP government took positive steps to solve such problems but these steps are not enough. We must confer greater rights to minorities (Interview with Faruk Loğoğlu).

We have so many Islamic houses of worship across Europe; therefore non-Muslim foundations in Turkey must at least be entitled to same rights. We must protect their property rights and help them live freely in Turkey (Interview with Ramazan Kerim Özkan).

Contrary to Baykal, the reformist respondents of the CHP oppose the confiscation of those properties and believe that minorities recognized by the Lausanne Treaty must be given full rights and liberties. It can be argued that Kılıçdaroğlu's positive rhetoric toward this issue contributed to the emergence of this positive discourse among party officials. However, the other half of the respondents<sup>15</sup> overtly declares opposition to such a reform. They express concern that such reforms carry a potential to divide Turkey. İzzet Çetin argues that steps towards the redefinition of minorities and the restitution of properties to minorities remind the final years of the Ottoman Empire before its disintegration. 'I see them as decisive steps to dismantle modern Turkey', he adds. Emre Köprülü is offended by the term 'minority foundations'. He rather calls them foreign spies having motives to divide Turkey. Ömer Süha Aldan justifies his opposition with reference to the Sèvres Treaty. Contrary to the supporters of the reform who believe that the Lausanne Treaty allows such a reform, Aldan argues that such a reform is a serious breach of the Treaty:

The EU's pressures on minority rights have rather similarities to the provisions of the Sèvres Treaty and they are detrimental to the integrity of the Turkish Republic. Turkey can discuss the revision of some issues pertinent to minorities but the Lausanne Treaty must not be undermined (Interview with Ömer Süha Aldan).

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<sup>15</sup> Emre Köprülü, Ömer Süha Aldan, İzzet Çetin, Erdal Aksünger, Ali İhsan Köktürk and Orhan Düzgün.

Some respondents<sup>16</sup> require the principle of reciprocity to be respected by EU members having minority groups of Turkish origin in return for the restitution of properties to minority foundations in Turkey. They also criticize the EU's approach toward the issue as 'double standard':

There is a double standard there. The EU undermines the reciprocity principle by ignoring the property rights of Turkish minorities in Bulgaria and Greece while intensifying its demands from Turkey concerning the rights of minority foundations (Interview with Ali İhsan Köktürk).

The criticisms against the EU's selective approach toward minority rights are shared almost unanimously by the CHP respondents<sup>17</sup>. The common argument is that the EU does not treat members and candidates equally, and this creates important double standards in the application of its minority rights policy:

There is no objective criterion to determine minority rights. If you are a strong state, you decide who is minority and who is not. For instance, Germany does not count Turkish immigrants as minority. France doesn't recognize Bretons and Corsicans as minorities. International law permits such arbitrariness. It is not just. While the EU cannot say anything to France and Germany, it pressurizes Turkey to recognize Kurds as minority. This diminishes the EU's credibility in our eyes (Interview with Süheyl Batum).

France is a unitary state just like Turkey but the EU doesn't inflict similar pressures on France to revise its minority policy. This decreases the credibility of the EU's minority conditions. Therefore, we see that it is not a must for Turkey to re-define the concept of minority in order to become an EU member (Interview with Gülsün Bilgehan).

Moreover, Erdal Aksünger claims that the EU has been selective in the application of its minority rights criteria in Turkey. For instance, he argues that despite its intensive demands for Kurds, the EU does not put any pressure on the Turkish government concerning the rights of Alevis. 'If the EU does nothing to defend Alevi rights, its minority criterion holds no meaning for us', he adds. Finally, the remarks of İzzet

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<sup>16</sup> Erdal Aksünger, Ali İhsan Köktürk and Orhan Düzgün.

<sup>17</sup> Only Aykan Erdemir did not openly criticize the EU's approach toward minority rights.

Çetin reveal the Sèvres Syndrome in his views. He blames the EU for having an ulterior motive to divide Turkey:

The EU dictates the revision of minority rights regime in Turkey due to its overarching plan to increase its influence in the Middle East. This is an interference with Turkey's internal affairs. We did not accept the provisions of Lausanne for nothing. The EU's pressures on Turkey to give a minority status to the constitutive elements of Turkish nation such as Kurds and Alevis threaten Turkey's integrity. Such pressures stem from the EU's aim to establish a federal Kurdish state in Turkish territories (Interview with İzzet Çetin).

#### *4.3.3. The MHP Responses*

In comparison to other parties, the MHP officials reflect a more or less unified image in their responses. They also share most of the arguments raised by the government and the main opposition. First of all, the MHP deputies embrace the provisions of the Lausanne Treaty as the ultimate rules governing minority rights in Turkey. In this respect, party officials oppose the redefinition of minorities and the categorization of Kurds as minority, and similar to the AKP and the CHP, they consider every citizen as the first-class citizen of Turkey entitled to same rights:

It is the Lausanne Treaty which regulates minority rights in Turkey recognizing minority status only to Armenians, Greeks and Jews. The Turkish Republic was founded by all other ethnic communities including Turks and Kurds. The Republic considers everybody as first-class citizens regardless of ethnicity. There is no specific right or freedom entitled to a certain ethnic group. Everybody is equal (Interview with Nevzat Korkmaz).

Kurds are not minority in Turkey. I used to be a member of Turkish minority in Macedonia and I know what it means to be a minority. You must get official authorization for almost everything if you are a minority. You must get state authorization if you want to buy a property or even get married. There is no such implementation in Turkey. Regardless of ethnicity, every Turkish citizen is equal. Only non-Muslims have been granted minority status by the Lausanne Treaty and the rest is outside the scope of minority rights regime. Therefore, I refuse to call people other non-Muslims as minority (Interview with Lütfü Türkkan).

Similar to other parties, the primary reason for the MHP's opposition to the redefinition of the concept of minority stems from the fear that such a re-categorization may divide the country:

The redefinition of the concept of minority based on ethnicity will be very much problematic for Turkey. Such a policy aims to create new nations and divide the Turkish nation. The usage of Kurdish language is the first step for division. Such policies may even result into foreign military intervention to Turkey in the future (Interview with Zuhâl Topçu).

Concerning the improvement of minority rights, the MHP officials put forward the principle of reciprocity as an indispensable condition. They clearly treat minorities in Turkey as foreigners and stand against any reform conferring additional rights to minorities unless other countries having Turkish minorities reciprocate with similar reforms:

I support the restitution of properties to minority foundation only if the principle of reciprocity is respected. If Turks do not even have the freedom to choose their own mufti in the Western Thrace, there is no sense in conferring greater rights to non-Muslims in Turkey. State gives no financial contributions to mosques in Macedonia, Kosovo and Greece; it is the Turkish state which finances the non-Muslim prayer houses in Turkey. This is unfair and unacceptable (Interview with Lütfü Türkkan).

Concerning the restitution of property rights of minority foundations, the principle of reciprocity is crucial. Turkey cannot offer its minorities more than what the Balkan states such as Greece and Bulgaria have been granting to their Turkish minorities (Interview with Nevzat Korkmaz).

Party officials also share the criticisms against the EU's approach to minority rights raised by the AKP and the CHP. They argue that the EU does not recognize the principle of reciprocity, and treats members and candidate differently. Such a selective approach decreases the EU's legitimacy in the eyes of the MHP respondents:

The EU's minority rights approach to member states is very much different from its conditionality towards third countries such as Turkey. It has a different agenda when it comes to minority rights in Turkey.



The EU forces Turkey to give such concessions to minorities while turning a blind eye to situation of Turks in the Balkans. This is double-standard and unacceptable (Interview with Nevzat Korkmaz).

We do not accept the restitution of property rights of minority foundations, because the EU doesn't recognize the principle of reciprocity. The EU does not care about the problems of Turkish foundations in Europe but demands greater rights for minority foundations in Turkey (Interview with Zuhale Topçu).

Moreover, the Sèvres Syndrome is visible in the MHP responses. Some MHP officials<sup>18</sup> claim that the EU has an agenda to divide Turkey. For instance, Nevzat Korkmaz asserts that the EU which united two Germanys; now aims to divide Turkey by redefining minorities. Holding similarities to a number of AKP and CHP respondents, such a stance reflects a hatred or suspicion toward foreigners in general and Europeans in particular.

#### **4.4. Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the resistance of Turkish political parties against the EU-led reform process focusing on the controversial reforms of minority rights. Accordingly, the two major opposition parties, the CHP and the MHP resisted reforms with the nationalistic urge to maintain the *status quo* and protect national sovereignty against foreign intervention. Both parties perceived the reform as a deviation from the Lausanne Treaty which equals to the erosion of the Republican principles. They both considered minorities as foreigners and treated minority rights as a foreign policy issue. Therefore, any improvement of minority rights would mean a concession to foreign powers, in particular the Greek neighbour. They claimed that the reform of minority rights would empower the minorities' country of origin at the expense of Turkey. The hard-line stance of both opposition parties at times reflected their historical suspicion against Europeans. The Sèvres Syndrome was particularly observable in their reactions against the reforms conferring immovable property rights

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<sup>18</sup> Nevzat Korkmaz and Sümer Oral.

to non-Muslim foundations in Turkey. The officials of the opposition parties depicted the adoption of the reforms as the resurrection of the defunct Sèvres Treaty.

The study argues that Turkish resistance to reforms of minority rights stems not only from domestic cost-benefit calculations and/or threat perceptions of political parties, but also the EU's selective approach upon candidate countries. The EU's differential treatment of member states and candidates faced with strong reactions in Turkey as well as other candidate countries. For instance, the nationalistic responses of the CHP and the MHP to the EU's pressures to expand minority rights in Turkey are similar to the stances of the ODS in Czech Republic and the SDSM in Macedonia. The Turkish opposition parties blamed the EU for remaining indifferent to 'the Greek oppressions and violations against the rights of Turkish minority' while conditioning Turkey to legislate greater minority rights. Similarly, the ODS criticized the EU for being oblivious to the walls segregating people in Western Europe while warning the Czechs against the construction of the wall in Maticni Street. Likewise, the SDSM claimed that the EU issued double standards on Macedonia by preconditioning the protection of minorities while failing to put the same pressure on Greece and Bulgaria which had refused to confer rights to Macedonians living on their territories.

The Turkish opposition also stressed the lack of a common minority criterion applicable to all Europe as a justification for its rejection of the reforms. Again, it is possible to trace parallels between the Turkish party responses and party reactions in other candidate countries. For instance, the MHP's emphasis on the lack of a consistent EU norm about minorities holds similarity to the PSL in Poland which resisted the EU-led reforms with the same justification. Overall, opposition to minority rights in Turkey cannot only be explained with Turkey's own peculiar history and political context but also with the general perception of the EU's inconsistent and selective conditionality concerning the protection of minority rights which triggered similar reactions in dissimilar candidate countries.

Concerning the Turkish case, the MHP's opposing stance over minority rights remains intact (during both as a coalition partner from 1999 to 2002 and in opposition afterwards). This rigidity may be largely associated with the party's ultra-nationalist and conservative electorate. The party's electoral success in 1999 elections was

primarily based on its objection to Kurdish separatism and denial of granting minority rights to Kurds in particular (Öniş 2003). Finally, the fact that Devlet Bahçeli kept his post as the party leader during both terms may also be seen as a contributing factor to the MHP's resolute opposition. The MHP's hard-line stance both during government and opposition shows resemblance to the stances of Right/TAN parties across different candidate countries. Especially, it is possible to draw similarities with the persisting efforts of the TB/LNNK in Latvia not to confer any rights to minorities during both its term in opposition and government. The main reason for such resemblance could be seen in the fact that both Turkish and Latvian societies are conservative and generally support populist parties to preserve the political *status quo* (Kalaycıoğlu 2007; Solska 2011).

On the other hand, the leadership change in the CHP had a remarkable impact on the CHP's official rhetoric towards minority rights. Unlike Baykal's leadership, Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP approached minority rights as an issue of democratization rather than a foreign policy matter; thus defended the amelioration of minority rights in Turkey. The new leader withdrew the party's long festering opposition to the re-opening of the Halki Seminary and the restitution of property rights of minority foundations. Party officials prepared new reports and took new initiatives to resolve the Kurdish problem. Kılıçdaroğlu held election campaign meetings in Diyarbakır and Hakkari, highly populated by Kurdish citizens, to which the Baykal administration had not paid any visit since 2002. Kılıçdaroğlu recruited Sezgin Tanrıkulu, former lawyer of Abdullah Öcalan (the leader of the PKK) as the deputy leader of the CHP. He even stated that he was ready to sacrifice his political career to solve the Kurdish problem (Vatan 2012a). Such a dramatic shift in the CHP can be explained with both Kılıçdaroğlu's resoluteness to return the party to its social democratic roots by abandoning Baykal's nationalistic rhetoric, and his personal identity-related commitment to expand minority rights. He is both Kurdish and Alevi, thus a member of two minority groups in Turkey. This identity factor may have been influential in his reformism towards the issue of minority rights in Turkey.

The interview findings, however, raise serious questions about the reformist stance of the governing AKP and the ability of Kılıçdaroğlu to change the CHP's traditional approach towards minorities. To begin with, there are remarkable resemblances in the

responses of all three political parties. Surprisingly, the officials of all three parties embrace the Lausanne Treaty as the primary document to govern minority rights in Turkey. Attachment to the Treaty provisions is not a surprise in the cases of the CHP and the MHP who declare allegiance to Atatürk's principles and actually invest the bulk of their resources on the preservation of the Republic. However, the AKP's attachment to the Lausanne Treaty is a novelty since it is the AKP government which announced its aim to transcend the Republican principles and establish a post-Kemalist Turkey (Dağı 2008 and 2012). Although the AKP government seldom makes statements about the Treaty concerning minority rights, the interviewed government deputies essentially pronounce their attachment to the Treaty provisions. This indicates a clear divergence from the AKP's official line. However, their support for the treaty is rather selective. The AKP respondents actually do not remain loyal to the Treaty provisions concerning the reform of foreign land ownership (FLO). Many AKP officials secure the view that the principle of reciprocity (dictated by the treaty) concerning the FLO has become obsolete in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, while they defend the principle of reciprocity as vital for the amelioration of minority rights. This selective attachment to reciprocity reveals the reluctance of the AKP respondents to treat Turkey's non-Muslim minorities as locals; yet they easily embrace people of Turkish origin living in other countries as the native people of Turkey. Therefore, the interview results definitely run counter to the scholarly works which claim that the AKP government considers minority rights within the scope of citizenship rights rather than foreign policy (Çağatay 2011). The attachment of the AKP respondents to the principle of reciprocity also reveals their reluctance towards the reforms of minority rights undertaken by their own government. Such reluctance is visible in their remarks concerning the restitution properties to minority foundations. Half of the AKP respondents deem reciprocity as a crucial condition for the implementation of this reform. The rest who do not hold Greek reciprocity as *sine qua non* for the reform of minority rights in Turkey still protest Greece's indifference to Turkish minority foundations.

In line with the official stance, the respondents from opposition parties support the principle of reciprocity as well. The MHP officials unanimously endorse the official line of their party. However, the status of CHP officials is rather dubious. Although

embracing the provisions of the Lausanne Treaty and extending rhetorical support for the principle of reciprocity, half of the CHP respondents defend the restitution of properties to minority foundations without seeking reciprocity from third countries. The other half is divided over the issue. While a quarter considers reciprocity as indispensable, the other quarter firmly rejects such reforms out of the fear of division. The remarks of the pro-reformist respondents can be explained as an allegiance to Kılıçdaroğlu's reformist rhetoric on minorities. However, the other half of the respondents still defend a nationalist stance reminiscent of Baykal's CHP. In this respect, a quarter of the CHP respondents reject the reform outright considering it as a European plot to dismantle the Turkish Republic. Hence, Kılıçdaroğlu's reformist agenda is not shared by at least half of the CHP officials. This reinforces the claim that the CHP is clearly divided between traditional and reformist groups.

Moreover, while the AKP government does not overtly stand against the categorisation of Kurds as minority, the AKP respondents overwhelmingly oppose such a classification. Although embracing every citizen as a first-class citizen of Turkey; as discussed above, the AKP officials clearly attach a pejorative meaning to minority primarily due to the historical negative memories toward Europeans living in the Ottoman Empire. Unsurprisingly, this stance is largely shared by the CHP respondents and unanimously endorsed by the MHP officials. Apart from a small fraction of the CHP deputies, the respondents essentially refuse to depict Kurds within the category of minorities. Such a unified stance depicts that negative views against minorities have been well-entrenched in Turkish politics. The CHP respondents refuse to categorize Alevis as minority either, while the AKP and the MHP officials remain silent about Alevis. The main justification essentially shared by all three parties is that they consider Kurds (and Alevis) an integral component of Turkish society. Moreover, the fear of division is considerably vivid in the remarks of all three parties. They share the concern that the redefinition of the concept of minority to include Kurds and Alevis carries a high danger for the division of the country. Moreover, the Sèvres Syndrome, the suspicion or lack of trust against Europeans, resurfaces when the respondents from all three parties lay claims that the EU or a particular EU member state has an agenda to divide Turkey. Precisely one fifth of the AKP

respondents<sup>19</sup> and one fifth of the CHP respondents<sup>20</sup> denounce the EU's hidden agenda to dismantle Turkey, while all the interviewed MHP deputies raise such a claim against the EU. Moreover, the EU's conditionality of minority rights is criticized by all parties as selective and discriminatory. An important number<sup>21</sup> of respondents from all three parties think that the EU treats members and candidates differently, and such a policy is discriminatory for Turkey. Accordingly, the EU's existing minority rights policy diminishes the credibility of its overall membership conditionality.

Concerning the hypotheses of Euroscepticism, this chapter came up with important findings. The debate about the ideology versus strategy has some implications on Turkish political party attitudes. Accordingly, the chapter finds that ideology plays a significant role concerning Euroscepticism in the case of minority rights. The first hypothesis is supported since the Left-Right distinction does not explain Turkish political resistance to the reforms of minority rights. Both the CHP (Left/TAN) and the MHP (Right/TAN) adopt a critical stance against minority rights with similar justifications. Moreover, hypothesis II based on the GAL-TAN distinction finds support since TAN ideology is a decisive factor concerning the party preferences towards Euroscepticism. TAN parties perceive minority rights as a matter of foreign policy and denounce the adoption of the EU-led reforms of minority rights as giving unilateral concessions to foreigners. GAL parties on the other hand mainly treat minority rights as a matter of democratization and support the expansion of liberties for minorities. The (Left/TAN) CHP and the (Right/TAN) MHP used similar justifications to protect the integrity of the Republic and maintain national security against foreign interferences. Their criticisms even reflected the resurfacing of old mistrust against Europeans embodied in the Sèvres Syndrome. On the other hand, Kılıçdaroğlu's rise to leadership initiated the transformation of the CHP from TAN to GAL which remarkably shifted the party's official rhetoric towards minority rights. However, the interviews findings demonstrate the limited success of such a liberal

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<sup>19</sup> 5 out of 25, namely ;Ülker Güzel, Ercan Candan, Rıfat Sait, Mehmet Erdoğan and Mücahit Fındıklı.

<sup>20</sup> 3 out of 15, namely; Ömer Süha Aldan, İzzet Çetin and Emre Köprülü.

<sup>21</sup> More than half of the AKP and the CHP deputies explicitly share their concern while all 4 respondents from the MHP raise the same claim.

transformation within the party. The CHP respondents are clearly divided over the expansion of minority rights. Besides, a quarter of the respondents reflects a hard-line stance similar to that of the ultra-nationalist MHP respondents dismissing the restitution of properties to minority foundations as a European plot to dismantle Turkey. Apparently, the CHP has a long way to go before truly transforming itself to a GAL party.

On the other hand, once pro-reformist, the AKP government slowed down the reform process after the curtailment of negotiations. Although the government did not entirely abandon the reform process, its approach to the reforms of minority rights could be considered as selective and inconsistent. While the AKP government returned numerous immovable properties to non-Muslim foundations, it has failed to re-open the theological school at Halki seminary. Prime Minister Erdoğan made a few attempts for an 'Alevi initiative' to win the Alevi sympathy, but the government opposes the recognition of Alevis' 'Cem house' as a legitimate Islamic house of worship. Alevis accuse the Directorate of Religious Affairs of favouring Sunni Islam at the expense of the Alevis (Çarkoğlu and Bilgili 2011: 355). Moreover, obligatory religion classes at primary and secondary schools 'ignore the Alevi belief system, imposing an exclusively Sunni interpretation of Islam upon students' (ibid.). Besides, in his 2011 election campaign, Erdoğan sought to diminish the popularity of the CHP leader Kılıçdaroğlu among conservative electorate by framing him as an Alevi Kurd (The Economist 2012). The AKP also abandoned its 'Kurdish opening' as early as 2009 after intensive public criticism. While the government has recently taken new steps for resuming negotiations with Abdullah Öcalan to end the PKK violence, Erdoğan has announced his willingness to reinstate the death penalty to prosecute terrorists (Shafak 2012). These instances indicate the fact that the pro-EU AKP has turned out to be a Right/TAN party with its rising authoritarianism and selective and inconsistent approach towards the reforms of minority rights. The AKP's current inertia in this domain can be explained with the lack of credible EU membership incentives which diminished the AKP's enthusiasm for reforms as well as domestic factors such as 'its Turkish nationalist ideological and political character, the lack of deep[er commitments to] democratic values and its weak administrative capacity about the Kurdish issue' (Çiçek 2011: 24). In addition, the interview findings indicate

reluctance in the AKP respondents towards the expansion of minority rights, although most refrain from openly criticizing the reforms undertaken by their own government. This reluctance increasingly stems from (1) the negative image of minorities in the eyes of the AKP respondents based on the experiences of the Ottomans; (2) the EU's selective approach toward minority rights, which is perceived as discriminatory against candidate states like Turkey.

Concerning hypothesis III, the interview results indicate that all three parties criticize the EU's selective approach in its minority rights policy. As previously pointed out, the CHP respondents are clearly divided over the enhancement of minority rights. Half of the CHP officials are in favour of the reforms and some even question the necessity of preserving the provisions of the Lausanne Treaty. Such liberal attitudes are reflective of Kılıçdaroğlu's efforts to transform the CHP into a GAL party. Even the emerging liberal wing within the party raise criticism against the EU's selectivity and discriminatory approach in its minority rights policy. Besides, as the control case, the BDP, a Left/GAL regionalist party reflects similar reactions to the EU as well. As a pro-Kurdish political party, the BDP supports Turkey's EU accession as it expects that through the EU membership process, Turkish citizens of Kurdish origin will gain greater cultural, political and administrative rights. Therefore, the party did not necessarily oppose EU-led reforms. On the contrary, the BDP officials have quite often sought support for their cause from the EU institutions; and they criticized the AKP government's handling of the Kurdish problem before the European Parliament. However, the BDP's strong pro-EU stance weakened after EU officials declared support for the AKP's 'Kurdish opening'; and they urged the BDP leadership to distance itself from PKK terrorism (Oğuzlu 2012: 233). Correspondingly, the party officials accused the EU of having turned 'a blind eye to the unfair treatment of Kurdish people' in Turkey (Büyükbay and Merdzanovic 2012). Although giving full support to the EU-led reform process, the BDP officials have become convinced that the EU has a discriminatory approach towards them giving priority to the AKP government's 'window-dressing' policies. Therefore, the Turkish case evidences the propensity of liberal (GAL) political actors to adopt Euroscepticism as a response to the EU's selective and discriminatory minority rights policy. Therefore, the Turkish case supports the explanatory power of TAN ideology in party-based Euroscepticism;



yet, the EU's selective approach changes the rules of the game as it causes reactions from GAL parties as well.

Regarding the CEECs, the mainstream literature does not offer much supporting evidence that GAL parties turn to Euroscepticism when the EU applies its minority rights conditionality in a selective manner. This is probably due to the fact that the EU's selectivity does not necessarily jeopardize the realization of accession, and GAL parties continue their support for EU membership regardless of the shortcomings of the accession process as long as the membership prospects are certain. In the Turkish case, the rising uncertainty of membership prospects following Turkey's failure to comply with the EU's Cyprus conditionality diminish the EU-enthusiasm of political parties in Turkey which also make them more reactionary against the EU's selective application of its conditionality in other reform areas. Yet, comprehensive research is necessary to find out to what extent the EU's selective application of its formal conditionality affects the EU discourses of GAL political actors in candidate countries.

Strategic party competition has some degree of influence in the development of Euroscepticism in Turkish politics. Accordingly, hypothesis IV is supported since all Turkish mainstream political parties reflect Euroscepticism in the case of minority rights. Therefore, one does not need to be a fringe party in Turkey to oppose the EU-led minority rights reforms. Moreover, the government-opposition distinction has limited explanatory power in Turkey since government officials reflect a remarkable reluctance towards the development of minority rights in Turkey due to the fear of division and historical suspicion against non-Muslims/Europeans. Nevertheless, the AKP took positive steps to confer greater freedom to minorities until the last couple of years. The uncertainty of membership prospects after the suspension of the negotiations diminished the AKP's enthusiasm for reform. Besides, the AKP respondents now emphasize the EU's double standards towards Turkey concerning minority rights, although such a critical rhetoric was absent when the bilateral relations were progressive during 2002 and 2005. Therefore, the initial years of the AKP reign supports hypothesis V rendering the AKP government path-dependent to embrace EU-led reforms when the accession process was progressive. However, after the suspension of the negotiations, the AKP government's reformist stance got

replaced by inertia. Therefore, in line with hypothesis VI, the uncertainty of membership prospects has shifted the AKP government's reformist stance and led it to join the ranks of other EU-sceptic parties.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **THE REFORM OF FOREIGN LAND OWNERSHIP**

Another reform area that draws Euroscepticism in Turkey involves the free movement of capital through lifting restrictions against foreigners/non-nationals concerning land acquisition. Accordingly, this chapter will first discuss the concept of foreign land ownership (FLO) and its application in the EU. Focusing on the main debates over the restrictions on FLO across Europe, the chapter will then investigate the political resistance to FLO in Central and Eastern European Countries (CEEC) during the EU accession process. After examining the political party behaviours towards FLO in the CEECs, the chapter will turn to the Turkish case discussing the FLO regime in Turkey and the Turkish resistance to the FLO reforms. The findings of the interviews conducted with 45 Turkish parliamentarians will be comparatively examined with respect to the official discourses of the parties over FLO. The concluding part will offer an overall analysis of the domestic resistance to FLO in Turkey and test the validity of the hypotheses proposed by this study comparing the findings of the Turkish case with the CEECs.

#### **5.1. Foreign Land Ownership and its application in the EU**

FLO is a highly ‘unregulated’ issue in international law which primarily leaves it to the discretion of nation states (Hodgson et al 1999: 2). While customary international law foresees no restriction on FLO, public international law recognizes the complete sovereignty of states over their territories (ibid.). Besides, there are no global multilateral treaties which regulate the issue of FLO (ibid.). Although there are some instruments adopted by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) such as the Code of Liberalisation of Capital Movements, none of them directly addresses the issue of FLO (Hodgson et al 1999: 3).

Restrictions and reforms regarding FLO are problematic in international law in the context of regional international treaties such as the Treaty of European Union and bilateral agreements enabling states and regional bodies such as the EU to regulate the issue of FLO with their own legal mechanisms (ibid.). Although EU law does not directly regulate land acquisition by foreigners, it nevertheless enables EU nationals to buy land in other EU member states (Majoros 2000). Article 54e of the Treaty of Rome<sup>22</sup> and Article 9 of the Regulation 1612/68/EEC<sup>23</sup> of the Council of 15 October 1968 on freedom of movement for workers provide a legal basis for a national of an EU member state to acquire and use land and buildings situated in the territory of another member state (Hodgson et al 1999: 21). Besides, the judgements of the European Court of Justice clearly dismiss any restrictions that violate EU citizens' right to acquire land since those acts are incompatible with EU law ensuring non-discrimination and freedom of movement (Majoros 2000: 14). Accordingly, the EU defends the freedom of EU-foreigners<sup>24</sup> to buy land within the EU territories while mainly leaving the status of non-EU citizens to the discretion of member states (Mayhew 2000). Although a number of EU member states including Belgium, Germany, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and the United Kingdom place no restrictions on non-EU nationals concerning property acquisition, the failure to satisfy the immigration requirements often prevents foreigners from using the purchased land for intended purposes (Hodgson et al 1999: 1).

The EU favours FLO in order to facilitate the smooth transformation of the accession country to liberal market economy creating a favourable environment for foreign investment; therefore the EU requires all EU accession countries to undertake major reforms of their land administration system including the liberalisation of FLO (Bogaertsa et al 2002: 30; Hodgson et al 1999: 21; Trzeciak 2012: 113). Besides, sale of land to foreigners brings certain economic benefits to the host country. Accordingly, it 'improve[s] productivity, enhance[s] access to capital, technology and knowledge, and hence stimulate[s] economic development' (Swinnen and Vranken 2009: iii). The EU also attaches importance to FLO reform because 'successful integration in Europe requires the development of a strong territorial identity that

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<sup>22</sup> See: [http://ec.europa.eu/economy\\_finance/emu\\_history/documents/treaties/rometreaty2.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/emu_history/documents/treaties/rometreaty2.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> See: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:31968R1612:en:HTML>

<sup>24</sup> EU citizens who are not nationals of the host EU country.

encompasses the entire area' (Wood 2004: 589). Moreover, EU law sees property in neutral terms as 'real estate', and its sale and purchase as a straightforward contractual bargain (Hilson 2008: 195). Therefore, it perceives any restrictions in national laws as an interference with the single market and dismisses them as discriminatory (Hilson 2008: 194).

However, from a nationalist perspective, land is considered as vital for state sovereignty and to be restricted to foreign acquisition. Upon governmental request, the EU permitted Austria, Finland and Sweden to issue a temporary restriction against FLO of other EU nationals, while Denmark was granted a permanent right to restrict the foreign ownership of holiday homes (Mira 2004). Moreover, Greece puts limitations on FLO in its border areas while Ireland restricts foreign purchases of agricultural land, forests, and water reservoirs (Tesser 2004: 217). Restriction of FLO is a common practice across the post-Communist countries too (Verdery 1998: 298). In the early 1990s, Latvia, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia constitutionally banned FLO (Verdery 1998: 299). In Poland and Estonia, foreign acquisition of property was subjected to the permission of local and national authorities, while in Lithuania, the new law in 1996 liberalized foreign land ownership excluding agricultural lands (*ibid.*). During EU membership negotiations for the eastern enlargement of May 2004, a number of accession countries demanded temporary restrictions on foreign purchase of land property. For example, Hungary and Slovakia asked for 10 years of transition period while Poland demanded 18 years. The Czech Republic demanded a permanent right to derogation on FLO without specifying a time period. Only Slovenia and Estonia did not demand any transition period (Trzeciak 2012: 108). The EU agreed to confer derogatory rights to most of the 2004 accession countries up to 7 years while granting Poland a transition period up to 12 years due to the considerable size of its arable lands and permitting Malta to restrict the foreign acquisition of second homes on a permanent basis due to the small size of the country (Burger 2006: 572).

There are numerous motivations for restricting FLO in Europe. First of all, foreign acquisition of land is seen as a security matter. For instance, selling borderlands to non-nationals have often been prohibited with the preoccupation to protect national

security, while the sale of arable lands to foreigners has increased national concerns for food security (Hodgson et al 1999: 19). Especially, in those countries whose economy heavily depends on agriculture such as Poland, agricultural land is a symbol of the ‘motherland’ and those countrymen who are tilling it are ‘maintaining the nation’ against foreigners (Burger 2006: 574). Since food is central to national cultural identity and national survival: ‘having foreign farmers growing food for you may thus be seen as a form of national security threat’ (Hilson 2008:196).

Moreover, restrictive measures stem from a preoccupation to prevent foreign economic domination, as well as the perceived threat that excessive foreign purchases may pave the way for land scarcity (Mayhew 2000; Burger 2006; Hilson 2008). For instance, the gap between the purchasing power of applicant countries and that of EU member states creates a public fear in Eastern European accession countries that such an economic imbalance would impair their citizens’ capacity to buy land across Europe while extensively selling their own (Mayhew 2000: 37; Trzeciak 2012: 105). Hilson (2008: 195) stands against the EU’s argument that domestic restrictions on FLO are discriminatory. He points to the relative differences in land values and national wealth between the old and new Member States which raise fears that wealthy old members could purchase significant amounts of land from new members (ibid.). According to Hilson (2008: 195), ‘[t]o prevent this from occurring could not be regarded as discriminatory because equality involves the idea of treating like cases alike. And since [old and new member states] are not in a like position as regards their wealth; treating them differently is not discriminatory’ (ibid.).

However, economic justifications only partially explain opposition to FLO. Nationalism, historical experiences and collective memory against foreigners in general or particular states (if not xenophobia) also play an important role behind FLO restrictions (Hodgson et al 1999: 20-23). Despite their relative wealth, Denmark and Austria issued restrictions on foreign purchase of second homes essentially due to their historical anti-German sentiments (Hilson 2008: 195). Similarly, Bogaerts et al (2002: 31) argue that the national historical context plays a determining role behind the challenges facing land administration reform in the CEECs. Territorial changes following the World Wars resulted in the rise of nationalistic reflexes to oppose

foreign land acquisition (*ibid.*). Especially, in Poland and the Czech Republic where the lands formerly owned by Germans had been expropriated, FLO reforms advocated by the EU triggered nationalistic resentments (*ibid.*). For instance, much of the land in current Western Poland was owned by Germans before the Second World War. Therefore, the Polish public was afraid that Poland's membership in the EU would be an opportunity for Germany to reclaim the real estate lost in the aftermath of the Second World War, or buy it cheaply in the market (Trzeciak 2012: 104).

Finally, land is an important component of national identity since it specifies 'what and who is in or out, and what belongs to whom' (Verdery 1998: 292). Dominant discourse in the CEECs is that land is the major attribute of nationhood together with language and religion (Trzeciak 2012: 105). Besides, emphasis on kinship and shared history is often used as a justification for opposition to FLO since locals identify land as the legacy of ancestors and hence secure it as an inalienable symbol of their identity (Verdery 1998: 299).

There are numerous restriction techniques including the outright prohibition of FLO, restricting the quantity of land available for foreign acquisition and limiting the purchase of agricultural, recreational, and border lands (Hodgson et al 1999: 44). As part of derogatory rights, accession countries temporarily maintained numerous restrictions on EU citizens and legal entities wishing to acquire property. For instance, foreigners are not permitted to purchase 'non-agricultural land in areas along the state borders, nature reserves or in the territories of other natural parks' in Latvia, while in the Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania and Slovakia, non-citizens are not allowed to buy agricultural land (Swinnen and Vranken 2009: 7-12). Countries often put bureaucratic restrictions such as the requirements for foreigners to get prior authorisation, make prior notice of transactions and a post-acquisition notice, and the obligation to register the purchased land (Hodgson et al 1999: 44). Moreover, there is no common bureaucratic procedure concerning land sale to foreigners. For instance, the authorizing institution for FLO is the Ministry of Justice in Denmark while it is the Council of Ministers in Cyprus (Hodgson et al 1999: 38). Poland on the other hand holds FLO subject to special permission granted by the Ministry of Interior and

Administration and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (Swinnen and Vranken 2009: 6).

## **5.2. Political Resistance to the FLO Reform in EU Accession Countries**

Legal amendments to liberalize FLO in line with the EU *acquis* generate heated political debates in accession countries. Domestic political actors oppose the FLO reform mainly due to economic fears that foreign ownership may increase land prices enormously at the expense of local buyers and/or out of patriotic concerns over the loss of national sovereignty and nationalistic fears of foreign invasion (Tesser 2004: 214). The issue of FLO caused serious political clashes in the parliaments of some candidate countries and decreased the support for EU membership amongst national elites and in the domestic public opinion.

In the Polish case, opposition parties with different ideological leanings stood against FLO. The Self-defence [Left/TAN] and the Polish Peasant Party (PSL) [Left/TAN] stood firm against the EU-led reform liberalizing the foreign acquisition of land, forests and areas containing water sources in order to secure the interests of Polish farmers (Batory 2003: 11; Tesser 2004: 220). The justification of such opposition was well-grounded in the public fear that excessive sale of land to foreigners would threaten Polish livelihoods following Poland's accession to the EU (Batory 2003: 11). Similarly, the centre-right party, Law and Justice (PiS) [Right/TAN], opposed the liberal legislations permitting FLO and proposed a 'land turnover law' in order to prevent speculative buying of Polish lands by foreign investors (Szczerbiak 2008: 232). The League of Polish Families (LPR) [Right/TAN] and the Self-defence argued that Poland should not sign the accession treaty 'without stricter land sale laws' (Trzeciak 2012: 126). The centre-right Solidarity coalition (AWS) [Left/TAN], the governing party between 1997 and 2001, framed FLO as a 'sell-out of national property to foreigners' and 'Germans' in particular (Tesser 2004: 220). The AWS insisted on a long transition period for Poland concerning land liberalisation to non-Polish EU citizens (Trzeciak 2012: 114). Party members demanded 25 years of transition period if permanent derogation is not possible (*ibid.*). The Polish Prime



Minister Jerzy Buzek (AWS) explained his party's strong opposition to FLO with the intensity of Polish public fear: 'We were a country that for many years did not have a Polish state and there are social fears connected with the sell out of land to foreigners' (Tesser 2004: 222).

The most intensive political debates concerning the issue of FLO in Poland started with the agreement of the Polish government led by the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) [Left/GAL] to reduce the transition period from 18 to 12 years and to allow EU citizens to buy second homes in Poland after a seven-year transition period and EU farmers to buy land for cultivation after a three-year lease (Trzeciak 2012: 117). Correspondingly, the main opposition parties the LPR and the PiS announced that 'they would submit a motion to hold a national referendum on sale of land to foreigners in connection with the condemnable and scandalous position of the government that failed to inform society about the scope of concessions in EU accession negotiations with regard to the sale of land' (ibid.). The LPR made three failed attempts to hold referendum on FLO backed by the PiS (Trzeciak 2012: 125). The officials of the PSL, a coalition partner of the time, announced its plan to submit a regulation to fix the 'mistakes' of their senior coalition partner in order to 'secure Poland's national interests'. Party officials also stated that 'such an important matter as the sale of agricultural land to foreigners [must] be settled favourably and Polish agricultural lands [must] be in the hands of Polish farmers' (Trzeciak 2012: 117). The PSL argued that 200.000 hectares of Polish land were already leased to foreigners, and party officials threatened to leave the government unless the coalition government considered the Polish interests more seriously (Trzeciak 2012: 122). The primary reason behind such a strong opposition to the FLO reform stemmed from the public concern that the FLO reform would provide Germans with an opportunity to buy up their former territories lost to Poland (Wood 2004: 588). Krzysztof Janik, Secretary General of the SLD, the senior coalition partner dismissed such concerns by stating that 'it is not necessary to create an atmosphere of impermanence. Those lands [the parts of Germany ceded to Poland after World War II] are ours and it will remain that way for centuries' (Tesser 2004: 222-223). The SLD also voiced its criticism against its junior partner by stating that the PSL cannot be in both coalition and in opposition at the same time (Trzeciak 2012: 126).

Similarly, the reform of FLO was rejected in the Czech Republic by major parties such as the Civic Democratic Party (ODS) [Right/TAN] and the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSCM) [Left/TAN] since the general public perception in the country was that the liberalisation of FLO would facilitate the erosion of the Beneš decrees which protect the Czechs against the property restitution demands of Germans and Austrians (Wood 2004: 600). The KSCM proposed a constitutional amendment to drastically limit the restitution claims (Kozakova 2003: 2). Apart from Beneš Decrees, the ODS also highlighted the necessity to protect domestic financial interests pertaining to the issue of FLO (Henderson 2008b: 122). Even Vladimír Špidla of the Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) [Left/GAL], the Czech Prime Minister between 2002 and 2004, voiced his concerns for German economic domination after the liberalisation of FLO in the Czech Republic, although his government did not actively take a position against the FLO reform (Tesser 2004: 231). The political resistance to FLO in the Czech Republic was overcome after the EU decided not to include the annulment of the decrees as a membership precondition.

Negative reactions to FLO have also been witnessed in Slovakia where politicians shared a concern over a possible ‘Hungarian return’ (Tesser 2004: 231). After the proclamation of the Beneš Decrees, numerous ethnic Hungarians were deported from today’s Slovakia and their lands were confiscated by the Czechoslovak authorities. During EU accession negotiations, there was a popular belief among Slovak politicians that the FLO reforms would enable Hungarians to buy up their previous properties in Slovakia (ibid.). For instance, František Mikloško, member of the centre-right Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) [Right/TAN] and speaker of the Slovak Parliament (1990-1992), opposed the EU-led reforms to liberalize FLO with the claim that such amendments would ‘put Slovakia once again in the hands of a few Hungarian landowners’ (ibid.). Vladimír Mečiar, the leader of the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) [Left/TAN] and former Prime Minister, accused the government led by Mikuláš Dzurinda’s Slovak Democratic and Christian Union – Democratic Party (SDKÚ-DS) [Right/GAL] – of readily surrendering to EU pressures that forced Slovakia to give concessions to Hungarians who had been expelled after the Second World War (Rupnik 2002).

Hungary is another example with political parties opposing FLO liberalisation. The Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) [Right/TAN], the governing centre-right party between 1990 and 1994, defied any attempts to sell the 'Hungarian motherland' to foreigners (Burger 2006: 573). While in opposition during 1994 and 1998, the MDF and other opposition parties in the Hungarian Parliament rallied in order to reject an amendment allowing foreign business corporations to acquire real estate in Hungarian lands (Tesser 2004: 227). Similarly, the Hungarian Civic Party (FIDESZ-MPP) [Right/TAN], a coalition partner between 1998 and 2002, declared itself as the protector of Hungarian land and proposed a referendum to prevent the EU reforms that would enable foreigners' land purchase (Batory 2008: 270-271). The party included the rejection of the FLO deal with the EU in its campaign for the 2002 elections (Sitter and Batory 2008: 71).

Similarly, the Smallholder Party (FKGP) [Left/TAN], the other coalition partner, rejected 'selling out the motherland [to foreigners]' and pledged in its 2002 election manifesto to renegotiate the FLO question with the EU (Sitter and Batory 2008: 65). Party officials claimed that the adoption of the FLO reform in Hungary would mean a pre-mature accession that would subordinate Hungary to the EU and result into a loss of national identity (Batory 2001: 16). The extreme-right Hungarian Justice and Life Party (MIÉP) [Right/TAN] equated EU membership conditionality with the Trianon Treaty of 1920 that cost Hungary an important portion of its territories (Tunkrova 2010: 99). Party officials conditioned their support for EU membership on the full guarantee for not selling land to foreigners (Batory 2008: 272). The Hungarian government led by the FIDESZ-MPP received a seven-year transitional period after the accession, during which prohibitions against foreign purchase of agricultural lands would remain in force (Burger 2006: 572). Towards the end of the seven-year transition period, the FIDESZ-MPP government declared its will to pass laws that ban land purchases by EU nationals in Hungary in contradiction with the EU's legal provisions (FriedlNews 2012). The main reason for such persistent opposition to FLO in Hungary is explained with a long established 'rural-nationalist ideology' deriving from rural over-population and land scarcity (Burger 2006: 575). Following the Trianon Treaty of 1920, Hungarians having lost a significant part of their national

territories developed a reactive tendency to equate land with ‘mother earth’ to be protected from foreigners (ibid.). Besides, in the aftermath of the Hungarian independence from the defunct Soviet Union, the lack of protective laws to restrict FLO enabled Austrian citizens to buy considerable amounts of agricultural land in Hungary between 1989 and 1994 (Tesser 2004: 225). This intensified nationalistic sentiments that land cannot be taken as a simple commercial issue because it is ‘capital-poor Hungary’s only asset’ which shouldn’t be easily sold to foreigners (Tesser 2004: 227).

Contestation against FLO was also witnessed in Slovenia, a strong pro-EU country which had already determined its ‘return to Europe’ as a strategic goal even before the dissolution of Yugoslavia (Krasovec and Lipicer 2008: 316). The reform of FLO has become a source of intense political debate in Slovenia in the late 1990s. The Slovenian Parliament amended its Constitution on 14 July 1997 for the first time after the Slovenian independence by altering Article 68 which had prohibited foreign acquisition of land (except for inheritance) (Albi 2005: 72-73).

The Constitutional change permitting foreigners to acquire land in Slovenia drew criticism from opposition parties. Members of the Democratic Opposition of Slovenia (DEMOS) [Right/TAN] alleged that the EU-led reform of FLO would transfer Slovenian sovereignty from Belgrade to Brussels (Lindstrom 2000). Officials of the Slovenian Nationalist Party (SNS) [Right/TAN] and the Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia (DeSUS) [Right/TAN] accused the Slovenian Foreign Minister, Lojze Peterle, of “destroying the Slovenian state” by giving in to external pressures and demanded his removal from office (Lindstrom 2000). The SNS announced that the debated EU-led reform of FLO revealed the imperialistic nature of the EU (Krasovec and Lipicer 2008: 318). It put strong emphasis on the continuation of prohibitions against FLO in Slovenia as one of its main goals during Slovenia’s EU accession process (Beichelt 2004). A party official argued that “Slovenes have never sold their land so easily. . . . Such law poses a great danger; in fact, we are opening the door to the whole world!” (Bandelj 2004: 470). Although the bill was adopted with overwhelming majority, even some of the government officials could not conceal their reluctance for FLO reforms. The Deputy Prime Minister, Marjan Podobnik, of

the ruling Slovenian People's Party (SLS) [Right/GAL] supported the FLO reform for the sake of EU membership but voiced his concerns about loss of Slovenian sovereignty (Bandelj 2004: 466). Podobnik similarly stood against the foreign ownership of major banks in Slovenia but his government proceeded with bank privatization in compliance with the EU's membership conditionality (Lindstrom and Piroška 2007: 122).

The cases discussed above point to the fact that FLO has become a source of intensive political debates in many candidate countries. Opposition against FLO reforms primarily stemmed from public fears of foreign economic domination and historical disputes with other countries. Especially, the collective memory against Nazi Germany was highlighted as a justification for rejecting to sell land to foreigners. Political actors in candidate countries mainly preferred to raise nationalist and populist criticisms against FLO, mirroring the public fear against foreigners, and exalted 'land' as an inalienable part of national identity. Moreover, some criticized the EU for being an imperialistic force endangering their country's national sovereignty. It is mainly because the EU seems to consider FLO within the narrow scope of economic freedom while domestic political actors tend to associate land with national sovereignty and survival. This is comparable to the case of minority rights which witnessed contestations against EU-led reforms due to the generalized domestic perception that minorities are foreigners and potential threats to national sovereignty. However, FLO differs from the case of minority rights since domestic responses to FLO reforms are not justified with the EU's inconsistent, selective and discriminatory application of its membership conditionality. In the case of FLO conditionality, the EU adopted a uniform approach to candidate countries that contested FLO, granting them a seven-year transition period before opening their lands to foreign purchase. Previously, Austria, Finland and Sweden were granted a five-year transition period so that they could establish effective land registration systems. The EU also recognized the special circumstances of certain countries and decided to extend the transition period in Poland to 12 years due to its bigger landmass and population, and permitted Malta to restrict the foreign purchase of second homes permanently due to its small size. Although the EU's decision to grant permanent derogatory rights to Denmark was criticized by several member states as discriminatory (Mira 2004), there is a

general consensus on the fact that the EU is consistent in its application of FLO conditionality and increases its legitimacy further by taking into consideration domestic concerns about development, land registration, and scarcity. Furthermore, unlike the case of minority rights, the FLO domain is subject to the active interference of the European Court of Justice, which collaborates with the European Commission in ensuring that all member state legislation and practice comply with the principle of free movement.

As regards party ideology, similar to the case of minority rights, it could be argued that parties with TAN ideology from both Right and Left constitute the bulk of the political opposition to FLO due to their attachment to *status quo* and nationalism. Therefore, resistance to FLO is primarily a TAN phenomenon which builds upon the public fear against foreigners. Party competition has a weaker explanatory power over Eurosceptic attitudes towards FLO compared to ideology, since TAN parties both in government and opposition resist the FLO reforms. The following section will discuss the Turkish responses to the reform of FLO in comparison with the cases of CEECs discussed above.

### **5.3. Foreign land ownership in Turkey**

The legal foundations of foreign land ownership were established with the Lausanne Treaty of 1923, the Village Act of 1924 and the Land Registry Law of 1934 which stipulate the principle of reciprocity concerning the foreign acquisition of real estates, do not allow foreign corporations to buy Turkish land, and ban foreign ownership of land in villages and military areas. Turkish governments made several attempts to liberalize the Turkish FLO regime in 1984, 1986, 2003 and 2005, but the Constitutional Court abrogated any legislative attempts to extend foreigners' rights to own land in Turkey. The Court justified its decisions on the grounds that land is a crucial element of national security therefore its acquisition by foreigners must be restricted; the legislated reforms violate the principle of reciprocity, which is a vital legacy of the Lausanne Treaty; and finally, foreign land ownership is often restricted in several EU member states (Court decision no. 2005/14).

The EU considers FLO within the scope of the free movement of capital and urges Turkey to withdraw its restrictions in order enable the smooth functioning of liberal market economy and integrate with the EU. The European Commission's 2008 progress report on Turkey's accession highlights the necessity for Turkey to put in more efforts to render its legal regime fully consistent with the EU *acquis* (European Commission 2008: 41). The progress report of 2011 deems the steps taken by Turkey insufficient requiring an action plan 'for gradual liberalisation of acquisition of real estate by foreigners in line with the *acquis* and to demonstrate that it is making progress towards gradual liberalisation, which is a key element for the accession negotiations' (European Commission 2011: 57).

The AKP government's initial attempts to align with the EU accession criteria of FLO was faced with objection from the opposition and the EU-led reforms were quickly repealed by the Constitutional Court. The suspension of Turkey-EU accession negotiations massively slowed down the reform process in Turkey; yet the AKP government persisted in its attempts to pass the bill in the Turkish parliament despite the fact that Turkey's EU accession prospects had become remarkably unclear. The AKP government introduced another bill about FLO in 2008 which was again abrogated by the Constitutional Court in 2011. Finally, the AKP enacted the law of 3 May 2012 following a heated debate in the parliament. The bill liberalized FLO in Turkey and lifted the reciprocity requirement for not only EU nationals but all foreign citizens (Sabah 2012). Moreover, the bill conferred greater rights to the Council of Ministers concerning the determination of the limits of FLO (ibid.). The main opposition party CHP appealed to the Constitutional Court again in order to repeal the new law.

The AKP<sup>25</sup> shares the economic justifications of the EU concerning the adoption of the reform. The government expects that the FLO reform will attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and bring financial gains that might help to close the national budget deficit (TBMM 2008h). The AKP government depicts the principle of reciprocity as an obstacle to the world-wide economic development of Turkey. For instance, the Turkish minister for Environment and Urban Affairs, Erdoğan

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<sup>25</sup> See the speeches of Yılmaz Tunç, the AKP deputy for Bartın and Osman Demir, the AKP deputy for Tokat, 12 June 2008.

Bayraktar, justifies the abrogation of the principle of reciprocity from the FLO legislation on the grounds that this would bring Turkey one step closer to become an advanced country like many other European countries that do not observe the principle of reciprocity (TBMM 2012a). Finally, in order to fend off the main opposition's criticisms, the AKP claims that a remarkable amount of Turkey's lands had been sold to foreigners when the opposition parties (CHP and MHP) were in office (ibid.).

#### **5.4. Reactions to the FLO reform from the opposition parties**

Similar to East European accession countries, the Turkish opposition parties extensively oppose the FLO reform because, unlike the EU, they interpret FLO as a security issue which threatens Turkey's national sovereignty and territorial integrity. During the leadership of Deniz Baykal, the CHP's view on FLO was based on two premises. First, the party differentiated between land and real estate (buildings) and opposed foreign ownership of land territory (including forestry, natural resources, and agricultural land) deeming it a sacred symbol of national sovereignty (TBMM 2008h). Second, the CHP defended the principle of reciprocity urging other states to authorize Turkish citizens to buy immovable properties on their territories if they want their own citizens to be authorized to acquire real estate in Turkey (ibid.). Accordingly, party officials appealed to the Constitutional Court in 2003 and 2005 demanding the abrogation of the FLO legislation introduced by the AKP government. The 2003 law gave foreign individuals the right to buy land up to 30 hectares and authorized the Council of Ministers to bypass legislative limits on the sale of land property to foreigners. The 2005 law that passed after the annulment of the 2003 law by the Constitutional Court decreased the foreign purchase of land property to 2.5 hectares but insisted on authorizing the Council of Ministers to bypass the law. The Constitutional Court annulled both pieces of legislation upon the CHP's application highlighting the vitality of 'national security over short term economic profits' (TBMM 2008h).

The CHP also proposed a parliamentary inquiry in order to discuss in detail the repercussions of the 2003 reform one year after its enactment. Signed by 42 CHP



deputies, the proposal intensively criticized the legislation which resulted in an extensive sale of Turkish land to foreigners in less than one year (TBMM 2004). The CHP questioned the AKP's insistence for the legislation although there was no strong conditional pressure from the EU, and Turkey's EU membership prospects remained unclear (ibid.). Party officials argued that it is not acceptable to justify the FLO reforms with mere economic motivations since land is an indispensable element of national sovereignty and security as previously stated by the Constitutional Court (ibid.). The CHP called the AKP government to reconsider its decision about the FLO bill of 2003. However, the motion for parliamentary inquiry was denied by the AKP votes that held a majority of the seats in the Parliament following the 2002 general elections.

Similarly, the CHP opposed the AKP's 2008 proposal which endorsed foreign purchase of land up to 10% of village territories. Atila Emek, the CHP deputy for Antalya, dismissed the proposal as a threat to national sovereignty which would transfer a considerable portion of Turkey's lands to foreigners (ibid.). According to Fevzi Topuz, the CHP deputy for Muğla, with the legislation under debate, the AKP aimed to sell lands to foreigners in order to close the national budget deficit the AKP government caused over the years (ibid.). Topuz remarked that the AKP undermined the Court decisions which forbid extensive sale of land property to foreigners, and rushed to bring new legislations depicting them as EU-led reforms (ibid.).

Party officials criticized the AKP's tendency to defend the adoption of the reform for the sake of EU membership. Onur Öymen, the CHP deputy for Istanbul, emphasized the fact that there was no common practice among the EU members concerning the liberalisation of FLO (TBMM 2003). Öymen contended that there was no way that the EU could pressurize candidate countries to bypass the principle of reciprocity (ibid.). He claimed that the AKP had arbitrarily prepared those bills for short-term economic benefits and had introduced them to the parliament as if they were part of the EU accession criteria (ibid.).

The CHP particularly emphasized the necessity to preserve the principle of reciprocity that represents the sovereign equality of states. As early as 2003, the CHP members<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> See the speech of Birgen Keleş, the CHP deputy for Istanbul, 3 July 2003.

of the Parliament warned the government that the dismissal of such an important principle would inflict irreparable damages upon Turkey (TBMM 2003). Fevzi Topuz, the deputy of Muğla claimed that the legislation authorizing the sale of 10% of village lands had no precedent elsewhere in the world and the adoption of the law meant that Turkey could lose a sizeable portion of its coasts to foreigners without securing a right to buy similar amount of lands abroad (TBMM 2008h).

The party also criticized the amendment in the Village Act which granted foreign ownership rights in arable lands of Turkish villages. The Village Act of 1924 prohibited the foreign ownership of agricultural fields. Seeing the Village Act as a legacy of Atatürk, CHP officials dismissed the AKP's amendment as a serious breach of Republican principles (TBMM 2003). Reminding Atatürk's words; 'Villager is the master of nation', Gürol Ergin, the CHP deputy for Muğla, contended that such legislative reform betrayed Turkish villagers relegating them to pariah in their own country (ibid.).

The leadership change in the CHP liberalized its rhetoric towards FLO since Kılıçdaroğlu announced his support for more liberal and democratic reforms in Turkey including FLO (Kılıçdaroğlu 2010). However, this liberal rhetoric is not shared by all in the party. Some party officials applied to the Constitutional Court in 2012 to repeal similar AKP legislation (CHP 2012). They charged the AKP with aiming to sell limitless amounts of land to foreigners for short-term economic gains (ibid.). Party officials<sup>27</sup> equalled the reform of FLO to 'treason' and often portrayed the AKP as 'traitors' who can't wait to sell the entire country' (TBMM 2012a). The CHP<sup>28</sup> claimed that the amount of land sold to foreigners under the AKP government in the last decade (136 Million square metres) was twelve times higher than the land sales of previous governments combined (12 Million square metres) (TBMM 2012b). Party members often resorted to patriotic discourse in their opposition to the reform. Associating 'land' with national sovereignty, the CHP officials usually referred to Turkey's war of independence through which those lands were gained (TBMM 2012a). Party officials<sup>29</sup> often accused the government of selling national lands

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<sup>27</sup> See the speech of Bülent Özcan, the CHP deputy for Aydın, 3 May 2012.

<sup>28</sup> See the speech of Ali İhsan Köktürk, the CHP deputy for Zonguldak, 2 May 2012.

<sup>29</sup> See the speech of Ramazan Kerim Özkan, the CHP deputy for Burdur, 3 May 2012.

acquired with the blood of Turkish martyrs (ibid.). However, they also claimed that the content of the FLO bill was not in line with the EU's membership conditionality because it foresaw the liberalization of land sale not only to EU nationals but every other nationals in the world without seeking reciprocity (ibid.). They argued that the AKP brought this bill to facilitate land sale to rich Arabs rather than Europeans (ibid.).

The MHP uses similar arguments in its opposition to the FLO reform. Party officials attach priority to the preservation of territorial integrity and the principle of reciprocity. The MHP<sup>30</sup> urges that the AKP places an expression to the draft law guaranteeing the protection of the country's territorial integrity and respect for reciprocity before agreeing to such legislation (TBMM 2008i). Similar to the CHP, the MHP officials often charge the government with 'treason' and depict the AKP as a government enthusiastic to sell national territories for economic gains. The MHP exalts Turkish lands as sacred and hard-worn with the blood of Turkish soldiers during the independence war (TBMM 2008h). Therefore, the party strongly opposes the sale of such strategically important lands based on economic justifications (TBMM 2012a). Party officials also believe that the reform proposals have been actually drafted and introduced by 'foreign powers' who aim to invade the entire country (TBMM 2008h).

The reform under scrutiny was often dismissed by the MHP officials who often adopted nationalistic and anti-Semitic discourse. Yusuf Halaçoğlu, the deputy for Kayseri, contended that the AKP's legislation enabled the sale of an enormous amount of land to Jews and Armenians. He argued that land sales triggered the establishment of the Jewish state in Palestine and blamed the AKP government for giving Jews the same opportunity in Turkey (TBMM 2012b). Halaçoğlu alleged that 34.000 acres of land were sold to Jews in his constituency and it was just the tip of the iceberg (ibid.). He also alleged that the reforms would enable 'ancient foes' of Turkey such as Armenians and Greeks to eventually buy the lands they long aspired for (TBMM 2012a).

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<sup>30</sup> See the speech of Faruk Bal, the MHP deputy of Konya, 11 June 2008.

The MHP officials<sup>31</sup> particularly defend the fulfilment of the reciprocity principle which should be the only way for a foreigner to buy immovable property in Turkey (TBMM 2008h). Oktay Vural, the MHP deputy for Izmir, labels the lack of reciprocity as capitulation, a unilateral concession to foreigners (TBMM 2012a). Vural stresses the fact that the Lausanne Treaty abrogated all capitulations and introduced reciprocity for Turkey's international transactions; he therefore dismisses the reform as incompatible with the provisions of the Lausanne Treaty (ibid.). He also charges the AKP with dishonesty since he claims that the government officials promised the MHP that the new FLO would observe the reciprocity principle but then did not remain loyal to their pledges (TBMM 2012b). MHP officials<sup>32</sup> accuse the AKP government of using EU conditions as a pretext to 'sell out the country's precious lands' (TBMM 2008h).

The MHP today demands the inclusion of the expression 'foreign ownership of property can be restricted when national security is at stake' in the new Turkish Constitution (Milliyet 2012). Oktay Öztürk, the deputy for Erzurum, defends the MHP's proposal reiterating the MHP's allegation that the establishment of the state of Israel was made possible due to the 'grave mistake' of Arabs who sold massive amounts of land to Jews (ibid.). Öztürk argues that the inclusion of such a restrictive measure might save Turks from experiencing a similar end or dissolution (ibid.). Following the general overview of the main arguments against FLO reforms in Turkey, the next section provides original empirical data on the current stances of the main parties in Turkey towards the question of FLO. The data discussed below derive from face-to-face interviews with 45 Turkish parliamentarians.

### **5.5. Reflections of Turkish Parliamentarians on the issue of FLO**

In order to gain greater insight into the stances of Turkish political parties towards EU-led reforms of FLO, I conducted face-to-face interviews with Turkish parliamentarians in Ankara between October 2012 and April 2013. The interviews yielded important results comparable to the official discourses of the parties under

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<sup>31</sup> See the speech of Behiç Çelik, the MHP deputy for Mersin, 12 June 2008.

<sup>32</sup> See the speech of Mehmet Serdaroğlu, the MHP deputy for Kastamonu, 12 June 2008.

scrutiny. Interestingly, the AKP deputies primarily reflect a unitary stance giving support to FLO mainly based on economic expectations and confirm the official policy of their party. However, they demonstrate internal disagreements over the question of whether to bypass the principle of reciprocity. On the other hand, some opposition deputies draw a slightly more liberal picture than the official discourse of their parties. For instance, most of the opposition deputies stated that they did not oppose the sale of land to foreigners under the condition of reciprocity. Moreover, opposition responses reflect a multiplicity of framings towards the FLO issue ranging from very liberal to highly conservative.

#### *5.5.1. The AKP responses*

All the AKP officials I interviewed are very supportive of FLO. They mainly consider FLO within the scope of economic liberalisation and claim that FLO will bring nothing but economic gains for Turkey. Several party officials<sup>33</sup> state the necessity of liberalizing FLO in order to attract foreign direct investment (FDI):

Foreign companies buy land in Turkey to construct factories which revitalize Turkish economy. When they decide to leave Turkey, they will sell these lands back to us. Therefore, there is nothing to worry about. Besides, the European population is getting older and they intend to spend their lives in our coastal areas after retirement. They spend their wealth in Turkey. If I deny selling them land and property, I will prevent an important source of income for Turkey (Interview with Ali Rıza Alaboyun).

Another justification raised by the AKP officials<sup>34</sup> is that FLO facilitates social and cultural dialogue between Turks and Europeans, and contributes to Turkey's positive image in Europe. Similarly, Burak Erdenir, the deputy undersecretary of the Ministry of European Union, believes that the liberalisation of FLO enables more and more EU citizens to come to live in Turkey and this shows Turkey's high potential to be integrated with the EU.

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<sup>33</sup> including Abdullah Çalışkan, Ali Rıza Alaboyun, Afif Demirkıran and Muzaffer Çakar

<sup>34</sup> including Fatih Çiftçi, Belma Satır, Mücahit Fındıklı, Muzaffer Çakar and Ali Rıza Alaboyun.

Party officials also refer to globalization as a justification for liberalizing FLO. For instance, Belma Satır believes that FLO is the norm in a globalized world promoting competition for foreign investment and it is actually advantageous for Turkey to be preferred as a destination to live and do business by people from different parts of the world. Similarly, according to Ercan Candan, globalization has resulted in a paradigm shift in the world and now the classical notion of protectionism is outdated. ‘Today, everybody is able to go to everywhere. We cannot prevent people from living in our country’, Candan states. Afif Demirkıran believes that the world has become a global family and as its member, Turkey must liberalize its laws to allow foreigners to purchase land.

Party officials do not believe that FLO imposes any real threat to Turkey. Rejecting the opposition’s concerns over loss of national sovereignty, Mehmet Sayım Tekelioğlu argues that major powers like Turkey cannot be easily disintegrated or destroyed by such small issues as FLO. The favourite expression shared by almost all the AKP interviewees against such concerns is that ‘foreigners won’t take away those lands in their pockets or on their backs’<sup>35</sup>:

If I want, I can buy lands in all EU member states. Even in authoritarian states such as Russia and Saudi Arabia<sup>36</sup>, we can buy immovable properties. If our bilateral relations become uneasy, we won’t be able to take those properties back to Turkey with us. The same is true for foreigners who buy land in Turkey. Their purchases do not constitute a threat to our territorial integrity. I don’t see any harm in selling land to foreigners. It will bring nothing but economic benefits (Interview with Mehmet Erdoğan).

AKP officials particularly emphasize the importance of self-confidence and the necessity to leave aside domestic fears against foreigners:

We shouldn’t be afraid. Turkish politicians often pursued the politics of fear but to no avail. If we want to be a great country we have to think bigger. We can go nowhere with taboos and fears. We must establish our living standards freely and that’s why we need the EU and its standards. (Interview with Abdullah Çalışkan).

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<sup>35</sup>The expression was explicitly used by Mehmet Sayım Tekelioğlu, Mehmet Durdu Kastal, Belma Satır, Ruhi Açıkgöz, Mehmet Erdoğan, Mücahit Fındıklı, Ali Rıza Alaboyun, Ercan Candan.

<sup>36</sup> Saudi Arabian law of FLO:  
[http://www.sagia.gov.sa/Documents/Laws/Real\\_Estate\\_by\\_Foreigners.pdf](http://www.sagia.gov.sa/Documents/Laws/Real_Estate_by_Foreigners.pdf)

Similarly, Belma Satır depicts Turkey as a country ‘in love with its own fears’. ‘FLO is one of these fears Turkish decision-makers maintained throughout history. We must leave fears aside. I see no harm in FLO. We must have self-confidence’; Satır contends. Bilal Macit claims: ‘if foreigners choose to live in Turkey, this shows that we have become an advanced country and confirms our self-confidence’. Likewise, Fatih Çiftçi believes that FLO is a global phenomenon and Turkey as major power must show the world its self-confidence by liberalizing FLO. Ahmet Baha Ögütken stresses that the increase in foreign demands for Turkish lands indicates that Turkey has become an economically advanced country with a fully functioning democracy.

The government deputies strongly reject the opposition’s allegations that they ‘sell out the motherland’ with excessive amount of land sale. They argue that just like elsewhere in Europe, Turkey imposes certain limits on foreigners’ right to purchase land. ‘We have always been careful to sell land to foreigners based on certain criteria such as the size and the location of the property. We don’t sell lands of strategic importance such as border areas’, Ülker Güzel states. On the other hand, the AKP deputies are considerably divided on the principle of reciprocity. While some deputies such as Tülin Erkal Kara, Rıfat Sait, Afif Demirkıran, Ülker Güzel, Mehmet Sayım Tekelioğlu and Ahmet Baha Ögütken deem reciprocity as indispensable for Turkey, others (including Çalışkan, Çakar, Açıkgöz and Candan) attach less emphasis on it:

The principle of reciprocity is a political matter. We can be flexible with it in order to increase the level of FDI in Turkey. Many countries have done such arrangements before. The criticism of the opposition is absurd. We can monitor the sale of land to foreigners and secure our national interests. We must trust ourselves. FLO is a normal phenomenon in a globalized world (Interview with Ruhi Açıkgöz).

As a matter of fact, the principle of reciprocity is not that important. We have bypassed this principle not for Europeans but for Arabs, since they don’t trust Europeans or Americans [Westerners] but trust us [and invest in Turkey] (Interview with Abdullah Çalışkan).

We no longer observe the principle of reciprocity and this is good for our economic development attracting greater FDI. If any problems emerge in the future, we can always bring reciprocity back (Interview with Muzaffer Çakar).

Moreover, some government deputies fail to acknowledge that the new FLO law bypasses the principle of reciprocity and claim that Turkey continues to implement the reciprocity principle in all its transactions. Although the AKP deputies mostly remain loyal to the government's official discourse in their responses, the split over reciprocity is a remarkable indicator of deviation from the party's FLO policy and internal division.

### *5.5.2. The CHP responses*

Contrary to the radical discourse of the CHP which only accepts foreigner ownership of real estate (and dismisses sale of land to foreigners), the interviewed party officials support FLO under certain conditions. For instance, they deem it necessary to determine an upper limit for foreign land purchases and to unconditionally respect the principle of reciprocity. Ali İhsan Köktürk argues that FLO is an integral part of human rights, but he also points to the importance of limiting FLO for national sovereignty. Likewise, Ömer Süha Aldan supports foreign purchase of houses, apartments and land for the purposes of tourism: 'Foreigners after their retirement can buy apartments, even lands in Turkey to spend the rest of their lives, but we must determine an upper limit for this [FLO]'. Similarly, Erdal Aksünger does not see FLO as a threat to Turkey but he is against the sale of excessive amount of land to foreigners. Faruk Loğoğlu, the deputy chairman of the CHP, explains that the EU does not set an upper limit for FLO, and stresses the necessity for regulating the issue with bilateral agreements respecting the principle of reciprocity. Therefore, party officials criticize the government policies which resulted in an excessive amount of land sale to foreign persons and companies. Aksünger argues that the AKP government has been involved in a series of 'sham transactions' bypassing the rule of law. He states that a serious number of land properties along the shores of Istanbul were sold to Arabs based on the new FLO laws which are still under the examination of the Constitutional Court. Atila Kart points to the foreign purchase of arable lands in large amounts:



We need to differentiate between the sale of property and the sale of land. We must put limitations to the sale of land. The current situation in Turkey is alarming. There is no official monitoring mechanism over the foreign purchase of land. The government either overlooks or intentionally promotes the excessive sale of land. For instance, one seventh of Konya, my constituency, has been sold to foreigners. This is unacceptable (Interview with Atila Kart).

Party officials strongly oppose the government's economic justifications for FLO and emphasize the vitality of preserving national sovereignty and integrity:

Economic justifications for liberalizing FLO are wrong, because we observe similar restrictions in almost all countries in the world in order to protect the agricultural lands, sea shores and strategic areas. However, Turkey has lifted such restrictions as well as the principle of reciprocity and liberalized the sale of lands to foreigners up to 600 acres per purchase. Such a liberalisation policy endangers Turkey's food security and national sovereignty (Interview with Ali İhsan Köktürk).

Aldan believes that an excessive amount of land sale to third-country nationals will threaten peace in Turkey. İzzet Çetin claims that the AKP has sold most of the arable lands in South-Eastern Anatolia to Israel: 'If a foreigner buys land, it no longer belongs to Turkey but to him/her. Therefore, we must put limitations. If unregulated, FLO may turn out to be a threat to national integrity. Money is not everything'.

CHP officials also highlight the principle of reciprocity as an indispensable condition for liberating FLO and blame the AKP government for undermining it due to expectations for short-term financial gains. Some deputies refer to the war of independence in order to justify the necessity of the principle of reciprocity:

Reciprocity is a *sine qua non* for Turkey. Selling lands without respecting that principle will seriously threaten Turkey's national sovereignty and freedom. FLO cannot be justified with economic gains because the motherland which Turkish people had fought and spilled blood for is priceless (Interview with Emre Köprülü).

There is a popular saying: 'what matters is land and sheep, the rest is all trick'. We must protect our agriculture. You can buy immovable properties in the EU but the purchase of land is based on reciprocity. The AKP government has lifted that principle. We are not against

the sale of land to foreigners but we reject land sale with no limits. We won our land with the blood and tears of our ancestors who fought in the independence war (Interview with Ramazan Kerim Özkan).

While the majority of the respondents give conditional support to FLO reforms, there are also factions within the CHP over the issue. For instance, a minority of respondents including Aykan Erdemir and Osman Korutürk adopt a more liberal approach towards FLO embracing it unconditionally. Erdemir believes that rights and liberties are not to be separated from each other: ‘As a social democrat, it is my duty to support FLO which is a part of human rights and liberties’, he argues. Similarly, Korutürk deems it necessary to adjust all existing regulations to the needs of people today respecting freedom and equality. Another small faction within the respondents including Orhan Düzgün is not sympathetic towards FLO:

I am against FLO because the EU is not honest with us. Turkish people think that once Turkey becomes an EU member, they will be able to buy lands, for instance, in Germany just like Germans buy lands in Turkey now. However, nothing is certain. If the EU is disintegrated in the near future or Turkey fails to become an EU member, the laws we accept today [in order to comply with the EU acquis] will be counter-productive for us tomorrow (Interview with Orhan Düzgün).

### *5.5.3. The MHP responses*

The MHP respondents are deeply divided over the FLO reforms. The responses of some MHP deputies very much reflect the official discourse of the party since they reject FLO outright seeing it as a ‘weapon’ used by foreign powers to divide Turkey. For instance, Lütfü Türkkan expresses his concerns over the possibility that land sales to foreigners in Turkey might result in the establishment of a Kurdish state within Turkish territories:

It is crucial to know which part of Turkey is desired the most by foreigners. We observe a large amount of land sale [to foreigners] in the South-Eastern Anatolia and this worries us. We should not forget that Israel was established through land purchases (Interview with Lütfü Türkkan).

While a number of respondents dismiss FLO outright directly reflecting the official discourse, some others give less antagonistic responses and declare conditional support for FLO similar to the CHP deputies. Zuhal Topçu, the deputy chairman of the party, Nevzat Korkmaz and Sümer Oral do not dismiss FLO but require an official upper limit for it:

There is no problem for me if foreigners buy land in Turkey but we have a limited amount of lands. We must determine the limits of FLO attaching priority to our national sovereignty and territorial integrity (Interview with Nevzat Korkmaz).

The MHP officials also underline the principle of reciprocity:

The liberalisation of FLO without respecting the principle of reciprocity is unacceptable. In the EU, you can only buy immovable property. Land is owned by the state but here the government's initiatives have made it so easy for foreigners to buy our lands (Interview with Zuhal Topçu).

## **5.6. Conclusion**

This chapter traced Euroscepticism in Turkey focusing on the resistance of Turkish political elites against the FLO reform. Similar to the case of minority rights, the two major opposition parties, the CHP and the MHP resisted FLO reforms with a nationalistic urge to maintain *status quo* and protect national sovereignty against foreign intervention. Both parties emphasize the indivisibility of Turkish lands and the vitality of the reciprocity principle stipulated by the Lausanne Treaty. The parties support foreign ownership of immovable properties (buildings) on the condition that the principle of reciprocity is applied indiscriminately. They however strongly oppose the sale of lands including forestry, agricultural land, natural resources, strategic areas such as military zones and border regions to foreigners. Rejecting the 'economic development' thesis of the AKP government, the opposition parties interpret 'land' as more than a means of economic exploitation and attach both patriotic and strategic value to it. This constitutes the basis of their opposition to FLO. Both parties make

reference to the independence war through which those lands were gained with massive casualties, and charge the AKP government with ‘treason’ to the memory of national ancestors. Similar political arguments have been raised against the FLO reforms in the CEECs where land is seen as the main component of national identity and an important legacy of ancestors. Therefore, the critical stances of political parties in the CEECs against FLO reforms including the FIDESZ-MPP in Hungary, the ODS in the Czech Republic and the PiS in Poland are highly comparable to the Eurosceptic attitudes of the CHP and the MHP of Turkey.

Moreover, the officials of the CHP and the MHP both consider the FLO reforms as a violation of the Lausanne Treaty. Both parties regard FLO as a form of foreign invasion, thus an issue of national security. However, unlike the CHP, the MHP often resorts to anti-Semitic and xenophobic rhetoric in its criticisms and confirms its Right/TAN political identity. According to some (Yılmaz 2006), both the MHP and the CHP are victims of the Sèvres syndrome, which refers to a Treaty disintegrating Ottoman territories and indicates a fear of foreign invasion. This holds similarity to the MIEP of Hungary that depicts the EU’s pressures concerning FLO as the resurrection of the Trianon Treaty, which ceded two-thirds of Hungary’s territory to neighbouring countries in 1920.

The interviews on the other hand yield interesting results indicating some evidence of deviation from the political parties’ official discourses. The AKP officials extend overwhelming support to the liberalisation of FLO. They mainly justify their support on economic grounds aiming to attract greater FDI. There is also a particular reference to Globalization which facilitates the free movement of people around the world and pushes countries to review their restrictive policies. Building upon this perspective, some party officials reject the principle of reciprocity since they see it as a political obstacle in front of economic liberalization and the free movement of people. On the other hand, more than half of the AKP deputies attach importance to reciprocity and some seem to ignore that the current laws bypass it. This is an important deviation from the official discourse of the party. While some AKP officials mainly defend the principle of reciprocity in order to promote bilateral economic cooperation, some others (Tekelioğlu, Güzel, Sait, Ögütken) suggest observing reciprocity to preserve national sovereignty.

Concerning the main opposition party (CHP), the responses of the interviewed parliamentarians indicate that the leadership change has altered the views on FLO. Unlike the official discourse of the CHP during Baykal leadership which dismisses FLO and only accepts the foreign acquisition of immovable property on the basis of reciprocity; the CHP officials under Kılıçdaroğlu leadership declare conditional support for FLO. The majority of the respondents believe in the necessity of determining an upper limit for land sale and respecting the principle of reciprocity. Moreover, the respondents primarily justify their support for FLO with particular reference to basic human rights and liberties, which is not visible in the responses of the reformist AKP deputies. This confirms the gradual transformation of the party from TAN to GAL. Furthermore, a couple of respondents reflect a very liberal image highlighting the importance of conferring liberal rights to people rather than protecting the state. Such a liberal approach does not represent the official discourse of the party for the time being, yet it holds a symbolic importance in terms of indicating a gradual shift in the political outlook of the party after the leadership change. Furthermore, the majority of CHP respondents refrain from populist references to the independence war and the Lausanne Treaty which were widely used by the party officials during the Baykal leadership. Only a few respondents resorted to populism; yet they still gave conditional support for FLO. With one exception, party officials don't tend to criticize the EU's policy regarding the FLO; the main tendency is rather to criticize the government for selling significant amounts of land for economic gains. Overall, the CHP respondents are not aloof to the idea of FLO but still require certain measurements such as respecting the principle of reciprocity and determining an upper limit for land sales.

Finally, the MHP responses partly reflect the official discourse as they are replete with populist references to the war of Turkish national independence. Moreover, the threat perception indicating a possible division of the country out of land sale is shared by a number of respondents who reject FLO outright. On the other hand, some responses indicate a deviation from the official discourse endorsing FLO under certain conditions. This is a remarkably liberal rhetoric coming from a far-right political party.

As for the hypotheses of the study, the Left/Right distinction does not necessarily determine party contestations against FLO reform. For instance, both the HZDS [Left/TAN] and the KDH [Right/TAN] in Slovakia, as well as the LPR [Right/TAN] and the PSL [Left/TAN] in Poland stood against FLO reforms. Accordingly, it is the TAN ideology which stands out as an important base for opposition to the reform in the CEECs. Nationalistic preoccupation to prevent foreign invasion is a common justification TAN parties utilized in order to oppose FLO reform. It is similar in the Turkish case, since both the CHP [Left/TAN] and the MHP [Right/TAN] opposed the reform with nationalistic justifications. On the other hand, the BDP, a Left/GAL party also opposed the latest FLO bill in the Turkish Parliament since BDP officials blamed the AKP for dictating its own version of FLO which aimed to facilitate land sale to Arabs rather than EU nationals. Therefore, a GAL party may oppose the FLO reform if the bill is prepared according to the government's own political and economic agenda.

Concerning the effects of strategic party competition in Eurosceptic attitudes, resistance to the FLO reform mainly comes from the opposition parties in Turkey. In the CEECs however, party competition has a weaker explanatory power compared to ideology since there are examples of TAN parties which stood against FLO despite the fact that they were in government. For instance, the PSL in Poland, the FKGP in Slovakia, and the MDF and the FIDESZ-MPP in Hungary declared their opposition to FLO while in government. The PSL even threatened to leave the coalition government if the FLO reform was revised in line with national sensitivities. Such an oppositional stance against FLO in the CEECs might stem from the long-standing fear that Germans would buy up those lands they had lost after the Second World War (Tesser 2004). Moreover, the rural nationalism in Hungary in response to the land scarcity in the country emerged after two thirds of Hungarian lands were lost following the First World War might explain why TAN governments in Hungary stood opposed to the FLO reforms (Burger 2006). Finally, many TAN parties who opposed the FLO reform were coalition partners which might have made it less costly for them to resist reforms in comparison to single party governments that have more to lose unless they act in line with the EU's accession conditionality (Börzel 2012).

In the Turkish case, as a single party government, the AKP [Right/TAN] overwhelmingly endorses FLO. Therefore, similar to the reform of minority rights, the AKP government despite its TAN attachments continued the FLO reforms. The AKP officials who participated in the interviews unanimously support FLO remaining loyal to the government's policy. Yet, the government officials do not necessarily associate the reform of FLO with the EU membership process. On the contrary, one government deputy (Abdullah Çalışkan) stressed the fact that they did not adopt the FLO reform for Europeans but for Arabs. They never refer to the EU's conditional pressures while justifying their support for FLO. Similarly, the opposition officials believe that the reform was not dictated by the EU but was a self-initiative of the AKP government. This is the main reason why the Left/GAL BDP strongly opposed the government's latest bill of FLO in 2012. Yüksel Mutlu, the deputy leader of the party, explains that the BDP extends strong support to FLO for it is a human right. She also refers to globalization which shrank the world enabling different cultures to live together and emphasizes the necessity of conferring people the right to own property wherever they wish to live (Interview with Yüksel Mutlu). However, the BDP joined the main opposition to criticize the reform of FLO brought by the AKP government in 2012 (TBMM 2012a). Hasip Kaplan, the BDP deputy for Şırnak claimed that the government's bill would enable foreigners to buy the lands they could not invade through use of force (Radikal 2012a). He also criticized the withdrawal of the principle of reciprocity from the legislation: 'A Saudi Arabian Sheikh can buy up our lands easily while we are not even permitted to buy a tent in his country' (ibid.).

Finally, unlike the reform of minority rights, there are no examples of parties in the CEECs and in Turkey criticizing the EU for applying its FLO condition in a selective and discriminatory manner. Therefore, it could be argued that issue-specific Euroscepticism regarding the FLO reform essentially emanates from domestic factors involving ideology and strategy in Turkey as well as the CEECs.

# **CHAPTER VI**

## **THE EU'S CYPRUS CONDITIONALITY ON TURKEY**

This chapter discusses whether/how the EU's country-specific conditionality contributes to the emergence of Euroscepticism in a candidate country. Previous chapters that dealt with the issue-specific conditions of the EU -focusing on the reforms of minority rights and foreign land ownership- explained the rise of Eurosceptic attitudes in candidates mainly with domestic factors such as political ideology and strategy. This chapter focuses on the EU's conditions that target a specific candidate country and finds that in the case of country-specific conditionality, the explanatory power of domestic factors decreases. Country-specific conditionality of the EU is defined in this chapter as the EU's extra preconditions for membership imposed on a candidate country due to an ongoing dispute between the candidate in question and an EU member state. Often, the solution of the bilateral conflict is introduced by the EU as a precondition for accession. Such extra membership conditionality is usually perceived as discriminatory and faces serious objections by political actors in the candidate country of interest. Therefore, Euroscepticism rises as a reaction to the EU's extra conditionality associated with the political pressures of an EU member state that seeks to gain leverage in a bilateral conflict.

In this respect, the chapter will begin with a brief discussion of the EU's country-specific conditionality and then provide examples from candidate countries which have faced additional membership preconditions due to a bilateral conflict with an EU member. After examining domestic responses in Macedonia regarding the name issue with Greece, reactions in Croatia against the maritime border dispute with Slovenia and resistance in the Czech Republic to the annulment of Beneš decrees, the chapter will turn to the Turkish case and discuss the Eurosceptic responses of the Turkish political elite against the EU's Cyprus conditionality. Briefly discussing the Cyprus problem, the EU's Cyprus policy and Turkey's Cyprus policy, the chapter will



scrutinize Turkish responses to the EU's Cyprus conditionality in detail. The results of the parliamentary interviews will be discussed in comparison with the official discourses of the political parties in question. The conclusion will summarize Turkish responses to the EU's Cyprus conditionality and examine the validity of the general hypotheses of the study to find out to what extent Euroscepticism in response to the EU's country-specific conditionality is affected by party ideology and party competition.

### **6.1. The EU's country-specific conditionality and responses from accession countries**

This chapter argues that Euroscepticism is not only associated with issue-specific conditionality. It also emerges in candidate countries as a response to the EU's country-specific conditionality. Domestic reactions intensify when the EU applies additional preconditions for membership due to a bilateral issue between a candidate country and an EU member state. Euroscepticism is thus a particular stance against the instrumentalisation of EU accession negotiations by an individual member state which seeks to get concessions from a candidate country on a bilateral issue that is not directly related to the EU's official membership criteria. The EU thus inherits the extant bilateral problem and under the pressures of the EU members, it fails to act as an impartial problem solver towards the candidate country. The member state that is a party to the conflict can use its veto power to block the initiation of accession negotiations or even freeze an ongoing negotiation process by objecting to the negotiation of individual chapters. Under such circumstances, the EU remains indifferent to the constraints inflicted upon the candidate by the member state and/or puts extra preconditions on the candidate country to solve the bilateral problem before joining the Union. As a result, political parties from different ideological backgrounds in the accession country of interest start to resist the EU's additional pressures and even end up losing their initial motivation to join the EU. The mitigation of this reactionary stance is directly contingent upon the solution of the bilateral issue either through reciprocal compromise or unilateral concessions given by the candidate country in return for EU membership guarantees. It is crucial to scrutinize these cases

primarily because in every case, a member state forces the EU to introduce the solution of a bilateral conflict as an accession pre-condition for a candidate country. In some cases (Macedonia and Croatia), member state pressure temporarily prevents the negotiation process while in others (the Czech Republic), the EU manages to withstand the pressures of member states and continues the accession process without curtailment. In this respect, it is crucial to study how political parties in different countries respond to similar external pressures. These cases are also directly comparable to the Turkish case, because Turkey has been facing similar pressures from the EU due to its bilateral conflict with a member state, the Republic of Cyprus (RoC).

The EU's country-specific conditionality does not only stem from a bilateral conflict between member and candidate. The domestic political context of a candidate country might complicate the accession process as well. For instance, the EU denied opening accession talks for Croatia unless two war criminals, Ante Gotovina and Janko Bobetko, were returned to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) (Jovic 2006). The EU's pressures were resisted by political actors in Croatia primarily because the public considered Gotovina and Bobetko as heroes rather than criminals (Jovic 2009). Such country-specific conditions are essentially introduced by the EU in order to enforce the respect for the rule of law and democracy in the candidate country. On the other hand, the EU's conditionality stemming from a bilateral conflict is introduced due to the pressures of a member state, which aims to solve the bilateral conflict in its own desired way by using its veto power. Such EU conditions face resistance in the candidate country and are dismissed as discriminatory and unfair. Eurosceptic responses against this conditionality hence deserve greater attention as domestic political actors justify their oppositional stance by rejecting injustice and discrimination. Below are some cases in which domestic political actors rally against the EU's country-specific conditions and generate Eurosceptic responses.

The Republic of Macedonia, a candidate since 2005, has been put under pressure by Greece that has a historical claim on the name 'Macedonia'. Greece considers Macedonia as historically and exclusively a Greek name and asserts that its use by the newly formed ex-Yugoslav republic implies a territorial claim to the northern Greek

province of Macedonia (Panagiotou 2008: 228). Greece has persisted in its efforts to block Macedonia's entry to major international organizations such as the EU and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization until a mutually acceptable solution is reached (ibid.). However, neither Greece nor Macedonia seem to agree on a common solution since Greece considers the name 'Macedonia' as its red line and remains resolute to prevent its usage outside its borders, while the Macedonian government wholeheartedly defends its liberty to choose any name just like all other states elsewhere in the world (Mavromatidis 2010). Greece has been blocking Macedonia's EU accession talks since 2009 despite the European Commission's recommendation to initiate the accession negotiations. The Greek government even considers putting the EU membership of Macedonia to popular referendum as a last resort to prevent its accession (Tziampiris 2012: 158). The series of blockades against Macedonia triggered nationalist resistance (Koinova 2011: 826). Domestic political actors showed strong reactions to Greece and condemned Brussels' one-sidedness which has been precluding Macedonia's EU bid (Balkan Insight 2011). Blaming the EU for inflicting double standards, the officials of the nationalist government under the Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE) [Right/TAN] even compared the EU's Macedonian policy to 'the Holocaust' (ibid.). The Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM) [Left/TAN] officials particularly referred to the name dispute as a serious problem that diminished Macedonian enthusiasm to proceed with EU-led reforms (Koinova 2011: 826). Macedonia's EU membership currently remains frozen and its government accuses Greece of showing no interest in finding a middle ground to help them proceed with EU membership negotiations (MINA 2011). Tziampiris (2012: 165) explains that Macedonian accession is only possible if Macedonia satisfies Greek demands regarding the name dispute.

Similarly, the maritime border dispute between Croatia (official EU candidate since 2004) and Slovenia (EU member since May 2004) caused a temporary curtailment of Croatia's EU membership negotiations due to the Slovenian veto. Following Yugoslavia's dissolution, there was a dispute between the two emerging countries over the demarcation of the maritime borders on the bay of Piran (Mackelworth et al 2011: 648). Croatia defended the principle of the equidistance line adopted by the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of Sea (UNCLOS). However, Slovenia dismissed

the equal share of the bay claiming to be a disadvantaged state due to its limited access to high seas (ibid.). Upon acquiring the rotating EU Presidency in January 2008, Slovenia presented this issue as a dispute between the EU and a third country violating the neutral position of the Presidency (Mackelworth et al 2011: 653). After Croatia provided documentation for several negotiation chapters that prejudged the border despite the lack of a settlement, Slovenia vetoed eleven negotiation chapters that were technically ready to open, and caused a considerable stagnation in Croatia's accession process (Jutarnji 2008). The Slovenian government even stated its willingness to hold a referendum on Croatian accession had the dispute persisted (Whitman and Juncos 2009: 196). The Slovenian veto caused strong nationalistic reaction in Croatia. Stjepan Mesić, the President of Croatia (2000-2010) and the former top official of the Croatian People's Party – Liberal Democrats (HNS) [Right/GAL] firmly defied the Slovenian demands for concessions:

The political elite in Slovenia think they can abuse their EU and NATO membership to blackmail Croatia. In other words, they want to block our negotiations on joining the EU and NATO if we do not accept their demand to settle the border problem through political negotiations (Pejic 2009).

Similarly, the Croatian Prime Minister and the HDZ [Right/TAN] leader Ivo Sanader accused Slovenia of blackmailing Croatia and asserted that Croatia did not intend to 'buy EU membership with the [Croatian] territory' (Vucheva 2008). Sanader's unexpected resignation from government was interpreted in the Croatian media as a reactionary move against the Slovenian veto (Covic 2012: 4). The extreme right Croatian Party of the Right (HSP) [Right/TAN] too deemed the Slovenian veto as the main obstruction for Croatia and refused to sacrifice Croatian national interests for the sake of EU membership (Stojarova 2012: 154). The EU accession negotiations resumed only after Croatia and Slovenia agreed to an EU-led plan of bringing the issue in front of an *ad hoc* international arbitration court (Sancin 2010). Croatia consented to the plan only after receiving the EU's guarantee for membership.

Finally, the strained relations between the Czech Republic and Germany over the Beneš decrees triggered anti-EU campaigns in the Czech Republic. The decrees had ordered the deportation of 2.5 million Sudeten Germans and Magyars from

Czechoslovakia in the mid-1940s<sup>37</sup>. During the accession process of the Czech Republic, Austria and Germany put pressure on the EU to introduce the annulment of the decrees as an official membership precondition. However, the Czech people considered the Beneš decrees a ‘national cause’ and a part of the ‘necessary *de-Nazification* process’ in Czechoslovakia at the time (Cordell and Wolff 2005: 257). The public support for the maintenance of the decrees reached 80% in 2002 and the major political parties were unified in their support for the decrees. The KSCM [Left/TAN] praised the decrees as a legitimate reaction to Nazi Germany’s annexation of the Czech Sudetenland and opposed its annulment for such an act would enable the realization of the ‘German land claims, control of publishing companies and cultural influences’ (Petrovic and Solingen 2005: 292). Similarly, the ODS [Right/TAN] defended the decrees as part of Czech national pride and the party leader Vaclav Klaus threatened to cast a negative vote in the referendum unless the EU guaranteed that Austria and Germany would not make claims against the Czechs based on the decrees (Petrovic and Solingen 2005: 294). Also, the Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) [Left/GAL] repeatedly declared its support for the decrees (Petrovic and Solingen 2005: 295).

During the 2002 election campaign, the Beneš decrees were embraced as a national cause to fuel negative public sentiments against the EU by the ODS and the KSCM (Hanley 2008: 247). Even the Czech Prime Minister and the leader of the ČSSD Milos Zeman, referred to the Sudeten Germans as ‘Hitler's fifth column’ defending the Beneš decrees against Austrian criticisms. Zeman claimed; ‘[t]he Sudeten Germans should be happy that they were only “transferred”. Can you really demand reconciliation with traitors?’ (Nagengast 2003: 340). The Czech Lower House passed a unanimous (161 to 0) resolution in April 2002, ‘refusing to discuss or reopen this matter, let alone “apologize” for the expulsion of Germans’ (Petrovic and Solingen 2005: 292). Despite the German and Austrian pressures, the EU Commission decided not to put the annulment of the Beneš decrees as a pre-condition for Czech membership. The Commission justified its decision based on expert opinions which stated that the decrees were no longer legally binding; therefore there was no need for annulment (Cornides 2009: 218, Kingsland 2002: 7). Moreover, the EU emphasized

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<sup>37</sup> For details on the Beneš decrees, see Nagengast (2003).

the fact that once an EU member, the Czech Republic would have to open its borders to Sudeten Germans giving them liberty to buy properties in Czech lands (Cornides 2009: 219). Hence, the benefits of ‘political and economic integration, free movement of goods and services, of persons and capital’ were deemed greater for the victims of the Beneš decrees than ‘any compensation...granted by unwilling governments’ (ibid.). This was a decisive factor for the Czech accession to the EU as the opinion polls in 2002 indicated a strong public rejection of EU membership, had the annulment of the decrees been introduced as a precondition (Hanley 2008: 362).

Overall, country-specific preconditions for EU membership stimulate Euroscepticism in candidate countries having bilateral issues with member states. It is plausible to argue that Euroscepticism against the EU’s country-specific conditionality is not an opposition phenomenon. When there is a ‘national cause’ at stake and when domestic political actors are convinced that the EU unfairly prioritizes member states over them, government and opposition are unified in their resistance to the EU’s conditionality. In all three examples, both governments and opposition parties resist the EU’s pressures on what is perceived as a ‘national cause’. In this context, ideological preferences cannot explain political party behaviour towards the EU, since all major political parties coming from different ideological backgrounds dismiss the EU’s country-specific condition as discriminatory and unacceptable. In Macedonia, both the SDSM [Left/TAN] and the VMRO-DPMNE [Right/TAN] opposed the country-specific pressures of the EU. Similarly, the HDZ [Right/TAN] and the HSP [Right/TAN] showed similar tendencies in Croatia; and the KSCM [Left/TAN], the ODS [Right/TAN] and the ČSSD [Left/GAL] of the Czech Republic adopted common attitudes against the repeal of the Beneš decrees.

Finally, such a common reactive Eurosceptic stance is reversible once resolute steps are taken for the solution of the conflict and the EU no longer considers the solution as an official membership precondition. Accordingly, the above examples indicate the EU’s potential to reverse such domestic resistance bypassing the pressures of member states. For instance, the EU took a successful political initiative not to include the annulment of the Beneš decrees as a membership precondition for the Czech Republic despite the pressures of Germany and Austria. Moreover, the EU’s pressures convinced Slovenia to pursue a legal solution to its conflict with Croatia through

international arbitration. Despite the EU's potential to play an important role in convincing Greece and Macedonia on a joint solution to the name issue the prospects for a solution remain unclear so far, and the membership of Macedonia is still uncertain. This constitutes the main reason behind the rising Euroscepticism in the country.

Similar political reactions are also observed in the Turkish case against the EU's Cyprus conditionality. The next section provides a short discussion of the Cyprus problem. It will then focus on Turkey's Cyprus policy in general and the Turkish responses to the EU's Cyprus conditionality in particular.

## **6.2. A Brief Discussion of the Cyprus problem and the EU's Cyprus policy**

Surviving under the yoke of various rulers, the island of Cyprus was annexed to the Ottoman Empire in 1571. It was governed by Turks until 1878 when its administration was granted to Britain as a reward for the British assistance in quelling a rebellion in Egypt. After the outbreak of the First World War, Britain annexed the entire island as it fought against the Ottomans. The British rule intensified the social separation of the island since Britain established separate institutions for Turks and Greeks and denied conferring greater administrative rights to Greek Cypriots although their population exceeded 80% of the entire island (Christou 2004: 30). This policy not only instilled anti-British sentiments in Greek Cypriots but also 'pre-empted any possibility for the achievement of a political understanding between Greeks and Turks' (ibid.). Greek Cypriots always considered the island as an integral part of the Hellenic civilization, and the ideal of *enosis* (union with Greece) had long been on the agenda since the 19<sup>th</sup> Century (Christou 2004: 31). The British rule revitalized the Greek Cypriot quest for *enosis* (ibid.). However, the push for achieving *enosis* also reinforced the ethno-national identity of Turkish Cypriots in return (Christou 2004: 32).

After centuries of subordination to foreign powers, the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) was established in 1960 under the joint rule of Cypriot Greeks and Cypriot Turks. The London–Zurich accords officialised the 'bi-national independence and political

equality and administrative partnership of the two communities' (Müftüler-Bac and Güney 2005: 282). According to the provisions of the accords, Britain, Greece and Turkey were recognized as the guarantors of the Republic. However, the Greek Cypriot leadership remained critical of the agreement for it was not a result of a compromise between the two Cypriot communities but between Greece and Turkey (Kedourie 2005: 650). The Greek Cypriot attempts to amend the Constitution generated heated debates in the island which led to inter-communal violence (ibid.).

The outbreak of the fight between Turkish and Greek Cypriots in late 1963 culminated in the isolation of the Turkish community into enclaves and resulted in the forced evacuation of the Turkish representatives from the government of Cyprus at all levels (Müftüler-Bac and Güney 2005: 283). The 1964 Resolution of the UN Security Council was interpreted as the recognition of the Greek Cypriot government as the legitimate ruler of the RoC and in 1968, the UN established a mechanism of inter-communal talks bringing together the representatives of two communities to negotiate the terms for 'a system of local government which would give Turkish-Cypriots a degree of autonomy without endangering the unity of the state' (Souter 1984: 663). The talks lasted on and off until the Turkish military entered the northern part of the island in 1974 as a response to a *coup d'état* in Cyprus allegedly perpetrated by the Colonels junta of Greece. Turkey responded with a military intervention to maintain the security of Turkish Cypriots as their guarantor state according to the provisions of the Treaty of Guarantee. The Turkish intervention divided the Island into two zones and the partition was further consolidated with the unilateral proclamation of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC)<sup>38</sup> in 1983. The bi-zonality was later confirmed by the UN through the delineation of the Green Line, which has been under the control and surveillance of the UN forces since 1974. The UN then sponsored peace talks for a settlement based on a state with 'single sovereignty, single citizenship and comprising two politically equal communities in a bi-communal and bi-zonal federation' (Nugent 2000: 135). However, while Greek Cypriots were seen as consistently supportive of a solution based on UN sponsorship, the stance of the Turkish Cypriot leadership under Rauf Denktaş was regarded as obstructive to the

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<sup>38</sup> The self-proclaimed TRNC is only recognized by Turkey, which has maintained its troops in Northern Cyprus since 1974 to date.



UN's peace plans due to its insistence on a settlement based on two separate states (ibid.).

Anastasiou (2009) calls the Cyprus problem an 'anomaly', because the two communities on the island have conflicting approaches to the problem which make it impossible to solve. Using the advantage of being internationally recognized as the sole official authority in the island, Greek Cypriots always choose to approach the conflict with legalistic lenses raising the issues of 'military occupation, refugees, human rights violations, the fate of missing persons, property rights' (Anastasiou 2009: 133). On the other hand, Turkish Cypriots consider the Cyprus problem primarily as a political matter rather than a legal one, because they secure more than a half-century-old fear that Greek Cypriots will always attempt to 'marginalize and even annihilate' them (Anastasiou 2009: 132). This sharp difference in the perceptions of the two communities long determined their conflicting stances towards a UN-mediated settlement. That's why Greek Cypriots have been praised by the UN as pro-solution and Turkish Cypriots have been considered as obstructive to the UN's peace plans.

The EU's relations with Cyprus were mainly economic until the Commission's 1993 opinion in favour of the RoC's accession (Christou 2004: 61). The EU believed that the accession of the RoC would constitute a *catalyst* for peace in the island (Christou 2002; Tocci 2005; Anastasiou 2009). EU officials and Greek Cypriot authorities shared the hope that the linkage between Turkey's EU accession and the solution of the Cyprus problem would force Turkey to take a more compromising position vis-à-vis Cyprus (Christou 2002: 8; Christou 2004: 62). However, the EU's pressures were resisted by Turkey and Turkish Cypriots essentially because the incentives the EU offered neither addressed the security concerns of Turkish Cypriots, nor did they draw 'Turkey further in to the EU structures' (Christou 2002: 21). Nevertheless, coming to power in 2002, the reformist AKP government abandoned Turkey's hard-line position towards Cyprus and supported the UN-sponsored Annan Plan. The EU's main strategy was to reinforce the UN-initiated efforts to achieve a settlement before the accession of the RoC. However, the Annan Plan was rejected by the majority of Greek Cypriot participants to the referendum despite the positive vote of Turkish Cypriots. The EU had managed to induce 'the Turkish side to abandon its traditional

secessionist nationalism and opt for a reunified Cyprus'; however, it failed to persuade Greek Cypriots about the necessity of the EU membership of a unified Cyprus (Anastasiou 2009: 130). According to Diez et al (2006: 576), the EU's 'lukewarm approach', which put no strong pressure on the RoC to reach a solution on the Cyprus problem in return for EU membership, 'did not foster the belief of Greek-Cypriot policymakers that concessions to the other side should be made'. Similar to the UN, the dominant impression in the EU was that Denktaş's uncompromising approach had drawn Turkish Cypriots away from a solution, and the Greek Cypriot community had a much more positive image concerning the willingness to resolve the Cyprus problem (Christou 2002; Engert 2010). This led the EU to accept the Greek Cypriot government's EU accession despite the perseverance of the conflict. When the Greek Cypriot leadership revealed its intention to reject the Annan plan, it was too late for the EU to counteract as the accession treaty had already been signed (Engert 2010). By accepting the membership of a divided Cyprus, the EU imported all the legal and political aspects of the Cyprus problem (Anastasiou 2009: 133). Since then, the EU has failed to reciprocate the latent desire of Turkish Cypriots to integrate, because the EU's subsequent attempts to lift the economic embargo and provide financial aid to Northern Cyprus were prevented by the Greek Cypriot veto (Sözen 2010: 82). The EU also disengaged itself from the peace process after the failure of the Annan plan primarily due to pressing issues such as the Lisbon treaty and the Eurozone crisis along with the lack of information and interest of most EU member states on the Cyprus problem (Sözen 2010: 83).

### **6.3. Turkey's Cyprus policy**

Turkey adopted a 'hands-off' policy towards Cyprus until 1960s when Cyprus became a national cause and since the 2000s, Turkish decision-makers have succumbed to self-criticism about Cyprus (Doğan and Asma 2008). Having endorsed British rule on the island, Turkish decision-makers did not initially consider Cyprus a matter of Turkish foreign policy. The words of the Turkish Foreign Ministers, Saadettin Sadak and Fuad Köprülü, who rejected the existence of the Cyprus problem benchmarked the Turkish indifference towards the Cyprus question in the 1950s

(TBMM 1950). However, after the eruption of inter-communal violence following the disagreements over the new Cypriot Republic, Turkey started considering Cyprus as a matter of national security. Due to its geographical proximity to the Turkish mainland, Turkish political elites perceived Cyprus both as an imminent threat and an integral part of Turkey's national security (Kaliber 2009). Cyprus was thus depicted as an 'invaluable geostrategic asset', which at the hands of hostile powers (Greece) would jeopardize Turkey's security since it could be used both as a base to attack Anatolia and as a means to encircle Turkey in the Mediterranean (Suvarierol 2003: 56-57; Kaliber 2009: 106). The policy of preventing *enosis* and increasing the Turkish influence on the island has thus become the foundation of Turkey's Cyprus policy (Kaliber 2005 and 2009). Turkey threatened to attack Cyprus twice in 1964 and 1967 as a response to the ethnic violence on the island. Ismet İnönü, the Turkish Prime Minister of the time, resisted the warnings of the United States (US) aiming to prevent Turkish intervention on the island. The invasion of Cyprus in 1974 was justified as a decisive step against the imminent realization of *enosis* which would jeopardize Turkey's national security (Suvarierol 2003: 57). After the proclamation of the TRNC, Turkish governments intensified their efforts for the preservation of the bizonality in Cyprus and the safety of Turkish Cypriots through the survival of the self-proclaimed Turkish Cypriot government. Although supporting the UN-mediated peace efforts, Turkey attached priority to the continuity of the TRNC which then constituted the core of Turkey's 'traditional' Cyprus policy (Gülmez 2007). Cyprus has become a national cause in Turkey and a taboo which 'severely constrained democratic debate and the capacity of subsequent governments to intervene in the substance of the existing policy' (Kaliber 2012: 225).

After the Cold War, Turkey's Cyprus policy started to change. Turkey's EU membership perspective enabled pro-EU Turkish politicians including Mesut Yılmaz, the deputy Prime Minister of the time, to question the validity of the securitized perspectives on Cyprus (Zambouras 2001). Yılmaz dismissed Turkey's traditional Cyprus policy as a mere reflection of the Sèvres Syndrome and urged for its revision during Turkey's EU membership process (Zambouras 2001: 363-364). The AKP government further altered Turkey's approach towards Cyprus in order to make use of the emerging opportunities for economic cooperation in the eastern Mediterranean

and to become ‘an activist regional power’, in addition to the quest for EU membership (Kaliber 2009: 122). However, after the rejection of the Annan plan and the EU accession of the RoC, the EU started to pressurize Turkey to open its harbours and aerospace to the RoC that was not officially recognized by Turkey as the legitimate authority of Cyprus. Upon Turkey's rejection to comply with this membership condition, the EU partially froze the Turkish accession negotiations by refusing to negotiate eight accession chapters (European Commission 2012: 5). The suspension of the accession negotiations shattered the reformist agenda of the AKP government to de-securitize Turkey's approach towards Cyprus and foster peace and cooperation in the island. The AKP government and opposition parties have since then been unified in their resistance to the EU's Cyprus conditionality and charged the EU with discrimination against Turkey. Below is the comparative discussion of the political party responses to the EU's country-specific conditionality about Cyprus.

#### **6.4. The AKP government and Cyprus**

Upon its landslide victory in the 2002 elections, the AKP determined that the solution of the Cyprus problem was one of its main foreign policy goals. Blaming the traditional Cyprus policy of Turkey as a stumbling block against solution, the AKP leader Tayyip Erdoğan, announced that they were not going to be ‘hawks’ regarding Cyprus (Hürriyet 2002). Erdoğan's famous expression, ‘no solution is not a solution’ became the rhetoric of the party's Cyprus policy. The AKP swiftly changed Turkey's Cyprus policy taking the risk of being framed as ‘traitor’ by the nationalist circles in Turkey and Northern Cyprus (Yılmaz 2011: 194). Oğuzlu (2012: 234) explains that the AKP took such a risk in order to make sure that the RoC's membership would not constitute a threat to Turkey's EU accession. In addition, Theophylactou (2012: 104) claims that the government also aimed to remove a major financial burden from Turkey's shoulders by solving the conflict and withdrawing Turkish troops from the island. Contrary to previous Turkish governments, the AKP did not reject the link between the Cyprus question and Turkey's EU membership; it praised the Annan plan as a means to a permanent solution and supported Mehmet Ali Talat, the pro-EU Turkish Cypriot politician who became Prime Minister in the 2004 general elections.

Upon the rejection of the referendum in 2004, the AKP government made an offer to the EU that Turkey would open its harbours and airspace to the RoC in return for the lifting of economic embargoes on Northern Cyprus (Gülmez 2007: 135). However, the proposal was rejected by the EU (ibid.). Turkey's accession negotiations were soon suspended after Turkey's insistence not to open its harbours and airspace to the RoC.

The suspension of the negotiations severely affected the Cyprus policy of the AKP. The party's reformist rhetoric was replaced with charges against the EU, and the statements of party officials signalled a return to the traditional Cyprus policy of Turkey. The AKP accused the EU of 'sacrificing' Turkey's EU membership for Greek Cypriots and announced that Turkey would never give up on Turkish Cypriots for EU membership (Çelenk 2007). Tayyip Erdoğan declared that they wouldn't tolerate the EU's 'double-standards' regarding the Cyprus problem, and he threatened to withdraw Turkey's EU membership bid (Radikal 2008). The Turkish Prime Minister's latest remarks indicate a decisive return to Turkey's traditional Cyprus policy. Erdoğan rejected the existence of the RoC and claimed; '[t]here are the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot administrations; and there is a green line in between. However, the EU does not see the line' (Vatan 2012b). He also stated that the Greek Cypriot administration cannot take any decision on behalf of Turkish Cypriots since it has no authority over Northern Cyprus (Vatan 2011b). Similarly, Egemen Bağış, the Minister of EU Affairs and Turkey's chief negotiator with the EU, held the EU responsible for the current impasse in the island which also prohibits Turkey's accession. Admitting that the Cyprus problem had become the most important obstacle against Turkey's EU entry, Bağış claimed that the EU had lost its impartiality by awarding the uncompromising Greek Cypriots with membership (Euractiv 2011b). He also rejected the EU's pressures on Turkey to open its harbours and airspace to the RoC since he did not want Turkish Cypriots to pay the price for Turkey's accession by being further isolated (ibid.).

Also, Cemil Çiçek, the speaker of the Turkish Parliament and a leading member of the AKP, announced that EU membership was not *sine qua non* for Turkey. Çiçek argued that if Turks were obliged to choose either EU membership or Northern Cyprus, they would not hesitate to prefer their 'Cypriot brothers' (Milliyet 2011c). Beşir Atalay,

the Deputy Prime Minister, announced that Turkey has a ‘plan B’ regarding the Cyprus problem: withdrawing its quest for EU membership and campaigning in favour of the recognition of Turkish Cypriot independence (Euractiv 2012). Even Yaşar Yakış, the former Turkish Foreign Minister who had once expressed the AKP government’s willingness to give concessions on the Cyprus problem in order to achieve Turkey’s EU accession, recently announced that Turkey would never trade Northern Cyprus over EU membership (Yakış 2002 and 2009). Finally, Abdullah Gül, a former top AKP official and the current President of Turkey, criticized the EU’s decision to grant the EU presidency to the RoC and claimed that the EU’s Cyprus policy would make the Cyprus problem unsolvable. He argued that such an act would *de facto* confirm the existence of two separate states in the island (Euractiv 2011a). The AKP government froze its relations with the EU for six months after the RoC took the rotating EU Presidency.

Overall, the AKP’s agenda to swiftly reform Turkey’s Cyprus policy has proven short lived. Party officials mistakenly believed that the Cyprus problem would be resolved during Turkey’s EU membership process. On the contrary, the problem itself stood as a major impediment to Turkey’s accession. The reformist Cyprus policy of the AKP has quickly been replaced with the traditional Cyprus rhetoric of Turkey since the AKP government found the EU’s Cyprus approach discriminatory for both Turkish Cypriots and Turkey. Party officials believe that the EU rewarded the RoC by accepting its membership despite its negative vote in the referendum on the Annan plan while further isolating Turkish Cypriots who had voted ‘yes’ to reunification (Öniş 2010: 365). Also, the EU granted important political leverage to the RoC which could use it to block Turkey’s accession process (Avcı 2011a: 413). The AKP government even questions the willingness of the EU to accept Turkey’s membership. The failure of the Annan plan and the EU’s Cyprus conditionality on Turkey considerably mitigated the legitimacy of the EU in the eyes of the AKP, which lost enthusiasm for Turkey’s EU accession as well as the solution of the Cyprus problem (Oğuzlu 2012; Öniş 2010; Yılmaz 2011). Erdoğan and his aides still refuse to open Turkey’s harbours and airspace to the RoC because they do not believe their compliance will either solve the problems of Turkish Cypriots or facilitate Turkey’s EU accession.

#### *6.4.1. The views of the AKP Members of the Parliament*

The interview results are very much supportive of the AKP's official discourse on Cyprus policy. The government officials mainly declare their support for a peaceful settlement in Cyprus. The majority of the respondents<sup>39</sup> defend any solution which embraces the will of Turkish Cypriots; while only a minority of the AKP deputies urge that the EU should recognize the two-state model on the island. Hence, the priority is mostly given to the preservation of the rights and liberties of Turkish Cypriots rather than the establishment of federation or separate states on the island. Moreover, the respondents<sup>40</sup> firmly claim that the AKP government did its part for a long lasting solution in the island by supporting the Annan plan in 2004. Mustafa Elitaş and Belma Satır find their government's Cyprus policy reform unprecedented. Belma Satır particularly praises the government's support for the Annan plan as revolutionary in comparison to the previous Turkish governments which, in her view, never desired the solution of the Cyprus problem and always considered Cyprus as political leverage to maintain Turkish interests against foreign powers. Ercan Candan admits that the AKP's support for a peaceful settlement in Cyprus was very risky as the Turkish public long considered the Cyprus problem as a national cause and supported the traditional Turkish policy.

The AKP officials are, however, highly pessimistic about the prospects for peace on the island since they question the EU's willingness to solve the Cyprus problem in an equitable way. The EU is blamed for its ambivalent approach which not only prevented a solution based on the Annan Plan but also further isolated Turkish Cypriots. The accession of the RoC without a precondition to solve the Cyprus problem is depicted as the EU's critical mistake which granted the Greek Cypriot authority important leverage to stand as a stumbling block against solution. Muzaffer Çakar and Ahmet Berat Çonkar share the concern that the EU's Cyprus policy has made the Cyprus problem much more complicated and harder to solve, because admitting Greek Cypriots while further marginalising Turkish Cypriots only

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<sup>39</sup> including Fatih Çiftçi, Bilal Macit, Burak Erdenir, Ahmet Baha Ögütken, Abdullah Çalışkan, Tülin Erkal Kara and Afif Demirkıran.

<sup>40</sup> Tülin Erkal Kara, Belma Satır, Mustafa Elitaş, Ercan Candan and Ali Rıza Alaboyun explicitly argue that Turkey did more than it could in Cyprus for a peaceful settlement.

contributes to the deadlock in the island. Similarly, Bilal Macit claims that Greek Cypriot accession not only undermines the will of Turkish Cypriots but also ensures the prevention of a solution. The AKP deputies find the EU's Cyprus policy highly contradictory to the EU's own values and principles:

The EU was wrong to accept the Greek Cypriot membership since it is contrary to its own principles which prohibit the membership of a state with ongoing border conflicts (Interview with Ali Rıza Alaboyun).

The EU breached its own norms by admitting Greek Cypriots. The EU suffers from crisis when it undermines its own norms and values. The Euro-zone crisis is a remarkable example. The accession of the Greek Cyprus accelerated the eruption of the Euro-zone crisis (Interview with Ali Şahin).

The EU's Cyprus policy contradicts its own principles which favour *pacta sunt servanda*. The EU will be eventually forced to take a step forward concerning the Cyprus problem but it has already lost its credibility in our eyes (Interview with Canan Candemir Çelik).

The government MPs also accuse the EU of failing to live up to its promises in return for Turkish Cypriot support to the Annan plan. According to Ercan Candan, the EU forgot its promises to conduct direct trade with Turkish Cypriots and grant financial assistance to Northern Cyprus in return for a yes vote in the referendum following the RoC accession. Abdullah Çalışkan contends that the EU did not remain loyal to its promises, because it lacked the will to embrace Turkish Cypriots.

According to the government officials, the ambivalence of the EU's Cyprus policy primarily stems from two main factors. First, the EU does not consider Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots as equals and hence does not seek an equitable solution in the island:

The EU's Cyprus policy is wrong all along. The EU has never considered Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots as equal nations but treated Greek Cypriots as the owners of the island. This approach stands as an impediment to an equitable solution to the conflict. The EU should force the Greek Cyprus to make real efforts for a solution on the basis of the Annan plan. However, the EU has neither the capacity nor the willingness to do that (Interview with Ali Rıza Alaboyun).



The EU was not impartial in its approach to the Cyprus problem as it favoured Greek Cypriots by admitting them to the Union without precondition. The EU hence sabotaged a possible solution based on the Annan plan (Interview with Fatih Çiftçi).

The EU has been treating Turkish Cypriots as minority and imposing its own terms on them. However, the EU must realize the fact that it is Greek Cypriots who oppose an equitable solution to the Cyprus conflict (Interview with Ali Şahin).

The EU must put pressure on Greek Cypriots to seek for an equitable solution in the island but the EU does not seem to care about solving the Cyprus problem (Interview with Ahmet Berat Çonkar).

The second determinant of the EU's ambivalent approach toward the Cyprus problem is, according to the AKP officials, the EU's unwillingness to accept Turkey's EU membership. Many government MPs claim that the EU has been using the Cyprus problem as an excuse to deny Turkey's accession. According to Afif Demirkıran, the EU is aware of its mistake in Cyprus but it never steps back, because there is no such will in the EU towards Turkey's accession. Burak Erdenir argues that the Cyprus problem is just a pretext for the EU to keep Turkey out. He claims that even if the Cyprus conflict is settled, the EU will create other obstacles to deny Turkey's membership. Ahmet Berat Çonkar argues that the EU can withdraw its Cyprus conditionality on Turkey if it really wants Turkey's accession, but there is no such will in the EU. The lack of willingness within the EU towards Turkey's accession has been highlighted by almost all the AKP respondents as the primary reason behind the EU's controversial approach towards the Cyprus problem:

The EU aimed to scare Turkey off by admitting Greek Cypriots. It has no intention to accept Turkey's membership; the EU let Cyprus in with the motivation to keep Turkey out. If Turkey becomes an EU member, it will be much easier to solve the Cyprus problem (Interview with Ruhi Açıkgöz).

The EU is not the right actor to solve the Cyprus problem. The conflict must be solved under the auspices of the UN. Besides, the Cyprus problem and Turkey's EU membership are totally unrelated issues. The EU uses it as an excuse to prevent Turkey's accession (Interview with Abdullah Çalışkan).

Cyprus stands as an important obstacle against Turkey's EU membership. France and Germany who oppose Turkey's accession

wholeheartedly support this obstacle. That's why Europe with 500 million people has become the servant of a small island with 600 thousand people (Interview with Burhan Kuzu).

The EU jeopardizes its vital relations with Turkey, a major power for the sake of Cyprus, a small island. This is mainly because the EU is not governed rationally. Europe is still engulfed with conservatism and religious dogma which fuel public opposition against Turkey's accession (Interview with Rifat Sait).

Overall, the AKP deputies find the EU's Cyprus policy unfair and discriminatory. The EU is held responsible for the failure of the Annan plan and the lack of a solution on the island ever since. The AKP respondents unanimously emphasize that the EU has lost its credibility and they no longer consider the EU trustworthy. An overwhelming majority of the AKP officials reject the EU's pressures on Turkey to open its harbours and airspace to the RoC, as they don't believe that such an act will facilitate the solution of the Cyprus problem or Turkey's EU membership. The respondents<sup>41</sup> mainly believe that even if Turkey complies with the EU's Cyprus conditionality, the EU will never accept Turkey's membership. This is a big step back from the AKP's 2006 efforts to convince the EU to lift its embargo in Northern Cyprus as a *quid pro quo* for opening the Turkish harbours and airspace to the RoC (Gülmez 2007: 135). This confirms the drastic change in the AKP discourse on Cyprus, reflecting an increasing distrust in the EU and the Greek Cypriot government. A shared belief among the government officials is that the RoC will make further demands for political concessions if Turkey opens its harbours and airspace to them unconditionally:

Greek Cypriots don't want to share the ruling mechanism of the Republic of Cyprus. They don't consider Turkish Cypriots as equals but only as a minority. We don't trust them. If we open our harbours and airspace, they will demand more concessions because they don't want to reach a permanent solution. They are happy with the current stalemate (Interview with Ali Rıza Alaboyun).

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<sup>41</sup> Mehmet Erdoğan, Mücahit Fındıklı, Mehmet Durdu Kastal, Burak Erdenir, Tülin Erkal Kara, Pelin Gündeş Bakır, Abdullah Çalışkan, Mustafa Elitaş, Ahmet Berat Çonkar, Ruhi Açıkgöz, Ahmet Baha Ögütken, Bilal Macit and Ali Rıza Alaboyun explicitly stated this expression during the interviews.

Only a minority of the AKP officials still believe in the importance of establishing trade relations with the RoC:

If opening harbours and airspace means the recognition of Cyprus, then I reject it. Nevertheless, there must be a middle ground which would enable Turkey to trade with Cyprus without necessarily recognizing the Cypriot government (Interview with Muzaffer Çakar).

### **6.5. The CHP and Cyprus**

The Republican People's Party (CHP) has long defended the traditional Cyprus policy of Turkey bolstering the survival of the self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Turkey's 'traditional' Cyprus policy was actually invented by the CHP. It was founded by the CHP leaders Ismet İnönü who defied the US President Lyndon Johnson's warnings over Cyprus in 1964 and Bülent Ecevit who gave the order for Turkish military intervention to Cyprus in 1974. Although in a different political party (Democratic Left Party - DSP), Ecevit later dismissed the Annan plan as a 'trap' for Turks, and Şükrü Sina Gürel, Foreign Minister in Ecevit's cabinet threatened the EU that Turkey would be unified with Northern Cyprus, if the RoC became an EU member (Milliyet 2002). Therefore, despite its rhetorical support for EU membership, the CHP praises Cyprus as a 'national cause' and gives priority to it over Turkey's EU accession.

Deniz Baykal, the CHP leader between 1992 and 2010, wholeheartedly defended Turkey's long established Cyprus policy and became a loyal supporter of the *status quo* in Cyprus. He criticized the association of Turkey's EU membership bids with the solution of the Cyprus problem (Celep 2011: 429). As early as 2002, Baykal warned the AKP government about the perils of the RoC's accession to the EU for Turkey. He claimed that this would grant the RoC crucial leverage to hamper Turkey's EU bid (Baykal 2002). He opposed the Annan Plan on the grounds that the plan, if accepted, would eliminate the Turkish identity in Northern Cyprus relegating Turkish Cypriots to minority position and shatter the current bi-zonality which provided peace and security to the island for decades (Celep 2011: 429). Onur Öymen, the deputy leader of the party, claimed that the adoption of the Annan Plan was effectively 'selling out'

Cyprus and 'losing it as the Ottomans lost Crete' (Baudner 2012: 933). After the failure of the Annan plan, Baykal urged the AKP government to work for the international recognition of the TRNC.

The CHP's sceptical stance towards the EU was exacerbated by the EU's Cyprus conditionality. Baykal found it unfair that the EU pressurized Turkey to resolve the Cyprus problem while admitting the RoC without such precondition. He argued that the EU could 'never convince Aristotle, Descartes or Goethe about such a double standard policy' (Baykal 2002). Baykal also put strong pressure on Erdoğan not to sign the EU's additional protocol that would lead to a 'scandalous official recognition of the RoC' by Turkey (Hürriyet 2005). He even claimed: 'if Turkey fails in its membership bids or is prevented by the EU from becoming a full member, this is not the end of the world' (ibid.). Onur Öymen criticized the informal EU rule (called the 'Luxembourg Rule') which dictates that the EU supports a member country against a non-member no matter what (Öymen 2011). He claimed that the EU can never be impartial about the Cyprus problem unless both states compete on equal terms as EU members (ibid.).

The new CHP leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, although adopting pro-EU rhetoric, dismisses the EU's Cyprus conditionality as the EU's 'gravest mistake' (Kılıçdaroğlu 2010: 25). Like Baykal's CHP, the new CHP firmly rejects the treatment of the Cyprus problem as an EU precondition for Turkey's membership (CHP 2011a: 124). Kılıçdaroğlu supports a solution under the auspices of the UN which is based on the sovereign equality of two states under a federation similar to the Annan plan (CHP 2011b). Otherwise, he insists that Turkey must invest its resources for the international recognition of the TRNC (ibid.). He considers the TRNC as an independent state having better democratic culture and human rights records than Turkey, and demands the EU to remain loyal to its promises and enable direct trade with the TRNC (Haber Kıbrıs 2013).

Overall, the CHP until Kılıçdaroğlu long favoured the *status quo* in Cyprus and rejected the UN-led solution. It was often seen as reflecting an uncompromising and conservative (TAN) stance towards the EU-led reform process in Turkey. However, the leadership change revised the CHP's ideological standing with a liberal (GAL)

agenda. Unlike Baykal, Kılıçdaroğlu supports a viable solution similar to the Annan Plan. Yet, despite such ideological shift from TAN to GAL, Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP still refuses to comply with the EU's conditions regarding the RoC, because it dismisses it as double standard. Besides, it defends the recognition of the TRNC as the second best option. It criticizes the EU's Cyprus policy after the failure of the Annan plan as a major mistake and expects the EU to keep its promises to the TRNC. The CHP is still opposing the EU's Cyprus condition even after a remarkable ideological shift in the party's official rhetoric following the leadership change, because party officials continue to perceive the EU's Cyprus approach as discriminatory, unfair and thus unacceptable.

#### *6.5.1. The views of the CHP Members of the Parliament*

The interview results indicate that the officials of the main opposition party CHP partly share the AKP's views although there are remarkable differences as well. Both parties defend an equitable solution to the Cyprus problem respecting the will of Turkish Cypriots and blame the EU for its ambivalent approach which has proven detrimental to Turkey and Turkish Cypriots. Moreover, the CHP responses confirm that the leadership change from Baykal to Kılıçdaroğlu has not modified the CHP's sceptical stance towards the EU's Cyprus conditionality. The CHP deputies are largely divided over the reform of Turkey's Cyprus policy.

Just like the government, the CHP deputies support a long lasting peace in the island although divided over the future of the Turkish Cypriot community. An important number of party officials defend the international recognition of the TRNC reflecting the legacy of Baykal's Cyprus policy. Almost half of the CHP respondents<sup>42</sup> emphasize the importance of maintaining bi-zonality and equal sovereignty of Turkish Cypriots urging the EU to recognize a two-state model in Cyprus:

The only viable option for peace is the recognition of two separate authorities in the island. This is the worst nightmare of Greek Cypriots. If the EU endorses the possibility of recognizing the two-state model in the island, this will force Greek Cypriots to make an

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<sup>42</sup> including Emre Köprülü, Osman Korutürk, Süheyl Batum, Orhan Düzgün, Ali İhsan Köktürk, Ramazan Kerim Özkan and Atilla Kart.

effort for a solution. Otherwise, in the current circumstances, it is extremely difficult to solve the Cyprus problem (Interview with Osman Korutürk).

Correspondingly, the other half<sup>43</sup> reflects a more liberal approach leaving the issue to the discretion of the Turkish Cypriots:

Northern Cyprus must take its own decisions. If they want a single state, that's fine for us as long as the rights and freedoms of Turkish Cypriots are guaranteed. If they want the existing two-states model, that's fine as well (Interview with Erdal Aksünger).

On the other hand, CHP officials reflect a more unified image while talking about the EU's approach towards the Cyprus problem. They primarily consider the EU's Cyprus policy as double-standard which protects Greek Cypriots and isolates the Turkish Cypriots:

The EU's approach towards the Cyprus problem is double-standard because it ignores the pre-1974 period in Cyprus and pretends the Turkish Cypriot people had not suffered from the Greek Cypriot oppression before the Turkish military intervention in 1974. The EU embraces the Greek Cypriot stance mainly due to the fact that Greece as an EU member puts pressures on the EU. The EU's impositions on Turkey are unacceptable (Interview with Ali İhsan Köktürk).

We regret to see that Turkish Cypriots have been further marginalized after the EU membership of Cyprus although they had made considerable efforts to solve the Cyprus conflict by accepting the Annan plan in the referendum. Conversely, Greek Cypriots were awarded with EU membership although they had rejected the Annan plan. This shows the EU's double-standard (Interview with Ramazan Kerim Özkan).

The EU lost its credibility after the failure of the Annan plan. The EU itself defended the plan but awarded the Greek Cypriots who had rejected it and further marginalized Turkish Cypriots who had embraced it. I no longer trust the EU concerning the Cyprus problem (Interview with Orhan Düzgün).

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<sup>43</sup> including Erdal Aksünger, Gülsün Bilgehan, İzzet Çetin, Faruk Loğoğlu, Kemal Ekinci and Aykan Aydemir.

Similar to the AKP officials, the CHP respondents also blame the EU for failing to remain loyal to its promises after the referendum:

The EU did not keep any promises after the 2004 referendum. Essentially, the EU adopted an ambivalent approach towards Cyprus as it never reflected a solid stance to put pressure on Greek Cyprus which turned out to be the real obstacle against a solution based on the Annan plan (Interview with Faruk Loğoğlu).

Another common argument shared by the CHP officials is that the real obstacle for peace in the island is the EU's failure to prevent the Greek Cypriot government from abusing its position as an EU member and challenging both Turkish Cypriot and Turkish interests:

The EU's Cyprus policy was a failure and the EU officials admit it. The EU long believed that Turkish Cypriot leadership was the main stumbling block against solution. However, the real problem turned out to be the Greek Cypriot leadership. The EU could have adopted a different approach by granting a semi-membership status to Greek Cyprus conditioning the full membership on the solution of the Cyprus problem. Until then, the EU could have denied political rights to Greek Cypriots such as veto power, while recognizing all other economic and social rights gained through accession (Interview with Osman Korutürk).

The conflicting agendas of Turkey and Greece resulted in such a crisis in the island. Turkey actually adopts a solution under the auspices of the UN, but Greeks and Greek Cypriots have been abusing the leverage of EU membership by pressurizing the EU to extract concession from Turkey (Interview with Kemal Ekinci).

The results of the referenda reflect the fact that if there is a reasonable plan to bring peace to the island, Turkish Cypriots will accept it; but the real problem is to convince the Greek Cypriots. The EU must draw lessons from its mistakes (Interview with Faruk Loğoğlu).

On the other hand, the CHP responses diverge from those of the AKP deputies on several points. First, the respondents not only blame the EU and the Greek Cypriot administration but also accuse the AKP government for failing to govern the Cyprus peace process in Turkey's favour:

The AKP government thought that the Annan plan would facilitate the solution but the AKP failed to see that the Annan plan only limited the policy options of Turkey towards Cyprus and the result of the referenda in the island further catalyzed the division of Cyprus. Today, it is almost impossible to find an equitable solution to the Cyprus problem. Therefore, not only the EU but also the AKP government is equally responsible for this stalemate. Self-criticism and a new approach for a solution are necessary in both sides (Interview with Atilla Kart).

The CHP officials also hold the AKP government responsible for the curtailment of Turkey's accession negotiations following the AKP government's failure to formulate a viable policy to avoid the 'additional protocol crisis' with the RoC:

The EU deceived the AKP government when Turkey signed the additional protocol. The EU officials assured the AKP that Turkey's signature would not constitute a formal recognition of Cyprus but they later rejected the AKP's declaration following the signature of the protocol. The AKP should have had a written guarantee from the EU before signing the protocol. We don't want to be deceived by the EU again (Interview with Süheyl Batum).

It was evident that the signature of the additional protocol would prove problematic and would bar Turkey's path for EU membership but the government did not listen to our warnings. Now, not only the Cyprus problem has become unsolvable but also Turkey's prospects for EU membership have been lost (Interview with Gülsün Bilgehan).

Unlike the AKP officials, the CHP deputies do not entirely shut the door to the EU and the RoC. Accordingly, half of the CHP respondents<sup>44</sup> do not dismiss the idea of opening borders to the RoC. Some CHP officials essentially demand an official guarantee from the EU that such an act does not constitute the recognition of the RoC and require the lifting of international economic, political and social embargoes in Northern Cyprus:

It is not a problem for Turkey to open its harbours and airspace to Greek Cypriots. It is actually advantageous for Turkey as it will most probably render Greek Cypriots economically dependent on Turkey. However, in return, Greek Cypriots must sign a direct trade protocol

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<sup>44</sup> including Ramazan Kerim Özkan, Gülsün Bilgehan, Burak Erdenir, Osman Korutürk, İzzet Çetin, Faruk Loğoğlu, Süheyl Batum.



that allows Turkish Cypriots to trade with the rest of the world freely (Interview with Osman Korutürk).

Turkey must open its harbours and airspace to Greek Cyprus. However, the EU must give Turkey an official guarantee that this does not mean the recognition of the RoC (Interview with Süheyl Batum).

Some CHP deputies reflect even a more liberal stance claiming that if it truly wants to become an EU member Turkey must fulfil the EU's Cyprus conditionality without any reservation:

Turkey must fulfil all its obligations arising out of its EU candidacy. The EU's condition for Turkey to open its harbours and airspace to Cyprus is one of these obligations and the Turkish government must fulfil it (Interview with Faruk Loğoğlu).

If you would like to become an EU member, you must fulfil your obligations arising out of membership conditionality. The EU's Cyprus conditionality is one of such obligations Turkey must fulfil if it wants to become a member. If the equal treatment of all EU members is one of the accession criteria, then Turkey cannot turn a blind eye to the EU's demands regarding Cyprus, an EU member (Interview with İzzet Çetin).

Had Turkey fulfilled all other membership obligations and had the Cyprus problem remained the only obstacle against Turkey's EU accession, it would make sense to negotiate whether to open our harbours and airspace to the RoC. However, Turkey still has so much to do for membership. Nevertheless, social democratic principles dictate that Turkey must use all its resources to successfully finish the EU accession negotiations. Turkey must keep all its communication channels open for the EU and must always be ready for a compromise. This does not mean 'concession'; it means a 'reciprocal understanding' (Interview with Burak Erdenir).

On the other hand, the split within the party is remarkable in this issue since the other half of the respondents<sup>45</sup> reject such an act as it will mean the recognition of the Republic of Cyprus and further isolate Turkish Cypriots:

Even if the EU guarantees Turkish accession, Turkey should not open its airspace and harbours to Greek Cypriots in return, because such an

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<sup>45</sup> including Emre Köprülü, Atilla Kart, Erdal Aksünger, Ali İhsan Köktürk, Ömer Süha Aldan and Orhan Düzgün.

act constitutes *de facto* recognition of Greek Cypriots as the main rulers of the island. This is contrary to Turkey's Cyprus policy which demands equal rights for Turkish Cypriots. Therefore, I reject any external impositions on Turkey to leave aside its long established Cyprus policy (Interview with Ali İhsan Köktürk).

However, unlike the AKP officials, the CHP respondents who refuse the opening of harbours to Greek Cypriots do not justify their opposition with the lack of trust towards the EU. The AKP deputies primarily reject it because they do not believe that the EU will give any guarantee for Turkish accession in return. The CHP deputies reject it even if the EU guarantees accession because they essentially see the Cyprus problem as a 'national cause' completely different from Turkey's EU membership. An official even dismisses the opening of harbours as an act of treason and the selling-out of Cyprus (Interview with Emre Köprülü).

## **6.6. The MHP and Cyprus**

The far-right nationalist MHP sees the Cyprus problem as a 'national cause' and Turkey's internal matter (KKTC Medya 2013). Rather than establishing peace under the auspices of the UN or the EU, the MHP favours a revisionist solution: Northern Cyprus will either remain as the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) or become Turkey's 82<sup>nd</sup> city (MHP 2003: 37). The party has always been against the linkage between the solution of the problem and Turkey's EU accession, and treated them as separate matters for Turkey. During its term in government between 1999 and 2002, party officials firmly denied giving any 'concessions' to Greek Cypriots in return for Turkey's EU membership (Yeni Şafak 2001). Moreover, the possibility of Cypriot accession to the EU was condemned by party officials as 'an attempt to complete the Greek *Megali Idea* and to turn Cyprus into yet another Crete cleansed of its Muslim Turkish heritage' (Canefe and Bora 2003: 129). Overall, the MHP acted as a steadfast guardian of the TRNC within the Turkish government (Tank 2002). Party officials even threatened to leave the coalition had the Turkish government decided to make concessions on the Cyprus issue (Loizides 2002: 441).

The MHP's hard-line stance over the Cyprus problem did not lose momentum after the party was relegated to opposition following the AKP's landslide electoral victories. The MHP stood against any compromise on the Cyprus problem despite the fact that the problem itself became a major stumbling block against Turkish EU accession (Öniş 2003: 45). Party officials firmly dismissed the Annan plan as 'the destruction of Cypriot Turkishness under the name of political solution' (Yanık 2012: 223). They alleged that the plan threatened the future of Turkish Cypriot community relegating them to minority, and accused the AKP government of sacrificing Cyprus for the sake of EU membership (Avcı 2011b: 443). The party leader Devlet Bahçeli charged the AKP with forcing Turkish Cypriots to say 'Yes' in the referendum on the Annan Plan and declaring war against the Turkish Cypriot Leader, Rauf Denktaş, who opposed the Annan plan (Bahçeli 2004). The failure of the Annan plan was welcomed by the MHP as a 'blessing' for the future of the TRNC (MHP 2009: 2).

The party also targeted the EU as the main obstacle in front of an equitable solution on the island. It accused the EU of destroying the prospects for the resolution of the Cyprus conflict by accepting the membership of the RoC (MHP 2003: 18). In its opinion, the EU membership of the RoC enabled Greece and Cyprus to achieve their long anticipated ideal of *enosis* (MHP 2003: 9). Furthermore, the MHP blamed the EU for having 'deceived' the Turkish Cypriot community. Party officials argued that the EU had promised to lift economic restrictions to Northern Cyprus in return for a 'yes' vote in the Annan referendum, but not only did the EU not keep its promise but it also managed to place the solution of the Cyprus problem as an official precondition for Turkish accession (MHP 2009: 2). The MHP particularly charged the AKP government with surrendering to the EU's demands and shattering the long established Cyprus policy of Turkey. Party officials claimed that the government had extended a *de facto* recognition to the RoC as the representative of the entire island by signing the EU's additional protocol (ibid.). They depict the AKP government's offer to open harbours and airspace in return for the lifting of isolations in Northern Cyprus, as 'treason'. Mehmet Şandır, the deputy leader of the party claimed that by making such offers the AKP had 'sold out Cyprus and accepted Enosis' (Hürriyet 2006b).

The MHP currently perceives the EU's Cyprus conditionality as the major obstacle for Turkey's membership. The official reports of the MHP about Turkey's EU policy claim that EU accession was strictly conditional upon the recognition of the RoC (MHP 2009: 7). It is argued that the EU primarily uses membership as a 'blackmailing device' to force Turkey to officially recognize the RoC, withdraw its troops from the island and accept NATO membership of the RoC (MHP 2003). The MHP declares that it attaches greater importance to the independence of Turkish Cypriots under the TRNC than Turkey's EU accession (MHP 2003: 37). Overall, the MHP's hard-line policy over Cyprus persists as its far-right nationalism remains intact. Labelling any attempts for a compromise on the island as an act of treason, the MHP justifies its uncompromising policy with the EU's discriminatory approach in the Cyprus problem. In this case, its ideological standpoint constitutes the main driving force behind the MHP's Cyprus agenda and the EU's ambivalence over Cyprus consolidates this hard-line stance.

#### *6.6.1. The views of MHP members of the Parliament*

The interviews conducted with MHP deputies hold parallel to the official discourse of the party. Party officials essentially embrace Cyprus as the national cause of Turkey, highlight the importance of the TRNC's survival and stand against the EU's Cyprus conditionality. Similar to both the CHP and the AKP, the EU's Cyprus policy is criticized by MHP officials<sup>46</sup> as double-standard and the Greek Cypriot nationalistic stances are framed as the real obstacle in front of a solution on the island. In support of AKP officials, the MHP deputies also emphasize that the EU has lost its legitimacy in Cyprus:

The EU has lost its power and harmony. From now on, what the EU dictates about the Cyprus problem is unimportant. As long as Turkey remains strong, the EU will have to adjust itself to what Turkey says about Cyprus. Not the other way around (Interview with Lütfü Türkkan).

The EU's Cyprus policy is unacceptable because instead of pressurizing Greek Cyprus to make an effort for a solution, the EU

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<sup>46</sup> Zuhale Topçu, Sümer Oral, Nevzat Korkmaz and Lütfü Türkkan explicitly denounced the EU's Cyprus policy as double standard and unacceptable.

acts as if Turkey is the main stumbling block against the solution of the Cyprus problem. Therefore, the EU is not to be trusted (Interview Zuhale Topçu).

Different from the AKP and the CHP, there is a consensus among the MHP respondents towards the necessity to maintain a two-state model in the island. Party officials believe that the EU must abide by a two-state system in Cyprus if it really wants a long lasting solution:

We believe that Turkey should never give concessions to Greek Cyprus. Turkey has done its best to contribute to a solution but the current stalemate primarily stems from Greek Cypriots. From now on, the only viable strategy for Turkey is to work for the international recognition of the TRNC's statehood (Interview Zuhale Topçu).

The EU must accept that there are two equal nations and states in Cyprus. After the proclamation of the TRNC in 1983, violence ended and peace prevailed in the island. Unless the EU admits this reality and endorses the equality of the two nations, its Cyprus policy is doomed to failure (Interview with Nevzat Korkmaz).

Moreover, the MHP officials seem to have lost their faith and patience for an equitable solution since they suggest radical action for Turkey to secure its own interests:

Turkey must immediately find a solution to the Cyprus problem, it is a bleeding wound. The world does not officially recognize the TRNC. Besides, the Turkish military presence is not appreciated by Turkish Cypriots. Therefore, there are two options: Whether Turkey will leave the island alone or make the Northern Cyprus its 82<sup>nd</sup> city (Interview with Lütfü Türkkkan).

Finally, party officials strongly oppose the EU's demands for Turkey to open its airspace and harbours to the Republic of Cyprus:

Even if the EU guarantees accession, Turkey should not open its harbours to Greek Cyprus because we can never be sure whether the EU will remain loyal to its promise. The EU must make serious efforts to regain its credibility in our eyes before asking for concessions (Interview Zuhale Topçu).

## 6.7. Conclusion

Overall, the EU's country-specific conditionality arising out of a bilateral conflict between a candidate and a member state, results in intensive Euroscepticism in the candidate country. Political parties defy external pressures since the bilateral conflict is considered as a national cause by the public, and hence compliance proves too costly for governments. Moreover, the veto power of EU member states grants them a crucial leverage over the bilateral issue and forces the EU to introduce additional preconditions for accession. Therefore, candidates feel discriminated by the EU's extra conditions which jeopardize their own accession process. The name issue between Macedonia and Greece, the maritime border dispute between Croatia and Slovenia, and finally the issue of the Beneš decrees between the Czech Republic and Germany triggered nationwide Euroscepticism. All major political actors in those candidate countries regardless of their ideology resisted the EU's country-specific pressures in an attempt to protect national interests.

Similarly, the EU's Cyprus conditionality attracts strong negative reaction from all major political parties in Turkey. The CHP and the MHP perceive the Cyprus problem as the 'red line' of Turkish foreign policy, having priority over EU accession. Even the leadership change in the CHP didn't have much of an effect in the CHP's Cyprus policy. Although the CHP's new leader Kılıçdaroğlu voices his desire for a long lasting solution under the auspices of the UN, he refuses to comply with the EU's Cyprus conditionality since he does not trust the EU's impartiality over the Cyprus problem. The AKP's initial attempts to de-emphasize the traditional 'red line' thesis with its support for a united Cyprus failed after the Greek Cypriot rejection of the Annan Plan and the EU's additional Cyprus conditionality on Turkey. The AKP abandoned its reformist stance and joined the opposition parties in condemning the double-standards of the EU following the suspension of the accession negotiations in 2006. The major Turkish political parties blame the EU for shattering the hopes for a peaceful solution in the island, and dismiss the EU's Cyprus conditionality as a

deviation from global standards that attach a primary role to the United Nations in the resolution of such international conflicts as Cyprus (Buhari-Gülmez 2012: 83).

In order to control for political ideology in explaining domestic responses to the EU's country-specific (Cyprus) conditionality, the views of the Democratic Society Party (BDP) have been examined as well. The BDP's stance on Cyprus is highly distinct. The BDP perceives both Turkey and the EU as imperial forces threatening the freedom of Cyprus and preventing the peaceful co-existence of the two Cypriot communities (Interview with Yüksel Mutlu). Sırrı Süreyya Önder, the BDP deputy for Istanbul, argues that the TRNC is not a legitimate state but a 'puppet' of Turkey (Radikal 2012b). Ertuğrul Kürkçü, the BDP deputy for Mersin, depicts Turkey's military presence on the island as 'invasion' (Radikal 2011). He believes that every Turkish Cypriot wants the Turkish army out of the island (ibid.). These statements confirm the 'anti-establishment' nature of the party's policy understanding. Nevertheless, the BDP joins the other Turkish parties in dismissing the EU's decision to admit the RoC as an unacceptable double-standard that has further alienated the Turkish Cypriots (TBMM 2012c). Party officials also blame the EU for using the Cyprus conflict as a 'blackmailing device' against Turkey (ibid.). This example substantiates the fact that dissimilar political actors give similar Eurosceptic responses in Turkey if they believe the EU treats their country unfairly.

Similarly, the interviews confirm the argument that the government and the opposition in Turkey are unified in their criticism of the EU's Cyprus policy. They consider the EU's Cyprus conditionality as double standard and unfair for both Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot community. The Greek Cypriot administration is equally held responsible for preventing a solution on the island and barring Turkey's EU accession. In particular, officials of both the AKP and the MHP seem to have lost hope for an equitable solution on the island. They have also lost their faith in the EU's capability and willingness to solve the problem. The EU is no longer considered credible and trustworthy. Accordingly, almost all of the respondents from the AKP and the MHP reject the EU's conditionality on Turkey to open its harbours and airspace to the RoC. In their opinion, Turkey's compliance with this condition won't help Turkey become an EU member or solve the problems of the Turkish Cypriots. What is equally striking is that the government MPs essentially associate the lack of a

solution in the Cyprus problem with the EU's reluctance to accept Turkey's EU membership. Accordingly, the EU is discriminatory in its Cyprus policy, because the continuation of the Cyprus problem is likely to delay, if not prevent Turkey's EU accession.

On the other hand, the CHP deputies are less unified but also less pessimistic in their responses. There is a clear split within the party over the Cyprus problem. The leadership change created such a divide since it gave voice to liberal thoughts within the party but did not erase nationalist elements. The reformist wing of the CHP reflects a far more liberal approach towards the EU's Cyprus conditionality in comparison with other parties. Accordingly, a half of the CHP respondents fuels optimism for Turkey-EU relations with respect to the Cyprus problem since they deem it necessary for Turkey to open its harbours and airspace to the RoC if it truly wants to be an EU member. A number of CHP deputies call for Turkey to comply with the EU's Cyprus conditionality without reservation. This is a remarkable split from Kılıçdaroğlu's own policy stance to resist the EU's Cyprus conditionality. On the other hand, the remaining half of the CHP informants stick to the old guard rhetoric of the Baykal leadership which defends Turkey's pro-status quo policy. They consider the Cyprus problem as a national cause and dismiss any effort for a compromise as 'selling out' Cyprus. The split within the party over the Cyprus problem shows that the CHP is not yet detached from nationalist (TAN) ideology, although the Kılıçdaroğlu leadership aspires for a liberal (GAL) turn within the party. Actually, almost none of the CHP respondents entirely share the official stance of Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP. The views of the liberal wing are far more liberal than the Cyprus stance of Kılıçdaroğlu, while the conservative wing rather reflects Baykal's views. The Cyprus stance of conservative CHP respondents is very much close to the nationalist (TAN) rhetoric of the MHP deputies which opposes any compromise in Turkey's traditional Cyprus policy, even if the EU guarantees full membership in return. They both insist on maintaining the two-state model on the island and embrace a zero-sum game rhetoric in line with the Sèvres Syndrome provoking Turkish establishment to fear foreign plots. The MHP officials go even further and offer a unilateral solution to the problem by either abandoning Cyprus or annexing Northern



Cyprus reflecting the MHP's nationalist motto 'either love it or leave it' (*Ya sev ya terk et*, in Turkish).

The main reason for the oppositional stance in the AKP is actually different in comparison with the MHP and the nationalist wing of the CHP, since the AKP officials do not consider the Cyprus problem as a national cause to protect against foreign powers but a problem to be solved by any means necessary. However, they oppose the EU's Cyprus conditionality, since they no longer trust the EU's willingness to solve the problem and accept Turkish accession. This confirms the hypotheses of the study that the country-specific conditions of the EU draw Euroscepticism from all segments of domestic politics rendering the government-opposition positioning and the ideological differences less important. This is essentially due to the generalized perception of the EU's conditions as discriminatory and detrimental to Turkey's membership prospects. Examples derived from other candidate countries (Macedonia, Croatia and the Czech Republic) and the Turkish case, demonstrate similar tendencies: all major political parties resisted the EU's country-specific conditionality since it was not only too costly to give up a 'national cause' for the sake of accession but also political actors felt increasingly discriminated against by the EU.

## **CHAPTER VII**

# **TURKISH POLITICAL PERCEPTIONS OF RISING TURKEY-SCEPTICISM IN THE EU**

This study has so far discussed the reactions of mainstream political parties in Turkey against two types of EU membership conditionality: issue-specific and country-specific. Eurosceptic political stances in candidate countries mainly result from the uncertainty of the EU accession process. Concerning the EU's issue-specific conditionality, political actors resist the uncertainty of the terms of EU accession. As discussed previously, parties oppose certain EU-led reforms that are perceived as unilaterally dictated by the EU in a top-down manner. They rather desire membership in their own terms. They resist because they cannot be certain under what conditions they will be admitted to the EU. That's why certain political groups oppose the reforms of minority rights and foreign land ownership as they don't desire EU accession by giving 'concessions' to the EU in those areas deemed important for national wealth, security and sovereignty.

On the other hand, the EU's country-specific conditionality generates profound uncertainty as it is usually based on a bilateral conflict with an EU member that jeopardizes the accession process. Political actors of the candidate country in question become increasingly reluctant towards EU membership, because the EU's country-specific conditionality threatens to suspend membership unless they comply with the EU's terms. For instance, the failure to comply with the EU's Cyprus conditionality has directly stalled Turkey's accession. Turkish political actors resist this conditionality since they are reluctant to trade their 'national cause' with EU membership. The dissipation of uncertainty arising out of the EU's country-specific conditionality is essentially contingent on the solution of the bilateral problem in question. For instance, Croatia's membership perspective has become clear only after

Croatia and Slovenia agreed on a joint plan to solve their bilateral problem in compliance with the EU. However, in the Turkish case, domestic political actors strongly believe that the uncertainty over EU membership will not dissipate even if they comply with the EU's Cyprus conditionality. The expressions in the EU's official documents such as absorption capacity, the anti-Turkish membership rhetoric of certain European statesmen and the curtailment of the accession negotiations have contributed to the development of a strong conviction among Turkish political elites that the EU does not desire Turkish accession.

Unlike the case of Croatia whose compliance with the EU's additional conditionality deriving from its conflict with Slovenia sufficed to continue its accession process, the uncertainty towards Turkey's EU membership is rather diffuse and multipronged; it thus creates a perception that even though Turkey complies with the EU's accession criteria (including the country-specific ones), the EU will never accept its membership.

This research does not claim that the EU is in any sense opposed to Turkish accession as if it was a unitary bloc. It rather argues that certain developments in Turkey-EU relations in the last decade have contributed to the burgeoning of such a perception in Turkey. Perceptions 'matter' in the Turkish context since they have contributed to the shift in the Turkish political discourses and actions towards scepticism against the EU. It is thus necessary to discuss how the burgeoning Turkish perception about the EU -that the EU fell prey to far-right nationalism, xenophobia, Islamophobia and 'Turkey-sceptic' elements- feeds into Euroscepticism in Turkey. With this motivation, the chapter will first explain the main elements and developments that have resulted in severe criticisms against the EU in Turkey and have led over time to the spread of the perception that the EU would never admit Turkey's membership. Secondly, the chapter will examine party programmes, public statements and parliamentary speeches of party officials to demonstrate that widespread perception of Europe as 'Turkey-sceptic' is strongly reflected in Turkish elites' political discourses. The chapter will then discuss the findings of the interviews conducted with Turkish parliamentarians which seek to find out to what extent the perception concerning the EU's reluctance towards Turkey's accession is shared by party officials. Overall, it finds that Turkish political elites strongly believe in the existence of reluctance within

the EU over Turkish accession, and this diminishes their enthusiasm for membership. Regardless of whether they are in government or in opposition, Turkish political parties from different ideological backgrounds highlight the lack of will in the EU towards Turkey's accession.

Nevertheless, the study argues that this negative perception of the EU stands as an important, yet insufficient factor behind the rising Euroscepticism in Turkish politics today, because it fails to explain why the AKP government continued the reform process during 2002 and 2006 even though the Turkish claims against the EU's reluctance towards Turkish membership were already present. It was the rising uncertainty of membership prospects after the suspension of the negotiations in 2006 which altered the EU policy of the AKP government, diminishing its EU-enthusiasm and emphasizing the EU's reluctance or undecidedness towards Turkish accession as the main reason behind the current stalemate in bilateral relations.

### **7.1. Main determinants of Turkish perceptions towards the EU**

During the initial years of the AKP government (2002-2004), Turkey–EU relations gained momentum and Turkey's EU accession process became progressive. Yet, certain expressions in the European Commission's progress reports and the negotiating framework document were interpreted by Turks as detrimental to Turkey's membership prospects. The opposition highlighted the danger those expressions would bring to Turkey's European bid. For instance, the phrase 'open-ended process' suggests that the accession negotiations do not guarantee an automatic membership to Turkey. According to Sedelmeier (2010: 424), this is a clear break away from the EU's previous enlargement policy and generates a notion that the EU will not grant accession even if Turkey meets the conditions. Moreover, the insertion of 'absorption capacity' as an implicit additional criteria for the EU's new enlargement waves indicates that even if Turkey meets all the conditions, the EU can still say no to full membership based on its institutional, political, economic, social and cultural dynamics (Emerson et al 2006: 3). Absorption capacity highlights 'the empirical and 'objective' limits to what current EU structures can accommodate and suggests that these limits have been or are close to being reached' (Vibert 2006: 2).

Plus, the introduction of ‘long transition periods, derogations, specific arrangements or permanent safeguard clauses’ concerning freedom of movement of persons, structural policies or agriculture in the negotiating framework document implies that such freedoms might be permanently prohibited to Turkey even if it becomes an EU member. Permanent safeguards have no precedent in the history of enlargement. The EU’s common practice is the transitional arrangements up to 7 years while the EU adopted these permanent arrangements only for Turkey (Kirişçi 2004: 91). These terms were interpreted by Turks as symptoms indicating the EU’s growing reluctance to grant full membership to Turkey (Öniş 2008: 41).

The reluctance within the EU over Turkish accession has been largely associated with the rising Islamophobia and right wing politics in Europe (Bunzl 2005; Özyürek 2005; Canan-Sokullu 2011). Depicting the European concerns over Turkey’s EU accession as ‘by far the most crucial aspect of Islamophobia’, Bunzl (2005: 505) explains how Turkey’s EU membership aspirations set in motion a series of political campaigns against Turkish accession in several EU member states, and far right political parties enjoyed a fertile ground to gain electoral success in, for instance, France and Austria. The argument that ‘Islam is external and even antithetical to the culture of the EU’ has been increasingly defended by right wing political actors in Europe to reject Turkey’s membership (Özyürek 2005: 509). The former French President, Nicolas Sarkozy, and German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, shared concern that Turkey’s ‘inclusion would permanently disrupt the cultural harmony among the European populations, bringing an end to all their attempts to build a united and strong ‘European state’’ (Yılmaz 2007: 305). The President of the EU, Herman Van Rompuy, highlighted the same concern when he claimed; ‘the universal values which are in force in Europe, and which are also fundamental values of Christianity, will lose vigour with the entry of a large Islamic country such as Turkey’ (Barber 2009). Likewise, Valery Giscard d’Estaing, Former French President warned about the ‘end of Europe’ in case of Turkish membership. ‘Privileged partnership’, as an alternative to membership, has been particularly supported by right wing political elites in Germany, France and Austria (İçener 2007: 421-422). Those elites have also been vetoing the implementation of a visa liberalisation regime for Turkey. That’s why

Turkey remains the only EU candidate whose citizens are required to have a Schengen visa for visiting the EU (Bürgin 2012: 884).

The campaign against Turkish accession has become a strong electoral strategy for right wing political actors in Western Europe since it resonates well with public opinion. Recent studies indicate a clear public opposition to Turkey's membership (Canan-Sokullu 2011). There is a burgeoning fear in the European public that 'Islamisation of Europe' will most likely 'come about through Turkey's EU membership' (Canan-Sokullu 2011: 484). Besides, the failure of Turkish immigrants to be integrated into European countries damages the image of Turkey and plays a determining role behind the public resentment towards Turkish accession (McLaren 2007). In Western European countries, Turkish immigrants are still perceived as foreigners (Spruyt and Elchardus 2012: 806). Consequently, propaganda against Turkey's EU membership promises to secure a crucial electoral base in European countries such as France, Austria and Germany that are host to a significant number of Turkish immigrants. Such campaigns are run, for instance, by almost all political parties in Austrian national elections (Bunzl 2005: 506). Opposition to Turkish accession was also the most popular election strategy used by right wing parties during the 2004 European elections (ibid.).

This has led to the emergence of a new concept, 'Turkey-scepticism' to emphasize the EU's reluctance towards Turkey's accession which was not only about the EU's 'enlargement fatigue'<sup>47</sup> but also about Turkey's social and cultural differences (Güneş-Ayata 2003; Canan-Sokullu 2011). However, it is too far-fetched to claim that the EU as a unified bloc opposes Turkey's accession. Additional conditions in the EU documents for Turkey, rising Islamophobia in Europe, public distaste for Turkish immigrants and the right wing propaganda against Turkey's EU entry don't prove the existence of Turkey-scepticism in the EU. Yet they still contribute to the crystallization of a perception in the Turkish political elite that Europe is Turkey-sceptic. The suspension of eight negotiation chapters by the EU along with the French blockade on five other chapters not only led to a deadlock in Turkey's EU accession

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<sup>47</sup> A general post-accession reticence within the EU towards further widening in favour of a greater focus on deepening integration across Member States. For detail, see Szolucha (2010).

process, but further strengthened the Turkish perception that the EU was ‘dragging its feet’ to delay, if not impede Turkey’s membership.

## **7.2. The EU’s ‘perceived’ reluctance for Turkish accession and Responses of Turkish Political Elite**

This section discusses how the EU’s ‘reluctance’ towards Turkish accession resonates within Turkish political parties and how it affects their EU policy. Following the suspension of the accession negotiations in particular, Turkish political parties (the AKP government especially) have shared the concern that the EU does not want Turkish accession and hence that it will never accept Turkey’s membership.

### *7.2.1. The AKP government: from indifference to strong criticism*

Pioneering the legislation of several ‘harmonization packages’ soon after forming single-party government in Turkey, the AKP devoted much energy to complying with the Copenhagen criteria. Its advances towards steady economic development and improved democratization triggered the golden age of Turkey–EU relations resulting in the initiation of accession negotiations (Öniş 2008: 38). However, suspension of the accession negotiations with Turkey in 2006 was a decisive moment for the AKP’s EU policy. While previously refraining from any criticism against the EU, AKP officials adopted a highly critical approach to the EU. Prime Minister and party leader, Tayyip Erdoğan, on several occasions criticized the EU’s lack of decisiveness towards Turkey. Arguing that the 10 new EU members were comparably in a much lower status than Turkey both in terms of democratic and economic development, Erdoğan claimed that the EU admitted the latter rather than Turkey for political reasons (NTVMSNBC 2010). He asserts that there are particular political motivations behind the opposition to Turkey’s membership within the EU, such as Turkey’s young and huge population, Muslim identity, proximity to conflict areas such as the Middle East and great economic potential to constitute a strong rival to major EU member states (ibid.). Claiming that the EU had been dragging its feet over Turkey for more than 50 years, Erdoğan demanded EU officials clearly announce whether or not they really

intended to let Turkey in (Hürriyet 2011a). Erdoğan threatened the EU by stating that although they had been patiently working for membership for so long, their patience had its limits (ibid.). He argued that no other candidate country faced such ‘unfair’ treatment like Turkey and claimed that now there were 27 EU member states to ‘mock’ Turkey (Vatan 2011a).

The Turkish Prime Minister has recently reacted to the EU’s insistence on issuing visas to Turkish citizens while it lifted visa requirements for the rest of the EU candidate countries. Stating the fact that even the citizens of South American countries such as Bolivia and Paraguay do not need a visa to enter the EU, Erdoğan found the EU’s persistence to issue visas on Turkey incomprehensible (Hürriyet 2011b). He said that if the EU was willing to be an exclusive Christian club, the EU politicians should explicitly announce that they did not want Turkey in, and thus Turkey would go its separate way (ibid.). He argued that the EU’s cryptic approach was likely to force them to reconsider their position towards Turkey’s EU accession (Bild 2011).

Erdoğan (2011) accused the EU of acting as a unified block against Turkey’s accession. He complained that Turkey had not even been invited to attend EU summits anymore after the then French President, Nicholas Sarkozy, and the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, had taken over (Bild 2011). He denounced Sarkozy and Merkel for mobilizing an unholy alliance reflecting fascist tendencies against Turkey (ibid.). Similarly, Egemen Bağış, the former Chief Negotiator of Turkey with the EU, raised harsh criticisms blaming the EU for remaining reluctant towards Turkey. He claims that although the European Commission commends Turkey’s progress in numerous fields, the EU still prevents Turkey’s smooth progress towards membership by blocking several negotiation chapters arbitrarily (Hürriyet 2010a). He asserts that it is meaningless to open and close negotiation chapters if the EU has no intention of giving Turkey full membership (Hürriyet 2010b). Bağış also declares that the EU’s ‘insincere and inconsistent’ attitude towards Turkey is increasingly criticized by more and more people in Turkey (Milliyet 2011a).

Concerning the EU’s ongoing visa restrictions to Turkey, Bağış argued that the EU was negotiating visa liberalization with even third world countries such as Moldova,



excluding Turkey (Yeni Şafak 2011). ‘In the last 50 years, the EU made constant efforts to dissuade Turkey. However, we will not be the ones to pull the plug. We will let the Europeans do it’, the chief negotiator asserted (Milliyet 2011b). Bağış also directed his criticisms on the ‘Turkey-sceptic’ EU statesmen such as Merkel and Sarkozy. Blaming them of being ‘myopic’, Bağış claimed that Turkey will not give in to this opposition and persevere on its quest for membership (Yeni Şafak 2009).

Other cabinet members also occasionally raised criticisms underlying the EU’s reluctance for Turkey. Sadullah Ergin, the Minister of Justice, stressed the possibility for the EU to refrain from granting membership even if Turkey fulfils all the necessary conditions (Vatan 2010a). Ergin stated that they would not tolerate such a move and would retaliate by going their own way (ibid.). Cemil Çiçek, the speaker of the Turkish Parliament, announced that EU membership was not *sine qua non* for Turkey. Çiçek argued that if Turkey was obliged to choose either EU membership or Northern Cyprus, they would not hesitate to prefer their Cypriot brothers (Milliyet 2011c). Abdullah Gül, the President of Turkey and former Foreign Minister declared that ‘the world doesn’t end with the EU’, emphasizing Turkey’s willingness to develop significant relations with the rest of the world (Le Figaro 2011).

The AKP’s pro-EU activism ceased after the curtailment of the accession negotiations and the pro-EU stance of the party was replaced with harsh criticisms against the EU. The AKP officials blamed the EU for derailing Turkey’s membership process. They question why the EU started the membership negotiations if Turkey was not wanted in the EU. The party officials frequently declare that they will go their separate way if the EU persists on its current policy towards Turkey. It is even stated that Turkey’s EU membership is not indispensable. As a reaction to the suspension of the negotiations, the AKP slowed down the reform process and even delayed 3 negotiation chapters fit for negotiation (Euractiv 2011). Nevertheless, the AKP continues its membership quest and will let the EU ‘pull the plug’ if necessary. Unlike the party’s previous manifestoes, the 2011 manifesto criticized the rise of Turkey-scepticism in Europe and emphasized the fact that the AKP will insist on working for Turkey’s eventual membership in spite of the ‘unfair and ungrounded’ opposition of certain EU member states (AKP 2011).

### *7.2.2. The CHP: Increasing criticisms towards the EU*

Unlike the AKP government, the main opposition party adopted a critical stance towards the EU from the outset of the AKP's landslide victory in 2002. Its election manifesto highlights the necessity for securing equal membership conditions without any double standards for Turkey (CHP 2002). Shortly after the curtailment of the negotiations in 2006, a new manifesto promptly indicates that the CHP supports 'full membership only' and rejects any 'unfair treatment and double standards' by the EU (CHP 2007). The party programme adopted in 2008 even threatens to withdraw the CHP's pro-EU stance if the Turkey-sceptic proposal to offer Turkey privileged partnership instead of full membership gains ground in the EU (CHP 2008). Similarly, the 2011 manifesto underscores the vitality of full membership having equal rights with the rest of the members. The manifesto asserts the CHP will take every measure to make sure the EU withdraws any safeguard clause against Turkey (CHP 2011b: 125). The party's Euroscepticism still persists today. However, in order to fully comprehend the CHP's EU policy during the AKP era, it is crucial to compare and contrast the perceptions of two party leaders towards the EU; Deniz Baykal and Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu.

Deniz Baykal, the leader of the CHP from 1992 to 2010, initially signalled a solid pro-EU stance. As the Foreign Minister of Turkey for a brief period, Baykal devoted much energy to the conclusion of the customs union with the EU in the early 1990s (Ayata and Güneş-Ayata 2007: 223). However, after the 2002 elections, he incessantly criticized Turkey's accession process following the AKP government's accelerated march towards EU membership. Baykal was highly sceptical of the EU's approach which would allegedly derail Turkey's accession process. During Baykal's leadership, the CHP focused its criticisms primarily on additional clauses and right wing politicians in the EU. For instance, Baykal asserted the 'open-ended' process signals the EU's reluctance against Turkish accession and its intention to convince Turkey of the merits of a kind of 'privileged partnership' (Hürriyet 2004a). He was also convinced that 'absorption capacity' was proof that the EU intends to deny Turkey's membership (Baykal 2004b). Besides, he believed that 'permanent

safeguards' would mean the permanent denial of free movement to Turks, and indicate the EU's willingness to offer Turkey a second-class membership (Hürriyet 2004a). Similarly, Onur Öymen, the deputy chair of the party was convinced that such additional clauses were developed by the Turkey-sceptic EU member states in order to derail Turkey's membership process (Öymen 2005). He explicitly stated that the CHP was not against the EU, but was against Turkey-sceptics who were pressurizing the EU to inflict double standards upon Turkey (ibid.).

Baykal's CHP not only questioned the EU's sincerity towards Turkey, but also accused the AKP government of failing to take resolute steps against Turkey-sceptic politicians in Europe. Blaming Merkel for resorting to Turkey-sceptic rhetoric to secure electoral success in German elections, Baykal denied any communications with her even during her visits to Ankara. Moreover, Baykal (2009a) considered Sarkozy's opposition as a fundamental obstacle against Turkey's EU membership. He particularly condemned the Constitutional amendment in France to hold a referendum on Turkey's EU accession. He argued: 'Turkey will rescue the princess kept as prisoner in a giant's den, which is on the seventh floor of a cave on the highest mountain and get through all the traps again to climb down'. However, at that point the EU will say: 'Let's ask what the French people think' (Radikal 2004). After Merkel and Sarkozy reiterated their co-decisiveness for granting Turkey only a privileged partnership, Baykal (2009b) denounced their statement as 'rude, antagonistic and reckless' and warned the AKP government that inaction might give Turkey-sceptics more courage to stand firm against Turkey. Supporting Baykal, Şükrü Elekdağ, the CHP deputy for İstanbul, claimed that France and Germany hijacked the EU's decision-making structure in order to leave no option for Turkey other than 'privileged partnership' (TBMM 2009b). He was certain that the EU under the influence of these two leaders would never accept Turkey's accession (ibid.). Öymen blamed the AKP government for its inaction against Turkey-sceptic politicians, and urged the Turkish Parliament to adopt a resolute stance against them (TBMM 2009a). With this motivation, the CHP submitted a proposal for parliamentary inquiry signed by 25 CHP deputies in order to discuss in a private session how to react to these additional clauses along with the oppositional stances of certain EU member states (TBMM 2011b). However, the motion was rejected by AKP votes. The CHP even

demanded that Erdoğan freeze the negotiations arguing such a resolute move would constitute a firm warning to the EU leaders who were still undecided about accepting Turkey's membership (Hürriyet 2004b).

After the negotiations stalled and the pro-EU activism of the AKP slowed down, the CHP seized the opportunity to fill the void and act more pro-European. Baykal worked for establishing contacts with pro-Turkish European social democrat politicians. He also tried to reinforce dialogue with EU officials through visits to Brussels, Berlin and London. Finally, in 2008, the CHP became the first Turkish political party ever to open an office in Brussels. However, those steps proved ineffective as the CHP failed to offer a solid strategy to revitalize Turkey–EU relations. Besides, the CHP's image in the eyes of the EU was considerably negative. The CHP was accused of inhibiting Turkey's progress for EU membership with its hard-line stance (The Economist 2009).

Kılıçdaroğlu's rise to leadership raised hopes in the EU pertinent to the prospects for the CHP's capability to abandon its Eurosceptic stance and become an influential pro-EU actor for Turkey's EU accession. Kılıçdaroğlu frequently reiterates the CHP's support for Turkey's EU membership and promises to make a fresh start in Turkey's relations with the EU (BBC Turkish, 2010). He acknowledges the failure of the CHP to explain its EU policy to the Europeans (Ibid). He admitted that they became much more aware of their image in Europe as a hard-line party after their visit to Brussels and Berlin, and promised that Turkey's EU accession would be top priority after the CHP becomes government (Kılıçdaroğlu 2010).

On the other hand, Kılıçdaroğlu remains loyal to the principles spearheaded by Baykal that are fair membership negotiations with no double standards and full membership having equal rights with the rest of the members (CHP 2011b: 124). Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP argues that it will take every measure to make sure the EU withdraws any safeguard clause against Turkey (ibid.). The new CHP also pledges to work for assuring similar accession processes for all candidate countries without any double standards (ibid.).

Kılıçdaroğlu also does not refrain from expressing his concerns about the EU's 'mistakes' towards Turkey. He condemns the EU's Cyprus conditionality on Turkey

as the gravest mistake to shatter Turkey's membership process (Kılıçdaroğlu 2010: 25). He also argues that the outright opposition of an increasing number of European politicians against Turkey's EU membership reflects the EU's incompetence and indecisiveness on Turkey's accession (ibid.). Nevertheless, differently from his predecessor Baykal, Kılıçdaroğlu calls the EU 'mistaken' not 'reluctant'. He also fuels optimism by urging both sides to focus on the future and 'not be bogged down by mistakes made by either side in the past' (ibid.).

On the other hand, Kılıçdaroğlu essentially believes that the AKP's rising authoritarianism stands as a major obstacle against Turkey's EU membership. Taking up Baykal's flag, he pioneered a NO campaign during the 2011 Constitutional Referendum to deny 25 constitutional amendments most of which were deemed crucial for EU membership. Actually, the CHP was willing to approve all but three amendments<sup>48</sup>, which would allegedly undermine the rule of law in Turkey and render the justice system tied to the AKP government. However, the party was forced to say no to the entire reform package since all 25 amendments were to be voted in a single referendum at once. The CHP also reacted to EU's support for the Constitutional amendments. Kılıçdaroğlu particularly accused EU officials of overlooking the danger behind some of the amendments that would further empower the AKP rule rather than contribute to the rule of law.

The criticisms of Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP originate primarily from the fear that some of the reforms the AKP introduces might undermine the advance of the rule of law and democracy in Turkey and thus, have negative repercussions on Turkey's EU membership prospects (Kılıçdaroğlu 2012). Kılıçdaroğlu accuses the AKP of deceiving the EU with pro-EU rhetoric and abusing the membership process for strengthening its authority rather than empowering democracy (CNN Turk 2011). Arguing that Turkey's EU membership might take a hundred years with the current speed of the negotiations, he blames the AKP government for completely losing its faith over Turkey's accession (Euractiv 2011). Besides, he also blames the EU for overlooking the potential dangers those amendments might carry against Turkish democracy.

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<sup>48</sup>The disputed reforms included the changes in the number and the election procedures of members of the Constitutional Court and the Supreme Council of Judges and Public Prosecutors, and the new arrangements for party closures.

### *7.2.3. The MHP: The EU as a 'Christian Club'*

The junior opposition party is known for its hard line stance over the EU long before the AKP era (Öniş 2003). Always sceptical of the EU's agenda about Turkish accession, the MHP has recently grown more resistant to EU-led reforms. Party officials share the perception that the EU remains reluctant to accept Turkey's membership. The MHP's reactions hold similarity to both Baykal's and Erdoğan's. Endorsing Deniz Baykal's arguments, the MHP focuses its criticisms on additional clauses and Turkey-sceptic right wing political elites in the EU. Moreover, in line with Erdoğan's stance, party officials are highly convinced that the EU acts as a Christian Club.

To begin with, the MHP firmly believes that additional clauses reflect the EU's tendency to tie Turkey to the EU as a second-class partner (TBMM 2009a). For instance, it dismisses the term 'absorption capacity' since it confirms the EU reluctance for Turkey (MHP 2005: 4). The party blames Austria for enforcing the term 'absorption capacity' to Turkey and criticizes the AKP government for failing to prevent Austria (ibid.). Moreover, the MHP argues that 'open-ended negotiations' is a different way of saying no to Turkey's EU membership (MHP 2005: 2). Similar to the CHP, the MHP interprets 'permanent safeguards' as a path toward 'second-class' membership. Party officials claim that by agreeing to such a clause, the AKP government officially endorsed the double standards inflicted upon Turkey (MHP 2005: 20-21). The party leader, Devlet Bahçeli, is convinced that the additional clauses confirm the EU's decisiveness to grant Turkey anything but full membership (Hürriyet 2008).

The MHP also focuses on the propaganda of right wing European leaders against Turkey's EU entry. Nicholas Sarkozy is depicted as the most popular European politician who aims to shatter Turkey's accession hopes (MHP 2009: 1). Party officials are convinced that Sarkozy intentionally blocked 2 additional negotiation chapters during the French Presidency although Turkey was technically eligible to open them (TBMM 2009a). Moreover, the MHP members of Parliament believe that France and Austria intentionally made constitutional amendments to popularly deny

Turkey's EU accession (TBMM 2010a). Faruk Bal, the deputy for Konya argues that it is just a false hope to bypass France and Austria, and then become an EU member (ibid.). Afif Akkuş, deputy for Mersin, blames the AKP government for lacking a plan to overcome the challenges these two countries pose (TBMM 2010d). Faruk Bal does not believe that Turkey could successfully lobby and change the minds of the Turkey-sceptic French and Austrians due to the enduring negative memories against Turks in the past (ibid.). Since Turkey's EU membership fate is dependent on those people, 'Turkey's accession process remains a shattered dream', Bal adds (ibid.).

Party officials also take a hard-line stance against Germany's anti-Turkey stance. They claim that the German position against Turkey's EU accession results in the ill-treatment of Turkish immigrants by the state authorities and encourages xenophobia and racism in the German public (TBMM 2009c). Just like Baykal of the CHP, Bahçeli, the party leader denied any communication with Merkel during her visit to Ankara in 2010 condemning her opposition to Turkish accession.

Similar to the AKP, the party also labels the EU as a Christian Club (MHP 2009: 6). According to Mehmet Şandır, deputy for Mersin, Sarkozy and Merkel oppose Turkey because of religious difference (TBMM 2008a). Similarly, Deniz Bölükbaşı, retired ambassador and the MHP deputy for Ankara refers to the difference in religion which nurtures deep-seated biases against Turkey in Europe (TBMM 2009b). He even claims this negative position cannot be reduced to Sarkozy and Merkel (ibid.). 'The EU as a whole remains reluctant to Muslim Turkey; that's why Turkey incessantly faces additional conditions which are not in line with the Copenhagen Criteria'; Bölükbaşı contends (ibid.).

Finally, privileged partnership is dismissed outright by the MHP. Party officials even perceive it as a conspiracy against Turkey pioneered by the EU itself. They claim that the EU has an agenda to officially prepare Turkey for privileged partnership, because it no longer uses the term 'full membership' in its declarations on Turkey since 2007 (TBMM 2010b). They are convinced that 'privileged partnership' has become the EU's new official policy towards Turkey (TBMM 2009b).

Overall, official party lines confirm the burgeoning reluctance in the Turkish political elite against EU membership, essentially developed in reaction to the EU's perceived

opposition or unwillingness for Turkish accession. Although leadership change in the CHP has shifted the focus on the AKP's carefree (or indifferent) approach to the EU, all three major parties share the same conviction that the symptoms discussed above indicate the EU's lack of will to absorb Turkey. In the next part, results of interviews conducted with 45 parliamentarians will be discussed to compare individual perceptions with the official party line.

### **7.3. Reflections of Turkish Parliamentarians**

The elite interviews reflect important results. The AKP respondents are firmly convinced that the Turkish government did its best for membership, and blame the EU as solely responsible for the current stalemate. They believe that the EU is a rather a 'Christian Club' and Europeans are scared of Turkey. Party officials not only embrace the official party line but also increasingly reflect their disappointment with the EU. The interviews suggest that most AKP respondents seem to have erased EU accession from their minds.

The CHP officials blame the AKP's authoritarianism for the deadlock in Turkey's EU bid. Although divided on many issues, party officials almost unanimously bolster Kılıçdaroğlu's stance against the AKP and put the EU's reluctance on the back burner. MHP officials on the other hand, mostly confirm the official stance which is lenient to Baykal's arguments on the EU.

#### *7.3.1. The AKP respondents*

Findings of the interviews with the government officials support the AKP's official stance. The AKP respondents almost unanimously<sup>49</sup> declare loss of enthusiasm for membership due to the opposition within the EU against Turkey. Almost all the government officials interviewed claim that the EU does not want to accept Turkey's membership and that's why the EU's approach towards Turkey is unjust, insincere and double standard. According to Abdullah Çalışkan, it will take only a single day

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<sup>49</sup> With the exception of Haluk Özdalga.



for the EU to accept Turkey, if the EU is willing to do so. Similarly, Burak Erdenir reminds us of an American proverb; ‘if there is a will, there is a way’. Erdenir claims that the EU accepted the membership of former Soviet Republics overnight, although most were not ready. ‘When it comes to Turkey, there is no way. We can’t open new negotiation chapters, because there is no will in the EU’. Berat Conkar agrees that the EU can resume negotiations with Turkey lifting its blockade over 18 chapters, if it really desires Turkish accession. ‘There is a lack of will in the EU. Hence the real problem for Turkey’s membership is political rather than technical’, Conkar argues. Finally, Afif Demirkiran is convinced that there will be no doubt about the EU’s reluctance unless the EU revitalizes bilateral relations:

The EU hasn’t opened a single chapter for two and half years. We no longer hold meetings with EU officials. The EU-Turkey joint parliamentary committee is now almost defunct. The political blockade of the negotiation chapter continues. Especially, the French blockade created discontent in the Turkish public. Besides, the EU hasn’t yet withdrawn the visa requirement for Turkey. The EU must take radical actions to resume Turkey’s accession process. Otherwise, we will be certain that the EU is opposed to our accession (Interview with Afif Demirkiran).

Only a minority of respondents<sup>50</sup> remain undecided about the EU’s stance towards Turkey although admitting the existence of opposition within the EU:

The EU doesn’t have a unitary voice towards Turkey. A number of members desire Turkish accession while others oppose it. Hence, it is unfair to claim that the EU doesn’t want us. It is equally unfair to argue that the EU entirely desires our membership (Interview with Mehmet Sayım Tekelioğlu).

There are divergent views within the EU concerning Turkish accession. Hence, it is not fair to state that the EU wants or does not want Turkey’s membership. The majority desires Turkish membership, although there are many Turkey-sceptics in the EU as well. Liberals support Turkey while conservatives oppose it. Liberal-conservative duality marks a historical clash engulfing Europe for centuries. Mostly, it is the liberals who prevailed over conservatives. I hope same applies to the Turkish case (Interview with Haluk Özdalga).

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<sup>50</sup> Mehmet Sayım Tekelioğlu and Hauk Özdalga.

Party officials are almost unanimously convinced that Europeans are biased against Turks primarily due to Turkey's large population, different culture and most importantly, its Muslim identity. Ülker Güzel disagrees with the popular bias that millions of Turks will rush to the EU to deplete local jobs. She is certain that no one will leave Turkey since Turks are devoted to their own country. Ercan Candan claims that Europeans hinted their reluctance towards Turkey many times by underlining cultural, geographic and religious differences. Mustafa Elitaş says he is fed up with being judged by Europeans due to its different culture and religion. Similarly, Abdullah Çalışkan and Rıfat Sait are critical of the European prejudices against Turkey's population and Islamic identity:

Turkey's large population and Muslim identity are the main determinants of the EU's reluctance. That's why the EU tries to delay our accession as long as it can. We are very much annoyed with the EU's approach. Our enthusiasm and faith in Turkey's accession have been depleted. I don't believe the EU will ever accept Turkey's membership (Interview with Abdullah Çalışkan).

Europe is full of biases against Turks. Our different religion has always been a deciding factor for Europeans to distance themselves from us. They have always considered Turks as religious zealots but conversely it is the Europeans who are obsessed with religion. (Interview with Rıfat Sait).

Many government respondents also point to the rising Islamophobia across Europe. Bilal Macit explains that they no longer consider the EU as a beacon of economic development but a breeding ground of Islamophobia which facilitated the rise of far right political parties across Europe. Similarly, Pelin Gündeş Bakır and Tülin Erkal Kara highlight the threat Islamophobia poses to Turkey's EU entry:

Xenophobia, racism and Islamophobia are on the rise in Europe. Far right parties gain ground and mobilize their electorate against Muslims who will allegedly steal their jobs. Public opposition to the Turkish accession stems from the burgeoning Islamophobia in Europe. Elder Europeans are particularly opposed to Turkey. We must convince the European public that Islam and democracy are compatible (Interview with Pelin Gündeş Bakır).

Europeans are scared of us. Especially, the rising Islamo-phobia draws Europe away from Turkey. They treat us like 'niggers'<sup>51</sup>. Turkish people

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<sup>51</sup> Racial insult against Africans. For detail, see Kennedy (2000).

living in Europe are exposed to racism, discrimination and violence (Interview with Tülin Erkal Kara).

In addition, almost all AKP respondents see the EU as a ‘Christian Club’ which will keep its door shut to Muslim countries such as Turkey. They believe that there is a powerful lobby within the EU against Islam. According to Ahmet Baha Ögütken, had Turkey been a Christian country, it would already been admitted to the EU. ‘Turkey is ready to open all the negotiation chapters but the EU doesn’t permit us. This is because the EU wants to remain as a Christian club.’ Ögütken adds. Berat Conkar believes that no matter how secular European society has become, there is always a ‘Christian Club’ mentality engulfing their subconscious. Several AKP deputies<sup>52</sup> explicitly state that the EU accepted the membership of several countries including Greece, Bulgaria, Portugal and Romania just because they are Christian, although these countries actually damage the EU’s economy:

The leader of my previous political party, Necmeddin Erbakan always called the EU Christian Club. I see that he was right all along. Bulgaria and Romania became EU members despite their mediocre economic performance and the lack of democratic consolidation. Would the EU still accept them, had they been Muslim? Absolutely not! The EU’s actions convince us that a Muslim country has no place in the EU (interview with Ali Rıza Alaboyun).

The EU puts additional conditions such as the Cyprus problem to delay our membership. None of the new EU members fully comply with the Copenhagen Criteria. Such discrimination tells me that the EU desires to remain a Christian Club. Turkey is the only Muslim candidate country and it has suffered the most during its candidature. Europeans fear us. They don’t want us in, but they cannot tell it to our face (Interview with Mehmet Erdoğan).

Christian conservatism forces Europeans to drag their feet over Turkey. This tells us that the EU couldn’t transcend its narrow vision of Christian Club. We even observe the hints of a Crusade mentality here. We remember the Srebrenica massacre where Dutch soldiers turned a blind eye to the slaughtering of Muslims at the hands of Christian Serbs. Europe still retains its religious fanaticism which will be its very end (Interview with Rıfat Sait).

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<sup>52</sup>Ahmet Baha Ögütken, Ali Rıza Alaboyun, Mehmet Erdoğan, Yıldırım Ramazanoğlu, Mehmet Kastal and Bilal Macit

Some AKP officials<sup>53</sup> also believe that the presence of Turkish immigrants across Europe, and biases against Turks throughout history contribute to the negative image of Turkey in the EU:

Turkish immigrants in Europe couldn't be well integrated to the host society. Cultural and religious differences play an important role behind this. In addition, Europeans have never abandoned their historical biases against Turks. In many European towns, there are monuments honouring their local people killed by Turks (Interview with Burak Erdenir).

An overwhelming majority of the respondents is also convinced that the EU's negative approach towards Turkey is primarily influenced by two major member states, namely; France and Germany. According to party officials, these countries are scared of losing their powerful position within the EU after Turkish accession. Ali Şahin contends that the EU is practically governed by Germany and France, and that's essentially why the EU has been dragging its feet over Turkey for decades. Similarly, Fatih Çiftçi admits that the majority of the EU members at least rhetorically support Turkey; but he also claims that the opposition of France and Germany dominates the EU's decision-making mechanism. In support of Şahin and Çiftçi, Berat Conkar charges France and Germany with hijacking the EU's enlargement policy. Burhan Kuzu states that the two countries intentionally use the Cyprus problem as an excuse to block Turkey's membership and criticizes the EU of remaining oblivious to such Turkey-sceptic actions. Ali Rıza Alaboyun argues that the leap of faith in Turkey towards EU accession has been essentially exacerbated by the anti-Turkey propaganda of France and Germany. Muzaffer Çakar explains that these countries aim to prevent Turkish accession because they consider Turkey a powerful rival to challenge their privileged position within the EU. Similarly, Belma Satır argues that Turkey's young and dynamic population, its political stability and economic growth scare France and Germany. Ruhi Açıkgöz even speculates that those two countries aim to establish a federal European state:

The EU has become a backyard of these two countries. Their ultimate aim is to establish the United States of Europe (USE) in which there is no place for Turkey. They fear that Turkey will gain excessive power and

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<sup>53</sup> Belma Satır, Ülker Güzel, Burak Erdenir.

influence within the USE at their expense. Therefore, they rather defend privileged partnership for Turkey. (Interview with Ruhi Açıkgöz).

The interview findings clearly confirm the AKP's leap of faith towards EU accession. Almost all respondents are certain that the EU is unwilling to accept Turkey's membership and that's why it creates new obstacles to delay accession as long as it can. Endorsing the statements of the Prime Minister Erdoğan, they want the EU to be clear about Turkey's accession:

We rather prefer Europeans to honestly and openly declare their final decision on Turkey so that we make our future plans. They don't desire our accession due to our cultural and religious difference but cannot spell it out. They rather want us to withdraw our application (Interview with Ruhi Açıkgöz).

Party officials speak hopelessly of Turkey's chances for membership. As a reaction, the AKP respondents reflect Euroscepticism. Most parliamentarians stress that Turkey no longer needs the EU. Conversely, they believe that the EU, which has been suffering from the Euro-zone crisis, desperately needs Turkey:

Turkey is on the rise and the EU is falling down. The EU now needs Turkey more than Turkey needs the EU. Delaying Turkish accession is counter-productive for the EU. Many EU members suffer from economic crisis. Had Turkey been a member, it would be a net contributor to the reconstruction of European economy (Interview with Yıldırım Ramazanoğlu).

Besides, party officials attach less value to membership while highlighting the importance of adopting the EU's standards. For instance, Bilal Macit gives priority to the accession process through which Turkey will be able to comply with the Copenhagen Criteria. 'I don't care whether we become an EU member or not, as long as we successfully adopt the EU's standards', he adds. A claim shared by many is that membership is not indispensable for Turkey<sup>54</sup>. Some respondents even dismiss

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<sup>54</sup>This opinion was explicitly highlighted by 13 AKP officials; namely, Ali Şahin, Abdullah Çalışkan, Ercan Candan, Mustafa Elitaş, Ali Rıza Alaboyun, Canan Candemir Çelik, Tülin Erkal Kara, Ahmet Baha Ögütken, Mehmet Kastal, Mücahit Fındıklı, Mehmet Erdoğan, Burhan Kuzu and Bilal Macit.

accession as it will probably damage the Turkish economy. Mücahit Fındıklı and Mehmet Erdoğan argue that the EU's ever-growing economic crisis renders it a less favourable target for Turkey. Ahmet Baha Ögütken believes that Turkey only needs the EU's standards, not membership. 'In the case of accession, we will only be the EU's henchman, anyway. Accession won't be much of a use to us', Ögütken explains. Similarly, Mehmet Kastal emphasizes the vitality of the Copenhagen Criteria for Turkey's development. 'We name them 'Ankara Criteria' and we go our separate way, if it comes to that point', argues Kastal.

The AKP respondents firmly dismiss any deals the EU offers which will be short of full membership. They have become reluctant for EU membership but they don't desire other options such as privileged partnership. They either want Turkey to be a full member or to go its separate way:

The EU definitely does not want Turkish accession but cannot admit it, because it doesn't have a luxury to lose Turkey. The EU considers offering a sort of special partnership to Turkey rather than full membership. But this is not enough for us. Either the EU grants us full membership, or we go our own way (Interview with Burhan Kuzu).

Europeans have been increasingly discussing alternative deals with Turkey other than full membership. If Turkey will not be able to join the EU, then why did we establish the Ministry of European Union in the first place? (Interview with Burak Erdenir).

The AKP respondents even spell out some alternative plans against EU membership. Some officials focus on a closer partnership with Russia while others talk about union with the Middle East:

Turkey is not dependent on the EU. For us, EU membership is not indispensable. Turkey has a capacity to create alternative options. We are working on a project called 'The Middle East without borders'. Similar to the EU, we aim to establish 'Middle Eastern Union'. People with different ethnic and religious backgrounds had happily lived together for centuries during the Ottoman Empire. However, the delimitation of borders brought chaos. We will withdraw borders with our Middle Eastern brothers and make the Middle East stronger and prosperous than ever (Interview with Ali Şahin).

The EU is insincere. We don't trust the EU. Unless it takes serious steps to revitalise Turkey's membership perspective, we will go our separate

way. Alliance with Russia is an alternative we take into consideration (Interview with Mustafa Elitaş).

Nevertheless, some AKP respondents also admit the reversibility of their Euroscepticism on the condition that the EU takes an initiative to revitalize Turkey's accession process. For instance, Mehmet Sayım Tekelioğlu believes that the negative image of the EU is temporary. 'If the EU decides to take positive steps toward Turkey's accession, its credibility will be restored immediately' he claims. Ali Rıza Alaboyun shares this optimism and states that if the EU decides to take positive steps for Turkish accession, Turkey will regain its motivation for membership. 'However, the EU has lost its credibility in our eyes. If it wants our accession, it should take the first step for it', Alaboyun contends.

### *7.3.2. The CHP respondents*

Responses of the main opposition party officials differ remarkably from those of the AKP respondents. Although they similarly emphasize the EU's reluctance to accept Turkish accession, they stress that the AKP's failure to comply with EU criteria is the main reason for alienation between Turkey and the EU. The AKP officials believe that they have done the best they could for membership and hold the EU solely responsible for the stalemate in Turkey's accession. The CHP respondents, however, argue that the AKP government's rising authoritarianism has swiftly driven Turkey away from the EU. Almost all of the CHP officials<sup>55</sup> explicitly mark the AKP government as the prime suspect for Turkey's failure to become an EU member. The CHP deputies blame the AKP for making Turkey a religious and authoritarian country at the expense of democracy and human rights. They also claim that the government has long used the EU accession process as a cover for its parochial agenda to consolidate its political authority. For instance, according to Gülsün Bilgehan, the AKP government crippled Turkish democracy through concerted efforts to persecute the Turkish press and change the Republican system. She believes that the AKP's authoritarianism drives Turkey away from the EU. Emre Köprülü claims that the AKP

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<sup>55</sup> With the exception of Ramazan Kerim Özkan and Ali İhsan Köktürk.

government uses EU membership as political leverage to gain domestic influence. ‘The increasing authoritarianism and conservatism in Turkey along with corruption and the erosion of democracy during the AKP government draw Turkey away from EU membership’, he argues. Similarly, Erdal Aksünger dismisses the AKP government’s attachment to the EU as a delusion and believes that the AKP is much more attached to the Middle East. ‘During the AKP era, Turkey has become similar to Arabia due to its fictive economic growth, rising corruption, conservatism and authoritarianism’, Aksünger asserts. Faruk Loğoğlu agrees with Aksünger as he claims that the AKP government has never been attached to Turkey’s EU membership objective; but it has long used the accession process as an excuse to consolidate its authoritarianism. ‘Today, the AKP has no membership perspective’, he adds. Almost all of the CHP respondents share the same arguments highlighted above. In comparison to other topics discussed throughout the dissertation, the stance against the AKP’s authoritarianism so far stands as the only policy line on which almost all CHP officials concur. They raise almost the same arguments to criticize the government’s EU policy. In agreement with the views of the parliamentarians discussed above, Atila Kart, Ömer Süha Aldan, İzzet Çetin, Osman Korutürk, Aykan Erdemir, Orhan Düzgün and Süheyl Batum explicitly emphasize that the AKP is primarily responsible for the current problems in bilateral relations since it uses EU accession as an excuse to consolidate its authority:

The AKP has never supported EU membership. It deceived the EU and pretended to be pro-European in order to consolidate its power. Turkey is becoming more and more conservative and religious. The AKP is driving Turkey away from the EU (Interview with İzzet Çetin).

The AKP government is against modern European values; it dismisses them as corrupt. It rather aims to become the leader of the Islamic world. The governing party has an agenda to raise the Islamic civilization above European civilization, but this is not possible. Such an agenda of the AKP is the primary obstacle against Turkish accession (Interview with Osman Korutürk).

The AKP uses EU accession as a tool to consolidate its authority. The government almost entirely abandoned its pro-EU policy. The AKP officials’ rhetoric towards the EU is threatening: ‘Either you accept our membership or we go our separate way’. This is wrong. This is not how you govern Turkey’s EU membership process. (Interview with Ömer Süha Aldan).



On the other hand, the CHP deputies mostly share the AKP's belief that the EU is reluctant towards Turkish accession. A clear majority of the CHP respondents (11 deputies) strongly believe that the EU has never desired Turkish accession. Only four deputies<sup>56</sup> think the EU is undecided. The main opposition mostly shares the government's pessimism towards the EU. For instance, Erdal Aksünger claims that the EU remains indifferent to the breaches of democracy and human rights in Turkey. According to him, it is because the EU fears Turkish accession. 'It is scared of having a border with Iraq, Iran and Syria', he adds. Süheyl Batum believes that the EU deceives Turkey with the false hope of membership. He believes that the EU has lost its credibility and leverage over Turkey. Similarly, Gülsün Bilgehan criticizes the EU's reluctance towards Turkey. 'Had they really wanted Turkey, we would have already been an EU member', she contends. Ömer Süha Aldan too believes that the EU does not desire Turkish accession. 'Once a member, Turkey will have the majority of seats in the European Parliament. Besides, Turkey's large population is an intimidating factor for the EU', Aldan argues. According to Osman Korutürk, the EU doesn't want Turkey's accession but does not want to lose Turkey either; hence it tries to 'anchor' it to EU structures without accepting it as a full member:

Although Turkey has so many issues concerning the functioning of democracy and human rights, the EU's progress reports don't address such discrepancies adequately in order not to drive Turkey completely away from Europe. The EU hence desires to tie Turkey to itself without granting full membership (Interview with Osman Korutürk).

Two deputies<sup>57</sup> draw an even more pessimist picture of Turkey's EU bid as they don't believe the EU has ever desired Turkish accession, and they don't think Turkey will ever be admitted to the EU:

I never believed that the EU would one day accept Turkish accession. I never trusted the EU and still don't trust it. The EU never wanted Turkey's membership. I don't believe it will ever endorse our accession (Interview with İzzet Çetin).

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<sup>56</sup> Aykan Erdemir, Atıla Kart, Faruk Loğoğlu and Hasan Ören.

<sup>57</sup> Emre Köprülü and İzzet Çetin.

The EU doesn't desire our accession. It never has. I see Turkey's EU bid as such; Turkey is ready to give almost every concession to join the Union, while the EU makes every diplomatic move not to accept Turkey (Interview with Emre Köprülü).

On the other hand, according to some respondents, the EU has a right to be reluctant towards Turkish accession. Interestingly, they boldly state that Turkey does not fit in the profile of a true European country:

Some member states under the leadership of France and Germany oppose Turkish membership. I believe that they have rightful concerns about Turkish accession. For instance, the large and unskilled population of Turkey is a major concern. Even western Turks are reluctant to have immigrants from South-Eastern Turkey. Hence, it is quite reasonable that the EU member states don't desire such a huge influx of unskilled and uneducated people from Turkey (Interview with Orhan Düzgün).

Consider yourself living in an affluent neighbourhood, and a bunch of gypsies want to construct tents in your area. Would you accept them as your neighbours? The EU does not want a 'mite' sucking blood from its body. We first need to learn how to become European. Adopting EU-led reforms is not enough. We must reform our mind free from authoritarianism and religious conservatism. Otherwise, we must forget about EU membership (Interview with Kemal Ekinici).

We have so many issues like the Kurdish problem waiting to be tackled. How can the EU accept our membership if we fail to solve our own problems? We must put more effort to become an EU member. Bulgaria worked 24 hours a day for membership; we must do the same. We should not hide behind excuses (Interview with Hasan Ören).

The self-criticism reflected by these CHP officials is nowhere to be found in the AKP responses. Most AKP officials are rather convinced that Turkey has become very advanced. They believe that the EU desperately needs Turkey while Turkey doesn't have a need for the EU anymore. On the contrary, some CHP members believe that Turkey needs EU membership more than ever due to the rising authoritarianism under the AKP government. For instance Aykan Erdemir and Orhan Düzgün state that their support for EU membership increased during the AKP era. They believe that accession stands as a remedy for the shattered image of Turkey:

The increasing authoritarianism of the AKP government made me realize that EU membership has become an indispensable project for Turkey especially in terms of improving human rights and freedoms. The more

authoritarian Turkey gets, the more important EU membership quest becomes for Turkey. Now, we need the EU more than ever (Interview with Aykan Erdemir).

Moreover, unlike the AKP officials, almost none of the CHP respondents see the EU as a Christian Club. Only Ömer Süha Aldan claims that the EU considers itself a Christian Club, that's why it maintains negative biases against Turks and secures doubts about Turkish accession. Most rather dismiss such a claim. For instance, half<sup>58</sup> of the CHP respondents see it as a paranoid idea which is not to be taken seriously. Some others<sup>59</sup> point to the European attachments to Christianity, while some<sup>60</sup> claim that segments within the EU are inclined to depict the EU as a Christian Club; but they still don't want to label the EU as such:

There are many in Europe seeing the EU as a Christian Club, but there are also social democrats in Europe more sympathetic to Turkey. Therefore, the EU's reluctance is not ultimate. There is a way out for Turkey. (Interview with Hasan Ören).

Christianity is still a dominant force in Europe. The EU's indifference to the ill-treatment of Muslims in European countries is worrisome. Nevertheless, labelling the EU as a Christian Club is an overstatement (Interview with Emre Köprülü).

Overall, the CHP deputies essentially consider the EU's reluctance towards Turkey as a secondary obstacle; they rather emphasize the AKP's policies as the most important threat against Turkish accession to the EU. Party officials firmly believe that Turkey must first complete its reforms successfully and then worry about the EU's reluctance. The CHP officials are also relatively optimistic about Turkey's eventual membership:

The Turkish public is manipulated by the government to believe that the most important obstacle is the rising Islamophobia, xenophobia and Turkey-scepticism. Yes, there are some Europeans opposing Turkish accession but first we should complete the reform process. Only then we will have a luxury to worry about Turkey-scepticism. It is actually unimportant whether Europeans desire Turkey or not in its current shape. I

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<sup>58</sup>Osman Korutürk, Orhan Düzgün, Atila Kart, Faruk Loğoğlu, Gülsün Bilgehan, Aykan Erdemir, Süheyl Batum and Ramazan Kerim Özkan

<sup>59</sup>Ali İhsan Köktürk, Erdal Aksünger and Emre Köprülü.

<sup>60</sup>Hasan Ören, Kemal Ekinci and İzzet Çetin.

believe that the EU will definitely desire Turkey's membership when it successfully completes its reform process (Interview with Aykan Erdemir).

The EU is unsure whether it wants Turkey or not. Especially, the anti-Turkey propaganda of France and Germany directly affects the EU's policy towards Turkey. Nevertheless, these are not insurmountable obstacles for Turkey. If Turkish decision-makers take politically consistent steps towards accession without any agenda to use the accession process for their parochial interests, Turkey can eventually become an EU member in spite of the EU's uncertainty towards Turkey (Interview with Atila Kart).

The EU doesn't want Turkish membership. It does not want to extend its borders to the Middle East. Nevertheless, we must first consolidate our democracy and achieve political and economic stability. Then we should worry about European reluctance to Turkish accession (Interview with Ömer Süha Aldan).

Turkey-sceptic EU member states, I call them parasites, contribute to the current stalemate in the bilateral relations. Nevertheless, either way, I believe Turkey will eventually become an EU member (Interview with Faruk Loğoğlu).

### *7.3.3. The MHP respondents*

The answers of the MHP officials are similar to those of the CHP but with an important difference. The MHP deputies agree with the CHP in the sense that they hold both the EU and the AKP government responsible for the deadlock in Turkey's accession process. However, their prime suspect is the EU rather than the AKP. The MHP deputies are convinced that the EU's approach towards Turkish accession is highly selective. They believe that the European public perceive Turks as a threat and hence fear Turkey's membership. Moreover, certain EU member states such as France never step back from their anti-Turkey policies. Nevertheless, party officials are largely divided over whether the EU desires Turkey's membership or not. All four MHP officials have different answers to this question. For instance, while Zuhâl Topçu firmly argues that the EU is definitely reluctant towards Turkey, Nevzat Korkmaz rather depicts the EU as undecided:

The EU doesn't want Turkish membership. Had Europeans desired our membership, they would not have kept us waiting for 50 years. They constantly put more and more obstacles to Turkey. No matter what we do

for the sake of accession, the EU always comes with new demands shattering our hope and motivation for eventual membership (Interview with Zuhâl Topçu).

The EU is undecided over Turkish accession. It is aware that the notion of Global Power Europe is not possible without Turkey. Hence, it cannot close the door to Turkey. However, it refrains from opening the door to Turkey essentially due to its large population and the historical biases of Europeans against Turks. (Interview with Nevzat Korkmaz).

Moreover, Sümer Oral emphasizes the anti-Turkey policies of certain member states such as France and claims that such policies are not applicable to the EU as a whole. On the other hand, Lütfü Türkkan claims that whether the EU wants Turkey or not isn't important as long as the EU does not have a capacity to absorb the huge Turkish population. Türkkan admits that the EU actually has a right to be reluctant about Turkish accession:

Certain EU member states conduct campaigns against Turkish accession and affect the EU's approach to Turkey. Especially, the French opposition to Turkey has become decisive in the curtailment of the accession negotiations. Even the replacement of the President Sarkozy with Socialist Hollande has not had an effect on the anti-Turkey stance of France. Nevertheless, it is wrong to assume that the EU as a whole embraces such anti-Turkey campaigns (Interview with Sümer Oral).

It doesn't matter whether the EU wants Turkey or not. The EU can never absorb Turkey of 80 million people. A huge population with high unemployment rate will further damage the EU's ailing economy. Besides, Turkey's Muslim identity and distinct culture are other sources of concern within the EU. I don't blame them. If I were the EU, I would oppose the membership of such a different country too (Interview with Lütfü Türkkan).

On the other hand, the MHP officials reflect a more unified image in other topics. For instance, almost all respondents<sup>61</sup> either depict the EU as a Christian Club or exclusively Christian. For instance, Zuhâl Topçu believes that the EU is actually a Christian Club, and Turkey's Muslim identity and huge population scare Europeans. 'They always live in a Christian paradigm in which they see no place for Turkey'; Topçu contends. Lütfü Türkkan emphasizes the fact that all EU members are

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<sup>61</sup> With the exception of Sümer Oral.

Christian. 'I don't know whether the EU is a club but I can assure you it is Christian', he adds. In addition, the MHP respondents are essentially convinced that the EU has an agenda to divide or dismantle Turkey. Nevzat Korkmaz argues that the EU has always perceived Turkey as a threat; that's why it supported or remained in different to the movements which aim to dismantle Turkey. According to Zuhale Topçu, the EU aims to break the integrity of Turkish nation state through the reform process in which some reforms have a serious potential to divide Turkey. 'This evidences the reluctance of Europeans to accept Turkish accession. The EU's unwillingness diminishes Turkish enthusiasm for membership', Topçu argues. Lütfü Türkkan approaches the issue from a Realist perspective. He claims that the EU does not desire a powerful Turkey:

I am not sure whether Europeans aim to divide Turkey, but even if they do, this is not morally wrong in International Relations. Every international actor seeks to maximize its own interests and dividing a rival is one method for it. We just need to take precautions against it (Interview with Lütfü Türkkan).

The MHP are also unified in their reactions to the AKP's EU policy. Similar to the views of the CHP respondents, party officials hold the governing party responsible for the deadlock in Turkey's EU membership process. They claim that the government could still have made some progress in Turkey's European vocation despite the EU's selective approach. The MHP officials don't trust the AKP government. They don't believe that the AKP wholeheartedly supports EU accession. Conversely, they share the CHP's view that the government draws Turkey away from the EU:

The AKP government is largely responsible for the momentum lose in bilateral relations. The AKP has long been pretending to support Turkish accession; instead it aims to use the membership process as an excuse to consolidate its political domination in Turkey (Interview with Nevzat Korkmaz).

The current government increasingly drives Turkey away from democracy. Hundreds of journalists are now in jail for opposing the government. This is another major obstacle for Turkish accession (Interview with Lütfü Türkkan).

Despite the growing European reluctance towards Turkey, the AKP government would still have made progress in Turkey's EU process.

However, the AKP government chose to blame EU member states for the stalemate and ceased the reforms. Besides, the AKP's threatening rhetoric further damaged the strained relations. The AKP does not sincerely want EU membership. Instead, it uses EU accession process as a leverage to increase its popularity at home. Turkey needs a new government that will repair the broken relations and help Turkey's EU accession process regain momentum (Interview with Sümer Oral).

Overall, apart from Sümer Oral, almost all the MHP officials interviewed are quite pessimistic about Turkey's EU membership prospects. They criticize the AKP's negligent policy understanding towards the EU, but they have lost hope primarily due to the EU's anti-Turkey stance:

The EU's criteria have become increasingly threatening over the years. Each year, the EU's progress reports have become even harsher towards Turkey. The EU's official documents usually threaten not to accept Turkey unless it complies with additional conditions such as Cyprus. I have actually lost my faith over the possibility of Turkey's EU accession (Interview with Zuhâl Topçu).

I resemble EU membership to club membership. You pay its price and get services in return. In the case of EU membership, you pay the price but there is no service available to you. Moreover, the EU is no longer in a good shape to serve you well. Turkey's EU membership is now just a dream for Turks and the EU doesn't want to wake them up (Interview with Lütfü Türkkan).

#### **7.4. Conclusion**

Overall, the three major Turkish political parties think that the EU does not desire Turkey's membership and it thus creates additional obstacles for membership (such as the Cyprus conditionality) and suggests alternative types of privileged partnerships instead of full membership. Turkish political parties target right-wing European political elite and hold them responsible for the negative propaganda against Turkey across Europe. Besides, the AKP and the MHP essentially emphasize Islamophobia gaining ground in Europe and depict the EU as a 'Christian club'. The CHP under Baykal focused on the EU's discriminatory approach towards Turkey. After the

leadership change, the Party has become much more concerned about the AKP's carefree approach to EU membership and its rising authoritarianism both of which are likely to drive Turkey away from the EU.

Although it is too far-fetched to claim that the EU particularly opposes Turkey's membership and European society is entirely Turkey-sceptic, there is an intensive perception gaining ground in Turkish politics that Europeans don't desire Turkey in the EU. The interview findings clearly indicate such a tendency in the mindset of Turkish political elite. The interviews confirm the Turkish reluctance for EU membership as a reaction to the EU's unwillingness towards Turkish accession. All 45 respondents share the belief that the EU is either reluctant or undecided about Turkey's membership. Apart from three respondents<sup>62</sup>, almost all the parliamentarians stress that the EU's reluctance for Turkish accession diminishes their enthusiasm for membership. This confirms the argument that Euroscepticism in reaction to the EU's country-specific conditionality weakens the the effect of party ideology on Turkish attitudes. Turkish political actors from different ideological backgrounds spell out their scepticism against EU accession as a reaction to the EU's discriminatory conditionality towards Turkey. Similarly, officials from both government and opposition indicate their reluctance towards membership in reaction to the EU's perceived unwillingness for Turkey. This is primarily because Turkey's membership perspective has become unclear and Turkish political actors believe the EU puts forward unique conditions such as the solution of Cyprus problem and the introduction of permanent safeguards, to delay Turkish accession as long as possible. On the other hand, the AKP officials are convinced that the EU is solely responsible for the stalemate in Turkey's European vocation, whereas the opposition respondents also blame the AKP's EU policy which, in their view, has been drawing Turkey away from the EU.

The responses of the AKP officials are in full conformity with the official party line. Party officials claim that the AKP government has done its best to keep Turkey's EU bid alive but it is the EU's reluctance towards Turkey which damages bilateral relations. The AKP respondents essentially believe that Turkey's large population and

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<sup>62</sup> Lütfü Türkkan of the MHP has already been opposed to EU membership, so his stance remains unaffected, while Aykan Erdemir and Orhan Düzgün of the CHP state that the EU's attitudes did not affect their support for membership.



Islam negatively affect the EU's approach towards Turkey. The government officials blame the EU for acting like a 'Christian Club'. In response, they become reluctant for EU membership. Many stress the importance of the EU accession process rather than membership. They believe the compliance with the Copenhagen Criteria will be sufficient for them. Some deputies focus on the potential disadvantages of membership such as the socio-economic costs of adjustment or the likelihood of a second-class membership (indicating only a weak role for Turkey in the EU decision-making), to justify their increasing aloofness to Turkey's EU accession. Nevertheless, this resistance proves reversible as some AKP deputies admit that their Euroscepticism will swiftly shift back to EU-enthusiasm, if the EU takes positive steps to revitalize bilateral relations.

The opposition, however, doesn't believe that it is fair to put all the blame on the EU's shoulders. The CHP respondents almost unanimously believe that the AKP government's rising authoritarianism is the primary reason behind the current stalemate. Actually, the stance against the AKP is the only area the CHP respondents are not divided about. Both nationalist and liberal deputies emphasize that the AKP, not the EU, is the prime suspect for the stalemate in Turkey's accession process. The CHP respondents still reflect loss of enthusiasm for EU membership due to the EU's reluctant or selective approach towards Turkey. Nevertheless, they explicitly highlight that the AKP must take the lion's share. Some CHP respondents declare that the AKP's rising authoritarianism has led them to become more supportive of Turkey's EU membership (seeing the EU as a shelter against AKP's authoritarianism). Unlike the AKP respondents, they believe Turkey needs the EU more than ever. Party officials also don't believe that the EU is a 'Christian Club' and some CHP officials empathize with the EU's hesitation about Turkish accession. They believe that the EU is not wrong to be concerned about 'absorbing' such a problematic country. There is only a minority<sup>63</sup> that reflects a hard-line stance towards the EU. They believe that the EU has never wanted Turkish accession; hence it is not to be trusted. The mistrust for Europeans indicates a symptom for the Sèvres Syndrome. Nevertheless, it seems to have fallen sharply after the resignation of Deniz Baykal whose criticisms had focused on the 'EU threat'. During the zenith of the bilateral relations under the AKP

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<sup>63</sup> Emre Köprülü and İzzet Çetin.

government, Baykal essentially focused his criticisms on the EU's reluctance and its 'double standards' towards Turkey, while condemning the AKP's over-enthusiasm for membership. Now that the AKP's authoritarianism has become more noticeable and its enthusiasm for Turkey's membership has weakened, the CHP under Kılıçdaroğlu leadership has changed its hostile tone towards the EU and has become much more critical of the AKP's role in the deadlock.

The criticisms of the MHP respondents, on the other hand, are more focused on the EU. They agree with the AKP officials that the EU is a 'Christian Club' and their scepticism towards the EU has even worsened to the point of losing faith in Turkey's membership. Moreover, the symptoms of the Sèvres Syndrome are much more visible in the MHP responses since they explicitly declare that the EU has an agenda to divide Turkey. Nevertheless, the MHP officials also point to the AKP's rising authoritarianism which creates additional obstacles for Turkey's EU accession. According to the respondents of the CHP and the MHP, the AKP is hiding behind the EU's selective policies; it could still have made progress in Turkey's EU bid despite the EU's reluctance, but it remains unwilling to govern Turkey's troubled EU membership process.

Finally, when we examine the response of the BDP officials (as the control group) concerning the EU's approach towards Turkey, we see that the strong belief that the EU remains hesitant or reluctant towards Turkish membership is well embedded within Turkish politics. The BDP is one of the most pro-EU political actors in Turkey since as a regional party, it aims to defend 'the ethno-territorial minority against the centre and demand for political autonomy' (Marks et al 2002: 587). Yet, the BDP too believes that the EU is reluctant towards Turkey:

The EU doesn't want Turkish membership. They [Europeans] are dragging their feet. The EU has been suffering an economic crisis. Besides, Turkey has a large population. Most Turks are low skilled and poor. Unemployment is a serious problem in Turkey. The EU fears that its economy will most definitely collapse if it opens its border to Turkey (Interview with Yüksel Mutlu).

Overall, statements of all four political parties confirm the burgeoning Turkish perception that the EU is unwilling to accept Turkey's accession, although they raise different justifications. The AKP and the MHP are convinced that Turkey's Islamic identity and rising right-wing conservatism in Europe are the main determinants of the EU's current policy towards Turkey. On the other hand, according to the BDP, Turkey's potential membership is perceived by Europeans as a serious economic burden to the EU's ailing economy. Finally, the CHP shares economic and political justifications but rejects religious arguments. Therefore, although having different ideological alignments, all four political parties in Turkey share the same belief against the EU. Therefore, 'Turkey-scepticism', an EU-driven factor, explains the rise of Euroscepticism in Turkish politics.

However, it is an important, yet insufficient determinant. It has a strong explanatory power regarding the opposition's Euroscepticism but it falls short of explaining the EU policy of the AKP government. The AKP government pursued a pro-EU policy despite the propaganda of right-wing European politicians against Turkey's membership. The opposition had already raised claims about the EU's reluctance towards Turkish accession right from the outset of the AKP's first term in government. However, the AKP turned a blind eye to the opposition's claims and continued the EU-led reform process. It was only after the suspension of the negotiations that the AKP focused on the EU's unwillingness towards Turkey. Therefore, during 2002 and 2006 when the EU gave credible membership incentives to Turkey, the AKP government took a strategic decision to continue its pro-EU stance despite the opposition's claims of Turkey-scepticism in the EU. It was the rising uncertainty of membership prospects following the suspension of negotiations which led to the AKP government's *volte face* in its EU discourse. It was only then that the AKP shared the opposition's allegations about the EU's lack of will to accept Turkey's membership. The AKP respondents explain their disappointment with the suspension of negotiations which is a turning point in their views towards the EU. They admit that the AKP government took a great risk by continuing the EU-led reform process despite reservations about the EU's approach to Turkey. The suspension of negotiations brought a serious uncertainty to Turkey's EU bid and led the AKP government to revise its pro-EU stance.

## **CHAPTER VIII**

### **CONCLUSION**

This chapter draws some conclusions, addresses potential criticisms and discusses some limitations and implications of the study. This PhD project scrutinizes why Turkish mainstream politics turned against EU membership, a primary quest of Turkish foreign policy since 1963. When the AKP leadership came to power in 2002 and initiated the EU-led reform process with accelerated pace, its efforts proved successful to initiate the accession negotiations in 2005. However, Turkey's failure to comply with the EU's Cyprus conditionality (i.e. its failure to open its harbours and airspace to the Republic of Cyprus) brought the bilateral relations into impasse and led to the partial suspension of negotiations in 2006. As indicated in Chapter I, scholarly discussions analysing Turkey's political stance towards EU membership are either focused on domestic factors such as party competition and ideological alignment or the Cyprus conflict as an external constraint, in order to explain the rise of domestic resentment towards the EU among Turkish political elites. Alternatively, this study reveals that the Turkish stance towards EU accession is not mono-causal; instead it is multi-faceted in nature and it can be better explained with the interplay between domestic and external factors that paved the way for a negative political environment in Turkey towards the EU. Accordingly, the study argues that until 2006, the factor of political ideology (in terms of GAL/TAN divide) explains the opposition's attitudes towards the EU reforms, while the governmental approach could be described as more strategic than ideological. However, since the partial suspension of negotiations in 2006, both the opposition and government in Turkey have reflected similar sceptical attitudes towards the EU irrespective of their ideology or competition strategies. Instead, they emphasize the role of EU-driven factors –

especially, the rising uncertainty over Turkish membership and the EU's 'perceived' reluctance to accept Turkish accession— in complicating Turkey-EU relations.

The existing literature lacks systematic and comparative analysis of fluctuating party preferences in Turkey towards the EU. Instead, scholarly works concentrate on a single party and tend to underestimate the reactionary and dynamic nature of Turkish sceptical attitudes towards the EU process (due to, for example, their overemphasis on historical scepticism based on the Sèvres syndrome). By taking into account the changing attitudes of three mainstream parties (AKP, CHP and MHP) and an anti-establishment party (BDP) towards the EU during the accession negotiations this study aims to fill this particular gap. Besides, the study suggests differentiating between Euroscepticism in member states and Euroscepticism in candidate countries. Euroscepticism applicable to member states means opposition to the notion of European integration in a broader sense, while Euroscepticism in candidate countries particularly means opposition to the EU membership process. The prevailing literature overwhelmingly employs the concept of Euroscepticism in the analysis of party positions towards EU membership in accession countries (including Turkey), without showing awareness of this analytical distinction. However, a critical stance against EU accession does not reveal much about the deeper position of a party towards European integration; thus it indicates a different form of Euroscepticism. It is crucial to emphasize this difference in order to better explain the critical EU discourses of political parties in accession countries and Turkey in particular .

Chapter II gives a detailed account on Euroscepticism in candidate countries putting a special emphasis on changing political party attitudes towards EU membership during accession negotiations. By resorting to Euroscepticism, this study seeks to highlight the contextual character of Turkish political party attitudes towards Turkey's accession to the EU by focusing on the complex nature of EU conditionality that can shift the EU stances of political actors in Turkey. The study discusses Euroscepticism in candidate countries under two main categories in response to the complications of the EU's accession criteria. First, Euroscepticism in candidate countries develops as a response to the EU's issue-specific conditionality. It hence involves an opposition to particular reforms deriving from the EU's formal membership conditionality applicable to every accession country. Domestic political actors resist certain EU-led

reforms either due to high costs of compliance or due to the perceived threats against their state's national sovereignty. Second, Euroscepticism arises from the EU's country-specific conditionality and it involves a more intensive political resistance, as domestic political actors oppose the EU's extra conditionality which specifically targets their own country. In sum, the study benefits from the concept of Euroscepticism in explaining the changing political attitudes of Turkish political parties as a response to the complex nature of EU membership conditionality (comprising both issue-specific and country-specific conditions).

Chapter III discusses the methodological choices of the study. It explains the rationale behind the selection of the Turkish case and the use of elite interviewing as a primary data collection technique. The empirical chapters (IV, V, VI and VII) provide a detailed analysis of Turkish reactions to the EU's adaptational pressures through a closer look at two problematic reform areas under the EU's formal issue-specific conditionality (minority rights and foreign land ownership) and two cases of country-specific pressures (the EU's Cyprus conditionality and the rising Turkish suspicion that the EU won't accept Turkey's membership due to cultural, religious and political differences). Overall, the study argues that Turkish reluctance for EU membership is multi-causal and involves a reactionary dimension. Not only endogenous but also exogenous EU-driven factors explain the rise of Euroscepticism in Turkey at different stages. In summary, domestic factors such as ideology and party competition had considerable explanatory power over Eurosceptic responses of the Turkish political elites when there were clear incentives towards Turkey's EU accession (2002-2006). However, after the partial suspension of the negotiations (2006 to 2013), EU-driven factors including the rising uncertainty of membership and the EU's 'reluctance' towards Turkish accession, have become more important than domestic factors like ideology and strategy in explaining the rise of Euroscepticism in Turkish politics.

Euroscepticism as a reaction to the EU's issue-specific conditionality was observed among Turkish political actors in the case of the EU-led reforms of minority rights and foreign land ownership. The main opposition parties (the CHP and the MHP) defied the reform process with a self-proclaimed duty to protect the integrity of the Turkish Republic against any dangers which the EU accession process might bring. Although operating at the different ends of the Left-Right spectrum, both parties

shared common TAN arguments to deny greater rights to minorities and foreigners. For its part, despite its conservative (TAN) background, the AKP government adopted a pro-reform approach using the EU accession process to provide external legitimacy for its minority rights policy and rally public support for its well-orchestrated efforts to solve the long festering Kurdish problem of Turkey. The AKP government also supported the FLO reform by emphasizing that it would stimulate foreign direct investment and decrease the budget deficit. Therefore, contrary to the main opposition parties which acted according to their ideological alignments, the AKP government took a strategic choice to stay on the EU path despite its conservative background.

However, after the partial suspension of the negotiations in 2006 which left Turkey's accession perspective in limbo, the ensuing developments in Turkish politics diminished the credibility of the 'ideology versus strategy' debate. Although it previously abstained from demonstrating a critical stance towards the EU, the AKP government has increasingly become reluctant to proceed with the EU-led reform process. Instead, it adopted a selective approach towards EU conditionality, adopting certain reforms such as Foreign Land Ownership while opposing others like the Cyprus conditionality. Moreover, the interview results demonstrate that most AKP respondents are in agreement with the opposition concerning the expansion of minority rights. The increasing uncertainty of Turkey's EU membership diminished their enthusiasm for reform and let them return to their conservative (TAN ideological) concerns about minority rights. The interviewed parliamentarians from the government reported that they opposed the categorization of Kurds as a minority, because they assumed that minority meant an inferior status. They also fear that such categorization carries the potential to divide Turkey, a statement that reinforces the historical Sèvres syndrome in Turkey. In brief, since the partial suspension of accession negotiations, the AKP respondents started to raise similar TAN arguments of the mainstream opposition parties in Turkey with regard to the expansion of minority rights. Moreover, the AKP respondents joined the opposition in their criticisms of the EU's selective approach toward minority rights. An important number of respondents from all three parties claim that the EU treats members and candidates differently as regards the question of minority rights, and this proves

counter-productive for EU-Turkey relations. This criticism has gained ground only after 2006 when Turkey's accession prospects became highly uncertain.

The AKP's selectivity towards EU conditionality is also visible in the case of FLO reform. Opposition parties, including the pro-reform BDP, are convinced that the FLO reform the AKP seeks to embrace is not in compliance with the EU's FLO conditionality, because the new FLO law foresees the liberalisation of land ownership not necessarily for EU nationals but for particularly Islamic countries who are willing to buy land in Turkey. Therefore, they believe that the AKP brings its own version of FLO reform to table and this is not in line with the EU's FLO criterion. Some AKP parliamentarians admit that the latest legal amendment to FLO was made in order to attract more Arab investment, not with the objective of complying with the EU's accession criteria as some had believed. It is plausible to argue that the suspension of the negotiations not only decreased the AKP's enthusiasm to proceed with the reform process, but also encouraged the government to go outside the scope of the EU acquis when adopting new laws. Therefore, the opposition blames the AKP for 'walking away' from the EU context in its legislation.

As discussed above, domestic reactions to EU-led reforms have been mostly adopted by opposition parties with TAN ideology who aimed to weaken the pro-reformist AKP government. On the other hand, the government gave strategic support for Turkey's EU membership process. As long as the EU provided Turkey with credible membership incentives, the AKP government continued the reform process, fending off the opposition's criticisms. However, the EU's Cyprus conditionality led to a more intensive domestic resistance, since failure to comply with this condition jeopardizes Turkey's membership prospects. After the partial suspension of the negotiations, the AKP abandoned its reformist discourse on Turkey's Cyprus policy. The AKP respondents unanimously indicate that they no longer trust the EU's impartiality over the Cyprus problem. Besides, they are convinced that opening Turkish borders to the RoC will neither solve the Cyprus problem nor guarantee Turkey's EU membership. A remarkable *volte face* in the AKP's Cyprus policy reflects the political impact of the country-specific conditionality of the EU on Turkish politics. Both opposition and government stand against the EU's Cyprus conditionality and even the BDP, an anti-establishment (and pro-EU) party has begun to express the same arguments as the



mainstream parties. A surprisingly broad consensus has emerged among Turkish politicians to emphasize the EU's 'double standards' towards Turkey.

The EU's Cyprus conditionality is not the only EU-driven factor that fuels extensive Euroscepticism in Turkish politics. There is also a growing perception among Turkish politicians that the EU has become rather reluctant towards Turkish accession. The main opposition parties have long emphasized the claim that the EU is unwilling to accept Turkish membership (as early as the initial years of the AKP government). However, the AKP government turned a blind eye to the opposition's allegations and remained at the EU's negotiating table. The partial suspension of the EU negotiations was a decisive factor in the government's changing rhetoric towards the EU. The AKP interviewees compare the EU to a 'Christian club' believing that Turkish membership is opposed on religious grounds. They state that they may be looking for alternative partnership with the Middle Eastern countries and/or Russia. Similar pessimism is shared by the opposition parties (the CHP, the MHP and the BDP), who are convinced that the EU is dragging its feet on the question of Turkey's membership. Turkish opposition parties also blame the AKP government for abandoning its pro-EU policy so quickly and using the EU's reluctance towards Turkey as an excuse for halting the reform process.

### **8.1. Discussion of the Hypotheses**

Six hypotheses are outlined by the study to test the effects of party ideology, strategy, and EU-driven factors on the development of Eurosceptic politics in Turkey. The discussion of the first three hypotheses reveals the fact that ideology holds only limited explanatory power in explaining the Turkish case.

**H1** states that the Left-Right distinction has a limited (if at all) role in explaining Euroscepticism in candidate countries. The Turkish case confirms this hypothesis because both Left-wing and Right-wing parties (the CHP and the MHP) reflect Euroscepticism. The literature on Euroscepticism previously attached a subtle role to the Left/Right distinction highlighting the bases of support for or opposition to the EU project with reference to different economic interpretations of European integration

(Aspinwall 2002). Increasingly, greater importance is attributed to the explanatory power of the libertarian/authoritarian (GAL/TAN) distinction in inducing party-based Euroscepticism (Marks et al 2006; Hooghe and Marks 2008). Following this trend, the study emphasizes the GAL/TAN distinction as a possible key determinant for Euroscepticism.

**H2** claims that TAN parties in accession countries are more likely to adopt Euroscepticism than GAL parties. This is only partly supported in the Turkish case. The CHP and the MHP as TAN parties reflect Euroscepticism with the claim that some aspects of the EU-led reform process are detrimental to Turkey's national sovereignty and integrity. However, the AKP government persisted until 2006 in Turkey's reform process despite its TAN ideology. Therefore, although Eurosceptic parties are primarily TAN parties in the Turkish case, this does not necessarily mean that all TAN parties automatically pursue Eurosceptic policies.

**H3** examines whether the effects of ideology on Euroscepticism are diminished by EU-driven factors in accession countries. Accordingly, the hypothesis argues that both TAN and GAL parties in accession countries are likely to embrace Euroscepticism when the EU's conditionality is ambivalent or inconsistently applied to candidates and members and when there is a rising uncertainty over membership related for instance to the EU's perceived reluctance towards enlargement. The findings of the study support the hypothesis, as the EU-driven factors (as defined above) are emphasized by both GAL and TAN parties that reflect Eurosceptic reactions. Apart from the conventional opposition based on TAN ideology, Turkish political actors with a GAL agenda such as the BDP and the liberal/pro-reformist wing of the CHP are critical of the EU's selectivity in the application of its minority rights criterion (Euroscepticism in response to the EU's issue-specific conditionality). They also criticize the EU's Cyprus conditionality and share the conviction that the EU is reluctant to accept Turkey's membership (Euroscepticism in response to the EU's country-specific conditionality). The AKP government has also started to express similar criticisms after the partial suspension of accession negotiations.

The remaining three hypotheses discuss the validity of party competition in explaining Turkish Euroscepticism. Compared to party ideology, the study finds a stronger link

between the strategic choices of the selected parties related to party competition and Euroscepticism between 2002 and 2006. However, the increasing uncertainty of membership prospects (an EU-driven factor) since 2006 seems to have diminished the explanatory power of strategy.

**H4** aims to reveal the association between a political party's place in the national party system and its propensity to adopt Euroscepticism in an accession country. According to some, sceptical attitudes towards European integration are reserved to fringe parties (Aspinwall 2004; De Vries and Edwards 2009). Alternatively, this study assumes that both mainstream and fringe parties may reflect Eurosceptic reactions during accession negotiations. Confirming this, the selected cases demonstrate that not only fringe parties like the BDP, but also the mainstream parties including the AKP, the CHP and the MHP have reflected Euroscepticism at different stages of the accession negotiations. In this context, the distinction between fringe and mainstream is not particularly useful in this study.

**H5** relates to the effects of the 'government-opposition' distinction on Euroscepticism in candidate countries. It follows the claims that opposition parties in accession countries are more likely to adopt Eurosceptic attitudes than governing parties. The research findings support this claim in the case of issue-specific Euroscepticism because the latter is essentially adopted by opposition parties aiming to undermine the popularity of the government. For its part, by embracing a pro-EU stance, the AKP government has sought to receive external legitimacy from the EU and delegitimize its political opponents in the domestic arena. One may argue that the government-opposition positioning has greater explanatory power than ideology in the Turkish case, since the AKP government –despite its TAN ideology– remained pro-EU. However, since 2006 the AKP has joined the ranks of Eurosceptics, neutralising the effects of government-opposition competition.

**H6** examines whether EU-driven factors decrease the explanatory power of party competition (the government-opposition distinction) regarding Euroscepticism in candidate countries. The hypothesis suggests that not only the opposition but also the governing parties in accession countries are likely to embrace Euroscepticism when there is a general perception in the domestic arena that (i) the EU's conditionality is

inconsistent and selective, (ii) there is a rising uncertainty over their EU membership, and (iii) the EU lacks the political will for further enlargement. The opposition parties reflect the significance of EU-driven factors while justifying their resistance against the reform of minority rights. However, the factor of strategy explains the AKP government's attitudes towards the EU conditionality better than the EU-driven factors before the partial suspension of accession negotiations. The AKP government continued the reform process despite the opposition parties' claims about the EU's selective application of its minority rights criterion. Moreover, the EU's perceived reluctance for Turkish accession often emphasized by the opposition parties did not have a remarkable impact on the AKP's EU policy before the partial suspension of the negotiations. Therefore, between 2002 and 2006, strategy played a key role in the AKP's pro-EU activism contrary to the EU-driven factors that ignited Eurosceptic responses in opposition parties.

From 2006 onwards, the increasing uncertainty of Turkey's membership has diminished the effect of the strategic alignment of the AKP government. Since then, the AKP officials have adopted Euroscepticism highlighting the EU's inconsistent and discriminatory approach to minority rights and Cyprus conditionality as well as the EU's 'lack of will' towards Turkey's accession. Therefore, the AKP adopted Euroscepticism as a response to the EU's both issue-specific and country-specific conditions following the curtailment of EU negotiations which brought high levels of uncertainty for Turkey's membership prospects. Accordingly, the EU's selectivity and its perceived reluctance towards Turkey are influential upon opposition parties but cannot explain the AKP's resort to Euroscepticism without taking into consideration the rise of uncertainty over membership.

Overall, the study's key findings regarding the rise of Euroscepticism in Turkish politics are:

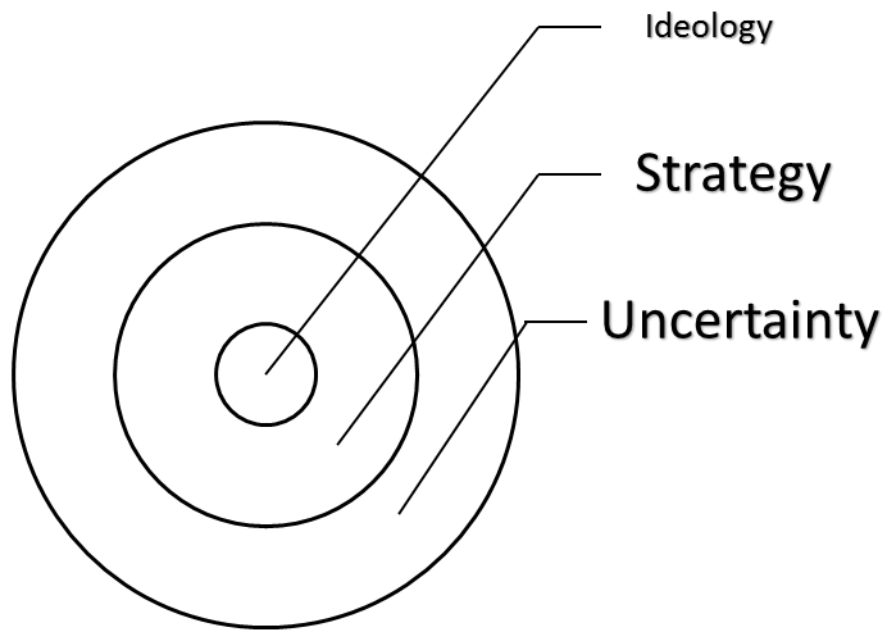
1-Although Eurosceptic attitudes are frequently adopted by parties with TAN ideology, not all TAN parties are Eurosceptic. It is important to look at government-opposition positioning and the state of negotiations with the EU.

2-Strategy may have a greater role than ideology in explaining Euroscepticism in Turkey since the AKP government with TAN ideology supported the EU-led reform process to acquire both external and internal legitimacy until 2006.

3- NOT all EU-driven factors have an equal impact on Euroscepticism. The EU's selectivity in its conditionality and its reluctance towards Turkey's EU membership may have influenced opposition party attitudes, but is not sufficient to explain why the Turkish government waited until 2006 before resorting to Eurosceptic arguments emphasizing the EU's selectivity and reluctance towards Turkish accession. In the case of the AKP, party strategy prevailed over EU-driven factors before the curtailment of accession negotiations.

4- The EU-driven factor that matters the most is the increasing uncertainty about membership. If uncertainty of membership increases to an unacceptable extent, both ideology and strategy lose their explanatory power. In that case, both government and opposition parties (having either TAN or GAL ideology) start to reflect common Eurosceptic reactions.

Overall, as illustrated below (Figure 1), ideology is at the centre of political attitudes towards EU conditionality in Turkey. However, strategy can contain ideology and decrease its explanatory power especially in the discussion of the governmental attitudes towards the EU. Finally, the uncertainty of membership prospects tends to decrease the role of ideology and strategy in terms of reinforcing unlikely alliances among different political parties against the EU regardless of their ideological alignments or strategic preferences.



**Figure 1:** Three main determinants of Euroscepticism in Turkish politics: party ideology, strategic decision-making, and uncertainty regarding EU accession.

The analytical distinction between the EU's issue-specific conditions and country-specific conditionality is useful in terms of uncovering the role of different factors at different stages of the EU process. For instance, the GAL-TAN distinction generally explains Eurosceptic responses to the EU's issue-specific conditionality better than Euroscepticism arising from the EU's country-specific conditions. The EU's issue-specific conditionality is primarily opposed by parties with TAN ideology in Turkey. While the opposition TAN parties have consistently been resorting to this type of Euroscepticism since 2002, the AKP government reflecting TAN ideology embraced it in relation to minority-rights reforms after 2006. The increasing uncertainty about Turkey's membership has encouraged an emphasis on EU-driven factors (the EU's reluctance towards Turkey's accession and its 'double-standards' in its Cyprus conditionality) ruling out ideology and party competition as the main determinants of Eurosceptic attitudes in Turkey. Irrespective of their ideology and strategies, all of the selected parties (the AKP, the CHP, the MHP, and the BDP), have converged towards a common position on Turkey-EU relations. In this context, country-specific additional criteria (Cyprus conditionality) coupled with uncertainty over membership paved the way for a broad consensus around Eurosceptic arguments in Turkey.

<b>EU Conditionality</b>	<b>Type Of EU Conditionality</b>	<b>Euroscepticism under <u>Low</u> Level of Uncertainty (2002-2006)</b>	<b>Euroscepticism under <u>High</u> Level of Uncertainty (2006-2013)</b>
<b>MINORITY RIGHTS</b>	Issue-specific	CHP and MHP	AKP*, CHP, MHP and BDP*
<b>FOREIGN LAND OWNERSHIP</b>	Issue-specific	CHP and MHP	AKP*, CHP, MHP and BDP
<b>CYPRUS</b>	Country-specific	CHP and MHP	AKP, CHP, MHP and BDP
<b>RELUCTANCE TO TURKISH ACCESSION</b>	Country-specific	CHP and MHP	AKP, CHP, MHP and BDP

**Table 2:** The effects of the level of uncertainty over Turkey’s membership on Turkish Euroscepticism in the selected domains. \*Selectivity in supporting the EU-led reforms.

## **8.2. Contributions of the study**

This research aims to bring theoretical and empirical innovations. First of all, it offers a theoretical contribution to the literature by differentiating between Euroscepticism in member states and candidate countries to better understand and explain political party responses to EU conditionality in candidate states during the accession negotiations. A particular focus on Euroscepticism in candidate countries is well-suited to explain the Turkish case, because it (i) categorizes domestic political reactions based on the complex nature of EU conditionality involving both formal issue-specific and additional country-specific pressures; (ii) focuses on both domestic and external/EU-driven factors behind domestic resistance to the accession process; and (iii) enables the comparison of Turkey with other candidate countries focusing on the negotiation process.

As regards empirical contributions, the study provides a two-pronged comparative perspective to the study of party positions towards the EU involving the comparison

of the attitudes of different Turkish political parties with one another (internal comparison) and the comparison of the EU policies of Turkish political parties with those of other candidate countries (external comparison). It first offers an internal comparison of Turkish politics as it discusses the EU stances of primary political parties in Turkey, namely the AKP, the CHP and the MHP, and takes into consideration the attitudes of the pro-Kurdish BDP (as a control case). Therefore, it aims to refine the prevailing approaches to Turkey-EU relations which limit their focus to single party attitudes towards EU accession process (Canefe and Bora 2003; Doğan 2005; Patton 2007; Gülmez 2008; Avcı 2011a and 2011b; Celep 2011; İçener and Çağhyan-İçener 2011). Following the emerging literature that suggests comparing multiple parties in Turkey (Öniş 2009 and 2010; Yılmaz 2011; Baudner 2012; Gülmez 2013b), this study will be the first to comparatively discuss the EU policies of all four political parties that are represented in the Turkish Parliament.

This comparison essentially reveals that as the uncertainty of Turkish membership increases, all political actors give similar Eurosceptic responses despite their differences. It is particularly notable that two diametrically opposed parties in terms of ideology, namely the MHP (ultranationalist party) and the BDP (pro-Kurdish anti-establishment party) show the same reactions to the EU's Cyprus conditionality and the EU's reluctance towards Turkey's accession. This has a crucial implication for Turkish politics. Despite their differences, political parties in Turkey secure a potential to unite against the EU as a reaction to EU-driven factors. The reactionary dimension of Euroscepticism in Turkey implies the reversibility of this phenomenon. If domestic parties can unite against the EU, they can also work together for Turkish membership invalidating ideological and strategic barriers. In this sense, Euroscepticism in candidate countries (Turkey in particular) should not be understood as a deep-seated, predetermined and fixed opposition to Europe and its ideals (which stands as a broader definition of 'Euroscepticism' primarily applicable to member states). On the contrary, *Euroscepticism in candidate countries involves domestic reactions to the EU's conditionality on particular issues and the EU's extra conditions towards particular countries during the accession negotiations, while supporting EU membership in principle*. It is thus crucial to consider the EU-driven



factors as well as domestic factors while trying to grasp the rise of sceptical attitudes in a candidate country.

Moreover, the interview findings make a series of empirical contributions to the extant literature on the comparison of Turkish political parties by revealing intra-party divisions. First of all, government officials turn out to be more conservative and nationalistic than their party's liberal political rhetoric whereas the MHP respondents often express more liberal attitudes, especially regarding FLO reform, than their ultra-nationalistic party. Second, contrary to the mainstream literature which considers the AKP as immune to the Sèvres Syndrome, most AKP respondents carry the fear of division and define the EU as a 'Christian Club'. This is an important innovation, as the AKP government has long been praised as a liberal force for Turkey shaking the foundations of the *ancien régime* which instilled the fear of division and hatred against Europeans (Kirişci 2006; Fuller 2008; Guida 2008; Yavuz 2009; Nefes 2013). The interviews, however, reveal the fact that some government officials are not much more different in their perceptions than the Kemalist establishment they aim to dismantle.

Third, there is an emerging literature on the leadership change in the CHP and a common argument is that Kılıçdaroğlu leadership took tangible steps towards liberalising the CHP that had succumbed to TAN inclinations during the Baykal era (Celep 2011; Baudner 2012; Oğuzlu 2012; Öniş 2012; Özipek 2012; Yanık 2012; Gülmez 2013a; Kaliber 2013). Yet the literature also contends that it is still too early to make a true assessment due to lack of a comprehensive analysis measuring the 'Kılıçdaroğlu effect' on the party's ideological alignment (Celep 2011; Yanık 2012). Öniş (2012: 148) claims that Kılıçdaroğlu's rise to party leadership has divided the CHP into two camps: defensive nationalists versus social democrats. This study provides original data to substantiate this claim. The interview findings highlight that Kılıçdaroğlu's rise to party leadership triggered a liberal transformation of the party; yet such transformation stands as an unfinished project since he could not erase the nationalist camp from the ranks of the party. Supporting Öniş (2012), the interviews indicate that the CHP is currently divided between an emerging reformist wing and the old guard nationalist establishment. Such a split is particularly clear in the case of minority rights and the EU's Cyprus conditionality. While half of the respondents

urge for the expansion of minority rights without seeking reciprocity, the other half reflects Baykal's hard-line approach and remains aloof to the idea of expanding minority rights in Turkey. Some party officials report that those reforms may be instrumentalised by the EU which, they suspect, holds a hidden agenda to dismantle Turkey. Concerning the EU's Cyprus conditionality, nearly a half of the CHP respondents defend equitable solution to the problem and urges Turkey to open its harbours and airspace to the RoC if it truly wants to be an EU member. However, the other half strongly defends the *status quo* on the island following the previous CHP leadership.

It is fair to argue that the CHP is evenly divided into two camps; while a half of the CHP respondents tend to identify the CHP with social democracy and individual freedoms; the other half remains as a nationalistic conservative camp preoccupied with the preservation of the Republican principles reminiscent of the Baykal era. Therefore, the 'new' CHP has not become a centre of attraction for the Turkish electorate since the party has not yet finished its liberal transformation. The CHP's failure to free itself from the shackles of its self-proclaimed legacy to protect the Republic precludes the party's potentials to rise to government.

Finally, the study offers an external comparison of the Turkish case. As discussed above, it compares the Turkish case with other candidate countries. Despite its political, historical, geographical and cultural differences, it is still possible to compare Turkey with other former and current candidate countries. The research finds that political actors in dissimilar countries give similar responses to similar EU conditions not only out of domestic considerations (ideology and strategy) but due to EU-driven factors (the EU's discrimination and/or reluctance towards candidate, and rising uncertainty of membership due to the EU's extra conditionality) as well. Political parties not only in Turkey but also in other candidate countries raise similar nationalistic justifications to oppose many EU-led reforms. For instance, domestic resistance to the reforms of both FLO and minority rights is essentially based on the preoccupation to protect national integrity against foreigners. Moreover, candidate countries having bilateral problems with EU member states are forced by the EU to solve the conflict before accession, and such additional preconditions tend to trigger negative reactions in the domestic arena. Despite their ideological differences,

political actors in an accession country can perceive the EU's conditionality as 'double-standard' and adopt a common critical stance against the EU process. Accordingly, Turkish reactions to the EU's Cyprus conditionality are comparable to the Macedonian reactions to the EU's membership precondition to change its name, and the Croatian reactions to the EU's precondition to solve its problem with Slovenia about the fisheries zone. Therefore, the innovative argument here is that despite domestic peculiarities, EU pressures that are perceived as discriminatory and thus, reinforcing the uncertainty of membership are likely to lead dissimilar political actors in dissimilar countries to give similar responses.

Overall, the study highlights that the EU's additional country-specific political conditionality can feed into the Eurosceptic discourses of Turkish political parties. Nevertheless, as discussed in Chapter VII, the current negative atmosphere in Turkey towards EU membership may be reversed if necessary steps are taken by both Turkey and the EU. Many government and opposition members report that they are ready to abandon their sceptical stance towards the EU once they are offered more concrete membership prospects. It is crucial to note that the EU-led reform process is likely to persist despite low accession prospects, albeit on a selective and uneven basis (Börzel 2012). Numerous attempts to codify different EU-led reforms by the single-party government that holds the majority of the posts in the Turkish Parliament have been vetoed by the main opposition party CHP. In the Turkish constitutional system, the main opposition party holds the right to submit new laws to the Turkish Constitutional Court. So, the CHP succeeded in having many laws annulled by the Turkish Constitutional Court, which has often been accused by pro-government circles of representing the CHP's Kemalist and Nationalistic mentality (Celep 2011). In this context, the success and viability of the EU-led reform process in Turkey depend on the collaboration between the government and the main opposition party<sup>64</sup>.

The rising Euroscepticism in the AKP and the opposition parties can be mitigated if Turkey is permitted to resume the accession negotiations in return for full compliance with the official Copenhagen Criteria. In such case, the interviews demonstrate that the AKP government is likely to return to its pragmatic pro-EU policy stance, and the

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<sup>64</sup>The far-right MHP will be persistent in its EU-sceptic stance in order to retain its nationalist electorate. Nevertheless, it will remain the only EU-sceptic party in the parliament which will not jeopardize the EU-led reform process.

CHP led by Kılıçdaroğlu would abandon its Eurosceptic stance despite the existence of a nationalist faction that reflects the Sèvres syndrome within the party. The liberal transformation of the CHP will gain momentum with the revitalization of Turkey's EU accession process and thus, the nationalist faction that was dominant in the Baykal era will not be able to dominate the EU discourses of the CHP under Kılıçdaroğlu. Concrete membership prospects can also have a positive effect in domestic politics in Turkey facilitating the adoption of a new Constitution in line with the EU *acquis* and the solution of the Kurdish problem. However, if the EU fails to dissipate the widespread perception that the EU will never admit Turkey due to the latter's cultural and religious differences, it is likely to lose its political leverage on Turkey.

For their part, Turkish political actors must be ready to promote a viable solution to the Cyprus problem. If the EU follows a different strategy on the Cyprus problem by pressurizing not only Turkey but also the RoC to agree on an equitable solution (for instance by disallowing the RoC to veto the EU's relations with North Cyprus and Turkey), this will provide enough stimulus for Turkish political actors to extend support for the opening of Turkey's harbours and airspace to the RoC. The interviews reveal the fact that the AKP officials wait for such an EU initiative that can help them explain their future concessions about the Cyprus question to the Turkish public. Moreover, at least half of the CHP respondents suggest that they would agree with the opening of Turkey's borders to the RoC in return for more credible incentives from the EU. They fear that by playing the 'Cyprus card', certain EU members seek to delay, if not cancel, Turkey's accession due to different political reasons. This means that Turkey's compliance with the Cyprus conditionality may lead to further demands for political concessions instead of facilitating Turkey's EU membership. In sum, a remarkable positive step from the EU may reverse the negative atmosphere in Turkey-EU relations mitigating the Euroscepticism currently engulfing Turkish politics.

### **8.3. Limitations of the Study**

Having outlined the main contributions of the PhD research, this section discusses certain limitations of the study which primarily stem from methodological choices involving the strategy of case selection and employment of a single-N case study.

### *8.3.1. Trade-off between multiple cases and in-depth analysis*

A focus on multiple reforms limits in-depth analysis. For instance, had the PhD project been on the reform of minority rights, a detailed inquiry on the Kurdish problem and the peace process initiated by the AKP government would have been possible. Launching the process in 2009, the AKP government aimed at solving the long festering Kurdish problem and the PKK violence once and for all. The peace talks continue between the imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan and Turkish authorities regarding the amelioration of Kurdish cultural rights and liberties, a general amnesty for PKK militants and the freedom of Öcalan in return for the PKK's retreat from Turkish soils and the eventual termination of the PKK violence. Turkish Armed Forces and the PKK militants jointly announced a temporary ceasefire in 2013. However, the talks proceed slowly and the PKK forces have not yet fully evacuated their posts within Turkish territories.

Moreover, it was not possible to include voluminous details of the Cyprus problem, which dates back to late 1950s and involves numerous actors and strategies including the UN, the USA, Russia in addition to the EU, Turkey, Greece, the UK and Cypriot communities. The study briefly discussed the main aspects of the Cyprus conflict and devoted its energy to the analysis of Turkey's failure to comply with the EU's Cyprus conditionality. Yet, a brief rather than detailed analysis of the Cyprus problem did not compromise the main findings of the study, because this PhD project exclusively aimed at examining Turkish political responses to the EU's Cyprus conditionality rather than the Cyprus problem itself. Therefore, for the purposes of the study, it is vital to reveal the main justifications behind Turkish reactions to the EU's Cyprus conditionality rather than discussing who is right and who is wrong in the Cyprus conflict.

### *8.3.2. Other actors and reform areas*

Another potential limitation is that the study could have focused on other actors and/or reform areas in order to scrutinize the rising Euroscepticism in

Turkey. Concerning actors, business elites are often considered as key economic players in Turkey's EU membership process. Pro-EU organizations such as the Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (TÜSIAD), the Economic Development Foundation (IKV) and the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV) long lobbied for Turkey's EU accession and gave full support to the EU-led reform process (Eylemer and Taş 2007: 564; Türkmen 2008: 151). On the other hand, pro-Islamic organizations such as the Independent Industrialists and Businessmen Association (MÜSIAD) and the Turkish Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists (TUSKON) long remained cautious towards Turkey's EU membership, but they both decided to extend support for Turkey's accession process after the AKP came to power in 2002 (Eylemer and Taş 2007: 564-565). Therefore, the position of the Turkish business elites towards the EU's issue-specific and country-specific conditions before and after the suspension of the negotiations could have been studied in comparison to the position taken by the political actors. Not only Turkey's centralized structure that emphasizes political elites at the expense of business elites and other actors such as bureaucrats, but also the polarised nature of the Turkish business elites reflecting the ideological competition of government and opposition led this study to focus on political party actors.

Regarding EU-led reforms, freedom of expression and the establishment of an ombudsman could have been studied since they triggered domestic resistance during the EU negotiations. For instance, both the CHP and the MHP opposed the EU's condition to abrogate Article 301 of the Penal Code, designed to penalise those who denigrate 'Turkishness'. This reform was encouraged by the EU in order to improve the freedom of expression in Turkey. The opposition parties defended that Article 301 protected the dignity and honor of the Turkish nation (Yılmaz 2011: 196). Both the CHP and the MHP strongly criticized its abrogation and voted against its annulment. Onur Öymen, the deputy chairman of the CHP blamed the EU for liberalizing insult instead of the freedom of expression in Turkey (Hürriyet 2006b). Oktay Vural, the MHP deputy for İzmir even charged the government with 'treason' due to the government's support for decriminalizing insult to Turkish state and nation (Radikal 2008).

The opposition parties also raised objections to the establishment of ombudsmanship out of fear that the AKP government would only recruit an ‘AK-budsman’, a pro-AKP ombudsman instead of an autonomous and impartial one (Buhari-Gülmez 2011: 480-481). Likewise, the EU-led reforms of competition policy and cooperatives have been equally opposed by the opposition deputies who denounced that the government’s bills were incompatible with the EU acquis (TBMM 2010a and 2010b). Although these reforms constitute viable test cases for the discussion of Euroscepticism in Turkish politics, due to time and space constraints, it was not possible to study all of them. Nevertheless, the opposition’s reactions to the reforms such as the establishment of an ombudsman and the annulment of Article 301 generally demonstrate the role of ideology in explaining the rise of scepticism in Turkey towards the EU, while strategy explains the AKP government’s reformist outlook (Gülmez 2013a). In this sense, the selected cases, namely foreign land ownership and minority rights capture the general context and arguments that can be used to explain domestic reactions in other reform areas.

### 8.3.3. *Some major developments*

A particular focus on the selected cases also limits detailed discussion of certain developments during the period under scrutiny that may have an effect on Turkey-EU relations. There are three major incidents in Turkey which were closely monitored by the EU, including the Ergenekon trials, the 2010 referendum on Turkish constitutional amendments and the 2013 anti-government protests.

*The Ergenekon trials:* Following a terrorist attack against the judges of the Council of State (Danıştay) in 2006, the police conducted a series of operations to arrest hundreds of high-ranked army officers, journalists and academics with the allegation that those figures planned a *coup d’état* against the AKP government. Convinced of the existence of a terrorist organization operating under the name of ‘Ergenekon’, public prosecutors prepared thousands of pages-long indictments regarding the suspects’ linkages to the so-called ‘Ergenekon’ terrorist organization<sup>65</sup>. The opposition (the CHP and the MHP in particular) stood against those trials arguing that

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<sup>65</sup> For two different views on the Ergenekon case; see Jenkins (2010) and Grigoriadis and Özer (2010).

the law suit was opened with the AKP's motivation to persecute political dissent. The EU took an ambivalent stance towards the Ergenekon trials. It initially expressed its full support to the trials and praised them as 'an opportunity for Turkey to strengthen confidence in the proper functioning of its democratic institutions and the rule of law' (European Commission 2010: 7). However, as the progress reports depict, the EU refrained from confirming the existence of a terrorist organization called 'Ergenekon' and reiterated its warnings about 'the time lapse between arrests and the presentation of indictments to the court' (ibid.). The EU also expressed concerns that the high volume of journalist detentions and arrests might result in self-censorship (European Commission 2010: 20). Similarly, the European Parliament issued warning to the AKP government 'not to allow legal proceedings to be used as a pretext to exert undue pressure on critical journalists, academics or opposition politicians' (European Parliament 2010: 4).

The trials have recently resulted in life sentences for several high-ranked generals and long years of imprisonment for the rest of the convicts. Although the court decisions were praised by the AKP government as a decisive moment to 'bring down the coup plotters to their knees' (Anadolu Agency 2013), Turkish public opinion is still divided over the existence of a pro-coup terrorist organization that operates under the name of Ergenekon (Vela 2013). The verdicts were increasingly interpreted in international media as 'political revenge' taken against the Kemalist establishment which long stood as an obstacle against the rise of political Islam in Turkey (The Economist 2013). For its part, the EU finds the indictments too general to validate the sentences (Butler 2013).

*The 2010 Referendum:* Another major event was the referendum that took place on 12 September 2010 about 25 Constitutional amendments most of which were considered important for Turkey's EU accession. In support of the amendments EU officials announced that such legislation would facilitate Turkey's bid for full EU membership (The Economist 2010). Although they desired a new Constitution instead of amendments, liberal segments within Turkish society supported the reform package with the motto of 'Yes, but not enough' (Migdalovitz 2010: 11). On the other hand, the CHP and the MHP pioneered a 'NO' campaign for the referendum. In fact, the opposition was willing to approve all but 3 amendments, as they were convinced that



the latter would undermine the rule of law in Turkey and render the justice system tied to the AKP government. The disputed reforms comprised the changes in the number and the election procedures of the Constitutional Court and the Supreme Council of Judges and Public Prosecutors, as well as the new arrangements for party closures. The CHP criticized the EU's support for the Constitutional amendments with *bon pour l'orient* (good for the East) mentality overlooking the risks that the amendments might undermine the rule of law and democracy in Turkey (Gülmez 2013a: 322). The BDP did not vote in the referendum as a reaction to the AKP's failure to include their demands for greater Kurdish rights in the reform package (Migdalovitz 2010: 12). The Constitutional amendments were adopted in the referendum with a 58% 'Yes' vote. The EU welcomed the popular endorsement of the amendments and declared that the referendum results confirmed the resoluteness of the Turkish nation to become an EU member. However, according to some scholars, the referendum results only confirmed an emerging polarization within the Turkish political elite and society (Kalaycıoğlu 2012).

*The 2013 anti-AKP demonstrations:* The AKP government's recent hard-line policies encroaching individual liberties including alcohol consumption and abortion have triggered resentment among different social segments in Turkey. Negative reactions to the government reached a climax after the Prime Minister, Erdoğan, announced in late May 2013 the construction of a shopping mall at the heart of Istanbul replacing the 'Gezi' park of Istanbul's Taksim square. Brutal police response to environmentalist demonstrations triggered nation-wide anti-AKP protests. The mainstream Turkish media failed to broadcast the demonstrations, yet many people gathered information through social media and international news agencies, and joined the protests. Erdoğan never stepped back from his hard-line approach to the protests and denounced the protesters as 'extremists' and 'looters'. The massive usage of water cannon and pepper gas by the police cost the lives of 6 protesters along with thousands of injured. Lasting about a month, the demonstrations had certain implications for Turkish politics. First, they revealed the authoritarian face of the AKP government and confirmed the burgeoning unrest within the public against governmental policies. Second, they uncovered the fact that the mainstream media in Turkey is not free from government interference. Third, the demonstrations unified

people from different ethnic, cultural, social, economic and political backgrounds against the government undermining the prevailing cleavages such as Left/Right or Turk/Kurd. On the other hand, they further polarized the society into the opponents and proponents of the AKP.

The EU expressed concerns over the police crackdown on the protesters and pressurized the government to communicate with the protesters to prevent further casualties (Baydar 2013). The European Parliament issued a resolution condemning the AKP government's handling of the demonstrations. It condemned the attempts of the Turkish mass media to censor the broadcasting of public demonstrations and called on the government to 'put an end to its authoritarian style of governing' (European Parliament 2013: 4). The AKP government dismissed the EU's criticisms as hypocrisy and denounced them as interference with Turkey's internal affairs (Today's Zaman 2013). The officials of the European Commission stated that the Commission would prepare its 'toughest' progress report on Turkey criticizing the government's authoritarian response to the Gezi demonstrations (Hürriyet Daily News 2013). According to some observers, the AKP's hard-line approach to public protests nullified Turkey's chances of becoming an EU member (Baydar 2013).

These three developments were important markers of the AKP's rising authoritarianism. All these events took place after the suspension of the negotiations and they contributed to the crystallisation of the AKP's Eurosceptic rhetoric. A detailed analysis on these events, however, could not be possible due to time and space constraints.

#### *8.3.4. On generalisation*

This project examines a single country: Turkey. There is also a comparative dimension in the study examining not only the attitudes of Turkish political parties but also those of main political parties in different candidate countries. The existing literature provides numerous cases from the CEECs facilitating comparison, but a comprehensive analysis of domestic political responses to EU conditionality in the CEECs necessitates more in-depth research. For instance, compared to party

competition, TAN ideology better explains Euroscepticism in Latvia and Poland, because although they were in government, coalition partners continued to oppose the EU-led reforms of minority rights and FLO due to their nationalistic stances. However, this does not provide sufficient data to make generalisations in the rest of the accession countries. It requires more comprehensive research to find out how being a single-party government or a coalition partner affects political parties' propensity to reflect Euroscepticism. Moreover, the prevailing literature does not offer much supporting evidence in the CEECs regarding the claim that GAL parties turn to Euroscepticism when the EU applies its minority rights conditionality in a selective manner. This PhD project primarily focusing on Turkish politics cannot make such generalisations. In order to reach such comprehensive conclusions, it is necessary to conduct a meticulous review of primary (election manifestos, parliamentary speeches, party reports) and secondary (press statements, academic literature) sources concerning the responses of political parties in each accession country to the EU's accession criteria. It will only then be possible to make generalisations about the key determinants of Eurosceptic politics in accession countries.

Nevertheless, it is possible to use the findings derived from the Turkish case in order to understand the general trends in other candidates. As previously pointed out, if a thesis is valid in the least favourable case, then it is likely to be valid for intermediate cases (Flyvbjerg 2006: 232). Turkey is not only different from other candidate countries in terms of its geography, demography, culture and history but also unlike other countries, there is an increasing perception among Turkish political elites that the EU specifically stands against Turkey's accession. If all Turkish actors base their EU stance primarily on this perception, then their responses to EU conditionality cannot be generalized as they have a unique source of contestation against the EU. However, the study reveals that Turkish political actors do not necessarily base their entire EU stance on the critique of a rising 'Turkey-scepticism' in Europe. The AKP continued its pro-EU policies especially between 2002 and 2006 despite the fact that political opposition to Turkish accession had already been observed especially in France, Germany and Austria. It was the suspension of negotiations which decidedly altered the AKP's discourse on the EU. Party officials currently highlight their frustration with the rising opposition within the EU to Turkey's accession.

Nevertheless, this reactive stance seems to be tactical since some party officials stress the fact they are more than willing to return to their pro-EU stance provided that the EU takes a positive step to revitalize Turkey's membership process. Besides, the opposition claims that the AKP uses this rhetoric just to cover up its own loss of EU-enthusiasm. Many opposition interviewees argue that despite the suspension of negotiations the AKP could have continued with the EU-led reform process, but it chose not to. Moreover, the CHP deputies explicitly state that the most important obstacle for Turkey's EU accession is not the EU's reluctance towards Turkey's membership but it is the rising authoritarianism of the AKP.

The study, however, acknowledges that it is not possible to make generalisations based on the findings of the interviews, because the total number of interviewees (45) only amounts to 8% of the Turkish parliamentarians in total (550). Therefore, the interview findings are not to be considered as representative of the entire Turkish parliament. Nevertheless, the interviewees included one third of the total members of the Turkish Parliamentary Committee on EU Harmonization and Turkey-EU Joint parliamentary committee. Plus, in compliance with the hierarchical structure of political parties and committees, the author interviewed the deputy leaders of the studied political parties and the chairmen of different Parliamentary Committees including EU harmonization committee, Committee on Constitution, and Turkey-EU Joint parliamentary committee. In this regard, the findings of the interviews provide a general context about the leading arguments within the selected political parties. Moreover, they are useful in terms of revealing certain political views that contradict the official party rhetoric.

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that it is the rising uncertainty regarding the membership prospects that led to the intensification of Turkish political constestation against the EU. Turkish claims regarding the existence of 'Turkey-scepticism' had already populated political agendas in Turkey before the curtailment of the accession negotiations; but the AKP government continued with the reform process anyway. It was only after the suspension of negotiations that the government joined the opposition in criticizing the EU. On the other hand, the rising uncertainty of membership is not unique to the Turkish case. Macedonia and Croatia experienced similar additional conditions due to a bilateral conflict with an EU member and their

resistance to those conditions rendered their accession process highly uncertain. Therefore, Turkish responses to the EU's accession conditionality are not necessarily unique and can be compared to other countries. Accordingly, Turkish reactions to the EU-led reforms of minority rights and FLO can be used to verify the effects of the ideology-strategy debate on Eurosceptic party behaviours in accession countries. Moreover, the EU's selective and discriminatory application of its conditionality faces with strong opposition not only in Turkey but in other candidate countries as well. Therefore, the Turkish case contributes to the development of a tentative argument that despite domestic peculiarities, political actors in dissimilar countries may respond similarly to similar EU conditionality (if they share a similar (TAN) ideological position or if the EU's conditionality is applied in a selective and even discriminatory manner).

#### **8.4. Answering questions and addressing potential criticisms**

The following section aims to answer possible questions about Turkish Euroscepticism and address potential criticisms. In particular, the changing attitudes of the AKP officials towards the EU's conditional pressures raise the question of whether the governing party has experienced an ideological shift from GAL to TAN. Another question is about the AKP government's possible pragmatism. Some scholars claim that the pro-EU stance of the AKP government was only half-hearted (if not mere 'window-dressing') and by adopting a pro-EU rhetoric, the AKP sought to gain an upper ground against its domestic opponents (Çınar 2008; Baudner 2012; Kaliber 2013). If this is the case, it implies that the AKP's recent disillusionment with EU membership is not a reaction to the EU's controversial approach to Turkey's membership, but it is only a tactical move of the AKP to blame the EU for the alienation between Turkey and the EU. Moreover, the so-called 'Sèvres Syndrome' and its effects on Turkish mainstream politics need to be further discussed in order to better explain the rising scepticism in Turkey against EU accession. If Turkish responses to EU-led reforms stem essentially from historical collective memory about European invasion during the First World War, then domestic contestations qualify as the examples of Euroscepticism in its broader definition (opposition to European

integration) rather than Euroscepticism in candidate countries that is largely based on reactionary and reversible attitudes against the EU accession process. The final question is about whether the term Euroscepticism which focuses on the critical discourses against EU accession is only applicable to the Turkish case or it can explain the rise of critical EU discourses in other candidate countries as well.

#### *8.4.1. Is there an ideological shift in the AKP government?*

As previously discussed, the AKP government's pro-EU stance has been replaced with Euroscepticism following the suspension of negotiations in 2006. A crucial question here is whether this meant the AKP government's ideological shift from GAL to TAN, since the AKP's reformist agenda that initially emphasized liberalism and freedoms was substituted by an Eurosceptic discourse that is, on the contrary, highly authoritarian. However, such a drastic change from liberalism to conservatism in the AKP's ideological positioning seems unrealistic and it is actually questionable whether the AKP has ever been a GAL party in the first place.

The AKP is the successor of the pro-Islamic Welfare Party (RP) which was closed down in 1998 by the Turkish Constitutional Court on the grounds that it aimed to dismantle the Turkish Republic and establish Islamic rule (Shariah) in Turkey. Many AKP founders including the Prime Minister Erdoğan and the President Gül came from the ranks of the RP either serving as Mayors for the RP or Ministers in the RP's cabinet in 1990s. However, with the establishment of the AKP, those political figures pursued a reformist agenda to abandon the conservative and Islamist tradition of their predecessors, because the 'military-civilian coup' on 28<sup>th</sup> February 1997 challenged the capability of pro-Islamic political actors to survive in a secular Turkey (Çınar 2008: 111; Yavuz 2009: 15). The RP was closed down shortly after the coup and its leaders were temporarily banned from politics. The AKP liberalized its political discourse in order not to share the fate of its predecessor, the RP (Çınar 2008: 110). The AKP's liberal outlook also stemmed from the need for external legitimacy such as the support of the EU to withstand strong 'regime actors' like the military and the judiciary in Turkey (Yavuz 2009: 28). Besides, party officials embraced democratisation as a viable way to liberalise the Islamic way of life in Turkey (Çınar

and Duran 2008: 30). Therefore, the party was not part of the liberal political tradition but strategically embraced a liberal rhetoric in order to survive in the Turkish political system and expand religious freedoms in Turkey.

With an attempt to establish the AKP as a mainstream liberal party, party officials defined it as a Conservative Democrat party comparable to Christian Democrats in Germany in particular and Conservative parties in Western Europe in general (Cizre 2008: 3). The party opposed the label of 'Islamist' and expressed its dissent with the politicization of religion (Çınar and Duran 2008: 31). In search for external legitimacy, party officials even sought the membership of the Socialist International although the party did not have a Social Democratic outlook (AKP 2007). Its reformist agenda and resoluteness for Turkey's EU membership enabled the AKP to recruit liberal political figures including Cemil Çiçek and Köksal Toptan who used to be cabinet members for centre right governments during the 1990s. Similarly, popular Social Democrats such as Ertuğrul Günay and Haluk Özdalga joined the ranks of the party to raise the profile of the AKP as a 'catch-all' party. Moreover, the party received the blessing of liberal journalists such as Mehmet Altan and Hasan Cemal who believed the AKP government would dismantle authoritarian Kemalist structures in Turkey (in particular, the prominence of the Turkish army in politics) and clear the path for Turkey to become a truly democratic country respecting the rule of law and individual freedoms. Similarly, Turkish academia welcomed the AKP's reformist political agenda naming the party as 'conservative globalist' and expected the party to successfully mobilize the masses for EU membership (Öniş 2007). The AKP was praised as the bringer of Kantian peace to Turkey that had long been living in a Hobbesian paradigm (Kirişci 2006). Some even depicted the rise of the AKP as a harbinger of 'New Turkey' releasing itself from the shackles of the *ancien régime* (Fuller 2008; Yavuz 2009: 43).

However, the AKP's liberal democratic intentions were open to debate. Secular circles in Turkey were never convinced that a pro-Islamic party could be transformed into a liberal democratic party overnight (Çayır 2008: 63). The AKP's professed liberal outlook not only generated suspicion among the secular elites but also faced the criticisms of some Islamic segments. While secularists accused the AKP of pursuing a hidden agenda to establish an Islamic regime in Turkey, some pious

Muslims blamed the party for betraying Islam by embracing the values of Western liberal and capitalist societies (Ibid).

The sincerity of the AKP's pro-EU stance was equally questioned. According to Börzel (2012: 15), the AKP's support for the EU process was merely strategic. The AKP government supported the EU accession process as long as the EU's conditionality aligned with its political preferences and survival strategies. The EU's support was the AKP's survival strategy through which it aimed to gain political leverage against its domestic rivals (Çınar 2008). Accordingly, the AKP used the EU's conditional pressures for both lifting the obstacles against Islamic freedoms in Turkey and garnering the EU's support against the ultra-secularist veto players such as the Army, Judiciary and the CHP (Saatçioğlu 2010). Therefore, the AKP's pro-EU stance was highly strategic aiming to consolidate its domestic authority in Turkey through external legitimation provided by the EU.

Moreover, the AKP lacked a practical democratization agenda independent from the EU's accession criteria (Çınar 2008: 122). Therefore, the loss of membership prospects greatly diminished the AKP's motivation to comply with the Copenhagen Criteria, which was the 'only game in town' governing the AKP's agenda of democratization and individual freedoms. Without credible membership incentives, the AKP abandoned its reformist agenda and stalled the democratization process with almost no political cost at home thanks to its unrivalled electoral popularity (Çınar 2011: 21). Therefore, the main component of the AKP's liberal agenda was the EU-led reform process whose curtailment led the AKP to return to its conservative roots. Besides, the AKP's Islamic agenda conflicted with the EU reform process. For instance, the 2005 decision of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) on the Leyla Şahin case<sup>66</sup> served to legitimize the headscarf ban in Turkey and therefore, it was a decisive moment for the AKP to lose its enthusiasm for liberal reforms and return to its pro-Islamic rhetoric (Öniş 2007: 254; Çınar 2008). Finally, especially after the 2007 elections, the AKP consolidated its electoral power and no longer needed the EU's support in order to survive and establish its authority in the Turkish

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<sup>66</sup> A law suit against Turkey opened by a medical student, Leyla Şahin as regards the Turkish legal ban on the usage of the Islamic headscarf at universities. The Court upheld the ban by 16 votes to 1 deeming it necessary for protecting the principle of Secularism in Turkey. For the judgement, see ECtHR (2005).



political system. Therefore, not only did the governing party abandon its enthusiasm for the unclear EU path but it also grew increasingly authoritarian at home. This led to anti-government protests and the government resorted to conservative arguments in order to justify its violent suppression of public protests. Overall, it can be argued that the AKP was always an authoritarian (TAN) party. What pushed it to pursue liberal politics and act like a GAL party for a while was the motivation to increase its domestic and external legitimacy by showing support to Turkey's EU accession process. After the EU failed to offer credible membership prospects, the AKP abandoned its liberal agenda and turned back to its TAN rhetoric coupled with conservative (and even authoritarian) politics at home.

#### *8.4.2. The AKP's support for EU membership: Pure pragmatism?*

If the AKP has always been a TAN party, how genuine is its support for EU membership? The pro-EU activism of the AKP during the initial years of its government has been largely attributed to its quest for external legitimacy to survive under the Kemalist threat (Çınar 2008; Yavuz 2009; Baudner 2012; Kaliber 2013). According to that account, the AKP's support for EU membership was highly instrumental (Kaliber 2013: 27). Hence, the AKP's burgeoning resentment for EU membership could be explained as a strategic choice rather than a reaction to the increasing uncertainty of Turkey's membership prospects (Kirişçi 2009; Kaliber 2013). AKP leaders support Turkey's EU membership, 'only when they think that this best serves either the national interest or their own electoral purposes' (Kaliber 2013: 65). Having consolidated its electoral power and political authority, the AKP no longer needs the EU as leverage against its domestic political adversaries, and consequently it seeks to develop partnership with non-European countries (Kirişçi 2009; Kubicek 2011; Baudner 2012). Besides, the decision of the ECtHR in the Leyla Sahin case indicates that investing on Europe does not necessarily help the AKP in its overarching quest to bring more religious (Islamic) freedoms to Turkey (Çınar 2008; Öniş 2009; Baudner 2012).

This line of thinking implies that the AKP had never aimed for EU membership but just instrumentalised the EU accession process as a shield against its domestic rivals.

It is a fact that the AKP has consolidated its political authority by absorbing Kemalist veto powers and has become an undefeated champion in the general elections. It is also true that the AKP government chose not to persist in its pro-EU quest and rather sought partnership outside Europe. The interview findings indicate the conviction of most AKP respondents that Turkey no longer needs the EU. They also explain the AKP's recent efforts to seek alliance with the Middle East and Russia. However, contrary to the expectations of the existing literature, the interviews reveal that the AKP respondents are not actually indifferent to Turkey's Europeanisation. Most government interviewees highlight their desire for Turkish accession to the EU and do not dismiss Turkey's EU membership as unimportant. Some even admit that they turned to the East because the EU turned their back on them. A number of government officials explicitly state that the AKP will swiftly return to its pro-EU policy if the EU takes a positive step towards Turkish accession. According to the respondents, the AKP's current aloofness to the EU is essentially a reaction to the EU's negative approach to Turkey. Therefore, it would be misleading to view the AKP's EU policy through purely instrumental/strategic lenses. Despite its pragmatic approach to Turkey's Europeanization, the AKP did not officially abandon its quest for EU membership and highlights that its current disillusionment is a reaction to the EU's 'reluctant' stance towards Turkey's accession.

#### *8.4.3. Where does the 'Sèvres Syndrome' fit in the discussion of Turkey's Euroscepticism?*

As previously discussed, the 'Sèvres Syndrome' refers to 'fear of plots by external enemies, especially the Western countries, and their alleged internal collaborators – ethnic and religious minorities in Turkey– to weaken, carve up and terminate the existence of the Turkish Republic' (Nefes 2013: 252). Fear of division is well-entrenched within the Turkish society and its symptoms have been noticeable in the discourses of mainstream political parties in Turkey especially regarding their views of the EU-led reform process. Accordingly, an important question may arise with respect to the association between Euroscepticism and the Sèvres Syndrome: Is the

Sèvres Syndrome the direct cause of domestic scepticism towards the EU? Other related questions include: Do Turkish political actors who traditionally reflect the Sèvres Syndrome in their discourses actually reflect opposition to European integration rather than opposition to EU accession? Do only opposition parties employ the Sèvres Syndrome in their discourses or does the AKP government carry similar fears towards Europeans as well?

The Sèvres Syndrome delegitimizes the West and fuels mistrust against Western states. Hence, it dictates to Turks not to ‘enter into economic, political and cultural pacts and alliances with the Western world’ (Yılmaz 2006: 12). In this respect, it is expected that the victims of the Sèvres Syndrome demonstrate principled opposition to Turkey’s EU accession. Therefore, politicians who secure such a ‘siege paranoia’ (Guida 2008) are supposed to be opposing European integration as a whole, since the Sèvres Syndrome prohibits partnership with Western institutions. However, mainstream political parties in Turkey do not necessarily base their EU policies on the Sèvres Syndrome. All political actors under scrutiny support Turkey’s EU accession as membership is expected to contribute to the development of democracy, human rights and economy in Turkey. Therefore, it can be assumed that the Sèvres Syndrome remains dormant as it does not directly influence party support for EU accession. Turkish political parties grow reluctant toward EU membership when the reform process contradicts their political and economic agenda. Controversial EU-led reforms such as minority rights and the Cyprus conditionality may have resurrected the old mistrust against Europeans. Especially regarding the reform of minority foundations, both the CHP and the MHP compared the reform to the provisions of the Sèvres Treaty and alleged that the reforms carried a potential to weaken (if not divide) Turkey. The interview results indicate a similar trend since one fifth of the CHP respondents and all MHP interviewees are of the opinion that some EU-led reforms including minority rights confirm the EU’s hidden agenda to dismantle the Turkish Republic. Therefore, it is plausible to argue that the Sèvres Syndrome, although embedded within Turkish politics, is not the direct cause of Euroscepticism but rather a reflection or consequence of Euroscepticism in Turkey. The EU-led reform process and the suspension of negotiations have triggered sceptical reactions in Turkish political parties. In response to the EU’s ‘discriminatory’ policies towards Turkey,

domestic political actors resort to historical suspicions towards Europeans in order to further delegitimize the EU's conditionality in the eyes of the public.

Besides, the mainstream literature assumes that the primary political actors reflecting the Sèvres Syndrome are the CHP and the MHP (the main opposition parties) due to strong attachments to the Republican regime; while depicting the AKP government as immune to the syndrome due to its reformist agenda (Guida 2008; Göçek 2011; Nefes 2013). However, the interview results indicate that the AKP officials are not completely immune to the Sèvres Syndrome. The fear of division is extensively visible in the responses of the government officials. Almost all AKP respondents dismiss the idea of granting Kurds a minority status because they believe Kurds qualify for a better category: 'co-founders of Turkey'. They fear that categorizing Kurds as minority carries a serious potential to divide Turkey. This argument is not different from the MHP's claim that the EU creates 'artificial minorities' in Turkey (Nefes 2013: 254). Moreover, the AKP officials are convinced that conferring excessive rights to minorities might result in the division of the country. One fifth of the AKP respondents report their belief that the EU pursues policies to divide Turkey. Apart from the fear of division, the AKP respondents essentially depict the EU as a 'Christian Club' acting with a 'Crusader mentality' against Turkey's accession. Unlike the opposition, the AKP government's Euroscepticism developed following the suspension of the negotiations. Accordingly, critical remarks against the EU reflecting the Sèvres Syndrome came only after the AKP had lost its hope for EU membership. Therefore, contrary to mainstream depiction of the AKP government as immune to the Sèvres Syndrome, this study finds that based on the interview results, AKP officials increasingly reflect the Sèvres Syndrome and carry a fear of division by foreigners. They also increasingly embrace the idea that uncertainty over Turkish EU membership highlights the EU's Christian identity allowing anti-Islamic (or Islamophobic) tendencies coming from within Europe. Overall, the effects of the Sèvres Syndrome on Turkish attitudes towards the EU cannot be thought of independently of the level of membership prospects and the state of Turkey-EU relations. Deterministic approaches that overemphasize the Sèvres Syndrome cannot explain why there is a general consensus on EU membership in Turkey.

#### 8.4.4. *Is Turkey an exceptional case of Euroscepticism?*

Essentially, the study aimed at explaining the rising scepticism in Turkish politics towards EU membership. The findings of the study indicated that Turkish domestic actors did not focus their criticisms on European integration *per se*, but Turkey's EU membership process in particular. Therefore, the study suggested differentiating between *Euroscepticism in member states* defined as opposition to European integration and *Euroscepticism in candidate countries* implying contestations against the accession process in order to better explain Turkish political attitudes during the accession negotiations. , This analytical differentiation is useful because it both reveals the difference between Turkey and member states in terms of critical EU discourses, and it facilitates the comparison of Turkey and other candidate countries. Accordingly, the study highlights that Eurosceptic political actors in both Turkey and other candidate countries focus their criticisms on the EU's accession conditionality rather than the overall European integration and its future. Euroscepticism in response to the EU's issue-specific conditionality is frequently observed in different accession countries in Central and Eastern Europe. In particular, TAN parties often opposed the same EU-led reforms with similar justifications. For instance, nationalistic urges to preserve political stability and national sovereignty against foreign intrusion played a crucial role behind domestic resistance to the expansion of minority rights. The EU's differential approach towards members and candidates in the application of its minority rights criterion further decreased the credibility of its conditionality. Reactions of political parties in the CEECs are comparable to those of Turkish political actors. Especially, minority rights policies of the TB/LNNK in Latvia are highly comparable to the MHP since both parties showed persisting objection against minority rights reforms during both their terms in opposition and in government. Moreover, the policies of Macedonia's SDSM and Turkey's CHP hold similarities as both parties demonstrate reluctance towards the EU's conditionality of minority rights emphasizing that their kinsmen's minority status was rejected in EU member states. It is also remarkable that both the HDZ of Croatia and Turkey's AKP express similar concerns over the EU's 'double standards' in the application of its minority rights condition. Officials of both parties emphasize that it is unjust for the

EU to put pressure on them concerning the improvement of minority rights while, for instance, overlooking the ill-treatment of Roma by the French government.

Likewise, the reform of FLO faced political resistance amongst national elites in CEECs, just like in the Turkish case. Similar patriotic claims such as ‘the selling out of motherland to foreigners’ were employed to stand against the reform of FLO not only by the MHP and the CHP in Turkey but also the FKGP, the MIEP and the FIDESZ-MPP in Hungary, the SNS and the DeSUS in Slovenia, the HZDS and the KDH in Slovakia, and the LPR, the Self Defence and the PSL in Poland.

Besides, the EU’s country-specific conditions further stimulate domestic opposition in candidate countries having bilateral issues with various EU Member States, since candidates felt discriminated by the EU’s extra conditions. Similar to Turkish political resistance to the EU’s Cyprus conditionality, political parties in the Czech Republic, Macedonia and Croatia were unified in their objections to the EU’s preconditions stemming from a bilateral conflict with an EU member. Mainstream political actors in the Czech Republic namely the ODS, the CSSD and the KSCM were unified in their opposition to the Austrian and German demands regarding the annulment of the Beneš decrees. Similarly, despite their political rivalry, both the SDSM and the VMRO-DPMNE in Macedonia joined forces to criticize the EU’s extra conditionality requiring the settlement of the name issue with Greece. Finally, both mainstream (HDZ) and fringe (HSP) parties in Croatia objected to the EU’s additional membership conditionality arising out of a bilateral conflict with Slovenia. Similar to the Turkish case, political parties resisted the EU’s conditionality with the conviction that the EU pursued discriminatory policies against their country.

Concerning the debate over ideology versus strategy, unlike the Turkish case, party ideology holds a greater explanatory power than strategy in the CEECs. Accordingly, TAN parties oppose EU-led reforms while GAL parties are more likely to support the reform process. Moreover, TAN parties in the CEECs reflect Euroscepticism not only in opposition but also in government as well. For instance, the PSL (Right/TAN) in Poland threatened to withdraw from the coalition government against the reform of FLO, while the DP-S (Left/TAN) actually resigned from government in Latvia in reaction to the EU-led reform of minority rights. Moreover, the HZDS (Right/TAN)

government in Slovakia long opposed the EU's pressures for the improvement of minority rights. On the other hand, the AKP government in Turkey actually defended EU-led reforms although it was a Right/TAN party. The AKP resorted to Euroscepticism only after the suspension of the negotiations which created a deep uncertainty for membership. The AKP's strategic support for the accession process can be explained with the fact that the pro-Islamic AKP government needed external legitimization in order to survive in the Kemalist political system, and the EU accession process empowered the AKP government against its Kemalist rivals (Börzel 2012). Therefore, despite its TAN identity, the AKP government supported the EU-led reform process in Turkey.

As in the Turkish case, when the EU's country-specific conditions are perceived as discriminatory, party ideology and party competition lose their explanatory powers in the CEECs. The EU's country-specific conditions faced domestic resistance transcending both the government-opposition positioning and TAN-GAL distinction. For instance, the EU's pressures on Macedonia to change its name due to the Greek demands unified both opposition (the SDSM) and the government (the VMRO-DPMNE) against the EU. Moreover, in the Czech Republic, not only TAN parties (including the centre-right ODS) but also the CSSD government reflecting Left/GAL ideology opposed the EU's conditional pressures about the annulment of the Beneš decrees.

This study reveals that Turkish responses to EU membership conditionality do not stem from a deep-seated opposition to the overall European integration project. Instead, they largely reflect domestic reactions to the complex nature of the EU's membership pressures. The EU's formal conditionality is generally rejected by opposition parties with a more conservative (TAN) ideological outlook whereas the EU's additional country-specific pressures are contested by all the selected Turkish parties regardless of their ideological backgrounds and strategic choices. Similar trends can be observed in many other candidate countries. Domestic responses to EU conditionality stem not only from ideological alignments or strategic party positioning, but they also develop as a response to the EU's selective and discriminatory approach in the application of its conditionality as well as to the uncertainty over membership prospects. In this sense, Turkey's EU accession process

is not entirely a distinct case, since Turkish responses to EU conditionality are not necessarily different from those of other accession countries.

Overall, by differentiating between Euroscepticism in member states and candidate countries, the study innovatively explains how political parties in Turkey and in other candidate countries respond to the complex nature of the EU's membership conditionality. Highlighting the importance of interplay between EU-driven and domestic factors, the study refines the prevailing literature that overemphasizes the domestic determinants of Euroscepticism and overlooks the dynamic and reversible character of political party responses to EU conditionality. As observed in the Turkish case, EU-driven factors often result in the formation of unlikely alliances among different political parties against the EU regardless of their ideological alignments or strategic preferences. Consequently, there is a need to take EU-driven factors seriously since the EU's handling of the accession process has a remarkable impact on the EU stances of political parties in accession countries.



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## **Appendix I. Interview Questions**

1-What are the major obstacles to Turkey's EU membership today?

2-As you know, according to the Lausanne Treaty, only non-Muslims have been officially recognized as minority. During the EU membership process, the scope of minority has been extended to cover ethnicity as well. How do you view this change?

3-What do you think about the restitution of property rights of non-Muslim foundations in Turkey?

4-What do you think about the EU-led reform facilitating foreign land ownership in Turkey?

5-How do you view the EU's membership conditionality for Turkey to open its harbours and airspace to the Republic of Cyprus?

6-Do you think that the EU wishes Turkey's accession?

## Appendix II. List of Interviewees

### THE AKP RESPONDENTS

Name	Constituency	date of interview
Mehmet ERDOĞAN	Gaziantep	1 November 2012
Mücahit FINDIKLI	Malatya	1 November 2012
Durdu Mehmet KASTAL	Osmaniye	6 November 2012
Mehmet Sayım TEKELİOĞLU	İzmir	7 November 2012
Burhan KUZU	İstanbul	7 November 2012
Muzaffer ÇAKAR	Muş	7 November 2012
Rıfat SAİT	İzmir	14 November 2012
Bilal MACİT	İstanbul	21 November 2012
Ülker GÜZEL	Ankara	21 November 2012
Yıldırım Mehmet RAMAZANOĞLU	Kahramanmaraş	6 February 2013
Ruhi AÇIKGÖZ	Aksaray	6 February 2013
Ali Rıza ALABOYUN	Aksaray	19 February 2013
Mustafa ELİTAŞ	Kayseri	20 February 2013
Ercan CANDAN	Zonguldak	21 February 2013
Fatih ÇİFTÇİ	Van	28 February 2013
Afif DEMİRKIRAN	Siirt	28 February 2013
Canan CANDEMİR ÇELİK	Bursa	28 February 2013
Tülin ERKAL KARA	Bursa	28 February 2013
Ali ŞAHİN	Gaziantep	28 February 2013
Pelin GÜNDEŞ BAKIR	Kayseri	28 February 2013
Mihrimah Belma SATIR	İstanbul	28 February 2013
Abdullah ÇALIŞKAN	Kırşehir	28 February 2013
Ahmet Berat ÇONKAR	İstanbul	29 February 2013
Burak ERDENİR		6 March 2013
Haluk ÖZDALGA	Ankara	30 April 2013

## AFFILIATIONS OF THE AKP RESPONDENTS

Name	Membership in Parliamentary committees/Position in the Party
Mehmet ERDOĞAN	Committee on Industry, Trade, Energy, Natural Resources, Information and Technology
Mücahit FINDIKLI	Head of the Committee on Industry, Trade, Energy, Natural Resources, Information and Technology
Durdu Mehmet KASTAL	Committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Affairs
Mehmet Sayım TEKELİOĞLU	Head of the Committee on EU Harmonization
Burhan KUZU	Head of the Committee on Constitution
Muzaffer ÇAKAR	Committee on Environment and Committee on Education, Culture, Youth and Sports
Rıfat SAİT	Committee on Foreign Affairs
Bilal MACİT	Party's Parliamentary Clerk
Ülker GÜZEL	Committee on Human Rights Inquiry
Yıldırım Mehmet RAMAZANOĞLU	Committee on Turkey-EU Joint Parliamentary Committee and Committee on EU Harmonization
Ruhi AÇIKGÖZ	Committee on National Defence and the Turkish delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly
Ali Rıza ALABOYUN	Committee on Foreign Affairs and Head of the Turkish delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly
Mustafa ELİTAŞ	Deputy Chairman of the AKP's Parliamentary Group
Ercan CANDAN	Spokesperson of the Committee on EU Harmonization
Fatih ÇİFTÇİ	Committee on Constitution
Afif DEMİRKIRAN	Committee on EU Harmonization and Head of Turkey-EU Joint Parliamentary Committee
Canan CANDEMİR ÇELİK	Committee on Constitution
Tülin ERKAL KARA	Turkish Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
Ali ŞAHİN	Committee on EU Harmonization

Pelin GÜNDEŞ BAKIR	Committee on Turkey-EU Joint Parliamentary Committee and Committee on EU Harmonization
Mihrimah Belma SATIR	Committee on Constitution
Abdullah ÇALIŞKAN	Committee on Foreign Affairs
Ahmet Berat ÇONKAR	Committee on Foreign Affairs and Turkish Delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly
Burak ERDENİR	Deputy Undersecretary of the Ministry of European Union
Haluk ÖZDALGA	Committee on EU Harmonization

### THE CHP RESPONDENTS

Name	Constituency	Date of Interview
Ali İhsan KÖKTÜRK	Zonguldak	1 November 2012
Emre KÖPRÜLÜ	Tekirdağ	1 November 2012
Ramazan Kerim ÖZKAN	Burdur	6 November 2012
Hasan ÖREN	Manisa	7 November 2012
Kemal EKİNCİ	Bursa	7 November 2012
Atilla KART	Konya	13 November 2012
Aykan ERDEMİR	Bursa	13 November 2012
Orhan DÜZGÜN	Tokat	14 November 2012
Osman KORUTÜRK	İstanbul	15 November 2012
İzzet ÇETİN	Ankara	6 February 2013
Gülsün BİLGEHAN	Ankara	6 February 2013
Faruk LOĞOĞLU	Adana	21 February 2013
Süheyl BATUM	Eskişehir	28 February 2013
Erdal AKSÜNGER	İzmir	28 February 2013
Ömer Süha ALDAN	Muğla	7 March 2013

### AFFILIATIONS OF THE CHP RESPONDENTS

Name	Membership in Parliamentary committees/Position in the Party
Ali İhsan KÖKTÜRK	Committee on Justice
Emre KÖPRÜLÜ	Committee on Environment
Ramazan Kerim ÖZKAN	Committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Affairs
Hasan ÖREN	Committee on Industry, Trade, Energy, Natural Resources, Information and Technology
Kemal EKİNCİ	Committee on Public Works, Reconstruction, Transportation and Tourism
Atilla KART	Committee on Constitution
Aykan ERDEMİR	Committee on Turkey-EU Joint Parliamentary Committee and Committee on EU Harmonization

Orhan DÜZGÜN	Committee on National Defence
Osman KORUTÜRK	Party's spokesman for the Committee on Foreign Affairs
İzzet ÇETİN	Committee on Plan and Budget
Gülsün BİLGEHAN	Turkish Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
Faruk LOĞOĞLU	Deputy leader of the CHP responsible for Foreign Affairs
Süheyl BATUM	Committee on Constitution
Erdal AKSÜNGER	Committee on Industry, Trade, Energy, Natural Resources, Information and Technology
Ömer Süha ALDAN	Committee on Justice

### THE MHP RESPONDENTS

<b>Name</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Date of Interview</b>
Lütfü TÜRKKAN	Kocaeli	14 November 2012
Zuhal TOPÇU	Ankara	19 November 2012
Nevzet KORKMAZ	Balıkesir	21 November 2012
Sümer ORAL	Manisa	28 February 2013

### AFFILIATIONS OF THE MHP RESPONDENTS

<b>Name</b>	<b>Membership in Parliamentary committees/Position in the Party</b>
Lütfü TÜRKKAN	Committee on EU Harmonization
Zuhal TOPÇU	Deputy Leader of the MHP and member of the Committee on EU Harmonization
Nevzet KORKMAZ	Committee on Constitution
Sümer ORAL	Committee on Plan and Budget

### THE BDP RESPONDENT

<b>Name</b>	<b>Date of Interview</b>	<b>Position in the Party</b>
Yüksel MUTLU	6 March 2013	Deputy Leader of the BDP responsible for Foreign Affairs