

Public Euroscepticism Intensifying in Turkey

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Abstract The objective of this study is to present and explain Turkish public perceptions of the European Union and Europe. This study aims to give an overview of the changes in public opinion and then to evaluate it by considering data from different surveys. It addresses two questions. First, why and to what extent do people support the European Union, and what are the objections, worries and reservations about the EU? Secondly, how have these perceptions changed from 2002 to 2015? Consequently, it argues that public Euroscepticism Turkey develops as a response to the EU's country-specific conditionality.

Keywords Public Euroscepticism - European Integration - Turkish Politics
Public Opinion - Eurobarometer

1. Introduction

Turkey's relationship with the European Union (EU) has a long history that reaches back to their application for associate membership in the European Economic Community (EEC) in July 1959 and the resulting Ankara Agreement in 1963. Accordingly, Turkey has been part of the European integration project from the very beginning of the process. Nevertheless, the process has been fiercely contested and slow, so that Turkey was only recognised by the EU as a candidate country at the Helsinki Summit on 11 December 1999. The recognition of Turkey's candidacy

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at the Helsinki Summit and the beginning of accession negotiations on 3 October 2005 constitute important turning points for Turkey's relations with the EU. EU membership has become a reality for the Turkish public and elites, and is seen as a means to further national democratisation, modernisation and economic development. These turning points accelerated both the socio-political transformation guided by the Copenhagen Criteria and also created critical attitudes towards the EU and European integration. Accordingly, the accession process has engendered both enthusiasm and criticism by domestic actors both at the state and civil society levels (Öniş 2003). Questions of loss of sovereignty, cultural and religious differences, past memories as well as the Cyprus and Armenian issues have emerged as important discussion points. The attitudes towards the EU and Europe have ranged in a continuum from happiness, consent, contentment and sober sentiments to rejection, denial and outright hatred. This is not surprising, as the Turkey-EU relationship is a story of up and downs, misunderstandings, prejudices and argumentative fallacies.

The perceived economic success during the AKP (Justice and Development Party) era has, from the party's coming to power in 2002 until today, generated an increasing self-confidence among conservative and Islamic groups and, in consequence, the discourse "Turkey has no further need for the EU" has become more dominant, especially after the European economy fell into its deepest recession since the 1930s. Political and civil society leaders began voicing doubts about the direction in which Europe is moving. The so-called "Turco-scepticism" in Europe among political leaders¹ and the public also created the impression that the EU would never accept Turkey as a member even if it fulfilled all the necessary criteria. Thus, Euroscepticism has grown, particularly in conservative and Islamist circles, due to a loss of trust in the EU, Turkey's increasingly active role in her geographical neighbourhood and its economic success standing in contrast to the economic crisis in the EU. Furthermore, religious and cultural arguments dominated the discussions about Turkey's possible EU membership on both sides of the process. Statements made by EU leaders along with their unwillingness to speed up the process along with the AKP's tactics have been further complicated by the Cyprus problem, which has almost deadlocked the accession process. One major associated challenge was when the Republic of Cyprus took up the EU presidency in 2012. Turkey has refused to deal with the Cypriot president, and no chapters were opened during the second part of 2012. This slowed down the reform process, despite efforts such as the New Positive Agenda, which was launched in Ankara on 12 May 2012 by European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy Stefan Füle.

¹ The former French President Nicolas Sarkozy and the German Chancellor Angela Merkel questioned Turkey's EU membership and Europeanness on the grounds of geographical, historical, cultural and religious reasons.

The structure of this study is as follows. The literature review and theoretical approach are presented in the second part. After summing up the state of the research on Euroscepticism in theoretical and case-specific terms, the survey results will be presented. The conclusion brings together the arguments from the preceding parts, signifies new arguments and places the empirical findings in relation to the broader conceptual debates of Euroscepticism.

2. Euroscepticism

In existing studies in and of different countries, Euroscepticism is mainly analysed in terms of public opinion² (Niedermayer 1995; Eichenberg and Dalton 1993, 2007; Hooghe 2007; Hooghe and Marks 2004) or in terms of party politics (Taggart 1998, Hooghe et al 2004, Kopecky and Mudde 2002, Ray 1999, Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008a and 2008b). Gifford (2008), Hansen and Waever (2002), Ichijo and Spohn (2005), and Diez Medrano (2003) analysed the link between national identity and collective understandings of Europe. Another categorisation of the studies can be performed according to their geographical area. There are researchers who analysed attitudes in Western Europe (Carey 2002, McLaren 2002, Gabel 1998) or focused on the CEECs countries using a more comparative perspective (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2004, Kopecky and Mudde 2002, Marks et al. 2006, Herzog and Tucker 2009). Hainsworth et al. (2004) analysed the Euroscepticism of the right of French politics as exemplified by elements of the extreme right, Front National, the Eurosceptic, Mouvement pour La France (founded in 1994 by its leader, Philippe de Villiers) and the broader Gaullist movement. This focused on the issues of extreme nationalism, the long history of nation-state building and imperialism. They conclude that for these right-wing groups, historical positions on the primacy of national unity, national sovereignty and the nation-state may lead to a deep distrust of supranational structures and institutions, and consequently opposition to the EU.³

In Turkey, most of the recent literature on Turkey-EU relations represents the first group and mainly involves two different approaches (see Monceau 2009: 99). The first is a historical approach, offering a chronology of Turkey-EU relations

2 After the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty, public opinion research has expanded and researchers have begun paying attention to economic considerations and problems over the public's national identity (Herzog and Tucker 2009). The public opinion surveys mainly focus on the influence of utilitarian factors in economic sense and on cultural or identity issues.

3 Turkey can quite be seen as similar to the French case in terms of the focus of Kemalist rhetoric on the primacy of the nation-state and national unity. A certain meaning of Euroscepticism is associated with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk as the leader of Turkish nation parallel to as in the association of the French Euroscepticism with another important leader in twentieth century politics: Charles de Gaulle.

from the 1963 Association Agreement to the official start of accession negotiations with the EU in 2005. The second is an institutional approach, examining the political and economic dynamics of Turkey's European integration. These approaches emphasise the difficulties and challenges that Turkey has faced in the course of European integration, the EU's expectation and Turkey's achievements in realising the Copenhagen criteria and the impact of reforms on the its political, economic and legal system. Nevertheless, examining the attitudes of the Turkish elite and public towards European integration will become a more important issue because of increasing Euroscepticism in Turkey. Analyses regarding the attitudes of domestic actors on Turkey's relations with the EU includes the roles of members of the Turkish Parliament (McLaren and Müftüler-Bac 2003), military (Cizre 2004), political parties (Güneş-Ayata 2003, Avcı 2004, 2011a, b, Gülmez 2008), public opinion (Çarkoğlu 2003, Yılmaz 2003, Kentmen 2008), business associations (Atan 2004, Yankaya 2009, Eylemer and Taş 2007) and the trade unions (Yıldırım et al. 2008). Başak Taraktaş (2008) attempted to identify patterns of popular and party-based Euroscepticism in the CEECs and Turkey before 2002, and hypothesises that the particularity of the Turkish context is based the nature of the opposition to Turkish accession in Europe and the uncertain nature of the accession process. Başak Alpan (2010) examines the contested nature of the concept of 'Europe' by using the Laclau-Mouffeian discourse analysis and concentrates on how discourses on 'Europe' contribute to a process of constructing political frontiers in Turkey. Hakan Yılmaz (2002, 2003) extensively studied public opinion towards the EU.

3. Origins, Definitions and Types of Euroscepticism

The term Euroscepticism (a combination of the terms 'Euro', meaning the European Union, and 'sceptic', meaning doubtful), emerged in the British political and journalistic context in the mid-1980s and has been characterised as "further contributing to a sense of the country's 'awkwardness' or 'otherness' in relation to a Continental European project of political and economic integration" (Harmsen and Spiering 2004:13). As a British concept, Euroscepticism was mainly interpreted as a phenomenon that opposes the Europeanisation of legislation and politics. In the domain of journalistic epistemology, it was first used in a 1985 article in *The Times*, in which it was used to refer to the 'anti-marketers' who were opposed to Britain joining the Common Market. It became popularised thanks to Margaret Thatcher's Bruges Speech at the College of Europe in 1988, in which she outlined an alternate vision for Europe and Britain (Leconte 2010:3).⁴

⁴ Euroscepticism was originally elite-driven. Two important landmarks in the history of the term are the Empty Chair Crisis of the 1960s by De Gaulle and Margaret Thatcher's Bruges Speech at the College of Europe.

Thatcher warned against the centralisation of political structures in the European Community and the concentration of power in Brussels, claiming that was an intent to diminish national identity. Furthermore, in the British context, the term was used to denounce anti-integrationist positions taken by members of the Labour and Conservative parties, and more broadly in emphasising the uniqueness of Britain vis-à-vis Continental Europe. In this case, doubts about EU institutions are considered to be a sign of Euroscepticism. British Euroscepticism has a radical (or, in Taggart and Szczerbiak's terms, harder) meaning, although Euroscepticism can refer to all opinions critical of the EU in a harder or softer manner (Spiering 2004:130).

While early use of the term was limited to describing a specific British phenomenon, Euroscepticism spread to continental Europe in the early 1990s as part of the debate over the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty as an all-encompassing term mainly implying opposition to the EU. Accordingly, due to this as well as to the repercussions of Eastern enlargement, Euroscepticism became a general phenomenon throughout Europe and a variety of approaches to Euroscepticism have been developed by continental European scholars. The definitions range from outright rejection of European integration to soft reformist criticisms. As a political discourse, the rejection of the value of European integration primarily relied on identity claims based hostility to "otherness" (a polarisation between "us and them"). Moreover, harder versions of Euroscepticism suppose that cultural distinctiveness, national identity and integrity⁵, and political sovereignty are distorted by the Europeanisation process, largely neglecting its economic and social benefits. To sum up, in the literature, Euroscepticism may denote a reaction against the current polity, to the EU's increasing competencies and supranational powers, to its widening and deepening processes or, alternatively, it can manifest itself as a fundamental opposition to European integration. The following excerpt aptly explains the penetration of the EU into the national context and its implications:

The emergence of a hegemonic great power or a new regional project poses a challenge to any nation state. At elite as well as popular levels a perceived genuineness, an established representation of the past, has to be reconciled with a new regional identity and culture...It might 'activate' dimensions of the nation's history that support or contradict the established self-understanding. (Malmberg and Strath 2002:13)

At this point, it should be noted that the adaptation of the term Euroscepticism necessitates in the context of different countries an analysis of national political traditions and the history of European integration for that particular country (Harmsen and Spiering 2004). Hence, in order to describe the dynamics of Euroscepticism,

⁵ Euroscepticism has high tendency to be driven primarily by nationalist considerations. In its EU-related discourse, many actors use the language of nationalism and patriotism.

it is important to understand its context, discursive elements as well as its cultural, ideological and historical specifics.

The concept of Euroscepticism was introduced by Taggart (1998:366) into the scholarly context and defined as follows: “The idea of contingent or qualified opposition, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration.” A broad definition that includes various positions was later developed and refined by Szczerbiak and Taggart, introducing the conceptualisation of Euroscepticism into hard and soft categories. Taggart and Szczerbiak (2004:3) defined hard Euroscepticism as an “outright rejection of the entire project of European political and economic integration and opposition to one’s country joining or remaining a member of the EU.” On the other hand, soft Euroscepticism is defined as: “where there is not a principled objection to European integration or EU membership but where concerns on one (or a number) of policy areas leads to the expression of qualified opposition to the EU, or where there is a sense that ‘national interest’ is currently at odds with the EU’s trajectory” (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2004:6). Accordingly, Taggart and Szczerbiak’s two-dimensional conceptual mapping of Euroscepticism enables us to differentiate between hard and soft manifestations of Euroscepticism. Soft Eurosceptic actors are opposed to particular aspects of the EU project and stand against complete withdrawal from the EU, whereas hard Eurosceptic actors mainly support decision making on the level of the nation-state and the weakening of the powers of the EU’s political and administrative institutions. Ravnny (2004) advocated analysing different degrees of soft and hard Euroscepticism by placing it on a continuum, and to think the magnitude of Euroscepticism in ordinal terms. Accordingly, he pays special attention to the differing degrees of soft and hard Euroscepticism on the basis of the number and relevance of EU policies that an actor opposes as well as the vehemence of the anti-EU rhetoric. By understanding Euroscepticism as opposition to the European integration project or to some of its aspects, he further differentiates between different degrees of strategically-driven and ideologically-driven Euroscepticism.

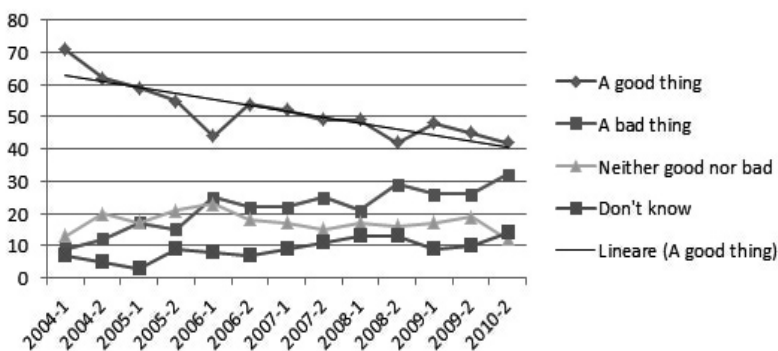
Returning to the original concept of Taggart (1998), who emphasises attitudes towards European integration, Kopecky and Mudde created a two-stage differentiation. To differentiate between the various forms of Euroscepticism, they rely on David Easton’s ground-breaking differentiation of forms of support for political regimes and distinguish between diffuse and specific support for European integration. Diffuse support means support for the basic ideas of European integration. Specific support implies the practice of European integration. This refers to the current state of the EU. Accordingly, Kopecky and Mudde proposed a new typology. As illustrated in Table 1, Euroscepticism consists of two dimensions (Kopecky and Mudde 2002). First, the ideological dimension that encompasses support for European integration. This is categorized as “Europhiles” and “Europhobes”. Europhiles

accept the principle idea of European integration while the Europhobes reject the basic idea of European integration. Secondly, the strategic dimension that deals with the acceptance of the EU being divided into EU-Optimists, who accept the EU as an institution and support the functioning of the EU, and the EU-Pessimists, who do not support the EU's current form and operation or even confront it critically. These two dimensions lead to a fourfold typology of actors according to their stance on European issues.

4. Public Euroscepticism in Turkey

When Turkey received candidate status at the Helsinki Summit in 1999, Turkish attitudes toward the project were quite positive. However, levels of approval and rejection of the European integration have not been constant in Turkey. Different opinion polls indicate that Turkish public approval of European integration has been continuously decreasing since 2004. This shift in public attitudes towards integration is an important turning point and it happens parallel to the slowing down of the accession process (Bardakçı 2007). This trend is confirmed by the findings of the Eurobarometer public opinion survey sponsored by the European Commission. Until 2004, a large number of Turks responded positively to the Eurobarometer trend question of whether membership is considered a “good thing” or a “bad thing”. Since then, however, this rate of approval has dropped to a minimum level. Figure 1 shows the percentage of support for the EU, as operationalised in the Eurobarometer survey:

Figure 1 Support for the EU: Generally speaking, do you think that (our country)'s membership of the European Union would be...?

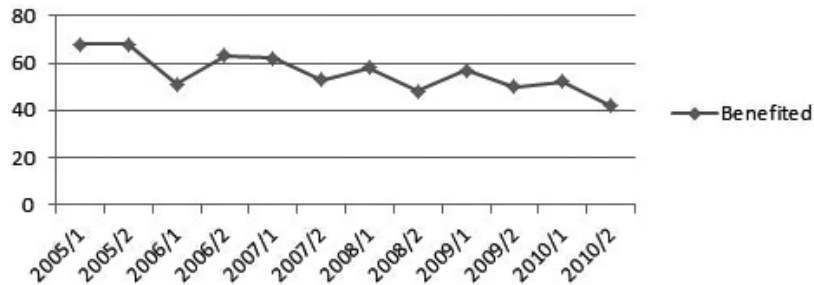


Source: Eurobarometer (2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010)

The figure above clearly shows the downward trend of enthusiasm vis-à-vis the EU: In 2004, 71% of respondents viewed the EU membership as a good thing and 7% as a bad thing. In contrast, the Eurobarometer survey of Autumn 2010 indicates that 42% of Turks say that Turkey's membership would be a good thing (minus 29

points since Spring 2004), while 32% (plus 25 points since Spring 2004) consider that it would be a bad thing. The response to the question whether membership would have beneficial to one's country shows a similar trend. Figure 2 shows the downward trend of the positive answers:

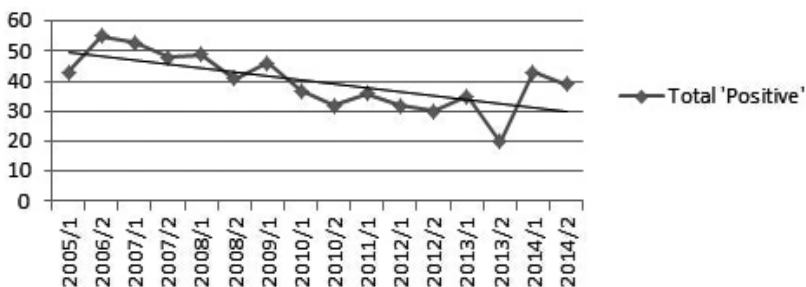
Figure 2 Benefits of the EU membership: Taking everything into account, would you say that Turkey has/would have on balance benefited or not from being a member of the European Union?



Source: Eurobarometer (2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010)

In Spring 2005, 68% of respondents considered EU membership to be beneficial, while in Autumn 2010 the percentage fell to 42% (-26%). One can observe small increases in the positive attitudes in some years, but it remains a fact that the rate fell to an all-time low in Autumn 2010. The Eurobarometer statistics thus reveal a downward trend in the percentage of positive answers. In a similar vein, we can observe a negative trend in the image of the EU in Turkey. Figure 3 illustrates this:

Figure 3 Image of the EU: In general, does the European Union conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image?



Source: Eurobarometer (2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014)

By Autumn 2013, the positive image of the EU in Turkey had decreased to 20%, an all-time low. This finding shows a similar negative trend such as the other two graphics. However, in Spring 2014, we observe an increase in the positive image of the EU. This increase is related to the corruption allegations in domestic politics and decrease of the trust to domestic institutions.

In Autumn 2012, the respondents answered the question, what the EU does mean to them personally, with economic prosperity (26%) and freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the EU (23%).⁶ In order to comprehend the EU's image better, the Eurobarometer Autumn 2010 survey asked which words are appropriate to describe the EU.⁷ As shown in the table there are differences between Turkey and the EU-27 countries. Whereas in Turkey "modern" describes the EU with a percentage of 77%, in the EU this percentage is 64%. The word "democratic" obtains the second highest percentage in Turkey at 58% and heads the table in the EU with 68%. Table 1 shows the words describing the EU in Turkey and the EU-27:

Table 1 Words describing the image of the EU in Turkey and the EU-27

	Turkey	EU-27
Modern	77%	64%
Democratic	58%	68%
Protective	45%	54%
Inefficient	39%	42%
Technocratic	42%	47%

Source: Eurobarometer, Autumn 2010

As in any other European country, in Turkey there is a high correlation between support for the EU and the level of knowledge about European integration. Therefore, the understanding of EU issues are crucial in diminishing Euroscepticism. In the Autumn 2010 Barometer, the respondents were asked to declare if a given statements was true or false.⁸ At 38%, Turkey is well below the European average of 63%. It has the lowest score among the candidate and member countries surveyed. It can be summarised that among the Turkish public, we can find the lowest level of subjective and objective knowledge about the EU.⁹

6 Generally, the items 'economic prosperity', 'freedom to travel', 'study and work', 'democracy' and 'a stronger say in the world' top the list and obtained the highest scores before 2012. The negative item that has the highest percentage is 'the loss of cultural identity.'

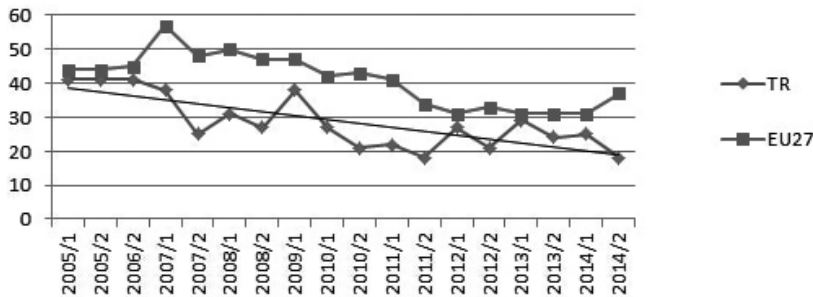
7 Please tell me for each of the following words if it describes very well, fairly well, fairly badly or very badly the idea that you might have of the European Union. Modern; Democratic; Protective; Inefficient; Technocratic.

8 For each of the following statements about the European Union could you please tell me whether you think it is true or false? The EU currently consists of 27 Member States; The Members of the European Parliament are directly elected by the citizens of each Member State; Switzerland is a member of the EU.

9 Other surveys also indicate that respondents' knowledge of the topics regarding EU membership is very low. More than 50% of Turks believe that they have the lowest possible level of knowledge on the issues (Carkoglu 2003:25).

In Turkey, only a minority of respondents trust the European Union. In Spring 2005, this percentage was 41%, and 18% in Autumn 2014. The Eurobarometer surveys indicate that the trust in the European Union did not increased after Turkey obtained its candidacy status. The low level of trust is highly related with the belief of unfair treatment by the EU towards Turkey (Carkoglu 2003: 26). Figure 4 shows the declining trend in Turkey in comparison to EU-27 from 2005 to 2012:

Figure 4 Trust in the EU



Source: Eurobarometer (2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014)

There are three main problems with the data obtained from the Eurobarometer surveys. The first is the relatively late inclusion of Turkey in the Eurobarometer survey (beginning in 2001). The second problem is the sampling due to the difficult conditions of data collection in Turkey. The third and most important problem with Eurobarometer surveys is the nature of questions. The questions are not well-prepared for an in-depth analysis of the Turkish public (Senyuva 2006). Hence, it would be necessary to show the results of surveys taken by Turkish political scientists to compare to the Eurobarometer findings. Below, I will briefly explain the most important public surveys in Turkey.

A public opinion survey conducted in May and June 2002 sponsored by the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV) examined the different bases of support for the EU and Euroscepticism in the Turkish public opinion. The researcher summarises the study's findings in the following excerpt:

Euroscepticism in Turkey tends to increase from higher to lower income groups, from higher to lower education levels, from more to less access to written information, from more to less familiarity with European countries and languages, from modern, urban and high-tech to traditional, rural and low-tech occupations, from a self-identification based on Republican citizenship to an ethnic and religious self-identification, from more to less association with Kurdish culture and identity, from lower to higher degrees of religiosity, from the left-wing to the right-wing of the ideological spectrum, from the support base of the secularist to the one of the Islamic- oriented political

parties, from the support base of the centrist to the support base of the extremist political parties. (Yılmaz 2003:75)

The study indicates that despite the overwhelming support for the EU in 2002 (64%), an equal part of the respondents expressed doubts and lack of confidence toward the EU (Yılmaz 2003: 1). Firstly, half of the respondents considered the EU as a Christian Club (49%) and think that the EU would never accept a Muslim country like Turkey joining, irrespective of Turkey's fulfilment of the Copenhagen Criteria (48%). Secondly, 62% of the respondents thought that the EU has treated Turkey unequally by imposing certain criteria on Turkey that are not part of the normal accession criteria. 61% of the respondents also said that Europeans do not understand Turkey and the Turks at all. Moreover, the public considers EU membership not a popular project, but a state one – driven by elites and the project of the secularist-centrist political establishment (Yılmaz 2003:59). The most interesting observation from this research is that there at the time there were different forms of Euroscepticism but no Eurorejectionism, as every sub-group supported EU membership by a decisive majority and the Turkish public does not reject the concept of shared sovereignty with EU institutions. Yılmaz highlights the absence of the Eurorejectionism in contrast to strong Turcoscepticism:

The virtual absence of a meaningful Turkish Eurorejectionism strikingly contrasts with ever growing European exclusionism and outright rejectionism directed against Turkey. This European rejectionism targeting Turkey, which can be observed among both the elites as well as the common people of Europe, and which uses historical, geographical, civilizational, religious, cultural or political motives, stands in a dramatic contrast with the almost non-existent Turkish rejectionism aimed at Europe (Yılmaz 2003:77)

Further research examined the Turkish public's fears, doubts and anxieties vis-à-vis Europe and the European Union, and defined the basic types of anxiety concerning Europe and European Union (Yılmaz 2003). These are listed as *historical anxiety* based on past fears, *exclusion anxiety* based on the fear of being excluded by Europe via double standards, *sovereignty anxiety* based on the fear of losing the national sovereignty, *religious anxiety* stemming from regarding the EU as a Christian Club, *separatism anxiety* based on the fear of the damage to national unity caused by the EU¹⁰ and *moral anxiety* tied to the erosion of traditional values.¹¹

10 In a survey carried out by Istanbul's Bilgi University in 2006, a strikingly high number of respondents (52%) claimed that the EU tried to disintegrate Turkey.

11 Exclusion anxiety is based on the observation regarding double standards of the EU (61%) and that the EU will not accept Turkey as a member, even if Turkey satisfies all the necessary conditions (50%). Historical anxiety is manifested by respondents agreeing (40%) with the statement that the conditions of the EU are similar to the capitulation of the Ottoman Era agree or to the Sevres Treaty (30%). Sovereignty anxiety is manifested agreeing (53% of respondents) to the statement that the

Another study from 2002 investigated public opinion towards the EU with a focus on attitudes towards Europe, religiosity and faith, degree of nationalism, political preferences and conventional demographic characteristics. It employed a multivariate statistical analysis, showing that factors such as nationalistic attitudes, Euroscepticism, religiosity, anti-democratic attitudes led to low degree of support for EU membership. With the exception of nationalistic attitudes, these attitudinal indicators were found to be the most influential of all variables in the study and are the major sources for rejecting EU membership. Çarkoğlu explains the findings of the study in the following:

From a policy perspective, there exist many so-called “sensitive” issues that can easily be used by groups and parties who choose to oppose EU membership. These issues are more likely to be publicly expressed, and thus conveniently exploited, within a nationalistic, Euro-skeptic and religious rhetoric so as to make them more palatable to the largely EU-supportive Turkish public. The choice of the rhetoric adopted may significantly change the level of support for or against policy modifications necessary for the fulfilment of the Copenhagen Criteria. (Çarkoglu 2002:187)

A more recent study analysing citizen support for EU membership based on pooled Eurobarometer data scrutinises three factors (Kentmen 2008): national identity, Islam and utilitarian considerations to explain individual support for Turkey’s accession to the EU. Although research has shown that religion plays an important role in the attitudes of individuals towards the European Integration project,¹² interestingly, the study discovered that attitudes towards the EU do not vary with attachment to Islam. Rather, influence on national identity and macro-economic advantages play a role in shaping attitudes. The study points out that in the European integration process, which structures the socio-economic structure of a state, the public evaluates the integration process in terms of its influence on national identity and on its contributions to the Turkish national economy.

The findings of the study go against the widespread correlation of the concepts of Islam and anti-Westernism. In contrast, the study found out that religious individu-

Turkish state will be brought to an end if Turkey does everything the EU asks her to do. Religious anxiety is based on the agreement (56%) with the statement that the EU is founded on Christian values. Separatism anxiety is manifested with the agreement (66%) to the statement that some EU countries supported the PKK. Moral anxiety is manifested on the agreement to the statements that joining the EU will lead to the corruption of young people’s moral values (55%) and the corruption of religious values (54%) (Yılmaz 2003:81).

12 Research has mainly concentrated on the differences of being a Protestant or Catholic in attitudes towards the EU and European Integration, and contrasted the strengthening role of Protestantism on attachment to a nation in comparison to transnational Catholic culture (Hagevi 2002, Nelsen et al. 2001, Vollaard 2006).

als are not less supportive of the EU. Supporting this finding, Ihsan Dagi (2004) maintains that many individuals with strong attachment to Islam have supported European values such as democracy and liberalism as a response to state authority over religious freedom. Despite these empirical findings, it is oversimplifying to claim that religious attachments have no effect of attitudes of the EU. Moreover, in the integration process, individuals face a new social form through changes in the political and social structure, and they may hold to their religious values as a mechanism providing stability (Hagevi 2002; Nelsen et al. 2001).

Reasons for the Shift in Public Opinion

There are a variety of possible explanations for this negative shift in public opinion. Bardakci (2007) lists the underlying reasons: the dramatic decrease in public support for the EU is linked to the pessimistic attitude of major European countries, especially France and Germany, and to the negative European public opinion regarding Turkey's EU membership. Additionally, utilitarian motives, namely the perceived costs of accession, come into play. Some sectors, such as agriculture, would lose a significant amount of state subsidies in the EU accession process as part of measures to strengthen public finance.

Moreover, the EU's perceived double standards in the case of Cyprus is a vital factor. In the eyes of the Turkish public, the EU made them feel disillusioned as Brussels did not stick to its promise of lifting the isolation of Northern Cyprus if Turkish Cypriots supported the referendum for reunification based on the 2004 Annan Plan. Although an overwhelming majority of Turkish Cypriots supported the reunification plan, the embargos on and isolation of Northern Cyprus still remain intact. Additional dissatisfaction also stemmed from the rising demand in European circles that Turkey acknowledge Armenian genocide claims as almost a pre-requisite for Turkey's EU membership. These, along with the resumption of PKK attacks in 2005 despite the EU reforms and the nationalist reaction, which enlarged freedom of expression and the rights of minorities have all contributed to the dramatic rise of Euroscepticism among the Turkish public. That is the reason that during the post-accession process in 2007, Turkish popular support for the EU membership has declined to an all-time low (Bardakci 2007). As Bardakci (2007) argues, the decrease in public support for the EU paralleled the worsening of Turkey-EU relations at the official level. Surveys conducted by the European Commission and the German Marshall Fund¹³ confirm this development. The public reacted negatively to this slowing down of the accession negotiations in 2006, and the image of the EU worsened in the eyes of the public (Bardakci 2007). In a similar vein, the 2007 Transatlantic Trend Survey indicates that the majority of Turks (54%) considered

13 The Eurobarometer surveys and others show similar results. According to a study of the German Marshall Fund "the ratio of Turks who see membership in the EU as a 'good thing' fell from 73% in 2004 to 54% in 2006 and to 50% in 2008.

the EU global leadership undesirable which was part of the overall negative image of the EU. At this point, it should be underlined that the decline in trust of the EU on the part of the public opinion may lead to any political movement to use anti-EU rhetoric to mobilise their support base (Çarkoğlu 2007:2).

The Transatlantic Trend Survey's findings indicate similar results and enlarges the perspective on public opinion of the West.¹⁴ In 2004, the survey indicated that Turkish respondents strongly support the EU membership (73%).¹⁵ They identified the main reason for their support as the economic benefits of membership for Turkey (70% of respondents affirming). The report states that there is a high rate of "don't know" answers among Turkish respondents to different questions in the survey, indicating that Turkey's European identity remains a work in progress. Compared to 70% of EU members in 2005, only 41% of Turks wanted the EU to become a superpower like the United States. In 2006, the Transatlantic Trend Survey focused on the question of whether Turkey is turning away from the West. The survey came to the conclusion that Turkey has cooled toward Europe with a percentage of 45% (-7 points in comparison to 2004) and the United States with a percentage of 20% (-8 points in comparison to 2004), but has warmed toward Iran with 43% (+7 points in comparison to 2004).¹⁶ Accordingly, Turkish politicians, notably Turkish foreign minister Abdullah Gül, warned that disappointment about the slowing down of the accession process could cause Turkey to drift away from the West and the EU (Transatlantic Trend Survey 2006:17). Gül stated that Turkey is jeopardising itself by turning away from its alliances in the West, and that "moderate liberal people [in Turkey] are becoming anti-American and anti-EU," particularly "young, dynamic, educated, and economically active people" (Financial Times 2006:11 cited in Transatlantic Survey 2006:19). Although the accession negotiations started on 3 October 2005, there is an unresolved conflict about the Cyprus issue and negative reactions of the European public and some European politicians against the Turkish accession.

Moreover, Turkish-American relations have worsened after the American's invasion of Iraq, and Turkey has repeatedly mentioned its objections to American policies in the Middle East. In 2007, the Transatlantic Trend Survey focussed on the

14 The Transatlantic Trend Survey is a comprehensive survey of European and American public opinion and is a project of the German Marshall Fund of the United States. Turkey was included for the first time in 2004.

15 The percentage of the respondents, who view EU membership as a good thing has declined from 73% in 2004 to 32% in 2008.

16 In 2008, Turkish warmth towards the European Union is 33% and towards the United States 14%, showing downward trend in feelings towards both since 2004.

issue of Turkey's relations with the West. In that year, accession negotiations with the EU worsened when the EU suspended eight of the thirty-five chapters in the negotiation framework and the negative attitude of the new French President Nicholas Sarkozy towards Turkey's EU Membership strengthened Euroscepticism in Turkey. The approval ratings of the Turkish people towards the United States have fallen to 11% in 2007 (-9% in comparison to 2006) and towards the EU 26%. The issue of Turkey has remained a matter for debate in EU politics and Turkey is considered more isolated than ever from West and East. In 2008, 55% of Turkish respondents agreed that Turkey has different values that are not really shared by the West. At the same time, US president Barack Obama said in an interview that if the EU pushed the Turkish accession sluggishly, "...this will inevitably influence the way Turkish people see Europe. If they do not feel themselves as part of the European family, it is natural that they [Turks] will search for other partners and allies" (Transatlantic Survey 2007). To conclude, Transatlantic Trends looked to see if Turkey was drifted away from the West and concluded that support for EU membership has fallen, criticism of the U.S. and the EU has continued, Turkish feelings towards the EU have cooled and finally that support for NATO has declined.

5. Conclusion

The negative trend of the public opinion as can be observed in the Eurobarometer and other surveys cannot simply be equated with hard-Euroscepticism or anti-Europeanism. Instead, growing Euroscepticism in Turkish public opinion is the result of the belief in the inequality of the accession process and growing distrust of the EU (Taraktaş 2008:254). Hence, by considering the EU-driven factors, this study argues that Euroscepticism in Turkey involves domestic reactions to the EU's conditionality on particular issues and the EU's extra conditions during the accession negotiations.

In studying Euroscepticism, core ideas of strategy or ideology have often been used to 'explain' why things happen. However, this study of public Euroscepticism of Turkey shows that once one is located in a specific instance it quickly becomes apparent that there are lots of other contextual factors at play. Accordingly, it can be questioned whether the same concepts and categories that we know of from Euroscepticism in member states are applicable to the candidate countries and Turkish case. This leads to the conclusion that we should supplement the traditional categories and resolve contradictions by using a contextual approach. Turkish Euroscepticism is multi-causal and is not only based on ideological or strategic factors but it involves also a reactionary aspect.

This study provides insights into the discourse about European Union and European integration that has been taking place in Turkish public opinion since 2002. By focusing on the surveys of public Euroscepticism in Turkey and international su-

veys, this study seeks to explain the main determinants of rising skepticism against EU accession. Consequently, it argues that public Euroscepticism in Turkey develops as a response to the EU's country-specific conditionality.

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