

The European Union, European Identity, and Political Cleavages in Turkey

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Turkish alignment with the West is not limited to strategic and diplomatic considerations. It is the outward expression of a profound internal change extending over a century-and-a-half of Turkish history, and resulting from a determined and sustained attempt to endow the Turkish people with those freedoms, economic, political, and intellectual, which represent the best that our Western societies have to offer. (Lewis, 1989: ix)

As an economically-developing country spanning two continents and having a history grounded in both the West and the East, Turkey represents a dramatic case of a “torn” (Huntington 1993) or divided country, possessing several types of political and social cleavages. Borrowing terminology and insights from the seminal work on social cleavages of Lipset and Rokkan (1967), Serif Mardin (1973) argued over three decades ago that political life in Turkey was defined by the differences between a more modern, centralizing, secularized, and Western-oriented “center” and a poorer, more traditional and Islamic “periphery.” Since the foundation of the Turkish Republic under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal (later Atatürk), the Turkish center has fought against what it views as the backward, traditional ways of Ottoman Anatolia and has sought to Westernize Turkey. Turkey’s drive to join the European Union (EU) can be seen through this lens, as the “culmination of a perennial quest for participation in European political and social space.” (Grigoriadis, 2009: 4)

This aspiration, however, is contested. It is contested in Europe between those who favor Turkish accession to the European Union and those, employing political,

economic, and, most vociferously, cultural arguments, who oppose it. It is also contested in Turkey, where the country's drive to join the EU has necessitated a host of political and social reforms. Some actors oppose these reforms, and, as seen in the revelations in 2008 about the shadowy Ergenekon organization, are willing to sacrifice Turkish democracy to derail the country's European project. Whereas in previous decades the Kemalist establishment stood in favor of closer ties with Europe, it is now the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, or AKP), with its Islamist roots, that is the country's strongest advocate for Europeanization while those with more secularist or nationalist orientations fear both the AKP and what its push for political liberalization portends for Turkey.

This paper examines how Europe—more specifically, the issue of whether Turkey should join the EU—has become a primary cleavage in Turkish politics. This cleavage reflects, to some extent, the old center-periphery, Westernizing-traditional divide that harkens back to the Ottoman Empire. However, in recent years it has assumed new and somewhat unexpected features. This paper will look the contours of public opinion over the issue of Europe and how debates over Europe divide Turkish political parties.

Cleavage Structures in Turkey in Historical Perspective

Turkish society is complex and multi-faceted. It combines elements of a more traditional political culture with those that are a product of modernization and exposure to the outside world. Views of the role of the state, religious orientation, occupation and

status, residence, and ethnicity are all factors that shape political and social outlooks. The country's political culture remains very dynamic. Grigoriadis (2009) notes that the liberal reforms in the 2000s that were required by the EU have had a significant impact on the political culture, putting pressure on the statist-Kemalist ideology while opening up space for new actors and identities to assume more political prominence.

Numerous faultlines, of course, run through Turkish society. Başlevant *et al* (2005) point to a number of factors that affect partisan identification, including assessments about the economy (“economic voting”), ethnic (Turk vs. Kurd) identity, and sectarianism (Sunni Muslims vs. Alevis). Secor (2001) identifies three fundamental lines of division within Turkey: a “typical” socio-economic one defined by expectations about the economic role of the state; a political one centered on the question of democratization; and a cultural one characterized by splits between secular and Islamic elements in Turkish society. While recognizing that some of these cleavages are cross-cutting, one could argue that the deepest and most enduring line of cleavage is one of center versus periphery. (Mardin 1973). In this scheme, urban, modern, secularized, and more Westernized Turks are pitted against their fellow citizens who are more rural, more traditional, and more Islamic.¹ While this can be reduced to a secular-Islamic divide, (Çarkoğlu and Toprak, 2000; Çarkoğlu and Hinich, 2006) it is important to note that notions of Turkey's identity and place in the world—e.g. is Turkey part of Europe or not? should it strive for closer ties to Europe?—linger not far beneath the surface. For example, one finds in the works of Orhan Pamuk (2005) that views of the West color much of Turks' assessment of themselves and their nation.

¹ In my own discussions with Turks, notions of “us” and “them” revolve on this axis, and include markers such as dress, music, gender roles, and even food.

The divide between what we can call Westernizers and traditionalists dates back at least to the early 1800s, when reformers began to argue that the Ottoman Empire must learn to borrow ideas from the West in order to stop its economic and political decline. Conflicts over the proper course of reform were the primary leitmotif in internal Ottoman politics until the end of the empire, with various leaders and factions advocating Westernization, pan-Islam, and Turkish nationalism. Ultimately, Atatürk and his allies imposed their vision on the Republic of Turkey, which would be based upon secularism, Turkish nationalism and Westernization.

Westernization—or at least those parts of it that meant secularization—encountered resistance. Under Atatürk (1923-1938), much of this was repressed, but with the advent of genuine multi-party politics in the 1940s, the more religious and traditional populations in rural Turkey found their champion in the Justice Party, which won elections in 1950 and ruled until a military coup in 1961 (Mardin 1973). While the center—led by Republican People's Party—re-gained some control, by the 1970s political Islam emerged as an even more overt force in Turkish politics. Eventually, struggles among leftists, Islamists, and nationalists prompted military intervention again in 1980. Several figures were banned from political life, but after a change in the law in 1990, many of the more divisive political figures were allowed to re-enter the public arena. Chief among them was Necmettin Erbakan, who assumed leadership of the Islamist *Refah* (Welfare) Party in 1993. *Refah* emerged as the largest party after 1995 elections, and Erbakan became Prime Minister, a development that made many in the secular establishment very nervous. While it would be unfair to characterize *Refah* and Erbakan as virulently anti-Western, there was little doubt that his primary interest was in

the Muslim world, as he made high profile trips to Iran and Libya. In 1997, in a “post-modern” coup, Erbakan was pushed out of power at the insistence of the military, which views itself as the guardian of secularism. *Refah* was banned in 1998 by the Turkish Constitutional Court, as was its successor, *Fazilet* (Virtue), in 2001. Both decisions were controversial, as many in and outside of Turkey felt bans on political parties compromised Turkish democracy. Others, however—those that Mardin (1973) would label representatives of the “center”—believed the ban was justified, given the fears that “those people”—with their prayer beads, veiled women, and provincial mores—were undermining the basic political framework of the Turkish Republic.²

The central point here, from a historical perspective, is that Westernization was linked to the Kemalist parties who viewed themselves as defenders of the Turkish state. Leaders from such “establishment” parties signed Turkey’s Association Agreement with the then-European Economic Community in 1963 and made a formal application to join the European Community in 1987 (this was rejected). They also sought Turkish entry into the EU in the late 1990s, and in 1999 at its Helsinki Summit the EU affirmed that Turkey would be eligible to join the EU if it met the Copenhagen Criteria. This is not to suggest that the various Kemalist parties in Turkey never had problems with Europe. Indeed, European condemnation of Turkey’s human rights record, sanctions placed on Turkey after its 1974 invasion of Cyprus, and appeals to Turkey to admit to the genocide against Armenians rankled Turkish-European relations. Nonetheless, as put by Ioannis Grigoriadis, EU membership was part of a “Kemalist imperative” that included identification with Western notions of modernity. (Grigoriadis 2009)

² I can personally attest to several conversations on this theme, often with Turks who would proudly describe themselves as liberal and democratic. For them, the example of the Iranian Revolution was salient, and they viewed bans on parties as a necessary measure to save democracy.

Since 1999, there has been, in the words of one writer, a “political avalanche of democratization” in Turkey.ⁱ Much of this, it seems clear, was brought upon by the EU, which required political liberalization in advance of accession negotiations. In 2001, the Turkish government passed a National Programme for the Adoption of the EU *Acquis* and pushed through thirty-four constitutional amendments that were in line with EU recommendations. In 2002, the government built upon these moves by advancing various reform packages through the Turkish National Assembly. These included changes on a variety of fronts: abolition of the death penalty, expanded freedom of expression, curtailment of the power of the military, release of political prisoners, and more freedom for use and study of Kurdish, which previously had been prohibited.ⁱⁱ In November 2002, the AKP, a re-incarnation of previously banned Islamist parties, won parliamentary elections and elected its leader, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (who at the time was banned from serving in political office) as Prime Minister. Crucially, however, the AKP was not the same as previous Islamist parties in several respects, including the fact that it was fundamentally pro-Europe and in favor of political liberalization. The AKP government established an EU Harmonization Commission and adopted the UN Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. In total, from 2002 to 2004 nine reform packages were passed through parliament, six of which were under the tutelage of the AKP government. These reforms have fundamentally changed the political environment in Turkey and have “liquidated a very large part of the semi-authoritarian legacy” of the previous military government.ⁱⁱⁱ

This is not to say that all obstacles have been removed from Turkey’s path to Europe. The EU did start accession negotiations with Turkey in 2005, but talks over eight

chapters of the *acquis* were suspended in 2006 because of Turkish refusal to normalize its relations with Cyprus. Many in Europe questioned Turkey's ability to transform itself to become a suitable EU member. Already in 2004 then French Prime Minister Jean Marie Raffarin asked, "We are not doubting the good faith of Mr. Erdogan, but to what extent can today or tomorrow's government make Turkish society embrace Europe's human rights values? Do we want the river of Islam to enter the riverbed of secularism?"^{iv} Other European leaders—most explicitly Nicholas Sarkozy, elected president of France in 2007—campaigning for office against Turkish EU membership. Meanwhile, even though AKP won re-election in 2007, its opponents took AKP to court for violating the principle of secularism (or, more accurately, laicism) by lifting the ban on the wearing of Islamic headscarves in universities. The Constitutional Court, ruling in July 2008, agreed that AKP had become a "focal point for antiseccular activity" but only had enough votes to fine the party, not ban it. Meanwhile, revelations about Ergenekon, a group of retired military officers, policemen, and journalists accused of plotting acts of terrorism to serve as grounds for a military coup, have rocked Turkey and thrown into some doubt whether political liberalization will firmly take hold.

In other words, Turkey's future relationship with the EU is very much in doubt. The straightforward calculus of the 1999 Helsinki decision—undertake reforms to receive membership—are in doubt, as many in Europe suggest that even if Turkey takes all the steps asked by the EU it still should not receive full membership. At the same time, the ability of the pro-EU AKP government to deliver reforms and survive politically is also questionable.

Public Opinion on Europe and the European Union

One of the factors that will affect Turkey's European project is Turkish public opinion. If Turks support the country's EU membership bid and the reforms required to meet EU criteria, at least one of the obstacles to Turkish membership will be removed. The questions, however, are how solid is Turkish support for the EU and what factors seem to account for pro- and anti-EU attitudes?

One can answer these questions in part by turning to data regularly collected by Eurobarometer surveys, which ask respondents about whether they think EU membership is (or would be) good for their country, what image they have of the EU, and whether they trust the EU. Aggregate data from Turkey from 2002-2008 are presented in Table 1, along with figures from neighboring countries that joined the EU in 2007.

Table 1 Views of the EU in Turkey, Romania, and Bulgaria, 2002-2008

| Question | Turkey | | | | Romania | | | | Bulgaria | | | |
|----------|--------|-------|-------|-------|---------|-------|-------|------|----------|-------|-------|-------|
| | 2002 | 2004 | 2006 | 2008 | 2002 | 2004 | 2006 | 2008 | 2002 | 2004 | 2006 | 2008 |
| 1 | 65/13 | 71/9 | 54/22 | 42/29 | 78/2 | 70/3 | 62/8 | 66/7 | 68/5 | 65/6 | 55/9 | 65/12 |
| 2 | 53/24 | 56/12 | 55/24 | 41/31 | 72/4 | 72/6 | 66/9 | 63/6 | 64/8 | 68/6 | 63/11 | 58/7 |
| 3 | 54/34 | 48/36 | 41/48 | n/a | 75/8 | 72/13 | 67/20 | n/a | 65/17 | 66/17 | 56/23 | n/a |

Question 1: Do you think EU membership will be (is) good for the country? (Good/Bad)

Question 2: What is your image of the EU? (Positive/Negative)

Question 3: Do you tend to trust the EU? (Tend to Trust/Tend Not to Trust)

Sources: Candidate Country Eurobarometers, 2002 and 2004; Eurobarometer 66 and 70 (Fall 2006 and Fall 2008)

A few items are worth mentioning from Table 1. First, one sees across several countries that Euroskeptical views tend to grow over time, perhaps a reflection of the fact that as these states entered into closer ties with the EU (e.g. accession talks began or concluded), Euroskeptical views increased. This could reflect the fact that respondents either realized the EU could not be a panacea for all the country's problems or that membership would entail costs as well. This pattern of increasing anti-EU views holds across most of the states that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007. Nevertheless, one clearly sees that whereas in 2002 and 2004—at least on the question of whether EU membership would be good for the country—Turks rated roughly the same as Bulgarians and Romanians, by 2006 there was a noticeable drop-off in support and trust for the EU in Turkey. This drop is much more severe than in Bulgaria and Romania, although one might mention that by 2008 the most pronounced anti-EU views came from Croatia, not Turkey.³ One could easily imagine the chief reason for this shift: increasing criticism and demands on Turkey from Europe, which, in November 2006, led to the suspension of accession talks on eight policy areas. By 2006, then, the prospect of EU membership seemed more doubtful, arguably making Turks distrustful and less supportive of the EU as a whole.

³ In Eurobarometer 70 from 2008, for example, only 23% of respondents in Croatia thought EU membership would be good for Croatia and only 33% thought Croatia would benefit from EU membership (compared to 48% of respondents in Turkey).

Our purpose is not to ascertain whether dynamics between the EU and Turkey have led to the drop in support among Turks for EU accession. Rather, the task is to determine whether or not there has been a shift in the factors or variables that help account for views on the EU. In other words, one might wonder what types of people are becoming Euroskeptical and what types of people tend to be most pro-European.

One can posit some basic hypotheses on this score, given both knowledge of Turkish history and views on the European Union in other member states. One would expect better educated, wealthier, urban residents to be more oriented toward Europe. Religious belief should also play a role, as secularism has often been taken as a marker for a pro-West or pro-European disposition in Turkey. Furthermore, drawing from the idea of “Generation E,” we would expect younger respondents to be more pro-EU. Given that the EU is also commonly celebrated as a “cause” for reform in Turkey, we might expect those less satisfied with conditions in Turkey—e.g. ethnic Kurds and/or those wishing for more political or economic reform—to be more pro-EU. Lastly, one could posit that knowledge about the EU drives attitudes towards it, so a knowledge scale variable was included.

Tests for these hypotheses were conducted on data from 2002 and 2006, allowing us to capture a view of Turkish public opinion when Turks were more pro-EU and when many in Turkey began to sour on the EU.⁴ A composite variable, adding together scores on responses for the three questions on Table 1, was put together with a range from 0 to 3.⁵ Multi-variate linear regression analysis, taking into account demographic and

⁴ Data from 2008 are not yet available, and the 2006 survey (unlike those in 2007) asked about religion, arguably a crucial variable.

⁵ There were only two responses for the questions on trust and benefits of EU membership, so scores were either 0 or 1. The question of the image of the EU was on a five point scale, and values were recoded as 0,

attitudinal variables, was conducted for both surveys. Dummy variables were created for two regions of Turkey (the southeast and the Istanbul/Marmara region) and for supporters for the two largest parties, the AKP and the more secular and establishment-oriented Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, or CHP).

The results are displayed in Table 2. Several points are worth mentioning. First, in 2002, when there was far more pro-EU feeling in Turkey, there appears to be little socio-economic, age, or gender basis for EU support. This stands in stark contrast to typical findings on public views on the EU, particularly with respect to greater support for the EU among the younger generation. Moreover, when other variables are held constant, there is no urban/rural divide, which has often been a surrogate for the center/periphery schism. This, however, might be explained by the large number of shantytowns (*gececondos*) in large cities, a fact that the “periphery” has moved to the “center.” One does see, a “Kurdish” effect, as respondents in southeastern Anatolia⁶, who are predominantly Kurdish, are the ethnic/regional group most likely to be pro-EU, no doubt seeing the EU as a vehicle that could better their own cultural or political standing.⁷ Somewhat similarly, there is a linkage between dissatisfaction with Turkish democracy and support for the EU, which could be seen as a remedy of sorts for Turkish shortcomings. What stands out, however, is how frequency of religious attendance—the best indicator in this survey for strong religious beliefs—is linked to skepticism or hostility to the EU. This does not translate directly to AKP, although in this survey and in

.25, .5, .75, and 1. These questions were the ones that best lent themselves to direct comparative analysis across these two surveys.

⁶ In the 2002 survey, southeastern Anatolia was its own region. In 2006, I combined results from the regions of Malatya, Van, Gaziantep, Sanliurfa, Mardin, and Hatay to construct this variable.

⁷ All of these findings are consistent with results from a more detailed, Turkey-specific survey on EU attitudes conducted in 2002. See Carkoglu, 2002 for a more complete analysis for this work.

other conducted at the time AKP voters did tend to be less pro-EU than most of the more “establishment” parties (Çarkoğlu 2002). In other words, looking at the “usual suspect” list of variables on attitudes toward the EU, one does see in 2002 evidence that religiosity—maybe a better marker for the center/periphery divide given the changing nature of Turkish cities—looms as an important factor.

Table 2 Explanatory Factors for Views on the EU

| Factor/Variable | 2002 | 2006 |
|-----------------------------------|------------|----------|
| AGE | .025 | -.089* |
| EDUCATION | .031 | .103* |
| FEMALE | .015 | .019 |
| SIZE OF VILLAGE/CITY | -.011 | .023 |
| INCOME | .027 | N/A |
| CHP | .153** | N/A |
| AKP | -.045 | N/A |
| SE TURKEY | .139** | .167** |
| MARMARA REGION | .055 | -.098* |
| FREQUENCY OF RELIGIOUS ATTENDANCE | -.098* | .053 |
| SATISFACTION WITH DEMOCRACY | .170** | N/A |
| EU KNOWLEDGE | .027 | .117** |
| CONSTANT/STD ERROR | 6.33/19.89 | 1.89/.25 |
| R ² | .103 | .075 |

Results are standardized coefficients. * p < .05, ** p < .01

In 2006, one sees some key differences. Age and education now seem to matter more, with youth and higher education associated with positive views of the EU. There is still a discernible “Kurdish” effect. Interestingly, knowledge of the EU is related to pro-EU feelings, reflecting perhaps a surprising notion (given the chill in EU-Turkish relations) that those more familiar with the EU are more likely to have positive views of

it. Most interesting, religious attendance is no longer associated with Euroskepticism. Indeed, religious attendance is connected to more pro-EU feeling, although the result is not statistically significant ($p = .16$) by most measures. We cannot test, unfortunately, the effect of party identification. A bi-variate correlation between attitudes toward the EU and left-right self-placement, however, revealed no statistically significant relationship. Similarly, the 2006 survey does not include a question on satisfaction with democracy. It does ask, however, whether one places great value on democracy. When added to the regression analysis, its value (std beta = .087) is statistically significant, indicating that there is a link between the value one attaches to democracy and one's view of the EU. Lastly, one sees a negative relationship between residence in the Marmara region⁸, which includes Istanbul, and pro-EU feelings. This may be surprising, as Istanbul would, in traditional representations of Turkey at least, represent the heart of the pro-Western "center." Of course, there could be a *gececondo* effect, although typical markers of class don't seem to matter and religion swings more in a pro-European direction.⁹

Overall, what the comparison of these two surveys reveals is that with respect to attitudes toward the EU, while some "typical" relationships that one finds in other countries (e.g. age or socio-economic status effect¹⁰) do appear in the Turkish data in 2006 (but not in 2002), conventional notions of center-periphery in Turkey hold up less

⁸ This was, like southeastern Anatolia, its own region in the 2002 survey. In 2006, this was made from respondents from Istanbul, Kocaeli, Tekirdag, and Balikesir regions.

⁹ Efforts to construct a "white collar," "professional," or "management" variable out of occupational categories failed because of insufficient cases.

¹⁰ In separate regression analyses from the above 2002 survey on respondents from all other candidate countries, income, age, and education all lined up in a predictable manner (wealthier, younger, better educated) as more pro-EU or European. Satisfaction with democracy and knowledge of EU also mattered. Interestingly, religious attendance was negatively associated ($p < .05$) with views on the EU or feelings of Europeanness. On the 2006 survey, among the EU-15 education, age, EU knowledge, and religion all lined up as significant. Among the 10 new EU states, education and religious attendance, but not age, were statistically significant.

well. Indeed, by 2006 the effect of religion even appeared to be such that those who attended religious services more regularly tended to be more pro-EU. This finding can be explained by the fact that the EU was connected more to the AKP government than to other political groups in Turkey and that its agenda dovetailed better with that of Islamic-oriented voters than that of secularists, who by 2006 were both uncertain if Turkey would gain the benefits of EU membership and voicing doubts if the EU-promoted political reform agenda was in their best interest. While it would be an exaggeration to suggest that attitudes toward the EU constitute a major cleavage in Turkish politics, it is interesting that the evolution of attitudes on the desirability of the EU and the image of the EU now cut against standard expectations.

Is there evidence of a broader cultural shift in Turkey that goes beyond views of the EU? In order to tap into what might be a deeper feeling of European identity—as opposed to views just on the European Union—one can utilize the same datasets to see what factors are connected to whether one feels more or less European. The 2002 survey asked individuals if, in the near future, they expected to see themselves as Turkish, European, or some mixture of the two along a four-point scale. As one might have expected, only a very few (3.9% in 2002) expected to consider themselves only European, but more thought they would consider themselves as either “Turkish and European” (43.7% in 2002) or “European and Turkish” (3.2% in 2002). In 2006, the question was changed to ask if individuals thought of themselves in the present as not only Turkish citizens but also European. Answers are on a three-point scale (“often,” “sometimes,” “never”), with 8.4% of respondents saying they often thought of themselves as European and 22.1% saying they sometimes felt that way. This represents

a decrease from responses in 2002 to the differently-worded question. Arguably, these sort of questions tap deeper into cultural divides in Turkey, and results from regression analysis on these questions are presented in Table 3. In 2002, one sees, as in Table 2, that frequency of religious attendance seems to matter, as those who attend religious services less regularly identify more with Europe. This factor seems to matter more than gender, age, or income. Similarly, Kurdish ethnicity appears to matter, and the effects for party affiliation for both the CHP and AKP matter. Size of city/village and education, both standard markers for the center/periphery cleavage, appear as important, as does knowledge about the EU. The results for education and place of residence strengthens the notion that in 2002, with respect to a broader consideration of “Europe” or “Europeanness,” traditional notions of center and periphery continued to hold.

Table 3 Factors Associated with a European Identity Among Turks

| Factor/Variable | 2002 | 2006 |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|----------|
| AGE | -.055 | -.052 |
| EDUCATION | .112** | -.049 |
| FEMALE | -.008 | -.08* |
| SIZE OF VILLAGE/CITY | .089* | .094** |
| INCOME | .051 | N/A |
| CHP | .110** | N/A |
| AKP | -.084* | N/A |
| SE TURKEY | .187** | -.196** |
| MARMARA REGION | -.017 | -.061 |
| FREQUENCY OF RELIGIOUS ATTENDANCE | -.100** | -.059 |
| SATISFACTION WITH DEMOCRACY | -.011 | N/A |
| EU KNOWLEDGE | .157** | .161** |
| CONSTANT/STD ERROR | -31.25/13.94 | 2.38/.14 |
| R ² | .165 | .103 |

Results are standardized coefficients. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Did they by 2006? While some items are similar (e.g. size of settlement, EU knowledge), there are some differences. First, somewhat surprisingly, there is a marked shift among those in southeast Turkey, so that residence in this region is negatively associated with a European identity. This might be a reflection in the way the question differed, as in 2002 it asked about the future (when hopes for Turkish EU membership were higher) and in 2006 it asked about contemporary feeling of identity. More interestingly, perhaps, education¹¹ is now negatively associated with a feeling of Europeanness and religious attendance no longer demonstrates statistical significance once other factors are held constant. In other words, some of the markers thought to be associated with European identity appear to be losing salience. Lastly, as with the scale of attitudes toward the EU, there is no way to test for effects of party identification, although a variable that asks respondents to place themselves on a left-right scale has a statistically significant ($p < .01$) effect, with those on the right (e.g. those backing the anti-EU Nationalist Action Party) less likely to feel that they are citizens of Europe.

Turkish Political Parties and the EU

While Turkish public opinion on Europe has some importance for Turkish-European relations, one should recognize both that Turkey's drive to enter the EU has historically been an elite-driven project and that public preferences are filtered through

¹¹ One should note that in 2002 education was coded based upon level of education obtained. In 2006, the variable was age education was completed, with room left for those still studying (folded into the 20+ category). Those with no formal education were coded a zero on a four-point scale.

the Turkish political system. Questions, therefore, that might be considered are whether positions on the Turkish bid to join the EU continue to line up along the traditional center-periphery cleavage and if Turkish parties reflect the changes in public opinion identified in the previous section.

As noted earlier in the paper, Turkey's initial attempts to forge closer ties with the European Economic Community in the late 1950s and early 1960s occurred under the stewardship of a "Kemalist" government, specifically one led by Ismet Inonu and the CHP. In the late 1980s, the government of Turgut Ozal from the Motherland Party (*Anavatan Partisi*, ANAP) made a formal bid to join the European Community. The key point is that both parties—the CHP of the center-left and the ANAP of the center-right—were, to use Mardin's terms, parties of the "center." True, ANAP has a history linked with the erstwhile Justice Party that was, in the 1950s and 1960s, more so a party of the "periphery." However, by the 1980s, Ozal's party was the favorite of the military establishment and his bid to apply to the European Community had sizeable support from economic and cultural elites. Antipathy to Europe (and the West more generally) was found more commonly among parties and groups on the far left and those on the far-right committed to Turkish nationalism and/or political Islam.

In the 2000s, this pattern no longer holds. Among major Turkish political parties—there are only three currently represented in the Turkish parliament—it is AKP, with its Islamist roots, that is widely viewed as the most "pro-EU" party. True, AKP's initial electoral victory in 2002 was driven more by Turkey's economic crisis in 2001-2002 and widespread concerns of corruption among other parties¹² than by a groundswell

¹² None of the three parties in the coalition government from 1999-2002 managed to clear the ten percent threshold to gain representation in parliament.

of support for the EU. Indeed, according to surveys in 2002, AKP voters were less likely than those of other parties (e.g. CHP and ANAP) to support a hypothetical referendum to join the EU (Çarkoğlu, 2002). Nonetheless, it was the AKP that pushed through many of the political and social reforms required by the EU to begin accession talks and it has been AKP that has tried to meet EU demands on many key issues, including Cyprus, cultural rights for Kurds, and curtailing the political prerogatives of the military. During this time, the CHP, as the largest opposition party, has been critical of efforts made to join the EU. Given the CHP's heritage and the fact that one of its primary constituencies are those voters with higher socioeconomic status (Çarkoğlu 2008; Siddi, 2008) and those that identify closer with Europe¹³—in other words, those in the “center”—one therefore sees, arguably, a surprising account of Euro-skepticism (Gülmez 2008) in the CHP.

What helps explain the turnaround with respect to Europe of Turkey's two main parties? Has the fundamental and long-standing cleavage structure in Turkey been altered? The evolution of AKP has been ably covered elsewhere (Taniyici 2003; Mecham 2004; Dagi 2005, 2009; Heper 2005; Ozbudun 2006; Kardas 2008). No doubt, some instrumental calculations were present. Dagi (2009) notes that Islamic groups now “view the EU as an opportunity to curb the power of those Kemalist/secularist centers...EU demands for greater democratization, respect for human rights and a restrained military role in politics overlapped with their practical priorities.” At the same time, however, the AKP has tended to downplay an explicitly Islamic agenda in exchange for claiming a better ability to manage the economy. It has tried to attract a grand coalition of voters from a variety of classes and interests (e.g. small business owners, rural residents, urban

¹³ Based upon an analysis of Candidate Eurobarometer from 2004, one finds that 60% of those who identify with the CHP have some element of a “European” identity, compared with 43% for the country as a whole.

underclasses, Islamists, Kurds), and increased its vote in 2007, winning in virtually every region in Turkey. It has attempted to “conquer” a large space on the center-right, drawing upon conservative populism and development of a counter-elite, albeit with a more of an Islamic slant than previous “outsider” parties such as the Democratic Party in the 1950s and the Justice Party in the 1960s (Taskin 2008). While its core constituents do not possess the characteristics of the typical “European” Turk, its voters have increased their “pro-European” views from 2002 to 2006 (Çarkoğlu 2006), and, as noted above, religion became an insignificant factor in explaining attitudes toward the EU by 2006. This is not to say that the AKP has abandoned all aspects of the Islamist agenda (e.g. headscarf controversy in 2008) or that it has not, on occasion, upset Europe because of its support for more “traditional” policies (e.g. the proposed criminalization of adultery in 2004). Indeed, one could argue that while the AKP presided over a “golden age” of Europeanization in Turkey from 2002 to 2005, this process has slowed down in recent years, leading the EU to become increasingly frustrated with Turkey (Öniş 2008). Nonetheless, and notwithstanding the fact that the sincerity of AKP’s “democratic revisionism” cannot be wholly confirmed, one can conclude that “both in terms of ideological stance and policy implementation, the AKP appears to have broken ties with the past.” (Ciddi 2008: 452) Notably, Prime Minister Erdogan has gone much further than other Turkish politicians to state that Turkey needs to make European values “Ankara’s values” (Erdogan, 2004), a statement one could imagine being made by Ataturk. In this respect, “Europe,” to the extent one can identify this as a distinct issue or cleavage in Turkey, has been decoupled from the link exclusively to the “center” and

been appropriated by parties most easily identified, at least in their roots, as the “periphery.”

What about the CHP? Its transformation, in some respects, mirrors that of the AKP. In the mid-late 1990s, in opposition to a center-right government, the CHP favored political reforms to expand individual rights and to re-fashion the 1982 constitution to remove its militaristic vestiges. The CHP also advocated accepting the existence of a Kurdish problem beyond that of terrorism (Ciddi 2008: 445). In other words, the CHP supported many of the moves subsequently advocated by the EU and pushed forward by the AKP.

In the 2000s, however, the CHP has been consistently critical of EU efforts to affect political change in Turkey. While the CHP does not repudiate the goal of EU membership, it has found fault with various EU statements regarding Turkey as well as some of the EU’s methods. These included the EU’s stipulation that negotiations with Turkey would be an “open-ended process” (suggesting that Turkey might be offered something less than full membership), EU pressure on Turkey to accept the Annan Plan on Cyprus, EU concerns that its “absorption capacity” would be relevant in the Turkish case, and proposals that “permanent safeguards” (e.g. restrictions on movement of Turkish labor) be put in place against Turkey (Gülmez 2008: 428-429). Concerns about the ramifications of EU reforms on Turkey were also important. CHP officials felt both that EU demands with respect to the Kurdish question went too far and that EU was playing into the hands of AKP, which was “attempting to use the excuse of EU harmonization to redefine the secularism principle and bolster the domination of a religious way of life over Turkish society.” (Gülmez 2008: 425). Ziya Öniş suggests that

those, including both the CHP and opponents of Turkish EU membership in Europe such as French President Nicholas Sarkozy, play on the politics of fear and unwittingly form a “grand coalition” in favor a “special partnership,” but not membership, for Turkey. (Öniş 2008)

Part of this might be expected to be natural, given that CHP was in opposition and wanted to differentiate itself from the AKP. Its accusations against the AKP, however, were often couched with concerns about nationalism and secularism, claiming that AKP—with tacit support from Brussels—was seeking to impose its religious agenda and thereby violate the principle of secularism and sell out legitimate Turkish concerns with respect to Cyprus, ethnic separatism, and international water rights. Beyond vocal criticisms, however, the CHP—and its allies in the media, bureaucracy, and military—tried to take action against the AKP. First, they attempted to block the ascension of Abdullah Gul to the Presidency¹⁴ and then, in 2008, they took the AKP to the Constitutional Court after government pushed through a constitutional amendment to allow the wearing the Islamic headscarf at Turkish universities. In other words, the CHP proved willing to use extra-democratic (albeit, in these cases, legal) mechanisms to defeat the AKP, as it was apparent that they lacked the capability to expand their voter base and oust the AKP through the electoral process (Ciddi 2008).

Such maneuverings, however, may go beyond tactical political calculations. The CHP has a long history of upholding secularism. It has equated Westernization and movement to Europe with its domestic secular agenda. It has, one might say, bought into the center-periphery dichotomy, viewing itself as representative of the progressive,

¹⁴ A chief objection to Gul was that his wife wore a headscarf in public (as does Erdogan’s), proof that their “European” credentials were a façade for an Islamist agenda.

Western-oriented center. At the same time, it has also espoused Turkish nationalism and inherited a tradition that “tends to perceive Western powers as a source of conspiracy that threatens the national independence of Turkey.” (Ayata and Ayata 2007: 224) The problem, from the CHP’s perspective, is that today’s EU is not the EEC that Turkey joined as an Associate Member in the 1960s. The EU is clearly interested in creating a stronger supranational, post-national organization. It is also much more interventionist in the domestic politics of would-be members. Its priority is on upholding individual rights and enlarging the spaces for political discourse. Advocates of expansion to Turkey are less interested, arguably, in old cultural debates about the merits or necessity of state policies to ensure secularization or limit political discourse. In short, the EU’s priorities are not the same, in key respects, with the CHP’s, which still sees itself as the guardian of the old order.

The AKP has adjusted to the new realities and its vision of Turkey is far more congruent with the EU’s vision of Turkey as a potential member. The CHP has not, sticking to party platforms that are “based on fears of secularism and ethnic strife, fears that have been continually broadcast since the founding of the CHP.” (Ciddi 2008: 452) The struggle between the AKP and the CHP and its allies is thus both real and deep, as it touches upon foundational elements of the Turkish Republic. What is new and interesting is that Europe is an active participant in this debate and has joined forces, from the CHP’s point of view, that represent the “periphery” and wish to move Turkey back to its pre-Republicans, Islamist past. From the perspective of AKP and the EU, however, the choice between the West and Islam—the stark choice that prompted Ataturk to try to pull Turkish society onto a Westernizing course—is a false one, as Western or European

values are universal and can include those with more of an Islamic, less secular orientation. In this respect, the European Union and all that it stands for transcends pre-existing cleavages in Turkish politics, while it has also alienated many in Turkey who thought of themselves as representing the most “Europeanized” segment of society.

Conclusion

This paper has suggested how issues related to the EU and European identity are reflected in Turkish political culture and in the activities and orientations of leading political parties. It has demonstrated that the old notion of a center-periphery cleavage, in which factors such as socio-economic status, religious orientation and activity, and cultural affinity for Westernization all re-enforced each other, has less resonance in Turkey today, at least when one considers issues how Europe fits into the equation. Whereas there is little doubt that Turks are more “Euro-skeptic” than in the past and Turkish reform efforts to join the EU have lost momentum, there is little evidence to suggest that this is a reflection of the victory of the anti-Western “periphery” over the more progressive “center.” On the contrary, one sees that factors such as education, age, and frequency of religious service attendance are not strongly associated with views toward the EU or with notions about European citizenship. No doubt, of course, this is a reflection of the fact that the AKP, for various reasons, has demonstrated, at least in the first part of the 2000s, greater willingness than other parties to work with the EU, so that those with stronger religious attachments are no longer as hostile toward Europe as they were in even the recent past. At the same time, the CHP, the most secular political party

and the one more associated with the “center,” has become a leading critic of the EU, although this may be more for instrumental reasons than because of a deep-seated rejection of all the EU or “Europe” stands for (Gülmez 2008).

It is too early to say whether or not this constitutes a permanent shift in Turkish politics. If the EU rejects Turkish membership, particularly if such a rejection is couched in cultural terms or is perceived by Turks to be a manifestation of double standards concocted by Brussels with respect to Turkey, one can imagine a more wholesale turn away from the EU by Turks, in particular those close to the AKP who at present retain confidence that Turkey can and should make more political and social reforms. Moreover, with existing evidence it is difficult to tell whether, independent of the EU and what it will eventually decide, whether Turkish political culture has been turned inside-out to such an extent that the more “backwards” elements of the erstwhile “periphery” will remain the leaders for political liberalization. However, at present, it does appear to be safe to say that the most immediate threat to Turkish democracy and Turkey’s bid to join Europe emanates from the military-bureaucratic establishment, the very institutions envisioned by Atatürk that would lead Turkey toward Western civilization.

In part, this paper may be disappointing because whereas it shows what is *not* strongly associated with views toward Europe, it does not show what is associated *with* such positions. This is manifested both by the lack of significance among many possible independent variables and the low R-squares in the regression analysis. While this may be unsatisfactory on one level, what it shows is that, at least on views toward Europe, traditional cleavage patterns do not hold. To the extent that more religious Turks can feel to be as “European” as their more secular compatriots, this may be a good sign: that

religion need not be an intractable marker of “civilizations” and perhaps that Turkey is less of a “torn country” than previously thought (Huntington 1993). On the other hand, however, the reaction against the EU and AKP by elements of the erstwhile establishment cannot bode well. The EU cannot, as it did in Central and Eastern Europe, count on strong widespread support for it and its democratization agenda. Its program both of political conditionality and cultivation of democracy “from below” is less successful than in the cases of those countries that have already joined the EU (Kubicek forthcoming). It may have helped change the cleavage structure in Turkish politics and society, but that may not be enough, in short, to ensure the successful execution of its agenda and the consolidation of political reforms in Turkey.

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ⁱ Gamze Avcı, "Turkey's EU Politics: What Justifies Reform?" in Helene Sjursen, ed. *Enlargement in Perspective* (Oslo: ARENA Report no. 2/05, 2005), p. 141.

ⁱⁱ For fuller discussion of many aspects of reform in Turkey, see Ali Çarkoğlu and Barry Rubin, eds., *Turkey and the European Union* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), and David Phillips, "Turkey's Dreams of Accession," *Foreign Affairs*, 83(5), September/October 2004: 86-97.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ergun Özbudun, "Democratization Reforms in Turkey, 1993-2004," *Turkish Studies* 8(2), June 2007: 179-196, at p. 195. Much of the following information in the text comes from this source.

^{iv} *Turkish Daily News*, September 27, 2004.