

VIEWS ON TURKISH ACCESSION IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

AVRUPA PARLAMENTOSU'NDA TÜRKİYE'NİN AVRUPA BİRLİĞİ KATILIMINA YÖNELİK BAKIŞ AÇILARI: KARŞILAŞTIRMALI BİR İNCELEME

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ABSTRACT

Utilizing data from European Parliament Research Group's 'Members of European Parliament (MEPs) Survey,' conducted by David Farrell and his colleagues in 2006 and 2010, this article analyzes to what extent MEPs are supportive of Turkey's EU accession and how their support shows variances across their national and European party group affiliations. In addition, by comparing MEPs' opinion on Turkish accession to their opinion on the accession of Croatia, Macedonia and Bosnia, the study seeks to understand whether Turkey is viewed differently by MEPs and to what extent it is perceived as a "category of its own" in the EP. The study finds that although some national and ideological affiliations of MEPs are associated with their attitudes toward Turkey, MEPs don't display a strong level of cohesion across nationality and ideology in their views of Turkish accession. Moreover, the study demonstrates that most MEPs are against Turkey's EU membership and Turkey is indeed viewed differently in the EP.

ÖZET

Bu makale, Avrupa Parlamentosu (AP) Araştırma Grubu'nun, David Farrell ve arkadaşlarının 2006 ve 2010'da uyguladığı 'Avrupa Parlamentosu Üyeleri Anketi'ni kullanarak, AB parlamenterlerinin Türkiye'nin Avrupa Birliği (AB) üyeliğini ne derece desteklediklerini ve parlamenterlerin Türkiye'ye destek oranlarının milli ve ideolojik bağıntılara göre nasıl farklılıklar arz ettiğini irdelemektedir. Ayrıca, bu çalışma, AB parlamenterlerinin Türkiye'ye sunduğu desteği, Hırvatistan, Makedonya ve Bosna üyeliklerine sunulan destek oranları ile karşılaştırarak, Türkiye'nin ne derece farklı olarak görüldüğünü de incelemektedir. Çalışma, her ne kadar bazı milli ve ideolojik bağıntıların parlamenterlerin Türkiye tutumları ile ilişkili olduğunu gösterse de, Avrupa Parlamentosu vekillerinin milli ve ideolojik açıdan Türkiye tutumlarında güçlü bir tutarlılık sergilemediklerini göstermektedir. Ayrıca, bu makale, parlamenterlerin büyük bir kısmının

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Türkiye'nin AB üyeliğine karşı olduğunu ve Türkiye'nin gerçekten de farklı bir kategoride değerlendirildiğini de ortaya koymaktadır.

Key Words: Turkey–European Union relations, Turkish Enlargement, European Parliament, Members of European Parliament, European Party Groups

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türkiye – Avrupa Birliği ilişkileri, Avrupa Parlamentosu, Avrupa Parti Grupları, Avrupa Parlamentosu üyeleri, Avrupa Birliği genişlemesi

1. INTRODUCTION

It probably is the case that the European Parliament (EP) finds more press coverage in Turkey than it does in any other European Union (EU) member country. The EP occupies the Turkish press headlines and becomes the subject of heated debates and discussions among politicians and intellectuals whenever its members comment on EU reports or passes resolutions related to Turkey. Indeed, many Turks, including its top politicians, think that the EU has been discriminating against Turkey, which filed an application for membership in 1987 but has yet to be admitted, while the countries with similar levels of economic and political developments like Bulgaria and Romania that applied in 1995, eight years after Turkey did, enjoys full membership today. However, although Turkey's EU integration is a hotly debated issue in both Turkey and several European countries like France and Germany, the EU-Turkey relations have yet to be fully explored in the scholarship. Perhaps more interesting is the limited number of scholarly works examining the EP-Turkey relations. The political clout of the EP is increasing in both domestic and foreign affairs and for that reason there is a growing need to study the EP-Turkey relations.

The EP consists of 736 members elected from the EU member states but seated according to their European party affiliations. As an elected institution, as in any other legislature, the EP reflects its members' worldviews, attitudes and perspectives. However, its representatives' attitudes may be shaped by several factors such as their ideology or constituency characteristics that scholars seek to uncover since such variables may prove to be useful in understanding the causal dynamics at play. Thus, if one wants to uncover the EP's stance on Turkey, he or she should then analyze its members' attitudes towards Turkey's accession to the EU. Who in the EP is more likely to hold a favorable view of Turkey's membership? How representatives' European party group (EPG) and national attachments are related to their opinions of Turkish accession? Moreover, one may further wonder whether Turkey is indeed viewed differently in the EP. How are the attitudes of MEPs towards Turkey compared to their attitudes towards some other countries like Croatia, Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (henceforth Bosnia)? For example, do the Germans or the right-leaning members in the EP hold more positive opinion of Croatia, Macedonia and Bosnia than of Turkey? If so, to what extent?

Thus, utilizing data from European Parliament Research Group's 'Members of European Parliament (MEPs) Survey,' conducted by David Farrell and his colleagues in 2006 for the 2004-2009 Parliament (Farrell, et al., 2006) and in 2010 (for the 2009-2014 Parliament) (Farrell, et al., 2011), this paper aims to explore which MEPs are supportive of Turkish accession and how their political and national identities are associated with their views of Turkey's membership. In addition, this paper makes an attempt to analyze the existence of any difference between the support base of Turkey and that of Croatia, Macedonia and Bosnia, with an aim to understand whether Turkey is viewed differently in the EP. How European elites view Turkish membership is significantly understudied in the literature. This paper may thus enhance our understanding of how Turkey is perceived among one group of elites (EP elites) in Europe.

In addition to providing practical information regarding how Turkey is viewed in the EP, the paper may also provide insight into the extent to which the EP has developed a common attitude on controversial political issues of interest such as that of Turkish membership. As discussed below, the extent to which MEPs display ideological cohesion (developing common worldviews and attitudes around their EPG membership) may tell us about MEPs' level of socialization under the EP structure. Alternatively, if MEPs' worldviews or attitudes are shaped by their national attachments, this may then suggest that the EP should be perceived as a platform for national politics and is yet far from being like a 'national' parliament representing a single geographic entity.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. First, the paper provides brief background information on the EP and its members. Next, it is argued that the enlargement process is highly political, reflecting the attitudes of the EU member countries and institutions, therefore, examining the attitudes of MEPs is important. The hypotheses are then constructed based on the insights gained from the legislative behavior literature. Next, the paper provides brief information on the data and then presents and discusses the research findings. The final section of the paper summarizes the study and makes recommendations for future research.

2. THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Although the EP was initially set up in the 1950s as an appointed consultative assembly with no real legislative role, its policy power and influence has grown steadily. Today, its 736 members are directly elected from the 27 member countries in every five years and, along with the Council of the European Union, the EP acts as a co-legislative branch of the Union with wide-ranging policy powers in many areas including budget, political appointments and enlargement. As the trend suggests, there are good reasons to believe that the power of the EP in both domestic and foreign affairs will further increase in coming years. In fact, it has even been claimed that the EP

has already become “one of the most powerful legislatures in the world” (European Parliament, 2007). With regards to enlargement, the EP observes the harmonization process of candidate countries and evaluates the relevant progress reports. According to many Turkish officials, the EP evaluations and reports are biased, reflecting the anti-Turkey attitudes of its representatives. Recently, for example, Egemen Bağış, Turkey’s Minister for EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator, following the EP’s resolution on the 2010 progress report that was critical of Turkey’s accession progress, accused the EP in a newspaper article for being subjective and unfair (Bağış, 2011a).

In addition, when a candidate country completes its negotiations and receives the approval of the European Council, an accession treaty is prepared and submitted for an assent to the EP, which accepts or declines the treaty by an absolute majority. For example, in 2005, when the EP voted for the Treaty of Accession for Romania and Bulgaria, 497 members voted in favor of Romania while 93 voted against and 71 were recorded as absent. The voting for Bulgaria was also favorable with 522 members voting yes, 70 no and 69 abstentions (European Parliament, 2005). Therefore, although never turned down any accession treaty so far, the EP stands as one of the veto players in enlargement (Nugent, 2003: 200).

3. ELABORATION OF THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

There is no single institution that represents the EU, which is actually a supra-national complex consisting of different countries organized around several institutions that also have their own agendas and identities. In large part because it is a directly elected supranational institution, the EP is considered as “sui generis among governmental bodies in the world” (Ginsberg, 2010: 177). However, its functions and role in the EU are also still unclear. For example, while the Council of Ministers is known to be representing the “national interest” aspect of EU politics and the Commission standing for the general EU “interests” (Almond, et al., 2002: 470-3), it is comparatively more difficult to place the EP in neither of these axes, especially considering the fact that MEPs are elected at the national level but seated according to their EPG attachments in the EP. However, although there are studies analyzing the European public opinion on Turkey (for examples see: Gerhards and Hans, 2011; de Vreese et al., 2008; McLaren, 2007) and how the EU member states approach to Turkey’s accession (Yılmaz, 2007), scholarly analyses of EP’s and its members’ Turkish attitudes are highly limited (for exceptions see: Braghiroli, 2012; Yuvacı, 2013; Yuvacı, 2012; Aydın, 2004). In fact, what European elites think of Turkish membership are significantly understudied (for exceptions see: Öniş, 2006; Yuvacı 2012). Öniş (2006:297) suggests that as Turkey transforms itself politically and economically, a “sizable and vocal pro-Turkey coalition” emerges among European elites. However, it has yet to be demonstrated how “sizable” pro-Turkey coalition among European elites is, especially through a comparative perspective.

The literature on the EP legislative behavior suggests that MEPs are under the influence of several ‘dimensions’ like ‘ideology’ and ‘nationality’ when they vote. It should be noted that the EP is a highly diverse institution, bringing together representatives who come from different countries with different languages, cultures, economies and political interests. However, as an institution, the EP strives to become an institution representing “Europe,” as its name indicates (*‘European’* Parliament). In fact, EP representatives are seated according to their EPG memberships, not nationality. The institutional design of the EP creates strong incentives for MEPs to join one of the EPGs, which control legislative resources like committee assignment, rapporteurships and speaking time that enable MEPs to exert influence in policy-making. The EPGs even give voting instructions to their members (Hix, et al., 2006: 496). Thus, ideological dimension, especially when conceptualized as MEPs’ EPG attachments, is vital as it provides information with regards to the degree that the EP has achieved an institutional identity as well as its members’ socialization (Hix, et al., 2011: 5).

In fact, there is evidence that the most important dimension influencing voting in the EP is the ideological positioning of MEPs (Hix and Noury, 2009; Hix, et al., 2006; Viola, 2000). This is increasingly so as, in addition to the incentives provided by the institutional design of the EP, the policy powers of the EP now include areas such as market regulations and environmental policies that urge MEPs from different countries but with similar ideologies to organize under the same EPG umbrella representing their policy preferences most closely (Hix, et al., 2006: 485). Therefore, it has been argued that, similar to national parliaments, ideologies are becoming more and more influential in the EP, with MEPs located on the right spectrum of politics displaying distinctive attitudes than those who are located on the left. Thus, a French MEP with a social-democratic outlook tends to work together with a British MEP with a similar ideology under the roof of the same European Parliament party, say, the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats.

If ideology is an important determinant of MEPs’ behavior, one then should expect to see that the MEPs should display “ideological coherence” (Hix et al., 2011: 3) not national coherence. Moreover, MEPs who are affiliated with an EPG on the left should be more supportive of Turkey’s EU entry than those who are affiliated with an EPG on the right. This is because numerous surveys and studies have demonstrated that one of the main lines dividing the pro-Turkish from the anti-Turkish position in Europe is the left-right axis, as the people on the Left have more favorable opinion of Turkey than do the people on the right (Gerhards and Hans, 2011; Yılmaz, et al., 2011; Yuvacı, 2013; Öniş, 2006: 290).

However, there are also studies suggesting that the national identities of MEPs should not be ignored when analyzing the legislative behavior in the EP. For example, Rasmussen (2008: 15) finds that although the EPGs are influential in how their members vote, representatives may be compelled to follow their national lines on some contentious issues like the

EU farm subsidies or the structural fund allocations. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, EP elections are held at the national level. Thus, national issues, not EU issues, dominate MEPs' election campaigns, and candidates in EP elections, if elected, promise to advance their respective countries' interests in the EP (Almond, et al., 2002: 478). In short, national attachments of MEPs should be taken into account, especially when analyzing a controversial issue like Turkey's EU membership.

There are also good reasons to assume that national-interest based politics may actually play a greater role in the EP when it comes to Turkey as several major EU member countries have openly declared that they oppose to Turkey's full membership. For example, Britain and to some extent Italy and Spain are advocates of Turkish membership in their respective official circles, while France and Germany are against Turkey's entry to the EU (Redmond, 2007: 308-9). The latter countries' respective government officials have already made proposals such as 'privileged partnership' that fall short of full membership. These national divisions on Turkey in part reflect EU states' view of the future of EU integration. Some states such as Britain and the Scandinavian countries imagine a loosely integrated EU and thus are more open to Turkish membership while others such as Germany and France would like to see a more integrated union and are therefore not favorable to Turkish membership (Öniş, 2006: 290-2). In short, if national politics is the main factor that shapes MEPs' view of Turkish accession, then one should expect that MEPs from the same countries should express similar views. For example, MEPs from France and Germany should be cohesively against Turkish accession, while British MEPs should hold more favorable opinion on Turkey.

4. THE EUROPEAN UNION ENLARGEMENT AS A POLITICAL PROCESS: IS TURKEY "A CATEGORY OF ITS OWN?"

This research also compares the support level of Turkey to that of Croatia, Macedonia and Bosnia to understand whether Turkey is a unique case in the EP and whether MEPs' views of Turkey significantly differ from their views of some other aspirant countries. As mentioned earlier, many Turkish politicians and some scholars claim that the EU is biased against Turkey. According to the 1993 Copenhagen criteria for membership, EU applicants are expected to have a stable market economy, a strong commitment to democracy and bring their laws in line with EU laws to be able to join the EU. This conditionality principle creates the illusion that aspirant countries will be admitted to the EU once they comply with the Copenhagen accession criteria. However, it has been argued that "accepting a new member [to the EU] is essentially a political decision based on qualitative judgment rather than quantitative measurement" (Redmond, 2007: 317). In enlargement, "Conditionality provides the EU with a mechanism and a degree of legitimacy for any slowdown, delay or stopping of the process" (İçener, 2009: 227). Thus, this paper rests upon the assumption that the

enlargement process in some part reflects the political attitudes of the EU member countries, publics and EU institutions towards the aspirant country in question.

In fact, a review of Turkey's EU journey reveals that it is progressing unusually slowly, especially considering the fact that all of the late joiners to the EU have applied for membership long after Turkey did. In fact, in 2005 the European Commission declared for the first time in the history of enlargement that the process with Turkey is 'open-ended,' indicating that Turkey may not be admitted as a full member even if it successfully completes the accession negotiations. The negotiation process has therefore been frustrating for Turkey as stated by Egemen Bağış, Turkey's Minister for EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator, that "Turkey's situation differs from that of former candidate countries. No other country to date has had more than half of its negotiating chapters blocked for political reasons" (Bağış, 2011b).

Turkey's unusually long accession process has also led some scholars to conclude that the EU has been discriminating against Turkey for political-cultural reasons. For example, İçener and his colleagues compare the 2004 Eastern Enlargement to the Turkish accession process and suggest that Turkey is indeed treated differently (İçener, et al., 2010). Similarly, Tsoukalis (2006:11) claims that Turkey's case is 'unique' and it represents a "category of its own" in the European enlargement. Yet not all scholars agree with this argument, as Verney (2007) compares Turkey's accession process to that of Greece and concludes that Turkey has actually not been treated so differently. In fact, Verney argues that the Greeks, like the Turks do now, "felt [during the accession process that] they were being treated in a discriminatory fashion in comparison with their predecessors" (Verney, 2007: 310).

Thus, this study aims to analyze whether MEPs' view of Turkey is different from their views of some other countries. However, no country among the EU candidate or potentially candidate countries can properly be compared to Turkey since its geography, history, size, economy and culture are significantly different. In other words, all candidate or potential candidate countries are 'dissimilar' to Turkey, but the comparison in this sense may still be fruitful as it may shed some light on the factors associated with MEPs' views on Turkey and the other countries in question.

Nevertheless, Croatia, Macedonia and Bosnia are selected for comparative purposes as these countries represent different patterns of relationships with the EU. Croatia, at the time of the survey, was a candidate country but with a very strong prospects for membership. Macedonia is another candidate country, but it also faces strong opposition within the EP. For example, the EP resolution on the 2006 progress report on Macedonia was highly critical of the country, and its accession negotiations are frequently blocked by Greece. The inclusion of Bosnia also serves well to the purpose of this study because Bosnia, although a small country, has the highest level of Muslim concentration in Europe as Muslims constitute 45 percent of its population. In short, the study expects to find that MEPs'

opinion of Turkey will be more likely to be negative than positive when their Turkish views are compared to those of Croatia, Macedonia and Bosnia. Moreover, it would be very interesting to see if the left-leaning French or British MEPs more or less likely to favor Turkey's entry to the EU when their support level for Croatia, Macedonia and Bosnia are taken into account. Such comparisons may further help us gain a better insight whether MEPs' attitudes of Turkey differs from their attitudes of the other countries.

5. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Thus, this paper revolves around two major questions. First, it seeks to understand to what extent MEPs think Turkey should join the EU and whether national or ideological factors are associated with MEPs' view of Turkey. Secondly, does Turkey, as Tsoukalis (2006:11) claims, represent "a category of its own"? In other words, do the factors that explain MEPs' attitude toward Turkey also explain MEPs' opinion of Croatia, Macedonia and Bosnia?

The data for this research is drawn from European Parliament Research Group's 'Members of European Parliament Survey,' which was conducted by David Farrell and his colleagues in 2006 (Farrell, et al., 2006) for the 2004-9 parliament and in 2010 (Farrell, et al., 2011) for the current (2009-14) EP parliament. The participation rate for the surveys was 37.2 percent in 2006 (272 of the total 732 MEPs) and 36.7 percent in 2010 (270 of the total 736 MEPs). The surveys inquired information on MEPs' political and social backgrounds, electoral campaigns, representations and contacts, legislative behavior and opinions on various political matters. The dependent variable of this study is based on one of the survey questions that asked MEPs the following: 'Which one of the following states should be allowed to join the EU if they apply for membership and successfully meet the Copenhagen Criteria for membership?' Then a list of countries, including Turkey, Croatia, Macedonia and Bosnia, was provided to the participants to choose from. The participants could choose more than one country.

The main independent variables of interest are MEPs' EPG and national affiliations. To keep the number of independent variables to a minimum, the paper focuses on the "Big Five" countries of the EU (France, Germany, Britain, Italy and Spain) (Parker and Jones, 2005; Krauss, 2000). These are the biggest countries in the EU. Moreover, MEPs from these countries constitute approximately 50 percent of the EP. Although several countries such as Greece and Austria could also be included into the analysis as they are also highly relevant players when it comes to the question of Turkish accession, they are represented by a few MEPs in the EP and their inclusion in any quantitative work therefore leads to statistical problems. With regards to EPGs, the study covers all EPGs that existed both in 2006 and in 2010. Thus, seven EPGs are included into the study. Their names and respective ideologies are presented below in Table 1. In the regression analysis constructed in this paper, liberal MEPs (MEPs from the ALDE) are

taken as the reference category for the EPG dummies as they are located in the middle of the ideological spectrum, and the remaining EU member countries (non-Big Five countries) are taken as the reference group for the nationality dummies. In addition, the GDP per capita and public opinion towards the EU membership of Turkey, Croatia, Macedonia and Bosnia (European Commission, 2006) in EU member states are included as control variables.

Table 1: European Party Groups, their Ideologies and Parliamentary Strength

EPG Name	Ideology	Number of Seats in the 2004-09 EP	Number of Seats in the 2009-14 EP
European Peoples' Party (EPP)	Christian democrats; center-right	268	265
Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S & D)	Social democracy; center-left	200	184
Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)	Political and economic Liberalism	88	84
The Greens - European Free Alliance (Greens)	Green politics	42	55
European United Left-Nordic Green Left (EUL-NGL)	Socialism; radical left	41	35
Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD)	Euroscepticism; nationalism	37	32
Non-Attached	Independents	29	27

Source: Archick and Mix, 2011: 246; <http://www.europarl.europa.e>

Methodologically, in addition to analyzing how MEPs' opinions vary according to their nationality and ideological attachments through crosstabulations, the study also constructs a logistic regression model as the dependent variable is defined as a binary variable. The regression model was constructed to examine how the independent variables in the study fare when additional variables (nationality, ideology, GDP per capita and public opinion) are controlled. As it is the case in any other elite survey of this sort, the survey participation rate from some countries was lower than others, which could result in some low counts problems in the analysis. For example, only 11 Spanish MEPs in 2016 and 14 in 2010 filled out the survey. Thus, to avoid low count issues in crosstabulations and in the regression analysis, the study pools the 2006 and 2010 surveys results. A dummy variable was therefore assigned to distinguish the 2010 survey (2009-14 EP) from the 2006 survey (2004-2009 EP).

6. MEPS' VIEW OF TURKISH MEMBERSHIP IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

6.1. Crosstabulative Comparisons

Table 2: MEPs' National Affiliations and their Attitudes towards Turkey in Comparative Perspective

	TR	CR	MAC	BOS
Britain (52)	33.6% (18)	57.7% (30)	51.9% (27)	51.9% (27)
France (48)	14.6% (7)	43.8% (21)	37.5% (18)	31.3% (15)
Germany (67)	28.4% (19)	56.7% (38)	43.3% (29)	43.3% (29)
Spain (25)	28% (7)	44% (11)	48% (12)	40% (10)
Italy (60)	30% (18)	55% (33)	43.3% (26)	41.7% (25)
Remaining states (290)	32.4% (94)	58.3% (169)	46.6% (135)	42.4% (123)
TOTAL (542)	30.1% (163)	55.7% (302)	45.6% (247)	42.3% (229)

Note: Numbers in parentheses are counts. Percentages are those who favor membership of the country in question.

Table 3: Ideology and Favorable Opinion of Turkish Membership in Comparative Perspective

	TR	CR	MAC	BOS
EPP (195)	21% (41)	52.3% (102)	43.6% (85)	40.5% (79)
PES (137)	43.8% (60)	63.5% (87)	54.7% (75)	50.4% (69)
Liberals (87)	32.2% (28)	58.6% (51)	41.4% (36)	37.9% (33)
Greens (41)	43.9% (18)	51.2% (21)	48.8% (20)	46.3% (19)
EUL-NL (25)	28% (7)	36% (9)	32% (8)	32% (8)
F&D/I&D (18)	11.1% (2)	50% (9)	33.3% (6)	33.3% (6)
Non-Attached (16)	-	56.3% (9)	37.5% (6)	31.5% (5)
Total (201)	30.1% (156)	55.5% (288)	45.5% (236)	42.2% (219)

Note: Numbers in parentheses are counts. Percentages are those who favor Turkish membership. 71 members counted missing as they chose not to disclose their ideologies in the survey.

Table 1 and 2 are designed to demonstrate how Turkey's and the other countries' supporters in the EP are distributed across national affiliations and ideology. First of all, the last row of Table 1 demonstrates that most MEPs are against Turkey's membership. Of the 542 MEPs who completed the survey, only 163, or 30.1 per cent, favor Turkey's entry to the EU. The same rate is significantly higher for Bosnia (42.3%) and Macedonia (45.6%), and reaches its highest level for Croatia (55.7%). In other words, the overall support for Turkey's entry to the EU is much lower in the EP when compared to the support for the other countries. One should also take notice that the support for Bosnia, although higher than that of Turkey, is still lower than the support for Croatia and Macedonia. This is interesting because Bosnia is culturally different from Croatia and Macedonia, as a significant portion of its population is Muslim.

According to Table 1, representatives from Britain and Germany are more likely than those from France to support Turkey's EU entry. However, for each country displayed in Table 1, the proportion of those who hold positive opinion of Turkey never goes above the 50 percent threshold. As one would expect, the support rate for Turkey is lowest among the French MEPs (14.6%) and highest among the British MEPs (33.6%). However, an interesting result is that while Britain is historically known to be a strong supporter of Turkey's EU accession, its members' support rate is well below 50 percent. In fact, when placed into a comparative perspective, the British MEPs are less likely to see Turkey's accession favorably when their views of Turkey are compared to those of Croatia (57.7%), Macedonia (51.9%) and Bosnia (51.9%).

When eyeballing Table 2, one notices that MEPs from the EPGs on the Left (PES, Greens, and EUL-NL) are more supportive of Turkey's EU membership than those from the right-wing EPGs (EPP, Liberals, and F&D/I&D). As similar to the case observed in Table 1 with regards to Britain, Turkey receives the least backing even from its strongest supporters (left-wing EPGs) when the support rate for the other countries are taken into consideration. For example, only 43.8% of MEPs from the PES, the strongest EPG on the Left, view Turkey's EU membership positively. However, as displayed in Table 2, PES MEPs are more favorable towards other countries under examination. A similar situation also exists for the other EPGs in the EP.

With regards to the question of whether MEPs display cohesion with respect to their ideology or nationality, Tables 1 and 2 provide evidence that MEPs are not cohesive in terms of their national or ideological attachments. In other words, neither ideology nor nationality can alone explain their worldviews sufficiently, at least as far as their views on enlargement is concerned. However, with regards to nationality, there seems to be a tendency among the French MEPs that Turkey should not be an EU member. In fact, approximately 85 percent of the French MEPs think in the same manner. The same is true for MEPs from the EPP and F&D/I&D with regards

to EPG affiliations, as approximately 80-90 percent of their members are against Turkey's entry to the EU.

6.2. Binomial Regression Analysis

In Table 3 below, MEPs' attitudes towards Turkey, Croatia, Macedonia and Bosnia are regressed against a number of variables to complement the previous analyses and examine how the national and ideological attachments of MEPs fare when additional control variables are introduced to the study. One control variable is the percentage of the European public supporting the membership of the country under examination. MEPs are directly elected from the EU states, and their attitudes towards crucial issues like enlargement may therefore in some part reflect the public mood. Thus, a positive sign is also expected for the public opinion variable. Finally, the GDP per capita in the EU member country is also added to the list as a control variable since the poorer European countries may display different behaviors than the richer ones. This may be because further enlargement may endanger the poorer countries' share of EU funds. A general hypothesis of the below model is that MEPs will display different attitudes towards Turkey than they do towards Bosnia, Macedonia and Croatia. Moreover, in light of the literature review and analyses above, it may be expected certain national and ideological attachments may yield statistically significant outcomes for Turkey.

Table 4: A Binomial Regression Analysis

	TURKEY		BOSNIA		CROATIA		MACEDONIA	
	Coeff.	Exp (B)	Coeff.	Exp (B)	Coeff.	Exp (B)	Coeff.	Exp (B)
EP Session	-0.36*	0.70	-0.02	0.98	-0.08	0.93	0.01	1.01
Germany	0.08	1.09	0.19	1.21	0.23	1.26	0.31	1.37
France	-1.24***	0.29	-0.49	0.61	-0.52	0.59	-0.32	0.72
Britain	0.08	1.09	0.59	1.80	0.03	1.03	0.56	1.76
Spain	-0.46	0.63	-0.12	0.88	-0.52	0.59	0.15	1.17
Italy	0.12	1.13	0.14	1.15	-0.03	0.97	0.31	1.36
EPP	-0.29	0.74	0.16	1.18	-0.31	0.73	0.13	1.13
PES	0.87***	2.38	0.61**	1.84	0.22	1.25	0.63**	1.87
Greens	0.97**	2.63	0.49	1.63	-0.20	0.82	0.45	1.57
EUL/NL	0.21	1.24	-0.15	0.86	-0.95**	0.39	-0.29	0.75
I&D	-1.23	0.29	-0.31	0.73	-0.35	0.71	-0.41	0.66
GDP Per Capita	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00**	1.00	0.00	1.00
Public Opinion	0.03**	1.03	0.01	1.01	0.00	1.00	0.02**	1.02
Constant	-2.11***	0.12	-0.85	0.43	0.96	2.62	-1.47*	0.23

Notes: (***), (**) and (*) indicate that coefficients are significant at 1%, 5% and 10% levels respectively. Non-attached members are excluded as they display no variances.

There are several conclusions that one may reach based on the above regression analysis. First, the dummy that was assigned to distinguish the

2010 survey results from the 2006 survey results yields statistically significant negative coefficient for Turkey while insignificant coefficients for the other countries. In fact, of the 272 MEPS who were surveyed in 2006, 33.8 percent (92 MEPs) indicated a positive opinion on Turkish membership, while those who expressed a positive view of Turkish membership in 2010 was 26.3 percent (71 of 270 MEPs who completed the survey). Table 3 shows that the difference between the 2010 and 2006 surveys was statistically significant for Turkey. In other words, the EP grew more unfriendly towards the idea of Turkish membership following the 2009 elections. This may be explained by the fact that the 2006 survey, contrary to the 2010 survey, was conducted at a time when accession negotiations with Turkey were just initiated, the Eastern enlargement just took place and, perhaps more importantly, the financial crisis had yet to shake Europe. This may be why MEPs were friendlier towards Turkey in 2006 than they were in 2010.

Secondly, even after controlling for EPG memberships, GDP per capita and public opinion, the France coefficient yields a negative and significant outcome for Turkey but insignificant outcomes for the other countries under examination. This means that, when compared to the reference category (non-Big-Five countries), the French MEPs are significantly less likely to be in favor of Turkish membership. With regards to EPG affiliations, Table 3 demonstrates that MEPs from the PES and the Greens, in comparison to MEPs from the reference category (Liberals MEPs) are significantly more likely to support Turkey's EU membership. However, EPG affiliations also play a role in explaining MEPs' view of the other countries' EU accession. For example, the PES coefficient is also significant for Bosnia and Macedonia.

Finally, the impact of the public opinion seems to be inconsistent across the countries under examination yet statistically and positively significant for Turkey and Macedonia. Although it is difficult to suggest that MEPs are under the influence of the public opinion in their respective countries, there seems to be a positive relationship between public opinion on Turkey and MEPs' view of Turkey. Thus, EP elite and the public share largely similar views on Turkey. For the GDP variable, although the coefficient sign is positive for each cases and it even achieves statistical significance for Croatia, the coefficient size suggests that the GDP variable is not a major concern in evaluating MEPs' opinion on Turkey.

7. CONCLUSION

The power of the EP has been growing steadily. The EP has already started playing important roles in enlargement as it approves progress reports and even votes on accession treaties. By analyzing MEPs' views of Turkey and comparing them to those of Croatia, Macedonia and Bosnia, this paper has made an attempt to understand to what extent MEPs favor Turkey's accession to the EU in a comparative perspective. Also, through

cross-tabulations and a logistic regression analysis, how MEPs' view of Turkey is linked to their national and ideological affiliations is examined in the study.

There are several conclusions of this paper. First, a significant majority of MEPs thinks that Turkey should not be admitted to the EU even if it successfully complies with the Copenhagen criteria. However, MEPs' views of Croatia, Macedonia and Bosnia are much more positive. This finding is significant since, although it was known that the EP is not favorable of Turkey, there was little available information on to what extent Turkey was viewed unfavorably and differently. Moreover, the research suggests that MEPs in 2010 were less favorable towards Turkey than were MEPs in 2006. This implies that the EP is growing more hostile towards the idea that Turkey should be a member of the EU. This may be due to several time relevant factors such as the economic crisis that hit Europe in 2008 or the concerns with further enlargement. Second, the research shows that both ideology and member state affiliations may be associated with MEPs' opinion of Turkey. However, neither ideology nor nationality can sufficiently explain MEPs' worldviews, thus additional variables such as national party attachments should be taken into account in examining their attitudes (see: Yuvaci, 2013). This also suggests that MEPs have yet to develop a common position around their EPG attachments, especially on controversial issues such as enlargement.

Nevertheless, the paper shows that MEPs who consider themselves on the left spectrum of politics are more likely than those who consider themselves on the right to think that Turkey should be admitted to the EU. In a comparative perspective, however, when the leftist MEPs' view of the other countries is taken into account, it is noticed that even the percentage of favorable opinion expressed by the leftist MEPs on Croatia, Macedonia and Bosnia is higher than the percentage of favorable opinion expressed by the leftist MEPs on Turkey. Thus, Turkey's favorability suffers even among the leftists MEPs, who tend to be less concerned with cultural factors like religion when it comes to enlargement. Also, the study finds that MEPs from France display more negative attitude towards Turkish accession, which is even the case irrespective of their EPG affiliations. But even MEPs who are from the pro-Turkey countries like Britain are less likely to see Turkey's EU accession favorably, which becomes evident when their opinions of the other countries are compared to their opinions of Turkey. In short, the overall attitudes of MEPs towards Turkey's eventual EU membership tend to be negative, and Turkey is indeed a "category of its own," at least as far how it is perceived in the EP.

It should be noted that this paper does not make an attempt to produce evidence that MEPs 'treat' Turkey differently, it instead suggests that Turkey is 'viewed' differently in the EP. How MEPs actually treat (e.g. vote) when it comes to Turkey should be explored by future studies as MEPs may be under the influence of multiple forces like their European party or home country constituencies when they take the floor. However, one may

safely assume that MEPs' personal beliefs of whether Turkey should be admitted to the EU or not is one of those forces that ultimately influence their legislative behavior in the EP, and it is therefore important to analyze what MEPs think of Turkish membership to the EU.

End Notes:

I would like to thank David Farrell, Simon Hix, Mark Johnson and Roger Scully for allowing me to use their data on members of the European Parliament. All errors are my own.

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