

THE IMPORTANCE OF DOMESTIC POLITICS IN EXPLAINING THE CHANGE IN TERRITORIAL POLITICS IN
EU CANDIDATE STATES: TURKEY AS A CASE¹

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ABSTRACT: This article seeks to understand the change in territorial politics in the European Union with a specific reference to a situation in one candidate state, Turkey. The main argument is that the domestic politics matters in order to examine the interplay between central institutions and local or regional administrations. The article claims that a territorial politics is not only mediated by certain national factors such as territorial and constitutional framework as well as historical legacy and political culture but also subnational factors, such as regional distinctiveness, the quality of intergovernmental relations, and pre-existing regional networks. It was argued that while the regional distinctiveness may play a negative role, the quality of intergovernmental relations and the pre-existing regional networks may stimulate the behaviour of local and regional administrations. Overall, the article suggests that in order for a better understanding of a change in territorial politics in candidate states, one should have a close observation on the domestic politics.

Key Words: Domestic Politics Approach, Territorial Politics, Multi-level Governance, Europeanization and Turkish Administrative Tradition

AB ADAY ÜLKELERİNDE MEKÂNSAL POLİTİKA DEĞİŞİMLERİNİN AÇIKLANMASINDA İÇ POLİTİKANIN
ÖNEMİ: BİR ÖRNEK OLARAK TÜRKİYE

ÖZET: Bu makale, Avrupa Birliği'ndeki mekansal politika değişimini, bir aday ülke olan Türkiye özelinde anlamaya çalışmaktadır. Merkez kurumlarla yerel ya da bölgesel kurumların etkileşimi analiz edilirken iç politikanın öneminin vurgulanması makalenin temel tartışmasıdır. Makale, mekansal politikanın yalnızca mekansal ve anayasal çatı ya da tarihsel miras ve politika kültürü gibi bazı ulusal faktörlerin etkisi ile değil aynı zamanda bölgesel farklılık, merkez-yerel ilişkilerinin kalitesi ve önceden var olan bölgesel ağlar gibi ulus-altı faktörlerin etkisiyle de şekillendiğini iddia etmektedir. Bahsi geçen süreçlerde, bölgesel farklılık negatif bir rol oynarken, merkez-yerel ilişkilerinin kalitesi ve önceden var olan bölgesel ağlar ile yerel ve bölgesel kurumların davranışlarının pozitif etki yaptığı tartışılmıştır. Bütün itibarı ile değerlendirildiğinde, bir aday ülkede mekansal politika değişimlerinin iyi bir şekilde anlaşılması için, iç politikaya yönelik yakın bir analizin yapılması tavsiye edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İç Politika Yaklaşımı, Mekansal Politika, Çok Boyutlu Yönetişim, Avrupalılışma, Türk İdare Geleneği

1. INTRODUCTION

The impact of Europeanization on candidate states has become a vibrant developing field of study. Several empirical studies have revealed that through the accession process, the EU has started to govern beyond its territory in accordance with the compliance for the EU requirements in terms of political, legal and administrative domains (Grabbe, 2001; Brusis, 2002; Bruzst, 2008; O'Dwyer, 2006). For regional policy and institutional change on subnational levels of the candidate states, the analysis of the possible factors usually begins with the role played by EU regional policy and its financial incentives (Baun and Marek, 2008; Bache et al., 2011). Europeanization is usually conceived as an independent variable in regional policy relating to financial instruments. This means that the EU regional policy affects and challenges well-established structures within the domestic systems of governance. It additionally plays an important role in the administrative reform and devolution processes as well as improves the institutional capacity at the subnational levels within the candidate states. In this context, some scholars have evaluated the entire transformation in territorial politics and relations in applicant states under the heading of multi-level governance. This has been largely seen as an outcome of the Europeanized regional policy process (Paraskevopoulos and Leonardi, 2004; Baun and Marek, 2008; Brusis, 2010; Bache et al., 2011).

The connection between Europeanization and the creation of multi-level governance (MLG) has become more apparent in the accession rounds of Central Eastern and European Countries (CEECs). To conform to EU regional policy, they have reconstructed their regional levels in conformity with the EU's statistical standard for administrative units (NUTS) and created Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) corresponding to each NUTS II level (Bailey and De Propis, 2004; Brusis, 2002). In seeing these developments within the new entrants and applicant states, a burgeoning literature has clustered around a general explanation of the transformative powers of EU membership conditionality and on examination of what has been changing in the regional policy of accession countries as a result of Europeanization (Grabbe, 2001; 2003; Hughes et al., 2004; Brusis, 2010). Consequently, the creation of the multi-level governance structure in member as well as in candidate states is largely derived from the domestic effects of Europeanization (Gualini, 2004; Paraskevopoulos and Leonardi, 2004).

Scholars have analysed two different aspects of Europeanization of polity dimensions (or domestic change) exclusively within the context of EU regional policy: the changing dynamics of territorial politics between regional and national level through economic, social and political actors (Paraskevopoulos and Leonardi, 2004; Bache et al., 2011); and the interplay between subnational and supranational actors in the form of subnational mobilisation (Hooghe, 1996). Both aspects are the complementary features of the MLG thesis in a given territorial context. What the notion of MLG here implies is that subnational, national and supranational authorities interact with each other in two ways: first, across different levels of

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government (vertical dimension); and second, with other relevant actors within the same level (horizontal dimension) (Benz and Eberlein, 1999; Paraskevopoulos and Leonardi, 2004).

The recent agenda of reforms in Turkish governance includes horizontal change in administrative space as well as vertical change (for instance see Okçu et al., 2006; Ertugal, 2010; Bafoil and Kaya, 2009). Although the horizontal dimension is a complementary feature of the MLG thesis, this article is less concerned with the change in the 'horizontal dimension' than it is in explaining the change in the vertical dimension. However, in terms of the vertical dimension, it is discussed that irrespective of the main motive(s) for changing territorial politics in any particular EU member (and candidate) states, the nuance lies fundamentally in the domestic details. Therefore, the degree and nature of such changes in given administrative system are largely conditional on domestic institutions and practices. For instance, motivations for the creation of regional development agencies should be first accommodated in national histories, political cultures, and institutional and legal contexts. Once the power balances and administrative cultures are institutionalized in a given domestic setting, they are difficult to change because of the path dependent character of such an administrative system. The article does not simply take the domestic context for granted in a way that solely explains changing territorial politics. Rather, it argues that national institutions and subnational contexts define important intermediating variables but still do not determine the ultimate outcome.

Under the light of above considerations, the article is designed to throw light on the intermediating factors in the domestic context in Turkey. The primary aim therefore is to examine the political, historical, legal and institutional culture of local and regional level from a historical perspective in order to make some assumptions for the future empirical studies in order for a better understanding of the effectiveness of territorial politics in Turkey. Such assertions will furnish some clues to the present obstacles to and/or incentives for understanding the change in territorial politics in the European arena. To analyse the extent to which the domestic context shapes, facilitates or inhibits territorial relations in Turkey, the article is organized in four parts. The second part explains why it is matter to focus on domestic politics. The third part outlines national context in terms of territorial and constitutional framework and presents key historical developments and actors/institutions that are involved in the regional/local governance system in Turkey. The fourth part examines the subnational context and politics and presents the three intermediating factors: regional distinctiveness, the quality of intergovernmental relations and the existence of a territorial network. The final part concludes and summarizes the main discussion in the article.

2. DOMESTIC POLITICS APPROACH

As emphasized, the main focus in this article is on the importance of domestic politics in order to understand the change in territorial politics in the EU's candidate states. The domestic politics approach is not a new concept for EU studies (Bulmer, 1983; John, 1996; Jeffrey, 1997; Moore, 2011). It is used as a tool to identify the intermediating factors that shape, obstruct or facilitate the outcomes of an observed policy or political change. This is because a growing awareness of the importance of domestic politics has led many scholars to identify the key domestic intermediating factors that allegedly intervene to shape or affect the patterns of domestic change. Consequently, the diverse outcomes of territorial politics and relations may be attributed to the different domestic institutions, traditions and interests.

In considering the situation for the EU-15, John (1996, p. 131), for instance, observed that the operation of multi-level governance is naturally affected by the constitutional context of each nation-state. In other words, if there are 15 different constitutional frameworks and political constraints, so there are 15 MLGs. As in the case of new members and candidate states, Bruzst (2008) reached a similar conclusion to John. For him, there are various emerging versions of multi-level governance and different configurations of regionalism. He also claims that in all new member countries one can find some contestation of the rules of governance and/or temporary compromises between central state and regional actors that might lead to what historical institutionalists would call 'layering', or 'a change in continuity' (ibid, p. 620).

Neither finding contradicts the argument that it is 'domestic adaptation with national colours' (Cowles et al., 2001, p. 1). In order for a better understanding of the implementation of regional policy in general, and the interplay between national and local administrations in particular, in targeted countries it is necessary to look at the extent to which national institutions, practices and preferences comply with the EU requirements and expectations. A common concern of scholars is therefore to find out how the impact of Europeanization is mediated by domestic circumstances. Scholars have usually methodologically focused on cross-country case selections by giving a particular emphasis on the differences in the national context, i.e. party politics and partisan contestation, constitutional differences, the devolution of competences to the lower level, and in the region specific dimensions, i.e. associational culture (or social capital), regional distinctiveness, the level of legitimacy, the entrepreneurial capacity of regions, size and financial sources of local or regional administrations. Keeping these potential intermediating factors in mind, the remainder of the article proposes the potential intermediating factors at domestic level, national and subnational, for the situation of Turkey.

3. NATIONAL CONTEXT

3.1. Territorial and Constitutional Framework

The dominant state practice in Turkey since the late 19th century has been political, economic, and administrative centralization characterized by the logic of Napoleonic state tradition (Güney and Çelenk, 2010). Such a system is initially based on the principle of a strong central government over weak localities. The subnational level of the Turkish state organization is constituted by 'provinces' that come closest to what some scholars would label a 'region'. There are eighty-one provinces which vary in size and population. The boundaries of most provinces, except those politically established, are historically determined (Polat, 1978, p. 66). Provincial boundaries no longer conform to the territorial shape of actual socio-economic or infrastructural

activities. Although there has been a slight change in the number of provinces since the beginning of the Turkish Republic, the organization of provinces has become a considerable issue on the public administration agenda since the 1960s.

Although Turkey has lacked regional government (discussed below), there is no shortage of local administrations. The territorial administrative system consists of two tiers: national and local administrations. Whereas the national administration is the core of the administrative organization, both in structural and functional aspects, the local administrative system has three subnational units. Provincial Local Administrations (İl Özel İdaresi) under the appointed Governors represent the first level. Municipalities (Belediye) constitute the second level. Village administrations (Köy) form the third level. In addition to these basic types, in 1984 a new type of government confined to the most populated urban centres, called Metropolitan Municipality (Büyük Şehir Belediyesi), came into existence. By the creation of a new administrative arrangement, important powers were devolved to the metropolitan municipalities. Today, local administrations in Turkey encompass 81 provinces, 30 large metropolitan municipalities and 2951 smaller municipalities. All these local units exist alongside the field units of central government.

As a prime unit of provincial administration, the province (vilayet), is ruled by the governor, who has been appointed by the Turkish Council of Ministers after being nominated by the Ministry of Interior and upon the approval of the President of the Republic. The governor is the chief administrative and political officer in the province and is the representative of the Ministry of Interior, as well as of each ministry. In this capacity, the provincial governor (Vali) is responsible for directing and coordinating the work of the field units of the ministries and other central agencies in the province with the exception of judges, public prosecutors of the Republic, military units, plants and institutions (Polatoğlu, 2000, p. 104). Municipal administration is a proper local democratic unit, including an elected mayor and an elected municipal council, though the first direct election for the Mayor was not held until 1963. Village administration, ruled by a headman (muhtar), is a mixture of elected and nonelected members.

Of all of the paid and elected officials at subnational level, the position of provincial governor is especially significant. This leads one to consider that the republican arrangement of the local governmental units is based on the principal of delegation, in which local governmental units have a 'completely subordinate status' (Köker, 1995, p. 59). Unlike the role of the centrally appointed governors, municipal administrations' roles, in reality, were confined to limited services such as, cleaning, transportation, housing and waste management. This was the case even after the municipality law of 1930 (Article 1580)², which supposedly provided a wide range of responsibilities for the municipal administrations.

The 1982 Constitution, which is still in effect but has been subjected to many revisions during Turkey's candidacy to the EU, introduced the concepts of centralization, decentralization and deconcentration with reference to the structuring of public administration. In Article 126, concerning the field units of the central administration, it is indicated that 'the administration of the provinces is based on the principle of deconcentration' (Polatoğlu, 2000, p. 78). In placing all government organizations under the hierarchical control of the centre, harmony among the central units is easily ensured. Local administrations are exercised through the power of tutelage, means through which the indivisibility of administration is guaranteed (ibid). In this sort of administrative tutelage, the central government approves or rejects decisions of local administrations, or postpones their implementation, but it cannot take a new decision itself.

In reality, if a country like Turkey does not have much political and cultural integrity at home, enhancing the strong central tutelage over the local administrations may be considered as a natural process (Keleş, 2011, p. 96). It is the main reason that constitutions (including the current Constitution of 1982) have reflected this centralist tendency and defined the administrative structure in a way that has consolidated and increased the central tutelage over local administration in order to emphasize the integrity and unity of the administrative structure (Çelenk, 2009). The indivisibility of administration is intentionally highlighted in the 1982 Constitution. Article 123, for instance, states that 'the administration forms a whole (indivisible) with regard to its structure and functions, and shall be regulated by law'. Due to its unitary character, there can be no political or administrative entity with 'reserved powers' within the boundaries of the Turkish Republic (Aksoy and Polatoğlu, 2003, p. 442). Although the departments and units of public administration may take diverse organizational forms, they all constitute the same body of administration. As a result, the harmony among the various parts of the administration is ensured and regulated by laws.

The current obstacles in the experience of territorial politics both through horizontal (public-private-societal actors) and vertical (through the different levels of governments) dimensions and certainly of the creation of the effective local or regional governance are not only confined to the legal and constitutional context. True, there is a weak constitutional position for Turkish subnational level. Yet some obstacles have their roots in the long and dynamic legacy of history and political cultures. One may therefore argue that history matters (Bulmer, 1993; Pierson, 1996) in order to understand how the present administrative system under examination has evolved from the past and to trace the legacies of that evolution.

3.2. The Historical Legacy and Political Cultures

No account of the current territorial politics in Turkey would be complete without first mentioning the heritage of the Ottoman Empire (Dodd, 1969, p. 3). Even though this is not a study to discover the impact of the Ottoman heritage on the current situation of territorial politics in Turkey, certain landmarks need to be emphasized. Heper (1989) perfectly summarizes the tradition of the local administration during the Ottoman period as follows: provincial groups were under the tutelage of the centre; the Ottoman system lacked free cities; and unlike the feudal heritage of localism in some parts of Europe, under Ottoman patrimonialism, or absolute rule by the Sultan, the local notables did not have extensive political-territorial rights. This consideration underlines that there was no rich history of local administrative tradition in the Ottoman system that modern Turkey could inherit.

² The municipality law of 1580 was replaced with the Municipality Law of 5393 in 2005.

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From the institutionalist perspective, there is a clear continuity between the late Ottoman period and the early Republican time about the local administration understanding and the economic and political problems regarding the division of powers between central and local levels (Mardin, 1973). This is proved in the establishment of an administrative tutelage over the local government. The tutelage in question was exercised over their decisions, transactions, composition and personnel (Heper, 1989). Such an asymmetrical relationship between centre and periphery is not only a tradition that has been inherited from the late Ottoman Empire, but it has also been developed and enhanced by the bureaucratic and military elites within the republican administrations during the consolidation of the nation state after 1923.

A strong central control at the local level suited the political context of the time and issues like the modernization of local administration and development of local democracy were not major priorities for the state elites at the beginning of the creation of the Republic (Çelenk, 2009). By the 1940s, Turkey strove for an industrialization process under a central system. Both state norms and approaches to economic development in the new Republic resulted in a centralized governance system (Koçak, 2006, p. 91). With the transition from a single party system to a multi-party era (in 1946) 'the bureaucratic ruling tradition' began losing their power and the party-dominated polity became paramount in Turkish governance' (Göymen, 2007). This was, however, unstable as was evident in 1960, 1971 and 1980 military interventions. The military as an ardent guardian of 'Kemalist ideology' and republican values, in corollary of the multi-party era, had filled a power vacuum left by the so-called bureaucratic elites (Heper, 1989). It is suffice to note that whenever political elites, irrespective of their ideology, embarked on undertaking substantial reforms in Turkey, i.e. democratization, regionalization, local administration reforms, and the like, they had to gauge the resistance exerted by certain segments of state and political elites (i.e. multi-level veto points) who embraced the Kemalist ideology and Republican values. Such issues have always been perceived as prime challenges to the Turkish Republic in the context of its integrity and security. The most recent example for the centralist reflection may be seen during the creation of regional development agencies and the comprehensive administrative reforms in the mid-2000s³.

Although the transition to the multi-party era planted the seeds of democracy inside the country, it, conversely, triggered antagonism between the centre and the periphery characterized by extreme patron-client relations. Because of the complete discretion of the central government, the distribution of material benefits has usually been based on partisan consideration enhancing the clientelist channels of interest mediation. Thus, politics has not revolved essentially around the pros and cons of socio-economic policies; political patronage became the basic strategy for obtaining votes (Heper and Keyman, 1998; Ertugal, 2005). Özbudun (1981) remarks that since the creation of the modern Republic, such clientelism has resulted in individual voters or groups trying to fulfil their needs through recourse to powerful patrons who may intervene directly at the centre, rather than seeking to form organized channels for the promotion of more general demands. Because of the patron-client relation, any relaxation of the centralist grip clearly reduces the possibility of patronage opening to the governing party. National governments have therefore proved reluctant to decentralize, given the likely consequences for their own monopoly in power.

Given that the local organizations of political parties have served an important function in conveying local interests to the state structures (Şengül, 2003), local authorities, particularly municipalities, have become arenas of local partisan interest mediation. Moreover, they have functioned to distribute state resources to clients at the local level. If municipalities were controlled by opposition parties, this generally led to the withdrawal of financial resources from that municipality. More specifically, the centre-right parties in the coalition government were not even-handed in their allocation of national funds to some major cities, especially Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir, where the mayors were elected from the left parties (Şengül, 2009; Güney and Çelenk, 2010; Keleş, 2011). Other political parties, including those on the left, also followed suit, when they were in power (Heper and Keyman, 1998).

Municipalities controlled by opposition parties often ran into conflict with the ruling parties and state officials. Personal and political antagonism shaped by interest group politics consequently obstructed local development initiatives, and thus local actors used political party connections to maximise the interests for their respective localities (Özcan and Turunç, 2008, p. 179). Although the exercise of political patronage in return for votes became paramount only with the multi-party system (Heper and Keyman, 1998; Ertugal, 2005), the issues of clientelism and patronage have become influential factors in the current Turkish politics (discussed below).

Another major point deserving particular emphasis in the historical evaluations of the Turkish subnational level is the emerging market economy in the post-1980s. In the wake of the politically and economically turbulent conjuncture in the world, the sweeping influence of neo-liberalism was proposed to be a viable response to the post-1970 crisis. By this new era, the reduction in control over the private sector, reducing protection from imports and enhancing export-oriented trade policy have opened the Turkish economy to the world market. Steps towards the neo-liberalization, democratization and modernization of administrative and political structures have been advanced by the ever-growing relations with various international organizations; inter alia, the EU, the Council of Europe, the IMF and the OECD. The impact of neoliberal policies in terms of its internal and external developments was profoundly felt at subnational level.

The external developments, inter alia the impact of the EU on Turkish governance and the impact of neoliberalization at subnational level, particularly for the large metropolitan municipalities (i.e. Istanbul, Izmir, Ankara, Bursa, Adana, Antalya, etc.), through the 1980s and 1990s are also important because of two-interrelated reasons. First of all, with the introduction of

³ For instance, the draft administrative law was vetoed by the former President, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, on the condition that it was in breach of the constitution as it proposed limiting the powers and responsibilities of the centre and offering extended powers to the local administrations; weakening the organizational and functional features of the central administration, and violating deconcentration and administrative tutelage principles (Güney & Çelenk, 2008).

metropolitan municipalities and the related reforms, the scope of the responsibilities of local administrations in the provision of public services (housing, transportation, sewage treatment, and parking), along with the promotion of the social and economic development of the relevant communities have been expanded (Eliçin, 2011, p. 120). Such changes and increasing responsibilities, accordingly, have rendered many metropolitan municipalities to establish municipal enterprises. New municipal companies because of their monopoly positions on the distribution of water, gas or public transportation have generated substantial financial sources for the large municipalities (Bayraktar, 2007).

Although there has been a tendency towards the delegation of services to local administrations, and the municipalities have obtained some means to extract additional financial resources, it is a well-known issue that tax evasion is an important problem for Ankara. Within this context, the inadequacy of local finance creates a chronic problem for municipalities, suggesting that local administrations are not economically well entrenched to conduct certain activities in and outside the national setting. This is conceived in the context of the financial deficit. Related to the first point, and because of the financial deficit, several large municipalities have started to borrow funds or financial support from the various different international sources (Özcan and Turunç, 2008, p. 182). The international interactions have not only taught them how to manage and execute international projects, but also necessitated qualified personnel to implement those projects supported by international donors. As Özcan (2000) rightly argued, because of the increasing use and influence of foreign credit and international institutions in local infrastructure project development and funding, there has been a significant expansion in foreign credit for urban projects starting from 1985. Accordingly, this marked a total shift in territorial politics by allowing municipalities to bypass the centre through their direct links with international organisations and banks.

The wave of neoliberalization has certainly changed local economic development, city planning and decentralization in Turkey since the 1980s. Through the impetus of rapid urbanization and industrialization of Anatolian cities, subnational politics have been transformed. This transformation brought about different dynamics of territorial relations within and beyond the national jurisdiction. The cities under rapid urbanization and industrialization are usually medium-size and they are commonly identified as Anatolian tigers. In investigating the transformation of Turkish politics since the 1980s and conducting a thorough analysis on eleven Anatolian cities, Keyman and Lorosdağı (2010) argue that there is a need for examining a city level from the bottom-up perspective. It is because many studies in this area focused on the national level without giving sufficient credit to provincial level. The key point, they offer, is that the transformation of Turkish politics has gone hand in hand with the transformation of Anatolian cities. This transformation has gradually resulted in a new city model, which is multi-dimensional, multi-layered and multi-agential.

The research conducted by Keyman and Lorosdağı is highly important because of the lack of comparative research on Turkish cities from the bottom-up perspective. This article similarly underlines the importance of the subnational level in order to understand how and the extent to which the process of Europeanization has changed territorial politics in Turkey. However, despite the efforts coming from the subnational level, as Keyman and Lorosdağı stress, one should not underestimate the role that the national level plays in the transformation process of subnational politics. There is a need for national support of local and regional administrations to have some financial and administrative means at their disposal. This may be achieved by public administration reforms.

Admittedly, since the creation of modern Turkey, various administrative reforms, and research projects have been conducted, in particular during the periods between 1950s and 1990s in order to improve and enhance administrative systems and local government and to tackle the problems that local administrations encounter. Besides, the five-year national plans that included local and regional development plans have been prepared by the Ministry of Development since 1960. Due to the lack of political support, unstable coalition governments, economic crises (in 1994 and 2001) and three military interventions (in 1960, 1971, 1980), some of those programmes and reform packages were not able to bring about a considerable change. The common concern of such reforms was, nevertheless, to restructure central administrations rather than cope with the local administrative structures (Çelenk, 2009).

Prior to the Helsinki Summit of 1999, restructuring the administrative system was again on the agenda but the protection of national unity towards the rising face of political Islam and ethnic separatism (Heper and Keyman, 1998) were the crucial aspects of Turkish political life. While both issues certainly hampered a move towards a new intergovernmental formulation, there was no strong external pressure to push Turkey to a greater decentralization. Moreover, the relations with the EC/EU in the 1980s declined sharply and Turkey was excluded from the list of potential members in the Luxembourg Summit of 1997 (Uğur, 1999). This process impeded the diffusion of new ideas and institutions in Turkish society within the process of integrating the EU's governing mechanism (Özcan, 2000, p. 227). In this respect, the adaptational pressure in the context of decentralization and regionalization had to wait until the victory of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in 2002.

What needs to be emphasized here is that the fear of separatism and political Islam led the governments and some veto players (President, Constitutional Court and Military) to be almost pathologically suspicious of anything involving popular participation during the 1990s. One result is that active participation of citizens in non-governmental political and social organizations has remained very low— reducing the associational culture in Turkey (Ertugal, 2005). Another result is that local administrations, a symbol of opposition forces for the leftist group and particularly the Kurdish local leaders, were kept as weak and ineffectual as possible. While the issue of political Islam has seemed to lose its merit as a source of threat to the unity of the Turkish Republic, the fear of separatism in some ethno-territorial areas (particularly the southeast part of Turkey where Kurds predominantly live) still dominates the insecurity agenda of Turkish politics. Because of such insecurity, whenever any local actor calls for more power and freedom, Ankara has constantly exerted its red lines on the issue of regionalization and/or decentralization. In summary, one cannot challenge this view of a strong centralist tradition, but it does not explain the whole story. There is also a need to focus on the subnational context in order to see what kind of intermediating factors may influence the territorial politics in Turkey. Let us develop this in the next section.

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4. SUBNATIONAL CONTEXT AND POLITICS

4.1. The Existence of Regional Distinctiveness

Regional distinctiveness refers to the existence of ethnic, historical, linguistic or religious ties distinguishing a local community (Brusis, 2010, p. 77). Regions having a distinctive culture or longstanding political differences with their respective national governments are essential ingredients for a strong local or regional tier motivated by regional distinctiveness. However, regions in the sense of European policies, i.e. those defined by economic and cultural aspects, did not exist in Turkey. With the exception of the authority for the development of the South Eastern Anatolian region (GAP, Turkish acronym) and branches of central units in some regions (e.g. General Directorate of Highways and of State Hydraulic Works), there were no regional structures outside Ankara for a long time. According to many civil servants interviewed in Ankara, the concepts of region, regionalism and regionalization are the most sensitive issues in Turkish political life. These concepts have always been associated with the fear of separatism, which has its roots in the long Ottoman-Turkish history.

At this point, as Masicard (2009, p. 18) aptly considered, the transition from the Ottoman Empire to modern Turkey was a tremendously violent and traumatic process. This consisted of wars, independent movements and irredentism often supported by foreign powers, especially in the Balkans and in the Arabic provinces, occupation by foreign powers, massive and often forced migration, and finally immense territorial losses. During this transition, political authorities perceived province and periphery to be potentially dangerous units. Such a fear of disintegration continued in the aftermath of the transition and throughout the new Republican regime. With this fear in mind, Republicanism has often been coupled with centralization and therefore the centrality of the State has been built directly against historically and culturally defined regions, which have been perceived to have potential 'irredentism'.

Related to the fears of disintegration, Kymlica and Opalski (2002) suggest a useful distinction between the ways in which territorial claims have been responded to by the state in Western and Eastern Europe. While it is considered in the context of justice for the West, it is a security issue for the East. Here, justice requires self-government for Western Europe. On the contrary, it is conceived as a threat to the state in Eastern Europe. The lessons drawn by Kymlica and Opalski from Eastern and Central Europe may appropriately be linked to Turkey. It is because the issue of insecurity plays a critical role in the heart of the discussion of the multi-level modality in general and in the creation of regional arrangements in particular in Turkey. The fear of insecurity has arisen from the 'Sevres Syndrome'⁴ and has become an integral part of the governmental discourse and strategy of the republicanist regime throughout Turkish history. Ulusoy (2009, p. 371) precisely examines that 'out of wartime anarchy, external invasion, and the danger of disintegration, the Republic emerged as a Hobbesian state of security'.

Quite the opposite, meaningful regionalization is essential for strengthening the existing subnational level and/or creating new subnational actors. It appears that there is no rational assessment on the issue of regionalization or decentralization inside Turkey (also see Uygun, 2012). What is more essential for the subject matter is that because of such insecurity, whenever there is an intention for networking between the EU institutions and local administrations in the southeast part of Turkey, such insecurity is raised again (Şengül, 2009; Keleş, 2011). The main reason here is that the national government approaches this relationship full of suspicion. In short, regionalization has usually been reduced to the divisibility of the nation and the State (Bafioil and Kaya, 2009). Additionally, national identity has been based on the centrality of the State and shaped against the particular regional features. As a result, the trauma deriving from the fear of national dissolution has not provided fertile grounds for flourishing local and regional distinctiveness in terms of language, ethnicity and culture. Accordingly, this creates an important hindrance in the context of territorial politics in Turkey.

4.2. The Quality of Intergovernmental Relations

The level of friction and tug-of-war between the national governments and the opposition-led municipalities is an important dimension. This is mainly because the level of satisfaction with the national governments, or what Jeffrey (2000) calls 'the quality of intergovernmental relations' between subnational and national levels, are critical factor in explaining territorial politics in a given national setting. For historical as well as politico-structural reasons, territorial politics in Turkey has long been focused on the provincial and national levels, with very little in between. The establishment of most of the provinces is based on traditions and historical evolution of the country, apart from those created by the political gestures. The centre has always kept local administrations under control and been reluctant to devolve political and economic responsibilities to the provincial groups throughout Ottoman-Turkish history. Because of the underprivileged history of local administrations, SNAs have thus become creatures of the central state. This situation not only makes them weak and vulnerable vis-à-vis the national governments, but also causes them to rely heavily on central institutions.

In such a statist tradition, the governors, as field agencies of the central government within and beyond the jurisdiction of the provincial administration, have become responsible for almost all decisions taken at the subnational level. As a direct result of their excessive roles in provincial politics, the governors are overwhelmed with routine and trivial obligations that impair their capacity to give administrative direction and leadership to their provinces (Polatoğlu, 1978, p. 59). In the absence of governors as leaders, mayors have become important figures for the given province. Nevertheless, suffice it to say that the periodic strain

⁴ Many scholars refer to this insecurity problem in Turkey as a 'Sevres Syndrome', which is based on the belief that the West have tried to weaken Turkey both through partitioning and through instigating domestic political turmoil. For example see Kirişçi (2004) and Bill Park (2005: 13).

between mayors and governors has expressed itself in the political struggles between the ruling party in Ankara and the political party that controls a particular provincial municipal government. Therefore, the recent tension over decentralization manifests itself in some places (e.g. Izmir and Diyarbakir) as a power struggle between the locally elected municipalities and the state controlled provincial administrative system. This sometimes mirrors an explicit tension between state ideology and political Islam (Özcan, 2000).

Beyond the conflict between the governors and mayors, the immediate problems in the context of intergovernmental relations derive from the asymmetrical relationship between central and local administrations. Municipalities have always been weak institutions with scarce sources in terms of labour and finance. Because of this heavy dependency and weak local administrations, it is not surprising to observe that the indigenous efforts at provincial development are often unsuccessful. Due to insufficient financial sources, many municipalities have opted for a direct relationship with central institutions (via the party political links) to materialize their local objectives. Such a relationship between centre and local levels has been considered in the context of party politics in general and patron-client relations in particular in the post multi-party era (see above).

Patron-client mode in subnational politics is certainly on the way to forming horizontal relations. Starting from the Ottoman era, isolation was the mode of peripheral life and provincialism that of the towns (İnalçık, 1963; Kolars, 1973, p. 186). Perhaps due to their having been completely subordinated and isolated for centuries, the provincial groups did not show any aspiration towards forming horizontal links that may have led to the emergence of a genuine civil society or 'a polity of estates' (Heper, 1985, p. 32). They, therefore, opted for vertical links with the bureaucratic centre, but these vertical relations with the centre were merely on an individual basis. Such a tradition is reminiscent of Putnam's (1993, p. 181) consideration on the case of South Italy, where social and political relations have been vertically structured. In this sort of relationship, the parties in power look to ensure there are available resources to municipalities under their control in order to limit the success of municipalities at least some of whom are always in the opposition (Tekeli, 1983).

From the historical point of view, not all local administrations have been silent on the legacy of the patronage relationship. There was a reaction against the patron-clientele mode of governance in Turkish history during the 1970s (Finkel, 1990; Gedikli, 2009). The first systematic and strong reaction against this relationship and administrative tutelage formed between central and local administrations was directed by the mayors of the big cities, many of whom took part on the Republican Peoples' Party side (Göymen, 2010, p. 84). Those mayors began pressing for devolution instead of delegation. The motto at that time was 'full participation of all social classes in the decision-making process' (Heper, 1989, p. 6). This movement led by the social democrat mayors was coined the 'urbanist leftism' (Şengül, 2009, p. 133) or 'social democrat local administration model' (Göymen, 2010, p. 85). The latter model suggests that local administrations must shift from being weak, unauthorized, financially and politically dependent on the centre to democratic, participative, productive, responsive, directive, regulative and integrative. The suggested model is not a desirable solution for the national institutions since local administrations that are too strong may eventually become a challenge to Ankara, and ipso facto, Ankara regards that it should keep an eye on the subnational level.

4.3. The Presence of Pre-Existing Territorial Networks

In analysing the differences between the south and the north regions in Italy, Putnam (1993) once argued that the efficiency of subnational level is linked to the strength and the historical tradition of civiness, which has an uneven dispersal in the peninsula. He contends that the civic culture of regional societies is a determinant for understanding the success or failure of a political institution. Herrschel and Newman (2002) also suggest that the forming of associational culture in given local and regional level may be stimulated by particular events or challenges. This is because such event(s) reinforce local-regional identity, but it may alternatively be facilitated by the central state encouraging nationally relevant initiatives/projects.

In Turkey, conditions are akin to those unitary states of the EU, where weak regional tradition encourages top-down policy implementation for the creation of regional/local networks. Top-down initiatives are a more likely case for Turkey, although there are a number of bottom-up endeavours mostly derived from the developed western cities (e.g. Izmir, Mersin). No matter how these territorial networks have been created, either in a top-down or bottom-up fashion, they may add value to the territorial politics in a given national setting. However, it is also important to emphasize that like many unitary states in the EU, Turkey has been facing a problem of regional inequalities in terms of socio-economic development, particularly between the east and the west part of the country (Dinçer et al., 2003). To tackle the problem of uneven regional development across different regions, subnational efforts have been insufficient because of their constant weakness in terms of human and financial sources throughout history. Although some local actors, particularly in the more developed western regions, pressured the central government for more resources and decision-making powers, these demands never crystallised into any regionalisation movement. Therefore, one may hardly speak of a bottom-up regionalisation promoting the pre-existing policy networks at a subnational level in Turkish history. Any efforts towards regionalization, except for some cases (e.g. Izmir and Mersin), should be seen in the context of planning induced by top-down pressure that has administrative and technocratic components.

Prior to the EU accession process, the debate on regionalization and decentralization was in fact sporadic and ephemeral in the Turkish domestic context. In that period (particularly between the 1950s and the 1990s), several top-down initiatives and 'regional plans', in the sense of integrating sectoral priorities of development plans with spatial dimensions, were developed by the Ministry of Development on an ad hoc basis. However, Turkey did have a tradition of regional policy unlike most of the CEECs. Starting from the so-called planned era in 1960, regional development policies and targets based on a sectoralist approach and public incentives used to be determined under the five year national programmes, which were a central development model (Kayasu, 2006). In such a regional development model, certain sectors were encouraged without any spatial consideration of regional or sub-regional dimensions. Dulupçu (2005, p. 109) argues that the regional issues in these plans reflect 'one-size-fits-all atomistic understanding' in that these regional plans were implemented by the traditional incentive programmes, especially in certain Priority Regions for Development (PRD), in order to attract capital and firms to the lagging regions.

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The majority of these regional policy initiatives did not produce development or institutional thickness for regions or cities because of clientelist consideration for the selection of PRDs and insufficient use of public funds. Besides, the unstable economic and political environment in Turkey, as well as insufficient experts and data in regions, exacerbated the problem. For instance, the service in charge of regional policy had very few people (25 officials) and no representatives in the regions (CEC, 1998). A further complicating factor is that the power shifts towards a lower territorial tier were thwarted by poor administrative competencies at the local level, as well as bottlenecks in vertical coordination and control (Lagendijk et al., 2009, p. 386). The real problem was finding proper institutions to devolve this responsibility and to ensure that these institutions are able to control regional plans without politicization and to direct national funds free of corruption. This highlights the ownership/interlocutor problem within the subnational level, i.e., who is going to control this process, and the extent to which these institutions become independent from the centre. To this end, the lack of institutional capacity together with the associational culture at subnational level are considered serious problems for regionalization in general and the creation of territorial networks in particular.

On the other hand, some cities/regions had already been privileged with the pre-existing local/regional networks owing to top-down or bottom-up initiatives. Firstly, while Turkey had not attempted to establish systematic forms or regional governance before the EU candidacy, there were several stand-alone initiatives of regional support (Ertugal, 2005; Lagendijk et al., 2009). Some of these top-down initiatives have indeed borne fruit for those regions such as the Eastern Anatolia Project, Eastern Black Sea Development Project and Southeast Anatolian Project. Other top-down initiatives, particularly for bearing on regional development, include the establishment, in 1998, of the Regional Development Institute for Small and Medium-Sized Industry Development Organization (KOSGEB), with the aim of fostering regional development through supporting SMEs and investors (Lagendijk et al., 2009). The common feature of such top-down initiatives manifests itself in the strong central hand in regional and provincial affairs. Alternatively, there were also some bottom-up dynamics in some developed cities (e.g. Izmir, Mersin and Antalya) through local cooperation in order to foster regional economic development and governance. Such bottom-up developments undoubtedly have fostered the regional dynamics and created policy networks in their respective territories.

At a provincial level, one should also mention the impact of Local Agenda 21 (LA 21) for the creation of territorial networks in different cities in Turkey. The very first aim of these local initiatives entails the establishment of City Councils, where a wide range of actors and institutions including NGOs, labour unions, academics, the representatives of public and private sectors, individuals and locally elected actors may establish a local consultative forum in order to discuss and find solutions for their respective local problems. As Göymen (2010, pp. 202-5) observes, with the participation in these initiatives, different types of co-operation and partnership are exhibited and experimented among different actors in Turkey, true to the essence of local governance. This program has helped to increase the level of participation of civil society organizations and private sectors in decision-making and enhanced the level of decentralization of governance. The LA 21 program has spread, largely spontaneously and through local initiatives, a locally adapted model of City Councils from nine pilot municipalities to more than 50 cities throughout the country (Özcan and Turunç, 2007, p. 188). The successful implementation and active participation in the programme has demonstrated its potential to trigger social transformation that accelerates the decentralization and democratization process in the country, as well as the process of integration with the European Union. Its achievements have been publicly recognized by one of the previous ministers as the 'groundwork for Turkey's EU Accession processes'⁵.

Overall, one may argue that the contributions of the existing territorial networks and regional project experiences, either designed in a top-down down fashion (e.g. GAP, DOKAP) or created by the bottom-up dynamics (e.g. EGEV, Yeşilirmak, BAGEV, and Mersin Development Council) or through LA 21 initiatives, for local/regional economic development and governance are directly relevant to the main argument of this article and therefore worth emphasizing. To begin with, through these regional development communities and programmes, public-private and third sector have had a chance to start acting jointly, which is important for emerging horizontal relations within the given territory. This participation among different local institutions has enhanced the important steps towards regional governance, although the central government still holds financial, administrative and political instruments. Secondly, the implementation of EU programs and the participation in the EU multi-level polity is faster and more efficient in those cities that have a pre-existing territorial network such as Izmir and Samsun. Accordingly, it can be argued that the existing territorial networks have a positive impact on territorial politics in a given national setting.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper has outlined the governance modality in Turkey in order to explore potential integral triggers or impediments for the change in territorial politics in the country. It has presented a number of domestic (national and subnational) mediating factors. Whereas most of the EU countries have engaged in a long process of decentralization (Goldsmith and Page, 2010), the Turkish administrative system has been increasingly centralized with power almost completely focused on Ankara. This process was a particular characteristic of the late Ottoman and the Early Republican Era practices. There were periods of significant reforms in the context of public and local administrations but the overall framework fundamentally remained in place.

The lack of a regional government tradition, an excessive central tutelage on local administrations, the indivisibility principle of administrations and the fear of irredentism may be considered as the main characteristics of traditional Turkish governance prior to the EU accession process during the 2000s. Such characteristics display close parallels with Napoleonic state tradition. They also contain various cultural elements of southern European societies in terms of clientelism, patronage and weak civil society, forming societal and institutional memory among local and regional administrations. In that respect, most of the structural limits for territorial politics in general and their relations through horizontal and vertical administrative levels in particular are to be found in the history of the local and regional problems in Turkey.

⁵ See <http://www.undp.org.tr/Gozlem2.aspx?WebSayfaNo=22>

Prior to the Helsinki Summit of 1999, there seemed to be several reform efforts in the context of territorial relations in Turkey. Yet they were usually erratic and ephemeral due to the hesitancy of the national authorities to lose their tutelage at subnational level. Due to the centralization of power and influence at the national level, relations between subnational level and central government have been regulated through the mode of tutelage, which exercises financial, administrative, and technical controls over the subnational level. Local administrations have usually opted for vertical relations based on individual links with the political and national elites, instead of forming horizontal relations through different stakeholders (public-private-third sectors) that may in turn foster the collective action of given territories. In this sense, the traditional Turkish administrative system represents an excellent case of unitary states that have been highly centralized, allowing little administrative decentralization. This seems to be an important obstacle for any genuine efforts towards an effective territorial politics.

The main argument here is that the domestic politics matters in order to examine the interplay between centre and periphery. However, such a territorial politics is not only mediated by certain national factors such as territorial and constitutional framework as well as historical legacy and political culture but also subnational factors, such as regional distinctiveness, the quality of intergovernmental relations, and pre-existing regional networks. It was argued that while the regional distinctiveness may play a negative role, the quality of intergovernmental relations and the pre-existing regional networks may stimulate the behaviour of SNAs. Overall, the article suggests that in order for a better understanding of Europeanization of territorial politics in candidate states, one should have a close observation on the domestic politics.

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