A COMPARISON OF THE 2006 AND 2010 MEMBERS OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT SURVEY RESULTS: A FURTHER POLARIZATION ON THE QUESTION OF TURKEY IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT?

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes data drawn from the 2006 and 2010 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) surveys to compare how the attitudes of MEPs toward Turkey have changed. Through cross-tabulations, the paper presents some preliminary evidence that the Right in the current European Parliament (EP) is less friendly towards Turkey than was the Right in the previous EP, while the Left is friendlier towards Turkey than before. Although it needs further evidence to support this claim, one may suggest that the gap between the Right and the Left on the question of Turkish accession might be widening. Since no single group has the majority in the EP, the polarization on the question of Turkey may complicate consensus-building on Turkey, which is often necessary to vote down anti-Turkey proposals.

Keywords: European Parliament, Turkey, Members of the European Parliament

JEL Classification: F50, F59

2006 VE 2010 AVRUPA PARLAMENTOSU ÜYELERİ ANKETLERİNİN KARŞILAŞTIRMASI: TÜRKİYE MESELESİNDE DAHA FAZLA POLARİZE OLMUŞ BİR AVRUPA PARLAMENTOSU

ÖZ

Bu çalışma, Avrupa Parlamentosu (AP) üyelerinin Türkiye'ye karşı değişen tutumlarını 2006 ve 2010 yılı 'Avrupa Parlamentosu Üyeleri' anketlerini karşılaştırarak incelemektedir. Makalede ki çapraz tablolar şuan ki AP sağ partileri üyelerinin bir önceki AP sağ partileri üyelerine göre Türkiye'nin AB'ye katılmasına karşı daha negatif tutumlu olduğunu göstermektedir. Öte yandan, şuan ki AP solu bir önceki AP soluna göre Türkiye'nin tam üyeliğine karşı daha olumlu yaklaşmaktadır. Her ne kadar tek bir çalışma ile genelleme yapmak zor ise de, AP sağı ile solu Türkiye konusunda daha fazla polarize olmuştur. Bu durum, AP'de Türkiye karşıtı yasalara karşı partiler arası bir koalisyon oluşturulmasını daha da zorlaştıracaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Avrupa Parlamentosu, Türkiye, Avrupa Parlamentosu Üyeleri

JEL Sınıflandırması: F50, F59

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1. Introduction

Many saw the 2009 elections to the European Parliament (EP) as a further blow to the Turkish-EP relations which were already far less than good. This was because the 2009 elections were interpreted as a victory for the Right, which is traditionally against Turkey's European Union (EU) membership, and a defeat for the Left, which tends to be friendlier to the idea of Turkish accession. The fact that candidates' use of anti-Turkey rhetoric in the 2009 EP election campaigns further added to the fear that a more hostile Parliament had emerged following the 2009 elections.

This study compares what Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) from the previous 2004-2009 EP (or, the Sixth EP) and the current 2009-2014 EP (or, the Seventh EP) think of Turkish membership to the EU by analyzing an original data set drawn from two MEPs opinion surveys, one was conducted in 2006 for the Sixth EP and the other one in 2010 for the Seventh EP. Thus, this research makes an attempt to understand to what extent the 2009-2014 EP is different from the 2004-2009 EP in terms of their representatives' views of Turkish membership. The study bases its analyses according to MEPs' European party group (EPGs) memberships since the EP is organized around EPGs. The national party and nationality are also considered as they also exert influence on MEPs' legislative behavior.

The next section briefly overviews the EP, its historical development and institutional structure. The following section provides information on the source of the data and rephrases the main questions that this paper seeks to answer. Then, through cross-tabulation analysis, the study analyzes and compares the two MEP surveys, showing that the overall support rate for Turkey has significantly dropped from the 2004-2009 EP to the 2009-2014 EP, and perhaps more interestingly, producing some preliminary evidence that the Right in the Seventh EP is less supportive of Turkish membership than the Right in the Sixth EP, whereas the Left in the Seventh EP is more favorable to the idea of Turkish membership than the Left in the Sixth EP. In other words, this study reveals that there is an observable attitude change in the opinion of the Right and the Left on Turkey, as the Right became more anti-Turkey and the Left became more pro-Turkey. The conclusion section of the paper discusses the implication of this polarization and makes suggestions for future research.

2. An Overview of the European Parliament, European Party Groups and the 2004 and 2009 Elections

Although its name frequently appears in the press, the EP remains as one of the least known and understood organizations of the EU. Brief information on the EP is therefore warranted. Such an overview of the EP will also clarify why it is important to study the EP and its representatives' attitudes towards Turkey.

Along with the Council of the European Union and the European Commission, the EP is one of the key organizations of the EU. It is also the democratic face

of the EU, as its members are directly elected from the member states in every five years. For that reason, the EP may claim to represent the interests of the European publics. This makes it also a unique international institution since it is the only popularly-elected supranational legislative institution in the world. The first direct elections to the EP took place in 1979, and the most current elections were held on June 4-7, 2009. While 410 members represented the nine countries in 1979, the EP today has 736 members elected from the 27 member states. Elections to the EP are held at the national level and the number of representatives each country sends to the EP is determined according to the population size. For example, Germany, the most populous European country, elects 99 representatives while Malta, the smallest EU country in terms of population, elects only five.

Before 1979, the EP was an appointed chamber and its legislators were selected by the member states. As an appointed assembly with little legislative or oversight powers, it was a parliament only by name at the time. However, its policy powers increased over time as the successive EU treaties such as the 1986 Single European Act, the 1992 Maastricht Treaty (see Corbett, 2005: 8) and the 2009 Lisbon Treaty empowered the EP in legislation and oversight areas to enhance democratic legitimacy of the EU decision-making process, which ultimately made the EP as one of the most significant institutions of the EU. In fact, with its standing committees, international delegations, debates, inquiries, parliamentary questions, public hearings, investigations, political parties, whips and lobbying groups, one may even argue that the EP has become like any other national legislative assembly.

However, there are significant differences between a national parliament and the EP. First of all, there is no clear government-opposition politics in the EP that people are accustomed to see in national parliaments. The EP cannot also initiate legislation but it acts as a co-legislator jointly with the Council of the European Union, meaning that an EU law requires the approval of both the Council and the EP before it goes into effect. Thus, the EP exercises power through amending or even rejecting legislative proposals in almost all policy areas such as agriculture, justice, immigration, budgeting, home affairs, etc. In fact, it is claimed that "The EP's budgetary power is considerably greater than that exercised by most parliaments in EU member states, and this 'power of the purse' gives the EP significant institutional weight in the EU" (Archick and Mix, 2011: 241). However, although foreign policies are still outside the legislative boundaries of the EP, it exerts influence in the enlargement process through the "assent procedure," according to which the EP must approve the accession treaty of a country before it becomes an EU member. The assent procedure also applies to all official agreements that the EU signs with non-member countries (Archick and Mix, 2011: 240). Most recently, the EP gave its assent to Croatia on December 1, 2011, with 564 votes in favor, 38 against and 32 abstentions (The European Parliament, 2011).

However, what shapes MEPs' behavior in the EP is somewhat complicated. Although elections to the EP are held at the national level and national issues, not

European issues, dominate EP election campaigns as candidates consistently promise voters to defend the interests of their country (for examples see, Drake, 2005: 110; Mayer, 2005: 178; Brinar, 2005: 228), the literature suggests that it is the EPG, not nationality, that is the most important force influencing MEPs' policy positions (for example see, Hix and Noury, 2009). EPGs are supranational umbrella organizations that provide an institutional platform for MEPs who come from different backgrounds to voice their concerns in the EP. Once elected, MEPs become members of an EPG that echoes their policy priorities most closely and are seated according to their EPG memberships, not according to their nationality. Legislative resources in the EP such as rapporteurships, committees and speaking times are largely controlled by EPGs.

The European People's Party (EPP) and the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in Europe (S&D), which was called the Party of European Socialists (PES) in the 2004-2009 Parliament, are the largest and most influential groups in the EP, while the former consists of conservative members from the center-right parties from the EU member states, the latter is a center-left political group that brings together social democrat MEPs. Another prominent group, though relatively less influential due to its smaller size, is the Alliance for Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), whose ideological position lies somewhere between the EPP and S&D and it therefore attracts MEPs with a centrist and liberal outlook. There are also some small EPGs, such as the left-wing European Green Party and the European Left and the right-wing Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD - formerly Independence & Democracy - ID), Union for Europe of the Nations (UEN, dissolved in 2009), and European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR, established in 2009). However, their influence in the EP is rather limited due to their small sizes. There is also Non-Attached Members (NA), which consists of MEPs who don't belong to one of the formal political groups in the EP (see Table 1).

Table 1: 2004 and 2009 European Parliament Election Results, by EPGs

	2004 Election		2009 Election	
	Seat	%	Seats	%
EPP (Christian Democrats)	268	36.6	265	36
S&D/PES (Socialists)	200	27.3	184	25
ALDE (Liberals)	88	12	84	11.4
Greens (Greens)	42	5.7	55	7.5
EUL-NGL (Radical Left)	41	5.6	35	4.8
I&D/EFD (Euroskeptics)	37	5	32	4.3
UEN (National Conservatives)	27	3.7	-	-
ECR (Anti-federalists)	-	-	54	7.3
NA (Independents)	29	4	27	3.7
	732	100	736	100

Source: Archick and Mix 2011, 246; http://www.europarl.europa.eu

3. Research Questions and the MEPs Surveys

Elections for the 2004-2009 parliamentary term were held on June 10-13, 2004, and for the 2009-2014 term on June 4-9, 2009. The 2009 elections were interpreted as a major defeat for the Socialists (S&D) in Europe, as their share of EP seats dropped from 27.3 percent to 25 percent while their main opponent EPP (Christian Democrats, or Conservatives) largely retained their seats. The results were disappointing for the Socialists in large part because it was the Socialists, not the Conservatives, who had lost their electoral ground although a severe economic crisis was deeply shaking Europe and Conservative parties were in government in most European countries.

The results of the 2009 elections also created concerns among some observers of Turkish-EU relations, who forecasted further deterioration in EP-Turkey relations with the declining share of the Socialists in the EP. In fact, the Left is known to display somewhat more pro-Turkey attitudes whereas the Right, defining 'Europeanness' on the grounds of identity and culture, tends to take rather anti-Turkey attitudes on the question of Turkish accession to the EU. One could therefore expect that the new EP could overall be less friendlier towards Turkey than the previous EP. Moreover, candidates in several European countries such as Germany and France in the 2009 elections intensely used anti-Turkey rhetoric to capitalize on the publics' increasing fear of Turkish accession, since for them integration of an Islamic and underdeveloped Turkey was associated with destroying European culture and inflow of cheap Turkish labor. For these reasons, one might expect to find a significant difference between the 2004-2009 and 2009-2014 parliamentary terms in terms of their representatives' opinion of Turkish accession. Therefore, this paper aims to help find an answer to the following question: To what extent has overall attitude towards Turkey changed from the 2004-2009 EP to the 2009-2014 EP? Perhaps more important than the overall attitude difference between the two parliamentary terms is to understand whether there is a decline in the support for Turkey among MEPs from the major EPGs such as the EPP, S&D or ALDE. This is because the EP is organized around EPGs, and several EPGs have to form issue-based coalitions to pass legislations, as no single EPG has the majority in the EP. Thus, it is important to know, for example, if there is a significant change in the EPP MEPs' view of Turkish membership to the EU from the Sixth EP to the Seventh EP.

To compare the opinion on Turkish membership between the 2004-2009 and 2009-2014 parliaments, this paper relies on a survey dataset produced by the European Parliament Research Group (EPRG) (Farrell et al., 2011). The EPRG operates under the London School of Economics and Political Science and has been conducting surveys to collect data on MEPs' political backgrounds and policy positions on various issues. The EPRG has so far completed three surveys: The fırst one was in 2000 for the 1999-2004 Parliament; the second survey was in 2006 for the 2004-2009 Parliament, and the most recent one was in 2010 for the 2009-2014 Parliament. The data for these surveys are available online at the EPRG website

(http://www2.lse.ac.uk/government/research/resgroups/EPRG/home.aspx). The 2006 and 2010 surveys included an identical question that was worded as: "Which of the following states do you think should be allowed to join the EU if they apply for EU membership and successfully meet the Copenhagen Criteria for membership?"[1] Both the 2006 and 2010 surveys then provided a list of countries for participants to choose from. While the 2006 survey asked the participants to mark the countries that they think should be allowed to join the EU, the 2010 survey provided three options (yes, no, and I don't know) to participants to choose for each country on the list. This paper compares the proportion of "yes" answers in both surveys, as there was no "I don't know" option in the 2006 survey. The participation in the 2006 survey was 37.2 percent, or 272 MEPs out of a total of 732 MEPs. In the 2010 survey the participation stood at 36.7 percent, or 270 MEPs out of a total of 736 MEPs.

4. MEPs' Opinion of Turkish Accessions in the 2006 and 2010 MEP Surveys, by Nationality, the EPG, and the National Party

A comparison of the survey results reveals an overall decline in the favorability of Turkish accession from the 2004-2009 EP to the 2009-2014 EP. According to the 2006 survey that examined the 2004-2009 parliamentary term, of the 272 MEPs who took the survey, 92 MEPs, or 33.8 percent, indicated that Turkey should be allowed to join the EU if it fulfills the Copenhagen criteria, whereas only 26.3 percent, or 71 of the 270 MEPs who participated the 2010 survey, expressed a favorable view of Turkish accession. Thus, there appears to be a 7.5 percent drop in the proportion of MEPs who view Turkish accession positively. This finding may suggest that there is indeed a more anti-Turkey EP currently at work, perhaps justifying the concerns of the pessimists who foresee further deterioration in the EP-Turkey relations.

However, one should have a better understanding of this observed attitude change in the EP before reaching to quick conclusions. In fact, this 7.5 percent decline may be explained in part by the fact that the right-leaning EPGs (EPP + ALDE + ID/EFD + UEN + ECR) increased their seat shares while the left-leaning EPGs (PES/S&D + Greens + EUL + NGL) saw a decrease in their seat shares in the EP. Since the right-leaning EPGs are known with their opposition to Turkish membership, this compositional change in favor of the Right may be one of the reasons explaining the difference in opinion on Turkish accession between the two surveys. In addition, the survey participation rate for the right-leaning MEPs was 58 percent in 2006 and 61 percent in 2010, whereas they constituted 56.2 percent of the EP in 2006 and 58.9 percent in 2010. For the left-leaning MEPs, the survey participation was 38.9 percent in 2006 and 35.9 percent in 2010, whereas their MEPs accounted for 38.8 percent of the EP in 2006 and 37.3 percent in 2010. Thus, the declining participation rate among the left-leaning MEPs may also provide additional explanation. On the other hand, one may safely argue that the 7.5 percent decline in the fa-

[1] The 2000 survey did not include a question on Turkey

vorable view of Turkish accession may not be fully explained by the electoral victory of the Right or the declining survey participation rate of the Left. In fact, a closer examination of the 2004 and 2009 EP elections reveals that the Right increased its share of EP seats only by 1.7 percent and the Left's share declined only by 1.3 percent from the 2004-2009 term to the 2009-2014 term (see Table 1). Moreover, although the participation rate for the Right and the Left in the 2006 and 2010 surveys were about the same, the participation for the Left dropped only by 1.4 percent in the 2010 survey, while for the Right it remained about the same.

If the decline in the EP's Turkish attitude from the 2006 to the 2010 survey was explained by the differences in electoral results or survey participation rates, there would be little to worry as it would signal only a temporal change in the overall attitudes of the EP. In other words, one would expect to see improvement in the overall attitude towards Turkey in the EP if the Left increases its seat share in the next elections or the left-oriented MEPs spend greater efforts to participate in similar surveys next time. For that reason, it should be more important to investigate if the opinion on Turkish accession shows any changes from the Sixth parliament to the Seventh parliament across MEPs' ideology or EPG memberships. For that matter, this research analyzes the 2006 and the 2010 MEPs surveys by crosstabulating their results on Turkey by MEPs' EPG affiliations.

Due to the low count problem that one encounters when analyzing such small-N surveys through cross-tabulations, the paper focuses only the major EU states, EPGs and national parties. Thus, the largest three states (Germany, France and Britain, which are also sometimes referred to as the Big Three states of Europe) and the largest three EPGs (EPP, S&D, and ALDE) constitute the main focus of the research. Moreover, the biggest national parties from Germany, France and Britain are also included into the research. Germany, France and Britain are the most powerful and influential states of Europe and MEPs from these countries make up 31.1 percent of the current EP. The EPP, S&D and ALDE are the central and most powerful EPGs as MEPs from these groups together constitute 72.5 percent of the EP. The German CDU-CSU (Christlich Demokratische Union - Christlich-Soziale Union) and SPD (Sozialdemokratische Partei), the French UMP (Union pour un Mouvement Populaire) and PS (Parti Socialiste), and the British Conservative Party and Labour Party are the largest national parties in Germany, France and Britain. The CDU-CSU, UMP and Conservative Party are center-right parties, whereas the SPD, PS and the Labour are center-left parties in Europe.

Table 2: MEPs Favorable Views of Turkish Accession in 2006 and 2010, by Nationality and EPGs

		2006 Survey	2010 Survey
States	Germany	35.5% (12/34)	21.2% (7/33)
	France	20.8% (5/24)	8.3% (2/24)
	Britain	35.1% (13/37)	33.3% (5/15)
EPGs	EPP (Christian Democrats)	29.5% (28/95)	13% (13/100)
	S&D (Socialists)	41.1% (30/73)	46.9% (30/64)
	ALDE (Liberals)	31.8% (14/44)	32.6% (14/43)

Sources: Author's own calculations from the EPRG 2006 and 2010 Surveys. Notes: Favorable views of Turkey are reported. Percentages indicate the proportion of those who expressed favorable opinion. Parentheses are counts. The first number in parentheses (numerator) is the counts of those who expressed positive opinion; the second number (denominator) is the total number of respondents who answered that question in the survey.

Table 2 displays the proportional distribution of the favorable opinion on Turkish accession across major EU states (Germany, France and Britain) and the major EPGs (EPP, S&D and ALDE) in the 2006 and 2010 MEP surveys. In terms of the states section, Table 2 shows a sharp drop in the proportion of German and French MEPs' favorable opinion on Turkish accession from the 2006 to the 2010 surveys. In 2006, 35.5 percent of the German MEPs and 20.8 percent of the French MEPs who participated into the survey indicated that Turkey should be allowed to join the EU if it successfully meets the Copenhagen criteria for membership, the same percentages dropped to 21.2 percent for the German MEPs and to 8.3 percent for the French MEPs in the 2010 survey. On the other hand, the favorable opinion towards Turkish accession for the British MEPs remains about the same from the 2006 to the 2010 surveys. However, the results for the British MEPs should be interpreted with some caution as the survey participation rate of the British MEPs declined sharply from the 2006 to the 2010 surveys. In 2006, 37 British MEPs participated the survey, in 2010 it was only 15.

With regards to the EPGs section, Table 2 reveals that the percentage of the EPP MEPs who expressed favorable opinion towards Turkish membership dropped from 29.5 percent to 13 percent, while it increased for the S&D MEPs from 41.1

percent to 46.9 percent from the 1996 survey to the 2010 survey. The opinions of the ALDE MEPs, on the other hand, show little variance between the two surveys. Table 2 may suggest that the MEPs from Germany and France and from the EPP have become less likely to view Turkish enlargement favorably, while the S&D MEPs in the 2010 survey seem to be holding more favorable opinion of Turkey when compared to those in the 2006 survey. However, another table that controls for the states (Germany, France and Britain) should be designed to gain a better understanding of this phenomenon, as the relationship between the EPGs and the states, on one hand, and opinion on Turkey, on the other hand, may be spurious as they both be intercorrelated.

Table 3: MEPs' View of Turkish Accession in 2006 and 2010, by EPGs, Controlled for Nationality

		2006 Survey	2010 Survey
Germany	EPP	26.3% (5/19)	0.00% (0/11)
	PES	50.0% (2/4)	44.4% (4/9)
	ALDE	100% (2/2)	0.00% (0/3)
France	EPP	33.3% (1/3)	0.00% (0/8)
	PES	25.0% (3/12)	20.0% (1/5)
	ALDE	0.00% (0/5)	0.00% (0/4)
Britain	EPP	30.8% (4/13)	0.00% (0/0)
	PES	50.0% (5/10)	0.00% (0/1)
	ALDE	33.3% (2/6)	50.0% (3/6)

Sources: Author's own calculations from the EPRG 2006 and 2010 Surveys. Notes: Favorable views of Turkey are reported. Percentages indicate the proportion of those who expressed favorable opinion. Parentheses are counts. The first number in parentheses (numerator) is the counts of those who expressed positive opinion; the second number (denominator) is the total number of respondents who answered that question in the survey.

Thus, Table 3 above further breaks down what MEPs' think of Turkey by cross-tabulating their opinion on Turkey with their EPG memberships while controlling for the states variable (Germany, France and Britain). Table 3 shows that while

26.3 percent of the German EPP members, or five of the 19 who took the 2006 survey, indicated a positive opinion while none of the 11 German EPP members in the 2010 survey expressed a favorable view on Turkish membership. Similarly, none of the eight French EPP members did indicate a positive view of Turkish accession. This may be a sign of a negative attitude change on the question of Turkish accession among the EPP members. Making comments on the PES EPPs and the British MEPs are more difficult due to the low count cells, but it seems a slight decline exists in the PES MEPs' opinions of Turkey for both the German and French MEPs. Finally, it should be noted that none of the three German ALDE members indicated a positive opinion on Turkey in 2010, while the two German ALDE members who took the 2006 survey was in favor of Turkish membership. This may be a signal that the ALDE members from Germany changed their positions on Turkey as well.

Table 4 below shows the relationship between national party affıliations and opinion on Turkey in 2006 and 2010, controlling for the states. Table 4 demonstrates whether the major center-right and center-left national parties in France, Germany and Britain have changed their positions on Turkey. This supplements the findings presented in Table 3, as the MEPs from the center-right national parties (German CDU and French UMP) tend to be seated under the EPP group in the EP,[1] and those from the center-left national parties (German SPD, French PS and the British Labour) under the S&D. The results displayed in Table 4 are very similar to those in Table 3, indicating a sharp decline of favorable attitudes toward Turkish accession among the center-right. In fact, although there were some center-right MEPs who were in favor of Turkish accession in the 2006 survey, none of the center-right MEPs from Germany and France (CDU and UMP MEPs) in 2010 expressed a positive opinion of Turkish membership to the EU. Although the participation was very low from Britain in the 2010 survey, the British center-right Conservative Party MEPs appear to be displaying different attitudes from their counterparts in Germany and France, as two of them expressed a favorable view of Turkey in the 2010 survey. This may be due to the fact that Britain, as a nation, takes a more pro-Turkey position than the other major countries in Europe in the Turkish-EU negotiations. However, this finding should be interpreted cautiously as the participation for the British MEPs was especially very low in the 2010 survey.

[1] *One exception is the British Conservative Party, which is currently seated under the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR).*

Table 4: MEPs' View of Turkish Accession in 2006 and 2010 by National Parties, Controlled for Nationality

	2006 Survey	2010 Survey
German CDU	26.5% (5/19)	0% (0/10)
German SPD	50% (2/4)	50% (4/8)
French UMP	33.3% (1/3)	0% (0/8)
French PS	25% (3/12)	20% (1/5)
British Con	16.7% (2/12)	40% (2/5)
British Lab	50% (5/10)	0% (0/1)

Sources: Author's own calculations from the EPRG 2006 and 2010 Surveys. Notes: Favorable views of Turkey are reported. Percentages indicate the proportion of those who expressed favorable opinion. Parentheses are counts. The first number in parentheses (numerator) is the counts of those who expressed positive opinion; the second number (denominator) is the total number of respondents who answered that question in the survey.

Table 5: MEPs' Ideology and Opinion on Turkish Membership in 2006 and 2010[1]

	2006	2010
Left	46.4% (39/84)	59.7% (37/62)
Center	35.8% (19/53)	37.5% (15/40)
Right	29.7% (19/64)	26% (19/73)

Sources: Author's own calculations from the EPRG 2006 and 2010 Surveys. Notes: Favorable views of Turkey are reported. Percentages indicate the proportion of those who expressed favorable opinion. Parentheses are counts. The first number in parentheses (numerator) is the counts of those who expressed positive opinion; the second number (denominator) is the total number of respondents who answered that question in the survey. The Pearson

[1] *Chi-Square values, 4.5 for the 2006 and 15.9 for the 2010 survey results, are also statistically significant at the 0.10 and the 0.001 levels, respectively.*

Although it gives a good sense of the opinion of MEPs on Turkey, due to the issues related to survey participation rates in such studies, any analysis based on the EPG or the national party should be interpreted with some caution as cross-tabulations in such analysis result in low counts for some cells. Indeed, things get even worse in analysis where one set of variables is controlled for, as it was the case in Table 3 and 4. This problem can be overcome if MEPs' ideological positions are used in place of their EPG affiliations. Therefore, Table 5 is designed to further analyze and complement the results presented in above tables, which suggest that the right-leaning groups in Europe were less likely to support Turkey's candidacy in 2010 than were they in 2006, whereas the left-leaning groups in 2010 were more likely than in 2006 to have a favorable opinion of Turkish membership. In other words, the Right in Europe appears to have moved further away from Turkey while the Left appears to have moved closer to it. Table 5 confirms these findings further. Table 5 is designed based on a question that appeared in both 2006 and 2010 surveys that asked MEPs to rank their own ideology on a 10-point scale, where 1 indicated the far-left and 10 the far-right. MEPs were assumed to be located on the Left if they chose 1, 2, 3, or 4; the Center if they chose 5 or 6, and the Right if they chose 7, 8, 9 or 10. According to Table 5, the proportion of the MEPs on the Left who think of Turkish accession favorably increased from 46.4 percent to 59.7 percent, while the same proportion fell from 29.7 percent to 26 percent for the MEPs on the Right. On the other hand, the attitude change for the MEPs on the Center is relatively little with a slight increase of 1.7 percent. These results lend further credibility to the evidence presented in Table 2, 3 and 4 that both the Right and the Left in the 2009-2014 EP appear to be different than they were in the 2004-2009 EP in terms of their attitudes toward Turkey, with the Right is less and the Left is more supportive of Turkish accession.

5. Conclusion: Polarization on Turkey and Its Implications

This paper is designed to compare the percentage of favorable opinion on Turkish accession in the Sixth and Seventh EPs. Since the EP is organized based on EPGs, a special emphasis is paid how MEPs' opinion on Turkey has changed in terms of their EPG affiliations from the 2004-2009 EP to the 2009-2014 EP. This research produces some preliminary evidence that the Right in the Seventh EP is more likely than the Right in the Sixth EP to think of Turkish accession negatively, while the Left in the Seventh EP is more favorable than the Left in the Sixth EP towards Turkish accession. What might explain such an attitude change with regards to Turkish accession to the EP? One may speculate that the decline in the Turkish attitudes among the right-leaning political groups such as the EPP may be explained partly by the rising cultural conservatism in Europe. Moreover, the left-leaning parties' move toward Turkey may be attributed in some part to Turkey's recent democratic reforms, especially regarding minority rights that the Left is particularly concerned with.

However, it may also be suggested that with the further polarizing positions on Turkey between the main EP groups (EPP and S&D), it might become more difficult for the EPGs to reach a consensus on issues related to Turkey. No single party dominates the EP, and the EPGs from different political spectrums have to collaborate on an issue by issue basis to pass legislations. In fact, coalition-building is an important part of the legislative life in the EP, especially between the EPP and the S&D, which are the two most dominant groups in the EP. For example, an amendment to an EP report that proposed a special status instead of full EU membership for Turkey failed in December 2004, when several EPP MEPs deviated from their group and collaborated with the S&D MEPs (Yuvacı, 2011). However, as the EPP and S&D move farther away from each other on the question of Turkish accession, reaching a compromise on Turkey may become more challenging, making it more difficult to stop anti-Turkey legislations in future.

However, the results presented in this study should be seen as preliminary and interpreted with some caution, as they are based on a comparison of only two parliamentary terms. It could indeed be the case that the observed polarization on the question of Turkish accession between the EPP and the S&D could be temporal. There is a clear need to undertake further research to produce and analyze data to complement the findings presented in this research. Thus, future studies may generate further evidence on the degree to which a polarization exists in the EP on the question of Turkish accession, when such a polarization has started and where it is headed. Future studies may also examine in more detail what shapes the positions of major European political groups on Turkey. As the EP becomes a more influential institution, finding an answer to such questions becomes especially important.

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