

PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR EUROPEAN UNION MEMBERSHIP IN TURKEY
BETWEEN 2005 - 2014

by

HANDE YAMAN



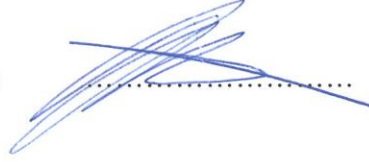
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PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR EUROPEAN UNION MEMBERSHIP
IN TURKEY BETWEEN 2005-2014

APPROVED BY:

Prof. Dr. Meltem Müftüler-Baç
(Thesis Supervisor)



Yrd. Doç. Dr. Emre Hatipoğlu



Yrd. Doç. Dr. Merve Özdemirkıran



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ABSTRACT

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HANDE YAMAN

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Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Meltem Müftüler-Baç

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Within the discussion of EU relations of Turkey, it is clear that until recent the importance of public opinion and its formation have been neglected from related research. Although the existent research deals with individual level factors shaping public opinion, this thesis proposes an alternative approach that public opinion formation is highly related to *political cues* that are provided from certain government institutions and political elite, among other determinants of *national economic growth, tendency to trust in the national government and parliament*. The decline in public support in Turkey regarding EU membership has been analyzed and tendencies within the period of 2005-2014 are presented in order to provide explanations to the association of the public opinion formation to the related propositions. In order to observe the relation of external and internal factors regarding policy formation of the political elite, the historical background of Turkish membership project to EU has been touched upon, and related political discourses have been analyzed to correlate public opinion formation to elite messages in the respective period. In doing this, the thesis aims to contribute to public opinion analyses of Turkey regarding EU membership process, while embracing Eurobarometer public opinion surveys from 2005 to 2014.

ÖZET

2005-2014 YILLARI ARASI AVRUPA BİRLİĞİ ÜYELİĞİNE TÜRK KAMUOYUNUN DESTEĞİ

HANDE YAMAN

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Süpervizör: Prof. Dr. Meltem Müftüler-Baç

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Türkiye-AB ilişkileri konusunda kamu görüşünün ve bunun şekillenmesinin yakın zamana kadar araştırmalarda gözardı edildiği görülmektedir. Mevcut araştırmalar kamu görüşünü bireysel düzeyde şekillendiren faktörlere değinse de, bu tez buna alternatif bir yaklaşım getirerek, kamu görüşü şekillenmesinde ülkedeki ekonomik büyüme, milli hükümete ve parlamentoya güven eğilimleri faktörlerinin yanısıra hükümet müesseseleri ve politik elit tarafından sunulan politik ipuçlarının da oldukça etkili olduğunu savunmaktadır. Türkiye’de AB üyeliği ile ilgili halk desteğinin yıllar içinde düşüşü analiz edilerek, kamu görüşü ile verilen önermeler arasındaki karşılıklı ilişkiye ışık tutmak amacı ile ilgili dönemdeki eğilimler incelenmiştir. Politik elitin politika oluşturmasında etkili olan iç ve dış faktörleri incelemek üzere, Türkiye’nin AB’ye üyelik projesinin tarihsel arka planına değinilmiş, aynı zamanda dönemin politikacıları tarafından yapılan söylemler kamu görüşü şekillenmesinin elit mesajlarıyla ilişkisinin ortaya konması amacıyla ele alınmıştır. Böylece, bu tez Türkiye’nin AB’ye üyeliği süreci ile ilgili kamu görüşü analizine katkıda bulunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bunun için 2005-2014 yıllarını kapsayan Avrobarometre kamuoyu anketlerinden yararlanılmıştır.

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INTRODUCTION

Turkey's accession to the European Union has occupied both sides excessively over the years, especially in terms of future prospects and possible impacts on both parties. There have been various debates especially after the opening of accession negotiations in 2005, on how Turkey's prospective membership would change the dynamics of European Union, how EU membership would affect Turkey in terms of social, economic and political factors, while possible mutual benefits such integration would bring along are expressed. However, contrary to the vast research on Turkey-EU relations, the matter of Turkish public opinion regarding Turkey's membership to the European Union stays as an area where to date little research has been conducted.

This unpopularity of public opinion studies within the literature may be linked to the fact that Turkish membership to the EU seems to be predominantly driven by the political elite since now (Şenyuva, 2006). Despite the importance laid on the 'real process' of the accession, it would be fair to mention the importance of public opinion especially in the fulfillment process of the membership criteria, particularly in the harmonization and orientation phases. This orientation phase would include adjustments to *Europeanness*, extending threshold of tolerance against different cultures, religions and local habits and –the most responsibility incurring for the Turkish case I suppose– consensually leaving some traditional praxis.

Contrary to the Turkish case, regarding the membership process of Poland, Slomczynski and Shabad touch upon 3 major factors for the importance of public opinion. (Şenyuva, 2006) These factors are referenda being conducted about becoming a member or not, involvement of EU membership in national electoral appeals and partisan debates, and the impact of EU membership in Central and Eastern European countries in terms of consolidation of democratic systems and market economy (Slomczynski & Shabad, 2003). Although these factors would practically fit the Turkish case, as Şenyuva suggests, Turkish public opinion's sphere of impact would be much broader to research on (Şenyuva, 2006).

Turkish accession to the EU has already been discussed from various aspects until now, since Turkish society as a matter of fact carries significant differences when compared to the societies of the continental Europe in particular. The characteristics of the Turkish society that would arise questions about joining a 'European' supranational organization would be the 'culture'. Cultural differences including religious belief system appear to be tough when it comes to adaptation to 'European' manners, and requires great endeavor from the public. Turkey, being the largest dominantly Muslim country negotiating on accession to EU, has to implement strategic policies that would carry the negotiation phase to further levels while preserving support from the public.

The existing research on Turkish public opinion focuses on several determinants that would shape individual preferences of citizens in case of EU membership, such as *religiosity, utilitarian considerations, Euro-skepticism* and *attachment to national identity*. These determinants are based on individual level inferences that are made through personal observations building up on the existing judgments. This assumption makes these determinants vulnerable to instant changes and misinformation, since these factors affecting public opinion formation are mainly based on already existing information, impression and even prejudices that are of course highly receptive to any alternation.

Beside individual level preferences regarding EU membership, formation process of Turkish public opinion no wonder is to be associated with many other patterns. This thesis proposes 4 main propositions that are claimed to be determinative of public support in Turkey towards EU membership. These propositions embrace *Turkish public trust in the national government, Turkish public support to the national parliament, progress of Turkish economy* and finally *cues provided from Turkish political elite* to be the key determinants of Turkish public opinion on EU membership. Furthermore, I claim that *cues provided from Turkish political elite* is among the most influential factors in shaping Turkish public opinion, since it encompasses the power of strategic manipulation of information delivered to public.

In order to present the relationship between support for EU membership in Turkey with the discourses of the political elite, statements of government officials are to be analyzed in a contextual manner, while associated with the relevant year's national and international developments. It is intended to associate the survey data of between years

of 2005-2014 on Turkish public opinion towards European Union membership, the image of EU, Turkish public's tendency to trust in national government and national parliament with historical developments and their exposure to the public within Turkish official's discourses, in order to present the correlation, they carry regarding public opinion formation in Turkey.

The trends will be analyzed separately for each year, relying on the Eurobarometer survey reports EU publishes each year twice regarding national public surveys of candidate countries. Chapter 1 will include the review of literature on Turkish public opinion formation on EU membership and theoretical framework on how public preferences are shaped through the above-mentioned determinants. The second chapter will follow with the historical background of Turkey's EU membership project concerning developments that would be reflected on Turkish public in particular, while touching upon the foreign policy approach Turkey has adapted especially covering the term of the AKP government. The third chapter then will follow with the survey and economic data and its analysis of fluctuations over the years. The fourth and the last chapter will then analyze the correlation with the data and the probable determinants that have been provoked regarding each year's developments that are reflected by the attitude of political elite and cues they have delivered throughout the process as I claim to be among strongest factors of influence.

CHAPTER 1.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1. LITERATURE REVIEW

The complicated process of European Integration both on domestic and supranational levels has long been lead and steered by political and intellectual elite. This precedent continued until just recent, and in the meantime very important steps just as Schengen Agreement and creation of Eurozone have been taken. Within this period and while European Union horizontally extends to 28 members, the issue of public opinion has continued to be regarded as less important in the decision making process. In other words, the public has not been considered as an agency of decision-making, but the espouser and implementer without much query.

This notion however has proved to be wrong with the stagnation of broader integration procedure as the Draft Treaty establishing a constitution for Europe draw negative reaction including rejection from referenda held in France and Netherlands. The rejection of Lisbon Treaty in 2008 in Ireland follows and the idea that the public opinion plays a great role in policymaking both in domestic and supranational platforms arouse. Çiğdem Kentmen dates this change of perception to 1994 referendum of Norway and underlines that elite opinion should not be the only reference, not only concerning member countries but also the candidate countries (Kentmen, 2008).

In particular to the candidate countries, Özgehan Şenyuva draws attention to the EU harmonization process they go through with major financial and administrative reforms affecting the daily lives of the respective community(Şenyuva, 2006). At this point, another major factor integrating the public to the decision making process comes to

light. Besides referenda on the membership or integration issues, specific reforms regarding EU harmonization would depend on public in terms of adaptation and implementation.

With regards to Turkish case, the lack of importance laid on public opinion until recent, is reflected to the research in parallel; studies regarding Turkish public support to EU membership has remained very few when compared to the vast literature on other topics about Turkey-EU relations. Ali Çarkoğlu touches upon the contrast that the rich literature regarding TR-EU relations containing complex socio-economic and cultural challenges is at variance with the lack of public opinion studies that are of great relevance(Çarkoğlu, 2003).

The existing literature on public opinion on EU membership in Turkey focuses on major individual factors to be influential in public opinion formation. These major factors researched by scholars mainly indicate arguments concerning *religiosity, utilitarian considerations, attachment to national identity* and *Euro-skepticism*. These variables do present the characteristics of groups regarding against or pro-EU considerations, while these also constitute the basis of individual level determinants shaping public opinion in Turkey. These variables are referred as to be the main obstructive or encouraging motives for EU membership that show alteration depending on developments of the respective period. In other words, Turkish public support depends on the changes over these variable along with the evolving developments between Turkey and the EU. Although the literature regarding Turkish public opinion toward European Union membership focuses mainly on these variables and the arguments that are formed rely on the comparative nature of these factors with the support measured for the EU membership among the country, our argument that Turkish public opinion towards European Union membership takes form by being influenced by the political elite's policy making choices and most importantly by *political cueing* lacks substantially within the literature.

This argument within the theoretical framework will be further examined, but first the approaches to the determinants of public opinion in Turkey within the literature are to be viewed.

Religiosity

The factor of religiosity especially in Turkish public opinion studies seems to be fair to be surveyed, since Turkey would be the largest dominantly Muslim populated candidate country to the European Union that has been long identified as a Christian Club. This approach indicated the factor of religiosity to many studies with enthusiasm, however the findings did not meet the expectations that this factor would be of great importance defining Turkish public's preferences regarding EU membership. Research on the factor of religiosity regarding the public opinion of Turkish citizens toward EU membership reveals contradictory results(Çarkoğlu & Kentmen, 2011). The reason for this contradiction is claimed to be the insufficiency of the existing data on the issue. Some scholars have argued that religiosity is not among the factors that strictly shape public's view towards EU, while other claim that their findings present that in cases where the individual lays greater importance on religion and religious practices, the support he/she would give to EU membership falls significantly.

As Kentmen implies, it cannot be denied that religion has a great role in identity formation, however for the membership to a supranational entity, rather utility based factors count. Kentmen find that 'individuals' support for Turkey's accession to the EU does not vary significantly with the strength of their Islamic beliefs(Kentmen, 2008). Ali Çarkoğlu and Çiğdem Kentmen follow with another research that also suggests that religiosity is insignificant in determining support for EU membership in Turkey(Çarkoğlu & Kentmen, 2011), such as Çarkoğlu and Glöpker-Kesebir in their comparative analysis of three countries Croatia, Macedonia and Turkey implied(Çarkoğlu & Glöpker-Kesebir, 2016).

In Turkey, religiosity in fact plays a great role in politics. However, the religiosity factor regarding EU membership in Turkey has to be approached from a significant perspective. Since AKP identifies itself with religious characteristics, its supporters associate the party and its leaders with Islam easily, while appointing them as the warden of their religion and freedom of religious practices. Therefore, any positive attitude from the AKP government towards EU would not be associated with any threat against Turkish public's religion or their Islamic rituals due to the unconditional trust they have.

Utilitarian expectations

The hypothesis claiming that individual support to EU membership would be more likely if membership carries positive effects on national and hence individual economic circumstances is referred as utilitarian expectations hypothesis. This hypothesis carried out through cost-benefit analysis also asserts that such positive effect on economic circumstances would push other factors into the background. As Özgehan Şenyuva puts, if this argument is to be implemented on Turkish public, the individuals considering EU membership as advantageous in terms of utility-based factors, they would overlook factors such as national identity or religion(Şenyuva, 2006).

These utilitarian expectations would not only be considered as financial economic benefits, but also as human capital. Since “Turkey is a low-skilled country compared with the Western European member states’ average, and the unification of Turkey with the EU will be a unification of a skill-scarce country with a skill-abundant group of states”(Çarkoğlu & Kentmen, 2011). This would bring mutual benefits since unskilled labor might move to EU, while European firms might benefit from low-cost unskilled labor by moving their businesses to Turkey.

Some scholars regarding utility-based expectations argue that if the economic reforms conducted in order to comply with EU affect national economy in a negative way, this would decrease the support of public to the membership(Hooghe & Marks, 2005).

Regarding utilitarian expectations, the observation of the current economic status of nation and individuals is indeed easy and therefore less prone to manipulation. However, when economic prospects and anticipations are taken into account, their government depending upon the intention of policymaking might misinform individuals and manipulate their predictions.

However, according to a survey conducted focusing on support to EU membership after 2008 crisis put forward that as in many candidate countries, public in Turkey exhibited negative response to a certain extent to the respective issue(Çarkoğlu & Glüpker-Kesebir, 2016)

National Identity

The factor of national identity seems to find itself a substantive place within public opinion literature regarding EU membership, since many scholars touch upon this factor under different headings. Since European integration continues vertically and horizontally at a great speed, discussions about preservation of national identity along with possible adaptation problems warm up. Adaptation problems might be correspondent, as Europeans already had hard times accepting the Turkish-Muslim populace present in Europe. Religion of course constitutes a great portion of identity formation; however when researchers take national identity apart with it-set to zero- it still presents a major factor affecting public attitudes against EU(Kentmen, 2008). (Dostal, Akçalı, & Antonsich, 2011)(Wutrich, Ardağ, & Uğur, 2012)A reason for national identity being that influential against EU-related issues is that Turkish population hold the perception about Europe and Europeans as an ‘enemy’, if not as ‘other’ dated back to many centuries.

Regarding another diverseness between Turkish national identity and the European, Ayşe Evrensel touches upon the formation processes of several national values. Evrensel puts

“Nevertheless, current post-modern European society with its egalitarian universalism, freedom, democracy, accountability, and individualism along with its promotion of independent existence from religion, nondiscriminatory attitudes towards marginalized groups, and strong civil society has its roots in the events that started almost five hundred years ago. By contrast in Turkey, ideas such as secularism were imposed by the state without any internal social dynamic or significant popular movement behind it” (Evrensel, 2013)

This view posing an obstacle in the way compatibility and adaptation to European Union has been discussed and defined as ‘an ambiguous one’, creating difficulties for both sides. (Dostal, Akçalı, & Antonsich, 2011)and(Çarkoğlu & Glüpker-Kesebir, 2016)agree that national identity affects support for EU membership when in exclusive forms.

Çarkoğlu with Çiğdem Kentmen define national identity as so that it “will provide individuals with feelings of belonging, distinctiveness and increased self-esteem, which can result in inter-group discrimination”(Çarkoğlu & Kentmen, 2011). It follows with the argument that EU might be seen as a threat to the national identity, since the states

have to follow some legislation decided upon within the supranational body collectively. This may be seen as weakening of sovereignty by many, together with lifted national boundaries, use of common currency and many other common symbols of the union.

Of course the public would form individual opinions about how entrance to EU would affect in terms of national identity, however this determinant may still be delivered to public toned down together with adverse covenants.

Regarding Kurdish and Alevi groups, Çarkoğlu and Kentmen suggests that these groups might well support EU membership, since EU membership presents rights and freedoms to ethnic and sectarian minorities(Çarkoğlu & Kentmen, 2011).

Euro-skepticism

Just after the accession talks begun, many signs have emerged signaling that EU rather want to propose Turkey's privileged partnership rather than full membership. As Tarık Oğuzlu exemplifies, the Negotiation Framework Document alone states that the outcome of negotiations cannot be predicted precisely until the end and put strict statements for EU's right to keep Turkey out of several policies such as free movement of people and goods(Oğuzlu, 2012). The reason for EU's reservations are somehow clear since Turkey would displace Germany with its population of 80 million and change internal dynamics that are procedurally based on population sizes of the member states(Dostal, Akçalı, & Antonsich, 2011)

Reservations and discussions on cultural integration no wonder fuelled Turkey's skepticism towards EU. Besides Turkish response to European attitude, Oğuzlu also suggests that Turkish public grows reservations regarding Europe's postmodern vision of a more decentralized system might pose a threat against Turkey's integrity(Oğuzlu, 2012).

Euro-skepticism, taken into account as a single determinant actually attribute to many others. Ali Çarkoğlu defines Euro-skepticism as “ a weighted summary of attitudes on EU policy towards the Turkish bid for membership, European's general failure to understand Turks, the perceived bias in the EU's evaluation of the Turkish application

and the perceived threat of losing national identity when a country becomes a full member(Çarkoğlu, 2003)

As expected, Euro-skeptic attitude tends to decrease support for EU membership. The prolonged process of Turkish accession to the EU of course would create exasperation, and make both policy makers and public abandon hope, which would eventually feed Euro-skeptic attitudes. The accession process lasting for long might well create such image of government's failure in the eyes of the public, and therefore the policy makers might have to make contrary statements in order to shape public attitude.

1.2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The approach I pursue within the theoretical framework intends to be adherent to the general outlook to public opinion research. However, the unique characteristics of Turkish public possess as a matter of course necessitate orientation and gradual examination of the argument that public opinion in Turkey designates the membership process to EU. It is well expected that each society to present different political characteristics due to its sui generis structure formed by its historical background, cultural construct, religious belief system, group dynamics, openness to bias, to global or cross-cultural interaction and many other deep-rooted factors. The characteristics of Turkish public, especially in the opinion formation process, however expected to bear certain principles, such as public opinion and policy formation being in a reciprocal relationship in terms of their influences on one another. In other words, Turkish policy makers are well influenced by the factors shaping public opinion and public support, while public opinion is highly vulnerable to messages provided by the political elite, which I claim is valid for EU membership issues in our case.

The reciprocal relationship should be the focus of further examination, since the underlying intentions of Turkish political elite's policy choices are extremely relevant when the motivational factors behind the political cues are taken into consideration. Turkish accession process which gained great pace under the rule of the AKP government indeed painted a promising picture. The extent of the reforms conducted by

the government in particular showed great improvement in Turkish EU membership project.

Characteristics of the Turkish public along with the attitudes of EU member states reflected on prospective Turkish membership gives the process a distinctive nature. Taking these into consideration, *trust in the national government, trust in the national parliament, progress of the Turkish economy* and influential to all these factors *cues provided by the political elite* I claim are to be most influential in shaping Turkish public opinion. In order to analyze further the extent of influence, I come up with 4 main propositions that are to be analyzed through Eurobarometer survey data and related discourses of the political elite.

The literature on the support of EU membership regarding economic considerations suggests that the effect of joining EU on the national economy would have distinctive effects on individuals with different economic backgrounds. This suggestion indeed would be applicable to Turkish case as such; individuals with higher income may well perceive EU membership to bring along better economic conditions, while individuals with lower income may not be totally optimistic about Turkey gaining economic benefits from EU membership that will enhance their quality of life in the long run.

The effect of EU membership on the public opinion in Turkey towards EU I suggest is more complicated. Since Turkey has been waiting for accession to EU for a very long period of time, Turkish public would tend to view Turkish membership to the EU as a remote possibility. Therefore, Turkish public will not choose to lay their back to EU on better economic conditions to develop as the last call, but instead place emphasis on their national economy to develop individually. It would be fair to expect that a great fraction to live in Turkey that would view EU membership project as an enhancer of the national economy on the long run. However, I claim that, EU membership on this equation does stand for means rather than ends, and Turkish public support for EU membership will decrease if Turkish economy would be able to develop positive growth individually. This claim will be analyzed further in the following chapters with the help of statistical data derived from various sources regarding Turkish economic growth and public support for EU membership in Turkey, after its extent is touched upon below.

Proposition 1: *Turkish public support for EU membership declines when there is a positive growth in the Turkish economy.*

This proposition holds the expectation that objective measures of the national economy are influential in shaping public support for EU membership, along with the assumption of individuals creating their opinions on rational basis. Furthermore, Kentmen states “Scholars suggest that rational individuals evaluate policy-makers whose decisions affect national economic conditions on the basis of their economic performance”(Kentmen, 2008).

The argument of economic measures are expected to influence public opinion towards EU membership rely on the assumption that the rational individuals view EU membership as to affect their national economy, since they would hold EU accountable for national economic conditions, which in turn will impose effects on life standards of the citizens. Therefore, scholars view economic benefits to positively influence public opinion for EU membership, in instance of EU proposing promissory impacts on the national economies. In other words, if the individuals believe that the membership of EU will exert positive influence on their national economies for certain, they tend to support membership with the expectation of gaining economic benefits out of it.

Regarding economic prospects affecting public opinion formation towards EU membership, scholars suggest that human capital as well constitutes a large room in the context. Human capital model suggest that rational individuals who view EU membership to exert influence on their own economic conditions are more prone to view this prospect as to bring along different job opportunities, higher wages or developed working conditions (Kentmen, 2008). This expectation of course have to be evaluated with the conditions of free movement of people, capital and services, which in Turkish membership case create serious reservations for EU member states to the extent that they have proposed Turkish membership to contain permanent safeguards regarding free mobility of labor. Therefore, the human capital model in terms of its positive influence on EU membership in the eyes of Turkish public would not constitute a great incentive as well.

The literature on public opinion identifies alternative explanations besides economic considerations such as possible effects ‘political cueing’. Scholars in regards to

formation of public opinion lay importance on political cues delivered by the political leaders to the public(Çarkoğlu, 2003). This explanation of course needs attention to what extent political elites and government institutions provide information to the public about the membership process to the EU. It is argued that this approach rises along with the assumption that the multi-level system of governance of EU creates space for domestic political actors to promote and implement policies in direction of their interest(Kentmen, 2008). This position paves the way for political actors to influence public support in the way they prefer while conducting policies that will secure their electoral support. Hence, the position of domestic political elite on EU related issues and cues they provide regarding these are highly influential in public opinion formation process.

Proposition 2: Turkish public support for EU membership increases when cues provided by the political leaders present positive attitudes towards EU membership

The approach of successful policy makers having the ability to shape the public support by political cue giving and mobilizing masses towards their preferences has been focus of several works on public opinion. This approach covers that successful policy makers might have the ability to shape public's views by political cueing and mobilizing masses towards their point of interest. Certain events and developments regarding policy choices might create undesired situations for the political elite, and thus political elites find themselves at a point where the required prospective policy choices of their interest threatening the support they acquire from the public. Hence, political actors may find themselves at a point where they have to implement certain tools in order to carry out necessary policies while securing public support concerning their electoral power in the future. These tools comprise of several methods that aim to shape public's view so that the public may not hold the policy-makers to account for any unsupported or undesired case situation. Agenda setting, misinformation or framing stands here as the main tools that policy-makers make use of in order to manage political maneuvering and mobilization of the public. In other words, these tools provide “[...]—in a positive, negative, or neutral manner—an organizing principle to the structure of a news story and therefore potentially to citizens’ understanding of and thinking about political, economic, and social topics”(Vreese, Boomgaarden, & Semetko, 2010)(McCombs, 2013). Ali Çarkoğlu touches upon the use of these tools in his work on public opinion by emphasizing the importance of misinformation in this process(Çarkoğlu, 2003).

'Misinformation' as a broad concept stands here as policy-maker's intentions to manipulate the information that is to be conveyed to the public. However at this point, the communication channels between the political elite and the public gain great importance. From a traditional outlook, the mass media has been and still is regarded as the main communication channel between these two parties, and carries the role to deliver information on the developments on the political sphere to the public level. The existence of the information media as a third party between the political actors and the public eases the manipulation of information in the process of delivery, and thus enables politicians to make strategic maneuvers in a less complicated manner. Maxwell McCombs made emphasis on media's important role in his work as "For nearly all of the concerns on the public agenda, citizens deal with a second-hand reality, a reality that is structured by journalists' reports about these events and situations"(McCombs, 2013)

Besides the components of mass media, i.e. television broadcast, newspaper magazines, radio, social media today in particular requires special attention. Until recent, tools of social media have become more significant within the public opinion research and apparently it is started to be perceived as one of the most influential data sources public has access to. When the focus is political cues that are delivered with the aim of influencing and manipulating public support, the participation of people into the wide communication channels especially through social media at one point posed a problem to the policy makers, since true and fast information would be provided to great masses through these channels, considering that it would be hard to exert manipulation to the social media channels. The reservation of the Turkish government against public's limitless access to the social media tools has been apparent recently, and it can be explained so, that in such instance the scenery the government would want to create with the desired political cues would be damaged.

When mass media in Turkey is taken into consideration, it can be said that Turkish policy makers have long been manipulating it as well, rather by unlawful acts of menace. The situation in Turkey concerning mass media and freedom of expression does not paint a promising picture. The manipulation that is desired to be created in the Turkish case does not only constitute the benefits of delivering the message from a third channel to the public, but the pressure the government apply on the mass media through acts of menace. Many tools of mass media, i.e. television, radio, newspapers, magazines and many others have been pressured and manipulated by certain political elite, and they

were requested to broadcast filtering news items if they show any sign of dissidence. Even the tools of social media, twitter for instance, has been exposed to confinement in many cases. Although this scenery is highly worrying in regards to freedom of expression, freedom on information and many other freedoms, existence of such trend is highly instrumental concerning the efficiency of political cues on public opinion formation.

The fact that public's influence on the implementation of government policies surfaces the need for policy makers to follow rigorous policy making strategies. Some necessary policy changes that are promoted by the government may well get reaction from the public, which has been the case for several times concerning EU membership. Scheve and Gabel state this modality as "The view of public toward EU membership does also include the necessary policy changes that EU criteria require, which would affect the public more perceptibly. Therefore, the public may harshly reject the necessary policy changes regarding EU harmonization"(Gabel & Scheve, 2007). Çarkoğlu touches upon this issue with the example of abolition of death penalty and other sensitive legislation regarding education in other languages such as Kurdish. He argues that through strategic political resistance and maneuvering, implementation of such sensitive issues would not cause any loss in electoral support(Çarkoğlu, 2003). While strategic political decision-making phase is therefore of great importance, the tone and attitude of the political elite throughout the process especially when conveying relevant messages/cues are critical as well.

The literature on Turkey's membership to the EU demonstrates high interest on individual preferences regarding public opinion as a matter of course. However, the formation of individual preferences taken into account within the literature is generally based on the assumption that individuals have access to true information, if they have to any. Most of the discussed variables depending on personal preferences may alternate from day to day, since the formation of these preferences is directly linked to the information derived. Therefore, the essential factor that would affect all of the preference formation process is the accessibility to true information and manipulation exerted by the political elite.

This argument however has a counterpart that is the desire of the policy makers getting re-elected. This argument diverges from other determinants analyzed, since latter hold

the assumption that individuals form their opinion about European Union membership relying on their personal preferences and changes they will go through on individual level. However, the argument that Turkish public opinion is formed through political cueing does not only hold the assumption of direct individual level preferences, and suggests that average citizen does not form specific individual opinions about European Union membership regardless of their policy makers' vision, while policy makers form their policies strategically in the direction of their interest by paying attention to correct political maneuvering in order not to lose electoral support.

In the Turkish case between the years 2005-2014, the years under the rule of AKP government presents great dedication of the electorate to the party, which also might be available for other examples of parties in Turkey, but this characteristic of Turkish partisan sections being inclined to shape individual preferences according to the supported party's policy preferences is clear. The reason for such dedication and opinion formation would completely be focus of further research. However, it can be argued for Turkey that the Turkish electorate has long possessed the habit of supporting political parties no matter what the policy choices transform into, which might be linked to Turkish political identity and tradition at some point. Ali Çarkoğlu on this issue argues that such behavior might be a consequence of the fact that an average citizen would not be capable of shaping his/her preferences according to state level decisions, but according to their daily life preferences(Çarkoğlu, 2003). In other words, the technical and complicated details of EU membership process exceed the capacity of an average citizen to form an opinion about on his/her preferences on any respective issue. At this point, the average citizen must be made aware and conscious of the consequences to be reflected on and affect his/her daily life in terms of social, economic and cultural means in order to create an individual stance against the possible policy choices followed by the government.

The argument of political cueing in Turkey constitutes the most important determinant of public opinion, since the general anticipation would be that an average citizen of Turkey would not be capable of comprehending possible policy preferences to be made by the government without inducement of the decision makers. The method of this political cue on the other hand would vary. Çarkoğlu underlines that the complicated political issues regarding EU membership for instance should be simplified and then delivered to the public by the authorities(Çarkoğlu, 2003). This simplification and

deliver process is the breaking point, since within this process the information would be vulnerable to great manipulation.

It is clear that Turkish political tradition paves the way for citizens to form their political stances depending on the political actors' preferences of their support. However at this point, despite the masses that determine their preferences regarding the policy choices of the political elite, there also will be a proportion that would consider economic benefits or damages that EU membership would bring along with the alterations of freedom of movement for persons, further educational and occupational alternatives and many others in prospect.

At this point, the fraction that is politically aware of the developments regarding European Union relations and membership must be taken into account, since political awareness may well enhance the accuracy of the preference formation. However, Scheve and Gabel find that the influence of the cues delivered by the political elite do not differ for more politically aware individuals(Gabel & Scheve, 2007)

It must be taken into account that political cueing would not be the only tool political elite would make use of. Scheve and Gabel introduce 'priming' and 'persuasion' as other tools that political elite shape public's attitudes with(Gabel & Scheve, 2007). Existing research on the effect of elite cues on the formation of public opinion touch upon several problems regarding the measurement of the effect. As Scheve and Gabel put, "Reciprocal relationship raises fundamental methodological problems in attempting to isolate empirically the effect of elite communication on public opinion" (Gabel & Scheve, 2007). The problems arising in the measurement process originate from the complexity of dissociation of respective variables. Endogeneity for example generates a great complication, since factors affecting individual opinion formation cannot be reliably derived neither through survey based research nor through time-series analyses(Gabel & Scheve, 2007).

Methodological measurement problems arising due to the nature of the content of the research lead this research to simply focus on whether any effect of political elite on public opinion are existent or not. The fact that elite-mass linkages cannot deliver strict validity due to several factors affecting analysis designs require a distinctive approach. This research therefore will utilize Eurobarometer data on public opinion in Turkey

together with the statements of the political elite through mass media within the respective period. By this way any correlation of their timing in between will be looked for, in order to prove that whether correct or not, information provided by the elite do indeed affect public's attitude towards policy issues, hereby towards Turkey's full membership to EU.

Possible methodological problems regarding this analysis will be set aside through making use of previous findings of empirical results. The first will be the finding of Scheve and Gabel that the effect of elite messages does not vary for more politically aware individuals(Gabel & Scheve, 2007). This finding will let the research refer to the public as a mono-block and follow with the assumption that the information provided through the statements of the political elite would carry the same weight to each individual.

Focusing on the designing process of opinion through elite messages requires attention to literature on preference formation. James Druckman and Arthur Lupia review preference formation focusing on its principles. The argument they offer is that preferences emerge from interactions between individuals and their environment rather than suddenly appearing (Druckman & Lupia, 2000). They follow with "Preferences over classes of objects are rankings that are derived from evaluations, where evaluations depend on beliefs, and beliefs are the result of interactions between individuals and their surroundings"(Druckman & Lupia, 2000).

When leaning on preference formation deeply, the internal process is of course of great importance, since any argument on external effects that would shape individual opinion would require attention on the nature and origins of preferences. Druckman and Lupia touch upon different models regarding processes of converting information derived from respective environment, and intend to analyze the internal process in which individuals evaluate political objects within that environment.

The memory-based model is of great interest among social scientists and assumes that individuals base their opinions on information retrieved from their memory. For overall evaluation, the individual recalls all relevant information on the topic and shapes preferences by making use of the new information along with the already existent information in his/her memory(Druckman & Lupia, 2000).

Another model that is applied to preference formation is the accessibility model. The accessibility model suggests that individuals base their preferences on whichever considerations happen to be accessible. Scheve and Gabel exemplifies this model as “For example, if an individual recently overheard a discussion about economic issues, the economic considerations may come to the top of the individual’s head, and as a result, her expressed preference will be based largely on considerations of economic issues”(Gabel & Scheve, 2007). The linkage with this model to our argument is of high importance. This model emphasizes the importance of the recently heard information on any policy issue that helps individuals to shape their opinions accordingly. Regarding EU membership of Turkey, individuals again here would shape their opinions according to the messages they have recently heard from certain institutions and political elite.

Similar but at the same time contrasting the accessibility model, on-line model suggest that individuals update their evaluation when they encounter new information and therefore it stresses that individuals may well tell their opinions on any subject but may not be able to recall information they base their opinion on. Scheve and Gabel summarizes this as “If people form their evaluations on-line, then researchers should not expect people to remember and report the reasons for their preferences.” (Scheve, Gabel) Therefore it would be fair to await individuals to form their opinions about EU membership of Turkey according to their already existent impressions on EU, on the political party’s preferences they are attached to or on the political elite.

Both exogenous and endogenous factors that are influential in public opinion formation may well be interconnected. National economic considerations as well as elite cues in regards to their influence to public are connected to Turkish public trust in the national government and the national parliament. In other words, the tendency of Turkish public to trust in the Turkish government and the parliament I claim to be influential in the process of public opinion formation on EU membership as well.

Proposition 3: Turkish public support to EU membership increases, when there is an increase in the tendency to trust the national government

This proposition can be approached in a double folded manner. The first would be the effect of tendency to trust in the government institutions in terms of public’s evaluation on the reliability of the political cues they provide. However, I suggest that Turkish

public does have the tendency to evaluate ‘the government’ and the policies they conduct apart from the individual political actors. In other words, although overall trust in the government decreases among Turkish public, political messages delivered by individual political elites continue to matter for the citizens at a respectable manner.

On the other hand, this trend can be approached as that Turkish public losing trust in the national government affects Turkish public support in the EU membership in a negative manner, since losing trust in the government may well arise with an overall mistrust to the political environment as a whole, including the accession process to the EU. If individuals were to view national politics to be unstable, their tendency to trust the national government along with their support to the supportive policies carried out regarding the EU membership will show a decline.

For the Turkish case, the period that has started with the promising picture AKP has painted from the beginning of their election campaigns resulted in repetitive failure in the accession to the EU. Although great steps were taken regarding necessary reforms to be carried out, the stance of EU officials as well as the gradually becoming intolerant declarations of Turkish officials created an environment, which can be regarded as other factors affecting Turkish trust in the national government and support for EU membership in a negative manner. In other words, decreased trust in the national government will affect public support for EU membership in a negative manner, but this trend might carry additional alternative variables affecting the results as well. The correlation between Turkish support to EU membership and public’s tendency to trust to national government will be searched through the Eurobarometer results of public opinion surveys on the following chapters.

The tendency to trust in the national government and the national parliament may well be seen as highly correlated. However the representation system on the basis carries the objective to ‘represent’ the public on the political sphere, and exert influence on the policy choices in regards to promoting public interest. The conjunction of EU membership process has promoted for a very long time the idea that this process must be carried out on the elite level, which disregards the importance of public opinion. Therefore it would be fair to expect individuals to perceive the national parliament to be ineffective in terms of promoting public preferences on the political sphere. This trend however may still be affective in the process of opinion formation of the public with

regards to the perception of individuals to correlate the national government and the national parliament with regards to their political stances. This perception has its background in the Turkish representation system with the great representation rate AKP has in the parliament.

Proposition 4: Turkish public support to EU membership increases, when there is an increase in the tendency to trust the national parliament

I expect this proposition to show correlation with the statistical data, however as I have mentioned before, since there may have other variables affecting public support to EU that are now unknown to us, the analysis of different years may present contrary trends as well.

The propositions I have mentioned in this chapter are to be analyzed in the following chapters with the statistical data visualized through graphs and tables carrying the numerical and percentile rates of variables. In order to grasp the attitude of the political elite and their discourses, statements and declarations of Turkish political elite has been selected and presented for the respective years. Through this approach, I expect that trends regarding economic considerations, political cues and tendency to trust in the national government and the parliament will help us to conclude on the respective propositions I have brought forward.

The next chapter will follow with the historical background of the EU membership process Turkey has been going through for many years. With regards to Turkish public opinion, the historical developments are of critical importance; since Turkish public opinion against EU has been developed through years in accordance with the developments emerged in between EU and Turkey.

CHAPTER 2.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF TURKEY-EU RELATIONS AND AKP'S EU AGENDA

2.1. TURKEY-EU RELATIONS IN A HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Turkey applied for full membership to the European Economic Community of the time as early as 1959. At that period, and even after the signing of the Additional Protocol in 1971, many state officials and business interest groups did have reservations against rapid integration to the then EEC, since they believed that such integration would damage national industry and economy(Yaka, 2016). However, in 1980s, as Özge Yaka introduces as a specific historical conjuncture, “the neo-liberal transformation of 1980s [...] led to a dramatic shift of opinion regarding EU membership. Turkey’s application for EU membership in 1987 should be evaluated within this specific historical conjuncture(Yaka, 2016). The application of Turkey in 1987 was rejected in 1989 due to specific reasons, and Turkey could only show limited progress during 1990s, except Turkey’s 1995 Customs Union agreement with the EU. This limited progress was basically due to Turkey’s problems in functioning of democracy and obvious gaps in the areas regarding human rights.

At the Luxemburg Summit in December 1997, the decision was made to exclude Turkey from the prospective members list. This disappointing decision made by the EU however did not break hopes of Turkey, and efforts continued to normalize the relations in between.

1999 and onwards witnessed highly important steps regarding Turkey’s EU harmonization reforms under the tripartite coalition of DSP (Demokratik Sol Parti- Democratic Left Party), the centre-right ANAP (Anavatan Partisi- Motherland Party) and the nationalist MHP (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi- Nationalist Movement Party). This period under the tripartite coalition government did involve steps regarding EU

membership, however the stance of the government did not obviously paint a very enthusiastic picture regarding this project(Öniş & Yılmaz, 2009). Although the centre-right ANAP showed interest in further reforms in this manner, DSP and MHP's nationalist outlook was not ready for further reforms for compliance with the Copenhagen Criteria that are pointing on Turkey's highly sensitive issues such as abolition of death penalty and legislation regarding the public use of Kurdish and other minority languages. However, reform packages including these legislations have been initiated in 2001 and 2002.

These efforts gained speed with the ceasefire declared by the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) and at last in 1999 Turkey was recognized as a candidate country at the Helsinki Summit in December 1999. The recognition of Turkey as a candidate indeed accelerated necessary social and political transformation in Turkish society(Yaka, 2016). Özge Yaka refers to this process as 'the EU membership project' and defines this period so; "In the first few years of the 2000s, the project became the central theme of Turkish social and political life as the consensus on the EU membership issue had effectively defined 'the centre ground of politics' and the mainstream political arena began to construct itself around this goal"(Yaka, 2016).

The reform process concerning compliance with the Copenhagen Criteria has been brought to another level with AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi) came to power with the 2002 elections. This phase witnessed great expectations of public regarding necessary policy changes especially in terms of economic policies. The economic recession that have been going on for several years and reached its peak at 2001 created a highly pessimistic environment where economic and financial rates showed great negative image. This economic crisis of 2001 posed severe effects on the public, and the reforms regarding EU compliance especially in terms of economic orientations became more attractive. AKP have already signaled its intention, starting with the period of election campaigns, to carry out significant steps regarding EU membership and to have this issue on the top of its priorities. The period after the economic crisis required several regulations and the first years of 2000s witnessed Turkish economy in need of EU anchor strictly. Indeed, the period after AKP came to power witnessed great Europeanization efforts regarding Turkey's foreign and domestic policy, in addition to regulations in economic policies as well.

Turkey showed remarkable effort in terms of harmonization process to the EU during the first half of 2000s, with the beginning of the accession negotiations in 2005 -when most people considered as the turning point of the EU project of Turkey- the public support showed a respectable decline in terms of enthusiasm to the prospective full membership. At this juncture, the general election of 2002 and the phase Justice and Development Party became the ruling party requires special attention, since these developments indeed have great impact regarding Turkey's EU membership project (Ahtisaari & Rohan, 2005).

General election period of 2002 witnessed the AKP's election campaigns strictly in favor of EU. When AKP took office, AKP's pro-EU attitude continued by taking great pace, while reforms regarding EU harmonization in order to meet the Copenhagen criteria have been focus of great attention. Considering Turkish foreign policy during AKP era, all might well agree that AKP showed great interest in EU during the general election campaigns. After taking the office, the reform process they carried gained great pace in order to meet the Copenhagen criteria. This process might be approached so that AKP government with its image with great enthusiasm in generating a fully democratic environment has taken great advantage of the EU harmonization process and its necessities. AKP's demeanor towards EU is visible within its party program:

“Taking as a basis the principles pertaining to democratization of the Copenhagen Criteria, which constitute the minimum standards to which members of the European Union must conform, amendments, which must be made in our national judicial system shall be carried out in the shortest possible time”. (AKP Party Program, 2011)

As introduced by scholars as ‘the golden years’ of Europeanization of Turkish foreign policy, the period from 2002 until the beginning of accession negotiations of 2005 witnessed several developments regarding necessary reforms. These reforms were successfully conducted under the rule of AKP government. Öniş and Yılmaz touches upon these developments by grouping into three areas. The first would be the successful economic growth Turkish economy experienced(Öniş & Yılmaz, 2009). Necessary EU reforms along with the requirements of IMF contributed significantly to Turkish economy by revitalizing monetary and fiscal discipline that enhanced Turkey's regulatory implementations and finally called forth significant economic development.

The required reforms conducted by the AKP government attracted significant amount of FDI.

The second area Öniş and Yılmaz touch upon is efforts on democratic consolidation(Öniş & Yılmaz, 2009). AKP government carried out great reforms in order to eliminate the accustomed ordinance earlier governments yielded. Elimination of the death penalty constitutes a great example of such reforms. This reform and many others call forth that elimination of several measures indeed required only administrative regulations, since many legal codes were defunct in practice. Kurdish problem and the measures taken to eliminate these problems take a totally novel shape within AKP's policy decisions. A series of democratic openings were conducted in order to exert cultural and language rights to Turkish citizens of Kurdish origin, although it attracted serious reaction from certain fractions.

The first three years of AKP rule witnessed passing of 8 EU 'harmonization legislation packages' along with changes in the Constitution and other regulations. This great pace of carrying out reform packages paved the way for European Commission to note Turkey as it sufficiently met the Copenhagen Criteria. European Commission recognizing this performance regarding compliance of Copenhagen Criteria brought forth the decision to open accession negotiations with Turkey.

Although the long awaited steps were taken, some external factors caused this decline. The Cyprus Referendum of April 2004 was the breaking point within these external factors. This referendum caused a significant shift in Turkish public opinion on EU membership towards negative.

Turkey's relations with Cyprus have been of critical importance concerning Turkey-EU relations without any doubt. While relations between two countries affected Turkey's position towards EU, membership of the Cyprus Republic carried the existing deadlock to a whole new level. Since respective developments carry great effect in regards to Turkey's EU membership project, it is essential to touch upon this context.

2.2. RELATIONS WITH CYPRUS

After Turkish occupation of the third of the island in 1974, Turkey refused to recognize the Republic of Cyprus, while declaring and recognizing Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in 1983. Turkish occupation of 1974 resulted in movement of refugees on both sides of the Green Line. This incident along with the formation of the self-declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus constitutes the core of the Cyprus dispute.

AKP government's efforts on Europeanization process in the first half of 2000s came along with certain changes in the domestic and foreign policies, including the policies on the Cyprus dispute. Cyprus problem has become one of the most controversial topics that was exposed to great policy change which consequently created criticisms regarding both domestic and foreign policy choices. AKP government implemented critical changes in the policy stance on Cyprus. Turkey has been conducting an official policy on Cyprus since 1974, and AKP implementing drastic changes in this respective policy has been criticized especially by the nationalist fraction of Turkey and Turkish Cypriot Community. The underlying significance of the criticisms was AKP compromising and threatening national interests.

The change of AKP's policy towards Cyprus came along with unconditional support to nationalist leader of the Turkish Cypriots of Northern Cyprus being lifted. The loss of support eventually caused Rauf Denktaş to lose the presidential elections to Mehmet Ali Talat along with its parliamentary majority. Mehmet Ali Talat's stance on the Cyprus problem was in compliance with the AKP government, and together the governments promoted Kofi Annan's plan regarding the solution of the long existing problem. Both governments acted in accordance, for the sake of the Annan Plan the Turkish Cypriot population was mobilized in accordance to say yes to the plan in the referendum of April 2004(Yaka, 2016).

Annan Plan for Cyprus constituted the peak of the dispute. Turkey and Turkish Cypriots sided with the plan in 2004 that aimed to reunify the island. However, the plan was rejected by the Greek Cypriot party and they claimed that the plan did not match their expectations, since they claim that the plan introduced rights of residence for Anatolian Turks who moved to Cyprus after the invasion, while Greek Cypriots who lost their

property after the invasion were to be granted only with restricted rights of residence(Ahtisaari & Rohan, 2005).

The EU prior to the proposal of the plan encouraged Turkey to support it, and much criticism was procured regarding the outcome. However, the Republic of Cyprus became a full member of the EU right after the failure of the respective plan. Consequently, Turkish government did not recognize the Republic of Cyprus while stating that it will not be recognized until blockades on the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus of the political and economic terms are removed. This non-recognition of the Republic of Cyprus created obstacles for Turkey's accession negotiations, since EU openly stated that in order to continue accession negotiations, the candidate country has to recognize every member state of the EU. Furthermore, in compliance with the Customs Union Agreement Turkey already signed, Turkey has to open its airports and ports to Greek aircrafts and vessels. Turkey in return required EU to ease the isolation of the Northern Cyprus on international level. This dispute finally caused EU's freezing of eight chapters in Turkey's accession negotiations.

The Cyprus question perceived by the Turkish side as to be discarded with the support of Turkey to the Annan Plan prior to the referendum, as it was signaled so by the EU. However, the developments did not match the expectations. Turkish public reacted to the EU membership of the Cyprus Republic as a matter of course, since contrary to the expectations, although Greek Cypriots did not compromise, they were awarded by the EU membership. The European Commission did put in effort in order to lift the isolation of Northern Cyprus by offering allowance of direct trade, which was vetoed by the Cyprus Republic as well.

The Additional Protocol that was to be signed by Turkey to recognize the 10 new member states of the EU was signed in December 2004. The signing of the Additional Protocol was important for the launch of accession negotiations of Turkey to the EU. However just 7 months after the signing of the protocol, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan stated that Turkey's signature does not constitute the recognition of the Cyprus Republic(Öniş & Yılmaz, 2009).Then after a few months, the EU made it clear that the recognition of all EU member states is a must in order to carry out the accession process and required Turkey to implement the agreement 'fully and non-discriminatorily'.

Turkey's ongoing dispute with Cyprus created many setbacks in the EU agenda of Turkey. These setbacks did not only appear as Cyprus Republic being an official member of the EU vetoing opening of chapters regarding Turkish negotiations, but the image of EU in terms of trustworthiness lost its previous appeal. EU carrying out accession negotiations with Turkey did not only disappoint Turkey with its stance in the Cyprus dispute(Öniş & Yılmaz, 2009). Statements and behavior of several EU officials regarding Turkish accession, vetoing of several chapters, proposal of privileged membership along with other safeguard measures proposed to be implemented in case of Turkish membership created an atmosphere where Turkish accession stands in deep ambiguity.

2.3. GRADUAL DISENGAGEMENT AND PURSUIT OF NEW ALTERNATIVES

The institutional framework of the EU in particular posed several obstacles for Turkey's route of accession. Although Turkey has met the expectations in a satisfactory level, the process of accession has been obstructed by different means. The setup that gives each member state veto power along with the 'indivisible' nature of the *acquis communautaire*, gives each member state of EU the competency to hold up negotiations either with a particular negotiating party or to stymie the overall enlargement prospects of the EU(Avcı, 2011).

In particular to Turkish case, the obstacle was the suspension and vetoing of several chapters by member states; France, Germany, Greece and Greek Cyprus Republic have blocked numerous chapters. Only 15 out of 35 Chapters have been opened since the beginning of the accession negotiations, while the EU has frozen eight chapters. The reason for EU to freeze these chapters was Turkey's refusal to open its airports and ports to Greek aircrafts and vessels.

As it was discussed above, the first half of the 2000s witnessed a great period of Europeanization with regard to EU harmonization process and aim of Turkey to meet necessary criteria to become a full member of the union. The scenery in the second half of the 2000s however was obviously different. In October 2005, when accession negotiations finally started, the idea of full membership to the EU has already lost its

appeal. It was clearly stated by the EU that the launch of negotiations does not ensure full membership of Turkey unless many conditions are met along with estimations of EU's 'absorption capacity' and votes of European nationals(Yaka, 2016). Scholars introduce this phase as first signs of 'weak commitment', as the EU Council within the Negotiation Framework included that negotiations with Turkey will be open-ended, in other words full membership of Turkey will not be ensured at the end of the process(Yaka, 2016). Austria and Germany in particular proposed that Turkey's accession process to withhold the possibility of privileged partnership rather than full membership. France and Austria on the other hand declared that they would hold national referenda on Turkish membership. Disregarding that these referenda did not take place due to several reasons concerning national legislative framework, these proposals made clear that these countries do hold serious reservations regarding Turkey's membership to the union, which created discomfort among the Turkish public and political environment.

As a reaction to these developments of negotiations being blocked, Turkish public lost its enthusiasm towards EU membership project, while the issue was slightly digressing from the political agenda.

The obvious loss of enthusiasm for EU membership in Turkey on the public front of course needs an explanation. As Öniş and Yılmaz argue, this process of decreased enthusiasm towards EU membership does not build on a single turning point, but on correlation on several turning points and factors(Öniş & Yılmaz, 2009). This change of mood can be observed within the public as well as on the part of AKP elite.

The change of mood can be related with both external and internal factors. Regarding external factors, the dynamics within the EU along with EU member states' stances towards prospect of Turkish membership do indeed affect Turkish public support to the project. The atmosphere reflected to Turkey after Brussels Summit, has been mentioned by Öniş and Yılmaz:

“The intense debate generated in core EU countries such as France and Germany in the aftermath of the critical Brussels Summit has helped to create a serious nationalistic backlash in Turkey and strengthened the bonds of anti-EU, anti-reform groups both within the state and the society at large”(Öniş & Yılmaz, 2009)

EU's stance against issues that are of critical importance in regards to Turkish accession also created great negative influence both within elite and public levels. The first and prominent problem was the precautionary clause EU proposed to take against allowance of full labor mobility in case of Turkey's full membership. This proposal of EU created vast amount of criticism within Turkey while being evaluated as a discriminatory measure that signals unfair treatment, since other Eastern European members were to implement a temporary safeguard on the issue. This discriminatory proposal as a matter of course resonated the privileged membership offer.

In December 2009, The Cyprus Republic blocked 6 chapters of accession; Judiciary and Fundamental Rights, Energy and Education and Culture. The purpose underneath was made public, as Turkey has to initially 'normalize' relations with Cyprus in order to continue negotiations in a sound manner. Hence, since June 2010, no chapters were opened and as all other chapters were blocked, the most complicated and economically depreatory chapters were left to Turkey to open.

Consequently, after these developments, it would be fair to mention that the AKP government also lost its devotion to the EU membership project. This loss of devotion became evident after 2007 general elections. The policy stance of AKP government on some terms is challenged by the internal dynamics of EU. In other words, AKP started to conceive the fact that its ideological roots of religious base will not be reciprocated. Due to several factors including these, AKP government after 2007 did not show the same effort to continue to implement necessary reforms. In fact, as Öniş and Yılmaz suggest, AKP government did miss a great opportunity during the fall of 2007(Öniş & Yılmaz, 2009). The reasons why AKP's policies shifted away were that AKP perceived its own power at an exaggerated level and their perception of EU as an important partner changed drastically. The perception of AKP after 2007 general elections was due to the electoral support they gained with a larger coalition. Hence, AKP did not take its chance to regenerate and update the reform agenda they have been carrying out for several years back then.

AKP's foreign policy style already carried a significant initiative of 'zero problems' with neighbors. This approach has become highly significant in the Cyprus dispute with AKP government's great compromise in resolving the long existing dispute. Moreover,

AKP displayed great progress in Turkey's relations with Georgia, especially with the growth of Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway project initiative.

Especially after 2009, AKP government made it clear that they now will evaluate alternative partners of cooperation. The AKP government's foreign policy formation actually gave clues in this regard. Collaborations being done with Middle Eastern, African and Arab countries in particular created a platform for Turkey to continue its path with alternative policy preferences.

'Strategic depth' perspective of Ahmet Davutoğlu carries the multi-dimensional foreign policy to another level. As Öniş and Yılmaz state:

"Davutoğlu argues that in order to formulate long-lasting strategic perspective, one needs to take into account 'historical depth' which provides a sound assessment of the links between the past, present and the future, as well as a 'geographical depth' penetrating into the intricate dynamics of the relations between domestic, regional and global factors" (Öniş & Yılmaz, 2009)

This approach of Davutoğlu underlines Turkey's multiple regional identities that are to be extended in terms of its influence in Europe, Middle East, Balkans, The Black Sea, Caucasus, Central Asia, The Caspian and the Mediterranean (Öniş & Yılmaz, 2009), and thereby become a key player in the region.

Turkey's prospects carried out in accordance with this foreign policy approach pushed Turkey for further progress in relations with the Middle Eastern and Eurasian countries. Turkish participation in the Organization of the Islamic Conference has been regarded as an attempt to further develop relations with the Arab world with the previous developments regarded as rapprochement between the parties as well. When relations with Russia is concerned, it can be argued that Turkey has been becoming more important transit country and energy hub, which develops competition with Russia. Regarding diplomatic and economic relations, Turkey pursues developmental policies not only with Russia, but also with former USSR countries.

Turkey's role as a regional and global actor became more prominent under the AKP governance. AKP promoted Turkish role as a global power by emphasizing its intercultural nature and participating initiatives for fighting against terrorism in particular. AKP in this respect has participated the Alliance of Civilizations Initiative raised by Spanish Prime Minister Zapatero in order to create alternative approaches

against international terrorism. Turkey did not only participate in the initiative, but also agreed to co-sponsor the project, and finally became a leader and “a more vocal advocate of the project than even Spain(Öniş & Yılmaz, 2009)

When relations of Turkey with the United States are considered, it can be said that the 2000s did not paint a very promising picture. Despite several clashes in terms of favored policy choices, there has been also converging interests which on the other hand signifies the importance of peace and stability in Iraq and the Middle East, enlargement of NATO, collaborative fight against terrorism and much others.

After July 2007 elections, AKP came to power once again with a larger coalition of support. This outcome has created AKP the chance to revive the reform agenda of EU project, since the level of public support they achieved would have enabled them to conduct necessary reforms. However, AKP did not choose to revive the reform agenda, which is a consequence of the loss of enthusiasm against the EU membership project. AKP rather focused on several domestic policies that are related to religious freedoms, however without incorporating these to a more extensive reform agenda that could have involve necessary reforms for further EU harmonization.

The aftermath of these domestic reforms based on fundamental religious rights witnessed serious reservations within the society, and even within the fraction that have been highly supportive of AKP’s reformist approach. This has been followed by the Constitutional Court case regarding closure of the AKP for violating the secular constitutional order of the state. Without much surprise, Turkey-EU relations have been affected accordingly, since the raised questions about Turkey’s democratic basis played into the hands of the European society, which cannot be argued to develop highly enthusiastic stance towards Turkey at all. The decision of the Constitutional Court was of crucial importance not only for AKP and Turkish political system, but also for the future of Turkish relations with the EU, since negotiations could have been suspended in such case.

After a stagnation of the negotiation process without any chapter openings for 2 years, European Commission decided to launch a ‘Positive agenda’ aiming to focus on the common interests on both parties. The agenda including a broad range of elements was

carrying the aim to support the negotiation process, and therefore, working groups regarding necessary chapters have been established.

The Gezi Parkı protests and its aftermath regarding the criticisms the government has received changed the dynamics of the negotiation process. Germany blocked the start of further accession talks with Turkey, and Turkish political elite raised their tones harshly against the criticisms they received from the EU front due to excessive force used against the protesters.

In respect to many developments influencing Turkish accession negotiations and prospective membership, it can be argued that while the EU front had demonstrated great reservations in many terms, Turkish enthusiasm has gradually decreased as well. It is observable that with the loss of enthusiasm in regards to EU membership project, Turkey started to develop new alternatives with its developing strategic perspective of becoming a regional and global actor. The process of accession negotiations accompanied with many stumbling blocks from both sides of course did have influence to the EU membership project. In the next chapter, the trends of public support towards EU membership along with other determinants proposed to affect the public opinion formation are to be researched, while the historical elements that have influenced the policy formation taken into consideration.

CHAPTER 3.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data regarding Turkish public's opinion on EU related issues has been retrieved from Eurobarometer surveys conducted twice a year by the European Union. In compliance with the given propositions, 4 of the Eurobarometer survey questions directed to Turkish respondents have been selected for analysis. Besides, data visualizing the growth rate of Turkish economy from 2005 to 2014 has been retrieved. Although Eurobarometer surveys include Turkey since 2001 regarding public opinion surveys, our focus will be the survey questions covering the information between the years 2005 and 2014.

The first question analyses the view of Turkish public on Turkey's possible membership of the EU through the question of "Generally speaking, do you think that Turkey's membership of the European Union would be...?". The responses are grouped as "a good thing", "a bad thing", "neither good or bad" and "do not know".

The second survey question refers to the image of the European Union as a whole in the eyes of Turkish public through "In general, does the European Union conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image?".

The third and fourth survey-questions are chosen intended to set forth trust Turkish public have in the Turkish government and the Turkish parliament. The reason why these questions occur relevant is that the trust Turkish public has in these institutions can be related to public support for EU membership on an individual basis. In other words, trust in these institutions Turkish people have might present correlative increase or decrease with the extent they shape their attitudes towards EU membership, and the stances they pose government officials' and parliament members' discourses. These questions were delivered as "I would like to ask you a question about how much trust you have in certain institutions. For each of the following institutions, please tell me if

you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it; The Turkish Government/ The Turkish Parliament”.

The survey questions selected from Eurobarometer surveys carry the aim to search for several aspects regarding Turkish public opinion and its formation. The data regarding Turkish public support for EU membership, Turkish public’s views on the image of EU, growth rates of Turkish economy and tendency to trust in the Turkish government and the parliament are to be analyzed with the aim for to find respectable coherence with the given propositions.

I expect that trust on certain national institutions might well shape the effect of the cues delivered by the officials belonging to these institutions. In other words, I claim that if people tend to trust their institutions and officials, it would be more probable that they will be affected by the discourses they provide to the public. However, the trends that would not follow this claim must be acknowledged as well, with the approach that trust people have in certain institutions do not necessarily mean that the information provided by them would not create any response in the minds of individuals.

The decline in the tendency to trust in the national government can be analyzed as an overall mistrust to the political environment as well, that would also include the relations with the EU. In other words, it would not necessarily mean that the lack of trust in national government or the parliament would directly be correlated with individuals support for the policies the parliament proposes and the governments pursue.

At last, it must be made clear that government officials may have to act in accordance with these trends and apply necessary strategic maneuvers in terms of political and social choices that are of critical importance for the public opinion. Therefore, the statements of political elite may come into prominence for political support. Hence, the cues that are provided to the public may become more critical and necessitate greater strategic formation.

3.1. GROWTH RATE OF TURKISH ECONOMY

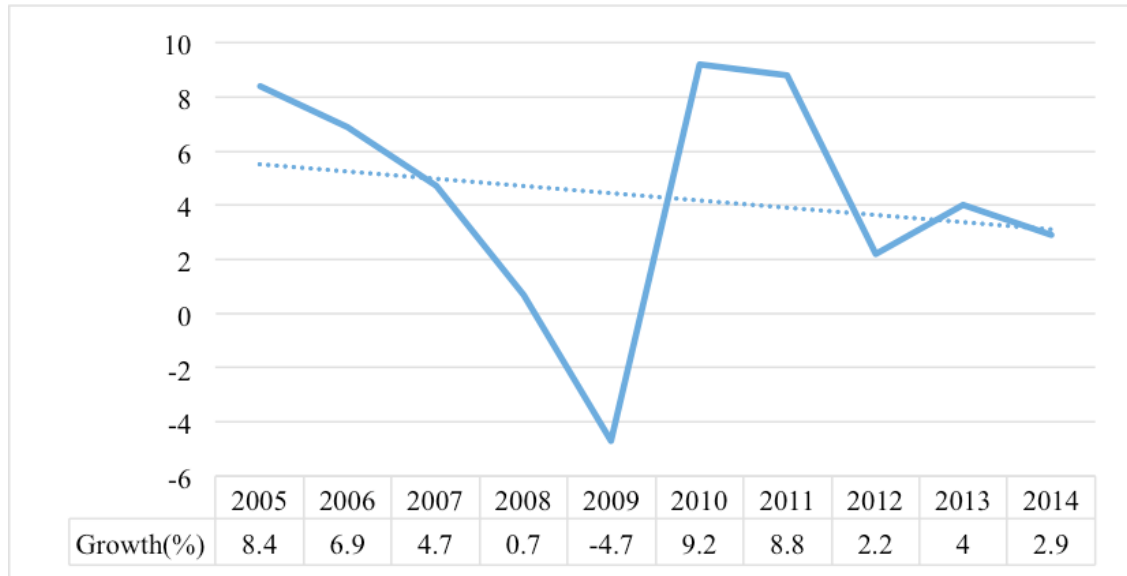


Figure 1– Growth Rate of Turkish Economy (2005-2014)

Proposition 1 I have stated on the theoretical framework chapter claims that Turkish public support for EU membership declines when there is a positive growth in the Turkish economy. In the first place, it must be clear that the crisis environment of 2001 created the image of the tripartite coalition government failing to implement successful policies that would pull Turkey through the crisis with minimum damage. Although the coalition government took several steps regarding EU compliance, it was clear that EU membership prospect was not among the priorities of the government. Turkish public however, was aware that Turkey turning its face to West, especially to EU might create certain opportunities especially in regards to economic means(Kutlay, 2011). In other words, with the failure of the coalition government to recover out of the crisis on its own means, Turkish public started to view EU membership process and respective necessary reforms as a way out. Therefore, EU membership prospect promising economic growth started to be a highly important alternative for Turkey. Although this period does not fall into our focus primarily, it is important to underline this correlation in terms of utility-based factors affecting Turkish public opinion regarding EU membership. When Proposition 1 is embraced, this period of economic crisis followed by AKP taking office with the primary policy of EU membership compliance, it becomes visible that the downtrend of economy in 2001 eventuated with increased public support to EU membership of Turkey. In other words, Turkish public support to

EU membership increased during the 2001 economic crisis, and this was visible with AKP winning the 2002 general elections with great emphasis on EU membership bid.

The first 3 years of AKP rule between 2002-2005 indeed showed remarkable economic recovery after the economic crisis of 2001. This period witnessed great enthusiasm by the government towards EU membership bid. As a matter of fact, EU membership stood as the primary objective of the AKP government at its first term and reforms regarding EU compliance have been conducted at a great pace during this period. In year 2005, when the accession negotiations finally began with the EU, Turkish economy painted a far more promising picture.

When data regarding growth rate of Turkish economy between the years of 2005 and 2014 is studied, it is visible that the growth rate in the post-2005 period shows a gradual decline and hit negative digits in the year 2009. Turkish economy in 2005 witnessed a growth rate of 8.4%, followed by 6.9% in 2006, 4.7% in 2007, 0.7% in 2008 and -4.7% in 2009. This low trend of 2009 signifies the impact of 2008 global crisis. When compared to other countries, scholars suggest that Turkish economy stands among the countries, which pulled through the global crisis with minimum economic damage. As it can be seen, the uptrend following 2009 until 2010 and 2011 embraces that Turkey has pulled its rate of economic growth up to 9.2%.

It is clear that 2008 global crisis has affected Turkish economy in a negative manner. However, the fast recovery of the economy, which is visible with the rates coming up to 9.2% in 2010 from -4.7% in 2009 regarding economic growth, can be linked with several factors. First of all, Turkish economic orientation in respect with Turkish foreign policy has experienced precise transformation in correlation with EU harmonization process. After the opening of accession negotiations in 2005, Turkey went through a transformation process in terms of its foreign policy making. Meltem Müftüler-Baç and Yaprak Gürsoy address this transformation as Europeanization of Turkish foreign policy(Müftüler-Baç & Gürsoy, 2010). In regards to adjustments to the EU, Turkish foreign policy started to implement civilian tools that “involve seeking international legitimacy, collaborating with others in the region and looking for solutions in multilateral settings and international or regional institutions”(Müftüler-Baç, 2011).

Müftüler Baç further argues that Europeanization of Turkish foreign policy involving several dimensions made it to become more effective, and the implementation of new tools in respect to civilian means brought Turkey further prospects. Turkey not only gained credibility and visibility especially regarding economic means in the international arena, but also implemented a more active approach in respect to its foreign policy towards its neighbors by intentions of eliminating any kind of tension in between(Müftüler-Baç, 2011). The orientation of Turkish foreign policy represented new prospects to Turkey especially regarding relations with its neighbors in the Middle East, Caucasus and Central Asia. Müftüler-Baç especially touches upon the Turkish foreign policy changes towards Iraq, Syria and Armenia in addition to Turkey's position in international institutions as precise indicators of the Europeanized Turkish foreign policy implementing soft power tools in policy-making and the efforts for eliminating sources of hostilities especially with the neighbors(Müftüler-Baç, 2011).

The post 2005 period witnessed Turkish expansion in terms of economic tools in relation with its foreign policy direction. MüftülerBaç puts “[...] it became the largest trading partner for Azerbaijan, Georgia and Iraq as well as one of the largest investors in these countries [...]” (Müftüler-Baç, 2011)Turkey's regional as well as global role has been enhanced in this period not only with economic orientation, but also with its participation to regional and global initiatives. These developments and changes in the foreign policy resulted in remarkable increase in Turkey's international credibility and visibility in the international arena.

When the global economic crisis of 2008 hit, Turkey had already developed alternative economic paths. In contrast to pre-2005 period, Turkey and Turkish economy did not need the EU anchor in terms of economic developments. In other words, Turkey was not solely depended to EU in economic relations, but developed alternative relations with Middle Eastern, North African and Central Asian countries at most. When Turkey's export rates are examined, it is visible that Turkish export market has been diversified greatly(Öniş, 2012). Pre-2005 period witnessed great amount of trade with EU member states. Although the following period hold remarkable rates of trade with EU, it is highly observable that trade with Middle Eastern and North African countries started to occupy a respectable place in the overall picture.

In response to the global economic crisis, the AKP government has developed certain

strategies regarding its foreign economic policy. Turkey's trade balance, which has been changing for several years towards alternative paths of cooperation, was followed by the AKP government's response, which is to continue further emphasis on South-South cooperation(Öniş & Güven, 2011). Within these efforts, the AKP government tried to promote Turkey's strategic position as an energy hub between Asia and Europe and developed projects in this respect.

Turkey's fast recovery from the 2008 global economic crisis with remarkable economic growth rates is a result of Turkey's then continuing efforts towards export market diversification. The intentions on diversification of export market were of critical importance not only for maintaining stable economic conditions, but also for putting an end to Turkey's perpetuate reliance on the West, especially Europe in terms of economic ties in particular.

The AKP government promoted several trade policies especially intending to attract the abundant Gulf capital with stressing on the common ground of Islamic ties and solidarity. Throughout these development, in order to promote further trade opportunities, with more than two dozen Middle Eastern, Asian and African countries visa requirements have been eased mutually along with facilitating further bilateral trade agreements in between(Öniş, 2012).

The period of downturn in the capital inflows and demand for Turkish exports in the Eurozone area caused negative impact on the Turkish economy. However, the regulatory reforms that were carried out in the period before the global crisis made it possible for the Turkish economy to become robust against the deprecating global economic environment. AKP's economic policies with regards to the relations with the IMF also are significant during this period. The AKP government took a stance that would emphasis Turkey and Turkish economy does not need IMF anymore. In line with this stance, AKP government's decision not to sign an agreement with the IMF once again signaled the national strength and self-confidence of the government. As Öniş implies, this growing self-confidence of the AKP government that has been signaled by the loosened relationship with the IMF continued with shifts in the power relations in Turkish domestic political economy(Öniş, 2012). Öniş puts as "The AKP, with its much stronger position at the center of the Turkish political system, could choose to act quite independently from the demands of major conglomerates represented under the

umbrella of TÜSİAD”(Öniş, 2012). Accordingly, the AKP government chose to act in respect to its core constituency’s demands. The core constituency constitute especially of the rising Anatolian business elites that are mainly represented by Independent Industrialists and Businessmen’s Association (MÜSİAD). Regarding the power shifts in the domestic political economy, AKP government unlike its early years presented a much more critical stance both against the IMF programs and EU membership. The 2008 global crisis period and its aftermath witnessed TÜSİAD’s continued commitment both to IMF programs and EU membership prospect, while AKP was observed to diverge from TÜSİAD on both grounds(Öniş, 2012).

AKP’s crisis management strategy was mostly established on the export market diversifying strategy and although it has been criticized on certain dimensions, it can be observed that the crisis has been avoid to a certain extent. The rates signifying a fast recovery after the global crisis proves AKP’s strategy of export market diversifying to be successful in terms of economic crisis management. However, Turkey’s diversified export market in the following years have brought along certain complicacies. Turkey’s export market, which has extended especially towards Middle Eastern and North African countries hold the fact that the countries in the region lack political and social stability.

In line with this fact, the end of 2010 the Arab Spring broke out, and the effects of the Arab Spring exceeded Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA), who experienced the uprisings in the first hand. Countries who possess strong economic, cultural and political ties with Arabic states also suffered immensely as a result of this unstable environment. The export and import goods, as well as the touristic activities with Turkey diminished adversely due to either raising prices or the fear of mobility between corresponding states(Öncel & Malik, 2015). An example could be increasing oil prices towards the beginning of the Arab Spring, which resulted in decreased economic activities with other oil importing countries.

Turkey, which has sought new markets in its vicinity due to economic crisis in European Union in year 2008 was one of the victims of this indirect causality. The most apparent negative trend in international economic activities of Turkey is in the Libya and Syria cases. For instance, even though the export share of Turkey in Libya was considerably low until 2008, new market research successfully raised this index to 0.0176 in 2009(Öncel & Malik, 2015). However, the sudden events of the Arab Spring

in 2011 hindered export activities and resulted to a point of 0.0055 in respective share. In terms of the Syria, the export share of Turkey increased more than two folds between 2006 and 2010 to 0.0162 but the Arab Spring affected this index to fall drastically to 0.003 in 2012(Öncel & Malik, 2015).Following these developments, without much surprise, Turkish economy once again started to witness a sharp decline of growth rate; falling down from 9.2% in 2010 to 8.8% in 2011, and then to 2.2% in 2013 and finally to 2.9% in 2014.

Although the period after 2010 sees a gradual decline, the fast recovery of Turkish economy from 2008 global crisis I claim to build up an environment of trust in the national economy. When data on Turkish economic growth rate and support for EU membership are taken into account together, a positive correlation seems to exist. In other words, the data signifies that when Turkish economy progresses in a positive trend, the trend of support for EU membership tends to show a decline.

This correlation can be explained with above-mentioned economic incentives the AKP government took, especially after the year 2005. As explained, the post-2005 period witnessed AKP government and public lost its enthusiasm in the EU project and the government developed its economic incentives alternative to Western partners. According to data retrieved by Turkish Statistical Institute, Yaka also touches upon the statistical data regarding Turkish export market diversification as, “the total share of exports to the Near and Middle East countries rose from 12.5% to 23.4% between 2014 and 2013, while the share of exports to the EU countries fell from 58.1% to 41.5% in the same period(Yaka, 2016). Even though these percentages signify great change regarding Turkish economic ties with Near and Middle East countries and EU countries, EU still seems to remain as the most important trade partner of Turkey.

Turkey considering new alternatives in economic relations indeed shows signs of changes in policy choices. The changing policy choices of course have causal relations with Turkey becoming less hopeful day-by-day regarding EU membership project. However another approach to these changes of policy choices might be explained with the growing self-confidence of Turkey. This self-confidence of Turkey is not only visible in relations with EU, but in many others especially regarding other global partners. Yaka refers to this self-confidence as to “have deep roots in Turkish common sense” and points out that the political discourses of AKP have been signaling this in

economic and foreign policy manners recently(Yaka, 2016). The self-confidence with regards to Turkish economy reflected upon the public may well affect public support for EU membership. As explained in the theoretical framework chapter regarding the respective proposition, this positive correlation between the declining public support and positive progress of Turkish economy sets forth that Turkish public views EU as means rather than ends in terms of economic considerations.

3.2. TURKEY’S MEMBERSHIP TO THE EUROPEAN UNION

Table 1 below shows the numerical distribution of the respondents to the question “Generally speaking, do you think that Turkey's membership of the European Union would be a good thing? A bad thing? Or neither a good or a bad thing?”, while embracing the respondents who replied to the question as ‘do not know’. Our period of concern covers the years between 2005-2014 and the datasets of Eurobarometer 63 to Eurobarometer 82 therefore have been scanned.

		A good thing	A bad thing	Neither good or bad	Do not know	Total # of participants
2005-1	EB63	591	205	174	34	1004
2005-2	EB64	556	149	211	88	1004
2006-1	EB65	442	254	231	78	1005
2006-2	EB66	538	217	178	72	1005
2007-1	EB67	522	223	165	88	998
2007-2	EB68	492	249	149	115	1005
2008-1	EB69	493	214	172	124	1003
2008-2	EB70	422	295	161	125	1003
2009-1	EB71	481	263	172	89	1005
2009-2	EB72	455	263	188	97	1003
2010-1	EB73	467	233	170	130	1000
2010-2	EB74	415	322	124	138	999
2011-1	EB75	414	288	197	101	1000
2011-2	EB76	-	-	-	-	-
2012-1	EB77	369	346	162	123	1000
2012-2	EB78	356	330	193	121	1000
2013-1	EB79	378	310	209	104	1001
2013-2	EB80	381	369	174	78	1002
2014-1	EB81	394	339	271	22	1026
2014-2	EB82	306	423	273	85	1087

Table 1–Numerical distribution regarding Turkish participants’ responses to the question of “Generally speaking, do you think that Turkey's membership of the European Union would be...?” (Eurobarometer 2005-2014)

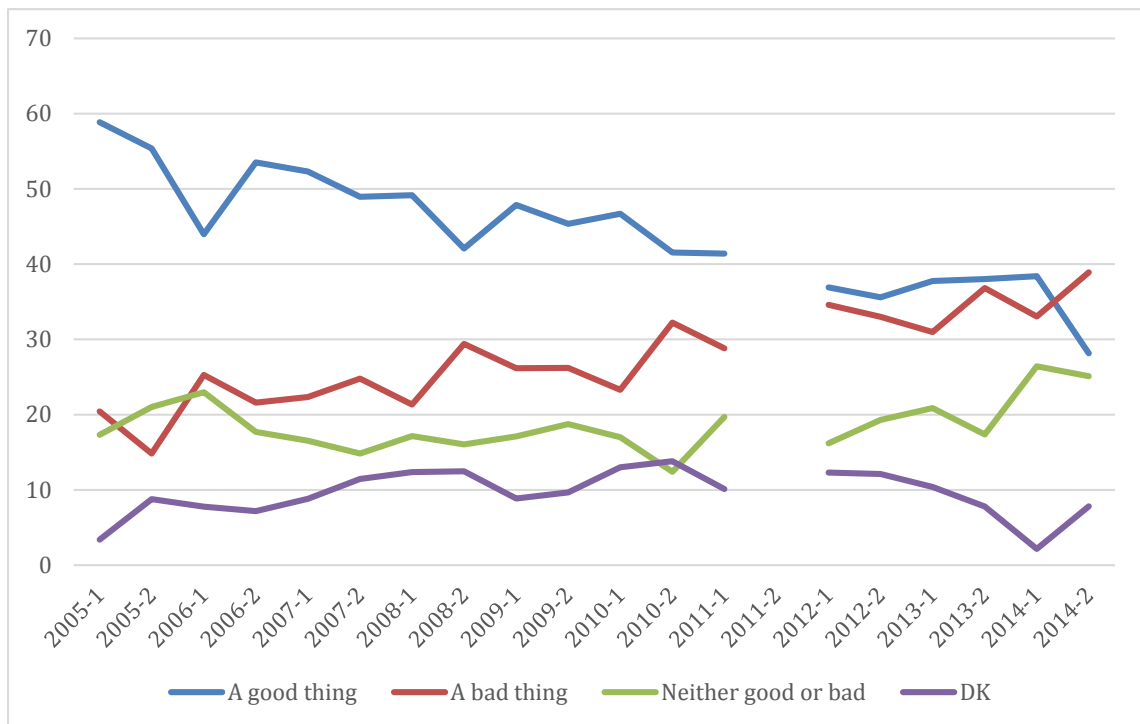


Figure 2 – Percentile chart regarding Turkish participants’ responses to the question of “Generally speaking, do you think that Turkey’s membership of the European Union would be...?” (Eurobarometer 2005-2014)

Figure above shows the data visualization containing the results of Eurobarometer public opinion surveys from 2005 to 2014. The respective question of our focus has not been directed to the respondents in Eurobarometer 76, which has been conducted in November 2011; therefore, the Table 1 and Figure 1 lacks the data for the respective period. However, it is possible to view the general trend of the respective period.

In general, it is clear that Turkish public’s view of Turkey’s membership to the EU would be ‘a good thing’ declined visibly throughout the years. The data of the first half of 2005 shows that 59% of the respondents view Turkish membership of EU would be ‘a good thing’. The second half of 2005 shows a decline from 59% to 55% and finally a sharp one to 43% by the first half of 2006, which resonates directly to a great loss of enthusiasm regarding EU membership especially when the percentages of the previous years are concerned. Although positive atmosphere generated with the opening of accession negotiations is visible on the first half of 2005, several developments seem to affect Turkish opinion in the following years.

It can be clearly observed that Turkish public increasingly lost its enthusiasm towards the idea of EU membership within this respective period. Although the fraction that

views the EU membership of Turkey to be ‘a good thing’ increases to approximately 52% in the second half of 2006 and first half of 2007, when compared to previous years, the per cent that views EU membership as ‘a bad thing’ rose to 22. When compared to the results in 2004, this trend shows a great change. Back in 2004, the per cent that views EU membership of Turkey as ‘a good thing’ was 70, while only 9% of the respondents believed that it would be ‘a bad thing’.

The reasons behind this great loss of support on the public part are to be concerned. Although a great decline is existent after 2004 until 2007, the general idea is that AKP government continued its reforms in conjunction with EU harmonization process. Although Turkey met new alternatives throughout this process, the EU hand of the foreign policy formation continued, despite the enthusiasm declined greatly on the government hand as well.

It is already clear that the disappointment emerged both on the government and public front after the Cyprus Referendum of April 2004 constitutes a critical factor of the downtrend observed. The rate of respondents regarding EU membership of Turkey as ‘a good thing’ decreased to 43% in spring 2006; and this trend is highly crucial in identifying the Cyprus dispute as the main cause to this decline, since this rate of 43% demonstrates the views of the respondents in spring 2006, only a few months after the opening of accession negotiations with the EU. Turkish disappointment followed with the decision of the European Council in December 2006. This decision proposed Turkish compliance with the Additional Protocol to the Ankara Agreement, and stated that 8 chapters of the accession negotiations will not be opened and no chapters will be provisionally closed in the opposite case, Cyprus and France vetoed opening of several chapters in addition.

The rejection of the Treaty establishing a constitution for Europe with referenda in May and June 2005 by the French and Dutch voters created further considerations regarding EU front. This rejection was perceived so as some member states of the EU are against further enlargement of Europe both in vertical and horizontal axis. Regarding Turkish accession, this perception caused several discussions and concepts to arise after 2006, such as ‘enlargement fatigue’, ‘absorption capacity’ and ‘privileged partnership’. Since the negotiations were blocked on several blocks, public support for EU membership in Turkey together with government’s enthusiasm started to present a downturn.

It would be fair to expect the Turkish public to decrease its support towards EU membership after the reservations of the EU member states came forth after the opening of the accession negotiations. It is highly known that the necessary reforms regarding the Copenhagen criteria requires Turkey to conduct reforms in some areas that are referred as the 'sensitive issues' of the Turkish nation. The abolition of the death penalty along with the Kurdish minority problem which are highly connected to the imprisonment and conviction to the leader of Kurdish PKK Abdullah Öcalan as examples confront the Turkish public in exchange for accession negotiations to conclude with the full membership prospect. It can be argued that Turkish public has tried to digest these reforms on the respective sensitive issues in exchange for a prospect of full membership to EU. However, when the growing opposition within the EU against Turkish membership started to be articulated in many platforms, the compromises Turkey made have lost meaning in the eyes of the public.

The post-2005 period witnessed a gradual decline of public support towards EU membership of Turkey. One of the most important factors behind this gradual decline stands as Turkish economic orientation during this period in regards to its changing foreign policy incentives. Turkey, actually in line with its EU harmonization process has developed civilian policies that would eliminate all kinds of hostilities with its neighbors. These policies of Turkey enabled the foreign economic policy to be developed in a positive manner with the neighboring countries. The period of 2005 and follows witnessed Turkish foreign economic policy evolving into a more assertive one promoting export market diversification strategies especially towards Middle Eastern and North African countries.(Öniş & Güven, 2011)EU still standing as one of the largest trade partner, Turkey created itself new alternatives on the Eastern front that had enabled Turkey to pull itself out of the global economic crisis with minimum damage. On the public front, Turkey's successful performance especially regarding 2008 global economic crisis created a much stronger image of Turkish economy, that would not need the EU anchor in terms of economic policies anymore. As proposed, Turkish public support to EU membership declines, when there is positive economic growth of Turkish economy is present.

Scholars regard the post-2005 period not as a fear of losing national sovereignty or integrity, but as a period of AKP building up a more self-confident policy stance and discarding EU to be its only option for strategic partnership(Yaka, 2016).At this point,

the gradual shift from AKP from its EU membership project and pursuit of new alternatives for global cooperation recalls the idea that AKP's commitment to the EU membership was motivated by its own domestic policy interests. In other words, in order for AKP to achieve its policy choices in the domestic arena, EU membership prospect and the necessary reforms for compliance constitute a great chance in the first half of 2000s. EU however has lost its appeal in the eyes of AKP government, since several legislations and features of EU appeared to be confounding AKP's expectations.

This approach of AKP's domestic interests motivating its EU agenda comes forth with alternative motives. As Yaka discusses

“AKP's commitment to the EU membership project was motivated by its own agenda of weakening ‘the Kemalist-bureaucratic tutelage regime’ and its main institutions such as the National Security Council(MGK), by means of the EU adjustment regulations. The idea was that the EU accession process would permit the centrist conservative majority of large and small business leaders, large and small farmers, some civil servants, and workers to finally break hold of the Kemalist civil-military bureaucratic elite that has controlled the country, with some interruptions since 1923”(Yaka, 2016)

AKP following the elections of 2007 with its higher percentage of votes intended to carry out several reforms regarding the fundamental religious freedoms independent from the EU harmonization agenda. It has been previously argued that AKP's greater percentage of votes out of 2007 elections could have created AKP a platform in which it could carry necessary reforms in parallel with the EU harmonization process. However, the increased self-confidence of the government then presented an alternative policy approach to disregard its pro-EU reforms at a certain extent. This policy preference of AKP correlates with the argument that it has been trying to achieve its domestic policy interest under the umbrella of EU harmonization compliance, and gives the impression in this period that Turkey does not need EU anymore.

Regarding year 2014, it must be clear that the rate of respondents that stated they do not know whether Turkish membership to the EU would be ‘a good thing’ or ‘a bad thing’ suddenly declines. In other words, some critical developments prior to year 2014 led Turkish public to form an opinion about Turkey's EU membership prospect. These critical events would be first and foremost the Gezi Parkı protests in June 2013 and December 17-25 corruption scandals.

The Gezi Parkı protests were held against the government's intention to build a shopping mall by destroying green space in Taksim Gezi Parkı district. The protests started with the reaction of a small group of environmentalists against the demolition of the park and then turned into a mass protests against the unlawful and acts of the government. The misuse of police force was obvious, and it created reactions from all around the world. These reactions did not only against the misuse of force, but also the cynical discourses that were made by the government officials. At that time, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan made critical statements that involved the messages that he sees and regards to the society as polarized by whether they support the government or support the protests held against it. Erdoğan's and other government officials' discourses clearly indicated that Turkey is drifting away from the rule of law. The methods used for suppression of the protests along with the declarations of the government officials created serious reservations and EU officials made serious criticisms regarding Turkish government and their behavior of supporting disproportionate use of force. At that point, the response of the government officials was harsh and it was implied that Turkey would not follow EU norms anymore. The Gezi Parkı protests constituted a breaking point regarding Turkey-EU relations. In result of the events, the Turkish society was polarized regarding their stance to the government and its policies, and declarations promoted this polarization further. In this manner, while a fraction of the society was at the opinion that Turkey under the rule of AKP government is in serious need of EU norms especially in terms of democratization, supporters of the AKP government were not. As a matter of fact, the constituency of AKP was highly supportive of the government policies and now became highly distanced towards EU. The Gezi Parkı protests and its aftermath therefore was important for Turkish public to form an opinion about EU membership, since the polarization that it caused bolstered up the idea.

Another incident that has led the public to form an opinion about EU membership was December 17-25 corruption scandals. A legal investigation was launched in December 2013 involving AKP ministers and members of their families with the accusation of involvement in corruption. Erdoğan's response at this point was critical, since he attributed this operation to be a 'judicial coup', which then led AKP government to implement legal changes on the judiciary law. AKP government perceived the existing procedure as a threat and despite all opposition, AKP government succeeded to restructure the High Council of Judges and Prosecutors. This restructuring attempt

along with changes in the judicial law once again created serious concerns for the EU front and The Council of Europe expressed condemnation regarding these developments. The European Commission on the other hand criticized the developments and mentioned that Turkey has to become condensed on democratic norms. These events did not only create reservations for the EU officials, but also for a fraction of Turkish public as well. A serious proportion of the supporters of the AKP government continued their support unconditionally by referring this operation as fictionalized, while others carry serious concerns regarding democratic norms in Turkey. This corruption scandal on the other hand inflamed the fraction of public that were already concerned about the functioning of democracy in Turkey, which resulted in public to perceive EU membership as ‘a good thing’ for Turkey, which would eventually help reconstruct democratic norms in the country.

The changing policy preferences of AKP regarding membership to EU would create a need for explanation on the public front as well. As I claimed before, Turkish public is prone to construct its preferences in accordance with the stances of the political elite. Proposition 2 touched upon in the theoretical framework chapter suggests that Turkish public support for EU membership increases when cues provided by the political leaders present positive attitudes towards EU membership. When this proposition is approached with the explained policy conduct of AKP pursuing policies of its interest and locate itself in within the frame in accordance as it has done with the EU membership project, it must be said that in order for AKP to conduct its preferred policies with continual public support, it then highly important to what extent the political elite is capable of shaping public opinion regardless of other determinants. At this point, the proposition deserves stress in the Turkish public opinion formation.

The shift of AKP’s stance away from the EU membership prospect is obvious. The features and benefits of the EU-AKP made use of for promotion- stand still. If so, what can be the main determinant behind the correlative decrease of public support towards EU with the decrease of government enthusiasm towards the EU membership project? My answer would be the political cues provided to the public. The experience regarding the sensitive issues to a certain extent proved that these sensitive issues regarding compliance to Copenhagen Criteria might be overcome, just as the hesitant views of the EU officials. However, the utility-based considerations of the prospective EU

membership stand still, even if Turkey’s enthusiasm gradually fades away. At this point, it must be underlined that Turkish public support towards EU membership having positive correlation with the stance of the government towards EU signifies that Turkish public is highly receptive of the political cues provided by the elite. On a contrary scenario, the government must have justified its loss of enthusiasm regarding EU membership without manipulating the opinion of the public. However, as mentioned before, domestic interests of the government, re-election and electoral support being on the top, motivate political elite to shape public opinion by delivering cues regarding their policy stance.

3.3. IMAGE OF THE EU IN THE EYES OF TURKISH PUBLIC

	Verypositive	Fairlypositive	Neutral	Fairlynegative	Verynegative	Do not know	Positive	Negative	Total # of participants
2005-1	305	305	118	98	148	31	610	246	1861
2005-2	292	306	152	92	105	58	598	197	1800
2006-1	191	241	228	139	126	79	432	265	1701
2006-2	70	255	362	213	76	25	325	289	1615
2007-1	271	261	119	118	154	77	532	271	1803
2007-2	236	246	165	119	161	78	482	279	1766
2008-1	173	323	162	130	144	71	496	274	1773
2008-2	115	307	167	167	139	108	422	306	1731
2009-1	151	310	203	154	126	62	461	280	1747
2009-2	93	333	235	177	95	69	426	272	1700
2010-1	75	293	224	169	161	79	368	330	1699
2010-2	82	240	158	158	156	206	322	315	1637
2011-1	94	269	222	184	146	86	362	330	1693
2011-2	65	220	209	212	205	90	285	416	1702
2012-1	53	265	265	281	92	44	318	373	1691
2012-2	51	253	253	238	108	97	304	346	1650
2013-1	96	253	254	215	127	57	348	342	1692
2013-2	99	104	226	205	71	296	203	277	1481
2014-1	121	321	320	149	90	26	442	238	1707
2014-2	95	330	306	163	106	88	425	269	1782

Table 2– Numerical distribution regarding Turkish participants’ responses to the question of “In general, does the European Union conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image?” (Eurobarometer 2005-2014)

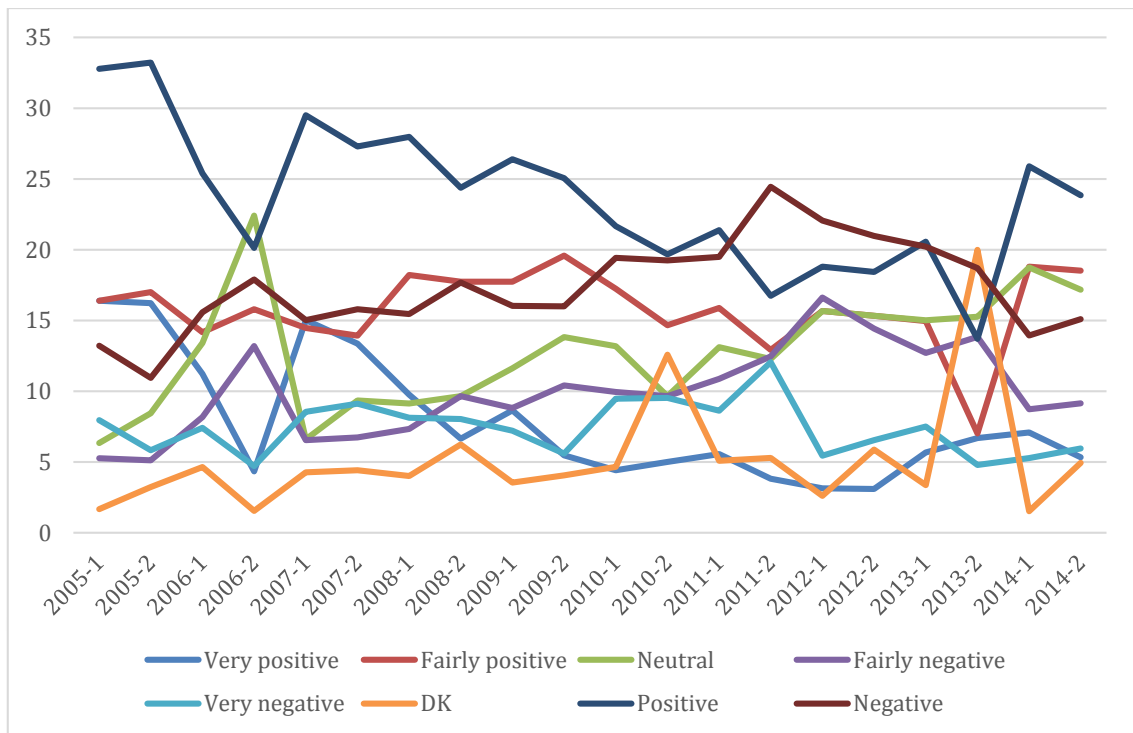


Figure 3 – Percentile chart regarding Turkish participants’ responses to the question of “In general, does the European Union conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image?” (Eurobarometer 2005-2014)

A similar picture of developments in public opinion can be observed using the question of ‘In general, does the European Union conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image?’ The most outstanding data of this graph belongs to years 2005 and 2006. The downward trend of the fraction that view EU as ‘positive’ is especially sharp between these years. Although the ‘positive’ series climb up to 15% in the first half of 2007 once again after hitting 4% in the second half of 2006, the downfall continued for years. However, throughout these years witnessing a downward trend of people viewing EU as ‘positive’, the percentage of people that are neutral gradually increased and hit 15% by the end of 2012, and then continued increasing to 18% in the first half of 2014. It is visible that this downtrend of 2005 and 2006 is followed by an increasing trend continued until the end of the first half of 2007, which then is followed by a gradual decline until 2014. It is possible to associate the uptrend in the first half of the 2007 with the repetitive emphasis of AKP’s election manifestos.

The trend of the respondents who stated to view EU ‘neutral’ shows a sharp increase that starts at the end of 2005 continues until the end of 2006. This sharp increase can be explained with the correspondence of opening of accession negotiations that has been

promoted by the AKP government for several years and the disappointment created by several voices from EU to approach Turkish membership with great hesitations within the same period. The stance of EU in the Cyprus dispute issue of Turkey has also created great disappointment both in the government and public fronts. The bold and promoting discourses provided by the political elite for several years regarding Turkish membership to EU and the disappointing developments thereafter have created an atmosphere where the respondents in that period cannot locate themselves in the juncture and regard themselves as neutral concerning EU' image.

The alternation of EU's image for Turkish public may well be linked both to internal dynamics of the EU, the developments regarding Turkey's membership within EU and policy preferences of Turkey. Öniş and Yılmaz also touches upon the effect of media coverage as "The media representations of Europe in Turkey as a monolithic bloc contributed to this change of mood"(Öniş & Yılmaz, 2009), by referring to the loss of enthusiasm Turkish public went through and the changing image of EU for Turkish public. When the internal dynamics of EU is to be discussed, it can be claimed that economic crisis of 2008 indeed affected the image of EU in the eyes of Turkish public. Furthermore, reservations of some member states regarding further enlargement of EU, with Turkey in particular, did well affected Turkish public support in a negative manner. The Cyprus dispute and the attitude EU adopted in this respect did also affect EU's image in the eyes of Turkish public. Furthermore, Turkey's new alternatives as international partners may well affected this trend in the way that Turkey now pose a stance that is not obliged to EU as before.

Furthermore, as mentioned before, the outcome of Brussels Summit in terms of attitudes of France and Germany created a serious nationalistic backlash in Turkey, as Öniş and Yılmaz stresses(Öniş & Yılmaz, 2009). They further argue that the coverage of these developments by the mass media along with their approach to Europe as a whole, not specific to the member states increased further antipathy towards EU in public at large(Öniş & Yılmaz, 2009). The downward trend of Turkish public support for EU membership along with the image of EU in the eyes of Turkish society has been inflamed by the questioning of Turkey's membership by EU's political elite.

Along with the atmosphere created by EU's political elite towards Turkey's membership, the constitutional crisis within the EU has been represented with

exaggeration by Turkish mass media. This factor as a matter of course played a significant role in shaping public opinion of Turkey in a negative manner. This fact did not only decrease public support towards EU, but also made Turkey to perceive the identity crisis of EU from a different perspective.

The negative image that has started to arise within Turkish public has also been associated with the perception of the 'West'. Öniş and Yılmaz argue that Turkey's relations with the United States already constitute a great factor that shapes Turkish relations with Europe. Their approach carries along the assumption that Turkish public perceives 'West' as a whole without necessarily separating Europe from United States, which comes from past experiences and cultural habits(Öniş & Yılmaz, 2009). As Yaka argues, Turkish relations with EU are highly relevant with the concept of 'common sense'(Yaka, 2016). Her work further suggests that Turkish common sense creates confusion around identity-based issues, which causes Turkish society's conceptions about the EU to rally around a mix of negative and positive conceptions that are open to rapid transformation in case of any change in political conjuncture(Yaka, 2016).

3.4. TRUST IN THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT

		Tend to trust	Tend not to trust	Do not know	Total # of participants
2005-1	EB63	760	212	33	1005
2005-2	EB64	723	217	65	1005
2006-1	EB65	677	271	57	1005
2006-2	EB66	635	333	37	1005
2007-1	EB67	707	249	42	998
2007-2	EB68	635	296	74	1005
2008-1	EB69	467	475	60	1002
2008-2	EB70	482	470	51	1003
2009-1	EB71	576	384	45	1005
2009-2	EB72	507	453	42	1002
2010-1	EB73	429	519	51	999
2010-2	EB74	445	499	56	1000
2011-1	EB75	578	370	52	1000
2011-2	EB76	488	447	66	1001
2012-1	EB77	572	366	62	1000
2012-2	EB78	450	474	76	1000
2013-1	EB79	487	467	48	1002
2013-2	EB80	358	570	74	1002
2014-1	EB81	530	450	46	1026
2014-2	EB82	495	521	71	1087

Table 3–Numerical distribution regarding Turkish participants’ responses to the question of “For the Turkish Government, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it.” (Eurobarometer 2005-2014)

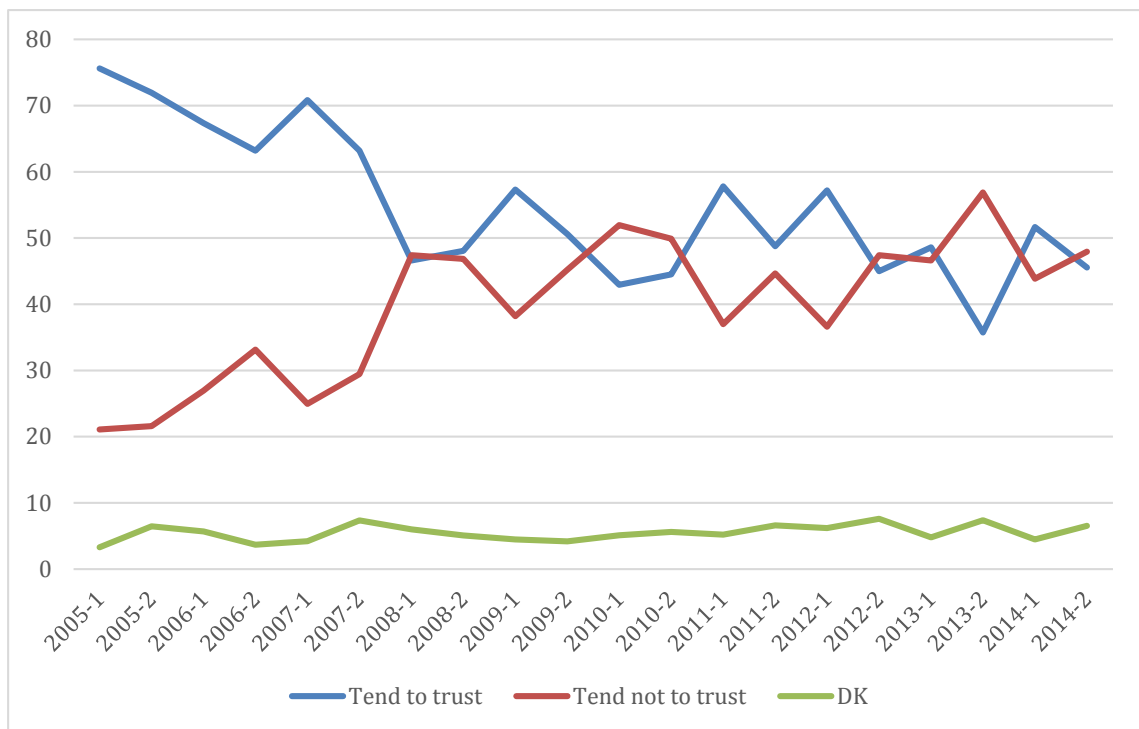


Figure 4 – Percentile chart regarding Turkish participants’ responses to the question of “For the Turkish Government, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it.” (Eurobarometer 2005-2014)

The survey questions regarding Turkish public’s trust in the Turkish government and the Turkish parliament may enhance our understanding of formation of public preference and whether it is correlated with the government and parliament’s positions on EU related issues. It is clearly seen that the fraction that tend to trust the government and the parliament in Turkey declines in that vein when the view of the EU membership and the image of EU figures are taken into consideration.

When Figure above is viewed, it is visible that the tendency of Turkish public to trust in the national government showed a gradual decline from 75% in 2005 down to 45% by the end of 2014, with the exception of an increase in 2007. This exception of increase in 2007 from 63% to 70% can be associated with the exceptional performance of the AKP government in the elections that is to take the office once again with a higher percentage of support. The first half of 2008 however witnesses a sharp decline once again to 48% and the rates did not see their highest peaks they hit at 2005 again. This sharp decline can be explained with the case of the Constitution Court regarding closure of AKP with the accusation of violation of secular constitutional order of the state.

It is clear that the AKP government has developed effective policies regarding management of the global economic crisis. Disregarding the foreign economic policies and bilateral relations with the respective countries, the AKP government portrayed a very optimistic picture by diverting the attention away from the shortcomings of the economic policies while stressing progress of Turkey's improving image among the region as a key player, especially focusing on the relations with the Middle Eastern neighbors. The domestic issues regarding secularism and identity enabled the AKP government to distract the public from the technical economic issues and respective economic policies. The improving relations with the Middle Eastern neighbors both in economic and cultural respects helped the AKP government to paint a picture of success in terms of foreign policies that portrayed to carry out the aim to become a key player in the region. In the domestic front, the failure of the opposition in attracting attention to the effects of the economic crisis such as low income rates and high unemployment enabled the AKP government to maintain support from the public and pass through the local elections of 2009 without any certain loss of support.

When the data regarding Turkish public's tendency to trust in the national government and the national parliament is concerned, it is visible that the following period of 2008 did witness an increase of the rate of the respondents who declared that they 'tend to trust', while the rate of the respondents who declared that they 'tend not to trust' decreased. Given that fact that Turkish economy has undergone certain complications such as high unemployment rates and poverty, through these rates it is visible that the AKP government succeeded to portray a highly promising picture in regards to Turkey's crisis management skills along with Turkey's position as a key actor among the region.

The reason why these findings constitute great importance is that concerning our claim that public opinion is formed correlatively with the cues that are delivered by the government officials and political elite in general. Although the positive percentages and uptrends may well be linked with the trust the public have in the government and the parliament, actually downtrends can be also explained with the distrust the public have in these institutions.

When Figure 3 is analyzed together with Figure 2, the positive correlation in between becomes visible. Proposition 3 explained further in the theoretical framework chapter in

terms of expectancies in regard, suggests that Turkish public support to EU membership increases, when there is an increase in the tendency to trust the national government. In this respect, it would be fair to say that statistical data shows a link in between.(Öniş, The Triumph of Conservative Globalism: The Political Economy of the AKP Era, 2012)

3.5. TRUST IN THE TURKISH PARLIAMENT

		Tendtotrust	Tend not totrust	Do not know	Total # of participants
2005-1	EB63	734	226	45	1005
2005-2	EB64	727	213	65	1005
2006-1	EB65	685	266	54	1005
2006-2	EB66	641	326	38	1005
2007-1	EB67	736	221	41	998
2007-2	EB68	642	278	84	1004
2008-1	EB69	475	462	65	1002
2008-2	EB70	492	448	63	1003
2009-1	EB71	582	371	52	1005
2009-2	EB72	511	436	55	1002
2010-1	EB73	455	484	61	1000
2010-2	EB74	470	473	57	1000
2011-1	EB75	549	390	62	1001
2011-2	EB76	444	483	74	1001
2012-1	EB77	536	392	72	1000
2012-2	EB78	441	476	82	999
2013-1	EB79	447	503	50	1000
2013-2	EB80	382	555	64	1001
2014-1	EB81	556	420	50	1026
2014-2	EB82	546	462	79	1087

Table 4–Numerical distribution regarding Turkish participants’ responses to the question of “For the Turkish Parliament, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it.” (Eurobarometer 2005-2014)

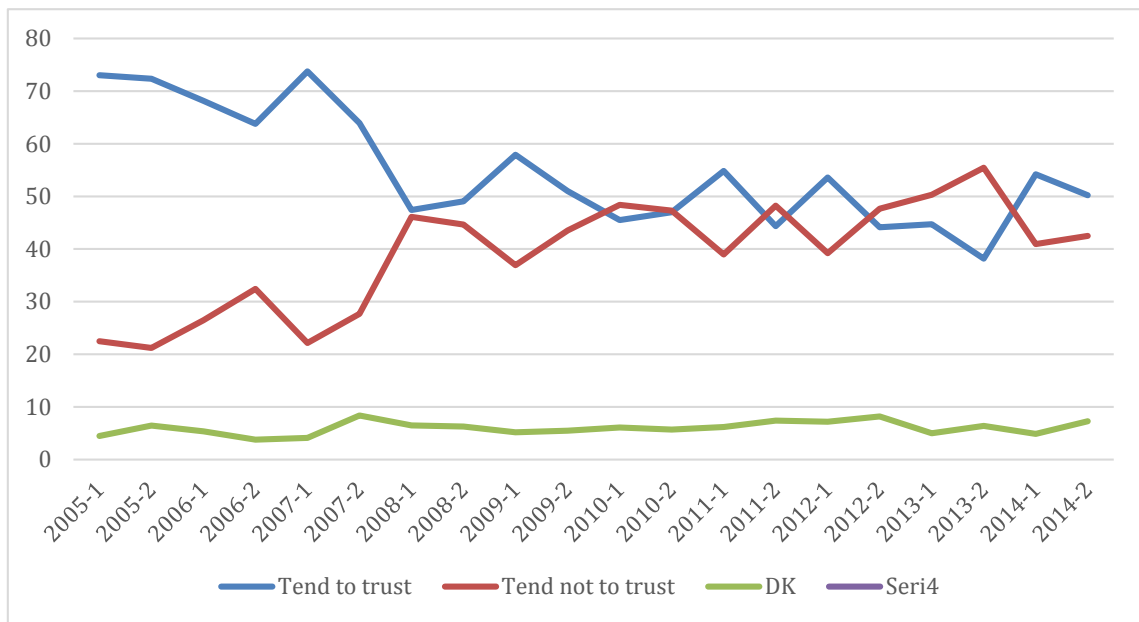


Figure 5 – Percentile chart regarding Turkish participants’ responses to the question of “For the Turkish Parliament, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it.” (Eurobarometer 2005-2014)

As explained in the theoretical framework chapter, the preference formation of the public is in different terms highly related to policy choices of the policy makers, while different models of preference formation suggest that irrespective of the provider of the information, the deliverance, the content and the timing are of critical importance.

Although it is visible that support for EU membership declines parallel with Turkish public trust in the government and the parliament, this trend can be explained with several different approaches. The first would be that public opinion is vulnerable to political cues regardless of the source provided the cue. In other words, even though Turkish people do not tend to trust their government or their parliament, they tend to be affected by the discourses provided by those non-trusted persons or institutions. At this point, the information delivered carries great importance in terms of its tone and content.

Another approach may be linked to the overall distrust the public may possess towards the whole political environment, including foreign policy. This case in regards to this approach might create the scene that Turkish people considering the instability of the

whole political environment that would lead them to withdraw their support to policy choices of the government including EU membership agenda. The statements government officials made were actually inconsistent with the downward trend of public support. The officials painted a promising picture that the reforms were continuing at the same pace during the years of 2006 and 2007, however the Eurobarometer survey does not tell the same hopeful story regarding public support.

When compared with the trends of tendency to trust in the national government, Figure-4 constitutes high similarity. The tendency of the Turkish public shows a gradual decline from 73% in the first half of 2005 with respectable decline down to 38% by the end of 2013. While this trend can be associated with the trust public have in the national government as a matter of course, it may also cue us about the public's reservations regarding the separation of powers within the Turkish democratic sphere. This explanation may become more understandable if the growing self-confidence and hegemonic stance of the AKP government is concerned.

Proposition 4 suggest that Turkish public support to EU membership increases, when there is an increase in the tendency to trust the national parliament. When the respective figures are analyzed, this correlation in between becomes visible, as it has been regarding trust to national government. The reasons behind this correlation carry great similarities with the one's behind the proposition regarding the national government.

The period of accession negotiations indeed paved the way for AKP to conduct policies of its interest. However, the longer this period lasted, reforms necessitating highly sensitive issues to be revised started to appear at a greater extent, which has created certain resistance at the public level. The public viewed the atmosphere as so that in the sake of EU membership a lot of compromises has been made, however the outcome still stood unclear. Therefore, trust in the government and the parliament declines in correlation with the public support to EU membership.

When considering the overall display, the data covering 'trust' of Turkish public in the national government and parliament showing a decreasing trend signals that although a mistrust in these institutions exist, Turkish public still takes the political discourses into consideration whether consciously or not. To be clearer, except a few years of gap, Turkish public's attitudes towards EU is framing a collateral picture with the policy

choices of the government towards EU membership process. To put more precisely, although Turkish public lose its trust to the national government or parliament at a substantial degree, the fact that public support more or less goes in parallel with the demeanor of the political elite promotes the idea claiming the substantial effect of political cues.

Johansson-Nogués and Jonasson touch upon Turkish public's perceptions of the government and they cite Aydınli and state that AKP's stable and strong political leadership has boosted the confidence of Turkish public(Johansson-Nogues & Jonasson, 2011). AKP however has been criticized by many for putting party interests at higher priority than state interests. However still, it is fair to expect public to view the government and its institutions as to pursue state interest and deliver necessary policies in this manner, while ensuring political stability along with national security.

CHAPTER 4.

POLITICAL DISCOURSE SIGNALING CHANGES IN POLICY PREFERENCES OF THE AKP GOVERNMENT

Basing our analysis to the discourses of the political elite in fact may not reward us with concrete and precise statistical results, but if not with content base inferences. Thus, this analysis may help us to comprehend the change of tone and attitude of the political elite in a particular period, which may further clue us in their policy stances. When the discourses of the Turkish political elite in the pre-2005 and post-2005 periods are concerned, the loss of enthusiasm that has been mentioned before is already visible. Together with this, continuing existence of emphasis on the EU membership and reform may also be considered as a part of strategic cue giving, since each day without the achievement of EU membership prospect, which has been carried out with great enthusiasm and hope for a period, may carry the risk to create an unsuccessful image of government in the eyes of the public. Therefore, the discourses belong to the post-2005 period are expected to carry emphasis on the obstacles EU created on the process.

The statements of Turkish officials, in terms of their content and changes they underwent, are important in order to empirically discuss Turkey's position regarding EU and the project of full membership. Since the statements made by government officials signal the policy preferences of the government against EU, the content of these statements may well clue us both in the direction Turkey pursues towards EU and in the image of the EU in the minds of political elite. The discourses especially made by the officials of the AKP government, and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in particular carry critical importance, since he stands as the opinion leader of the constituency of the AKP (Kalaycıoğlu, 2013). Erdoğan with his highly strong rhetoric possess the skills to successfully mobilize and manipulate the public. When the recent events and Erdoğan's comments in respect are considered, it is visible that Erdoğan's declarations not only carry the ability to mobilize its supporters, but also manipulate and provoke the fraction that are opposing his and AKP government's policies and stance.

The first discourse to be viewed is existent within news articles of all news outlets. The celebration ceremony that have been done after the date were set in 2004 for the opening of accession negotiations with the EU as 3rd of October appeared in almost all news sources back at the time. The development was celebrated with great excitement, and fireworks were set off. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan announced the date of the beginning of accession negotiations during his public speech and stated, “There are 39 years on one side, and 2 on the other”(Radikal, 2004), while declaring the day as feast. By this statement, Erdoğan underlined AKP’s success that they had accelerated the EU membership process greatly by setting a date for accession negotiations, while previous governments failed to do so.

In 2005, Erdoğan during his speech at the grand opening of a shopping mall in İstanbul stated that

“I do not state a specific date for EU membership, but we believe in one thing. We work; we do our share of the task as we have done until now. Then we will expect them to do their share of the task. On October 3, Turkey achieved her goal that has been tried to achieve nearly for 40 years. Turkey now does not talk about the negotiation process, but about the accession.”(Milliyet, 2005)

Again in 2005, Erdoğan once again underscored the government’s purpose to follow the necessary reform agenda by saying “Turkey’s direction Turkey will follow is definite. In case of any problem, we will turn Copenhagen criteria into Ankara criteria and carry on our path”(CNN Türk, 2005). Additionally he continued with his emphasis that Turkey now is on the path of full membership and it is unnecessary to put privileged partnership prospect on the table. Furthermore, regarding the referenda conducted in France Erdoğan stated that “It would be wrong to link French referendum to Turkish membership. French people exerted their willpower towards the Constitutional Treaty. That has nothing to do with Turkey. The referendum was not related to Turkey’s membership, but to the Constitutional Treaty”(CNN Türk, 2005).

When we come to 2007, Prime Minister Erdoğan changed his tone against EU and stated: “We expect sincerity and honesty from the European Union. If the ones who find us successful still block our way, then that is political.” Through this statement, Erdoğan made it clear that the Turkish government started not to take EU’s position to granted and has hesitations regarding the membership process”(NTV, 2007)

Abdullah Gül in 2007, during his term of presidency delivered this speech regarding EU membership:

“We should follow our path of EU membership that we have started with the accession negotiations in October 2005 with strong-will. The political and economic reforms of EU membership project have to be conducted with greater dedication; this is necessary for our country. The political conjuncture in Europe can always change. The important thing for us is being able to open and close negotiation chapters by our own in order to achieve modern standards. Turkey that conducts its reforms without any hindrance and consequently conclude total harmonization with European Union will eventually make its own choice”(NTV, 2007)

This statement of Abdullah Gül can be viewed as delivered in a more tolerant attitude. He touches upon the factors that necessitates Turkey to confront in the process of membership, while making clear that this process is still of critical importance for Turkey at large.

During the Turkey-EU Joint Advisory Committee Meeting in April 2008, Turkish officials made very important statements regarding Turkey-EU relations within the speeches they delivered. Prime Minister Erdoğan’s speech is as follows:

“Turkey does not have any hesitation or drawback regarding joining EU. Turkey continues to follow its path with excitement despite of all efforts of hindrance, all developments that are decreasing her motivation. We believe that we will enrich EU. Our aim is to lessen EU’s burden, not to be another one. No country on the entire world has the capacity to go further alone without any cooperation. That period was long gone. Each country has to integrate with each other; the situation requires cooperation” (Türkiye Ziraat Odaları Birliği, 2008)

Erdoğan’s speech still seems to carry elements of hope. However, with his great skills of rhetoric, he did not hesitate to deliver his message between the lines. Erdoğan underlines that membership of Turkey to EU will bring along benefits to both sides, while signaling that it is apparent Turkey’s accession process have been complicated by various measures.

At the same meeting, Abdullah Gül delivered a speech as well. Regarding his speech, it visible that it again carries more moderate elements than Erdoğan’s. President Abdullah Gül’s speech is as follows:

The political disputes are due to the nature of democracy. The hardest thing along the membership process is to maintain public support, and non-governmental organizations have their duties in this regard. Turkey-EU relations have two standpoints; the first would be the governments and the parliaments, and the second would be the non-governmental organizations. The dialogue in between EU

and Turkey has to be enhanced in order to conduct a more stable negotiation process. In Turkey, sometimes several misunderstandings occur. In this respect, I request non-governmental organizations to continue their works in great pace”(Türkiye Ziraat Odaları Birliği, 2008)

Gül makes strong emphasis on the importance of public support in the process of negotiations. The duties of non-governmental organizations are stressed in order to continue stable negotiations. The fact that Gül pays great value on public opinion is of critical importance regarding our claim. His approach signals that he is well aware of the fact that public opinion plays a critical role in shaping policy preferences. Therefore, his aim to mobilize masses is highly apparent in his speech, especially with his reference to the capabilities of the Turkish society.

His speech continues as follows:

“The negotiation process is not easy, and Turkey is conscious of this fact. Our commitment derives its roots from our society’s nature and is therefore very strong. Turkish society is highly determined to the continuity of this process. Our parliament always conducted legislations that are of great importance for strengthening relations with Europe”(Türkiye Ziraat Odaları Birliği, 2008)

When it comes to 2012 we see that, advisor of Prime Minister Erdoğan, İbrahim Kalın stated that “Turkey is beginning to read history from a non-Eurocentric point of view and to recognize other possibilities in modern history”. This statement is of critical importance, since Turkey considering other alternatives as cooperation partners have been signaled through his words precisely. Turkey, considering new alternatives have not been signaled by Kalın only. Suat Kınıkoğlu, a member of AKP back in 2010 also stated “Turkey does not really need the EU anymore. Its economy is strong enough to do without a union that is struggling with its own financial problems.” (Hürriyet Daily News, 2010) This short statement of his carries great importance in terms of analysis of the government’s tendencies. The content of this saying makes it clear that Turkey did perceive EU as a necessary partner that would contribute Turkey in economic spheres. His emphasis on Turkish economy scoring really well carries on with his criticism of EU’s financial problems regarding Eurozone crisis.

On the other front, Foreign Minister Davutoğlu’s speech back in 2006 states Turkey’s intentions clearly; “Turkey cannot wait forever at the door of EU, and needs to develop a genuinely multidirectional foreign policy by utilizing its geostrategic advantages”. It shows that Turkey’s efforts to create strategic partnerships dates long back, and in this instance of stagnation within the process carried on with the EU, Turkey may well carry

on with its other alternatives of strategic partnerships. Actually in a few years, Turkey accelerated her efforts in the direction of this alternative.

Moreover, Davutoğlu argued in 2013 that “If Europe wants to be geo-politically relevant, it should have access to Asia, should have access to the Middle East, to Caspian Sea, Indian Sea and even Africa, they need Turkey”(Davutoğlu, 2013).(Doğangil, 2013)This statement long after the loss of enthusiasm towards EU membership holds the mission to express the possible advantages Turkey would create for EU. In doing so, I suggest that it does not carry the aim to reanimate the enthusiastic atmosphere of EU membership process back in 2004, but show the respective interlocutors that Turkey now is moving towards new horizons. These interlocutors do not constitute only the EU member states, but also the general public at large. This approach is indeed compatible with the attitude Turkish public has towards EU, and towards the new alternative partners of Turkey as well.

In November 2009, Cemil Çiçek, Turkish Deputy Prime Minister states as such regarding Cyprus dispute; “If Turkey would be forced to choose between supporting either EU membership or Turkish Cypriots, Turkey’s choice forever will be to stand next to Turkish Cypriots. Everybody should understand this”(Çoğal, 2011)

As we hit 2013, Prime Minister Erdoğan appears in January on national television with a pretentious statement. Erdoğan stated clearly “I have requested clearly from Putin to include us in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization”. In response to further questions, he continued “Shanghai Cooperation Organization is well a better alternative for Turkey than EU. We have no more patience regarding the EU accession process. We will do everything in the interests of Turkey and we will join alliances that the country will benefit from” (Radikal, 2013)

Egemen Bağış, Minister for EU Affairs, in 2013 after Gezi Parkı protests responded to EU officials that has criticized Turkish government for exerting disproportionate force against its citizens as follows:

“We have been seeing that some European parliamentarians and officials are irresponsibly making very bold and irrational speeches. It is nonsense that some European parliamentarians and officials believe that suspending Turkey’s EU accession process would be a threat for Turkey. Suspending Turkey’s EU accession process is in fact would be a threat for EU, but not Turkey. Turkey has the most reformist and strongest government in Europe”(Bağış, 2013)

It is clear now that the ruling government of AKP has been promoting several specific policies that are of great importance regarding its electoral constituents. As it has been the case for several times, the desires and necessary adjustments that EU require from Turkey to meet have contradicted AKP's strict and deep-seated policies that would attract great negative reactions if changes would have been applied. At this point, the domestic gains of AKP that are the continuing support by its electorate and correspondingly its durability in office are of greater importance. Therefore, AKP along with the opposition has to carry balancing policy changes. The success here would be on the execution of necessary policy changes carried out by the government as a whole, while gratifying the public as well. Therefore, the balancing elements in the discourses of the political elite should not be discarded.

The relation between the embraced political discourses and the Eurobarometer data covering the respective period they have been delivered is of critical importance. When examined in detail, it can be seen that the public support to EU membership moves in correlation with political leaders' tendencies of policy formation that are cued to public through their individual statements. Since the general assumption is that a regular citizen of Turkey would not be capable of comprehending relevant developments and their consequences without being guided by an upper mind, it would be fair to await the citizen to perceive the existing scene by creating impressions being influenced by the authorities.

When the statements of the Turkish officials are examined with the background of Eurobarometer data regarding support for EU membership of Turkey, the conjunction is to be seen. As a matter of course, -as a strategic political maneuvering tool I suggest-, the discourses of political leaders vary in terms of attitude and tone. When Abdullah Gül's and Tayyip Erdoğan's statements corresponding to same period are in focus, it is clear that Gül has been trying to create a more promising picture, while Erdoğan's attitude gradually becomes more intolerant.

As the overall periodical change in the discourses of the Turkish political elite is viewed, it is visible that the change of tone and attitude of the discourses indeed carry resemblance with the periodical change of the public opinion. However, as mentioned before, the selected discourses might lack significance in terms of statistical analysis.

Even so, it is worth mentioning that the general trend reflected within the discourse analysis have parallels with the trend of Turkish public opinion.



CHAPTER 5.

CONCLUSION

It is now beyond dispute that public opinion formation is highly vulnerable to both many endogenous and exogenous factors. As many scholars argue, factors such as religiosity, national identity and individual utility-based determinants are of great importance in Turkey in the process of public opinion formation especially towards the idea of EU membership. This thesis however proposed an alternative approach to public opinion formation in Turkey towards EU membership and with the help of Eurobarometer survey data and data regarding growth of Turkish economy, the given propositions have been analyzed.

The first data helped us to evaluate Turkish economic growth rate in relation to Turkish public support to EU membership were examined with regards to the evolution of Turkish foreign economic policy and its reflections to the domestic front since the beginning of 2000s. Turkish public's support for EU membership shows an increase in the first half of 2000s, especially after the economic crisis of 2001. AKP promoting EU membership prospect as its priority gained remarkable support in 2002 general elections, since the public perceived the situation to be in need of EU anchor in terms of economic regulations. AKP, at its first years in office continued to promote the EU membership idea while sustaining remarkable economic growth. In line with EU norms, AKP government further implemented civilian approach to its foreign policy, and sustained successful economic and diplomatic relationships with the countries in the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia. These economic relations and diversification of the export market enabled Turkey to sustain remarkable economic growth and recover fast after the global economic crisis of 2008. This diversification of markets brought Turkey new incentives and promoted the idea that Turkey is not depended on the EU anymore, especially regarding economic means. This did not only promote AKP government's self-confidence, but also affected the public front so that the EU membership prospect became less interesting day by day. Although the Arab

Spring affected Turkey's export market negatively, EU still stood as one of the largest trade partners of Turkey. The AKP government and the Turkish public with the changing dynamics of economic relations were confident in terms of economic rates, and economic prospects that EU would provide became less and less attractive as time passes. The analysis of the developments, their aftermath and the respective economic data were present for being able to create a linkage to public opinion formation in relation. Regarding the analysis of proposition claiming ' *Turkish public support for EU membership declines when there is a positive growth in the Turkish economy*', a significant positive correlation has been found. The data analysis brought forward that when Turkish economy progresses in a positive trend, the trend of support for EU membership tends to show a decline. The data analysis blended with historical analysis brought forward that Turkish public perceives EU as an economic anchor to a certain extent, and tends to be more supportive of the idea of EU membership, in case of any presence of negative economic indicators.

The propositions concerning tendency of the Turkish public to trust in the government and the parliament showed great resemblance. The propositions hold that *Turkish public support to EU membership increases, when there is an increase in the tendency to trust the national government* and *Turkish public support to EU membership increases, when there is an increase in the tendency to trust the national parliament*. Indeed, when the respective data has been analyzed together with the data of Turkish public support to EU membership, it is visible that the trend of support for EU membership tends to increase in correlation with Turkish public's tendency towards trusting in the national parliament and the government increases. The changes in the tendencies to trust the national government and the parliament are observed to show interconnection with the economic performance of the country. When the respective data are viewed, Turkish public's tendency to trust in the national government and the parliament goes in line with the economic rates of the country in the respective period of time. These data on the other hand may well be linked to Turkish government's stance against the EU membership idea, as well as the overall trust the public carry for the government and the parliament, as well as their presumptions over the international political stability of such choice. On the other hand, it must be clear that with its successful performance especially regarding economic outcomes, the AKP government did not only gained a respectable proportion of constituency, but also created a highly self-confident image as

the years passed. Although there have been incidents creating reservations about Turkish government's commitment to democratic norms over the years, the fraction that carry these reservations are outnumbered when compared to the supporters of the government. The analysis considering above-mentioned factors reveals that the developments both on the international and domestic fronts in time altered the public's perceptions and tendencies of trust against the government and the parliament, which eventually affected public's opinion towards EU membership.

The analysis of the proposition "*Turkish public support for EU membership increases when cues provided by the political leaders present positive attitudes towards EU membership*" lacked numerical data regarding cues presenting elite attitudes to infer strong empirical conclusion. Therefore, the determinative elements behind the trend of public support to EU membership have been analyzed, and then a linkage between the trend and these elements has been searched for. In order to strengthen this linkage, the discourses of the Turkish political elite have been analyzed in respect to particular periods, while the developments regarding Turkish membership to the EU also have been analyzed in a historical and critical context. Thereupon I claim that Turkish public support for EU membership increases, when positive stances of the political elite are reflected to the public through political cues. Although not yet certain in an empirical context, I propose that Turkish public opinion on EU membership is highly volatile to changes in the attitudes of the Turkish political elite.

Following the assumption that a great amount of information the public receive comes from the political elite regarding foreign policies and their consequences, it must be acknowledged that the messages/cues that are provided by the political elite are of critical importance in the process of public opinion formation. In respect to Turkish public opinion on EU membership, I claim that this argument is also valid. However, the empirical research on the extent of the influence exerted to the public through political cues can be focus of further research.

Regarding all discussed propositions above, it must be acknowledged that there may be other variables to influence these trends that are now unknown to us. Besides, possible influences of endogenous and exogenous factors on public opinion formation should not be discarded. In regards to Turkish public support to EU membership, the opinion formation process accommodates several factors that are prone to prompt changes.

Progress of Turkish economy, tendency to trust in the national government and the parliament and political cues provided by the Turkish political elite I claim to be among the most influential factors shaping Turkish public opinion on EU membership between 2005 and 2014.



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