

The Impact of Europeanization on Turkish Political Party System: Justice and Development Party (2002-2007)

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Abstract

In this paper, I will test Robert Ladrech's theory of Europeanization's impact on political parties on five areas within the Turkish political context by focusing on Justice and Development Party's (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi-JDP) rule from 2002 to 2007.

Key Words: Europeanization, Robert Ladrech, Turkish Politics, Turkish Political Party System, JDP, Justice and Development Party.

I. Introduction

In this paper, I will test Robert Ladrech's theory of Europeanization's impact on political parties on five areas within the Turkish political context by focusing on Justice and Development Party's (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi-JDP) rule from 2002 to 2007. In order to analyze Europeanization's impact on Justice and Development Party in this certain time period, firstly I will draw the lines of what Europeanization is and then, in order to understand Europeanization's stand until 2002 I will try to figure out: what kind of role it has played during Turkish history in general. Following this part, I am going to explain Robert Ladrech's approach to Europeanization and I will define his theory conducted to explain the five areas of Europeanization's impact on party politics. After that, I will try to apply Ladrech's theory into Turkey and I am going to test these areas on Justice and Development Party policies from 2002 to 2007. I will conclude by pointing out the transformation of party politics of the Justice and Development Party caused by Europeanization process, with regard to Ladrech's five areas: Programmatic change, organizational change, patterns of party competition, party-government relations, and relations beyond the party system. Finally according to my analyses, I would state that JDP has "Europeanized" according to the certain areas that Ladrech derived.

II. Europeanization: Semantics

Outside of the social sciences, Europeanization commonly refers to the growth of a European continental identity or polity over and above national identities and polities on the continent. Europeanization in political science has been referred to very generally as "becoming more European like". The concept of Europeanization enjoys increasing popularity within the study of European integration. Although there is considerable conceptual contestation with regard to the question what it actually is, the bulk of the literature speaks of Europeanization when something in the domestic political system is affected by something European. Hence we can define Europeanization for the moment and very briefly as domestic change caused by European integration¹. Hix and Goetz are more precise in their definition as "a process of change in national institutional and policy practices that can be attributed to European integration" (Hix and Goetz 2000: 27). This definition connects quite well to the definition suggested by Börzel (1999: 574), as "a process by which domestic policy areas become increasingly subject to European policymaking", except from the fact that she limits Europeanization to change in policy practices (although her study actually focuses on territorial politics).

¹ Maarten Vink, "Paper for the Second YEN Research Meeting on Europeanisation", p. 2

On the other hand, as a broader conception, Radaelli's (2000: 4) conception of Europeanization refers to "processes of (a) construction, (b) diffusion and (c) institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, ways of doing things and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of EU decisions and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourses, identities, political structures and public policies". Although arguably this definition is too encompassing to survive as a clear definition of what Europeanization is, it does underline the importance of change not only in the output of political systems, in other words public policies but also in the underlying structures and identities.

The academic study of the impact of Europeanization on the national political parties dates back to the time when the members of the European Parliament (EP) were first directly elected by the citizens of member states in 1979. Prior to this date, there was a common conception that the EU had little or no effect on the party politics. Following the period after the direct elections to the European Parliament, the legislative politics within EU has gained a degree of autonomy and made a giant step for the reduction of the European democratic deficit. What made the European Parliament different than the other EU institutions was that the groupings were not based on the territory but rather gathered around partisan lines. The national parties and the parties within the European Parliament have a strong tie and many MEPs are also members of the national political parties, and this can be considered as a "further Europeanization" inside Europe itself, which affected national party policies.

When we look at the political parties' strategies in politics in EU-member states, we see that parties chose electoral strategies and decided whether to split, form, run alone, merge and ally based on an evaluation of their electoral chances; but they also took into consideration the opinion of their European partners. That is why, I would agree to Sprova, by saying that: "Legitimacy derived from the EU level is crucial that parties chose strategies that might not have been entirely to their benefit in terms of office-seeking ambition, but that satisfied the will of the Europarties"².

III. What kind of role does Europeanization play in Turkish history?

Beyond Expectations

In order to test Ladrech's areas on Turkish case during JDP rule between 2002 and 2007, it is important to clarify what Europeanization means for Turkish society briefly. Europeanization's considerable role in Turkish political and cultural history shows that Europeanization is not a process which is equal to being a member of EC/EU, but it is a process of conducting ties. For instance, in the Turkish case, despite still being a non-member state, Europeanization dates back to Ottoman period³. The Ottoman economy became linked to European markets as early as the sixteenth century⁴ and Europeans eventually dominated Turkish market in the nineteenth century⁵. Ottoman Empire was closely linked with demands for modernization from different sections of the political and economic elites. That is why, Ottoman reformist Sultans, applied a series of reforms that presented in the Tanzimat Reform of the late 1830's and - in the next few decades - in a series of legal, political and economic reforms (Islahat Reform in 1856, First Constitutional period in 1876 and Second Constitutional period in 1908). The changes introduced by the reformist Sultans of the nineteenth century could be interpreted as attempts to embrace progressively aspects of Western modernity in response to popular or elite pressure. Clearly, these reforms were not the product of a "self-generating societal process"⁶ and were often characterized by a top-down character and by the defensive attempts of the modernizing Sultans to delimit the scope of Ottoman society's transformation.

Founder of Turkish Republic Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was much more aggressive and determinate than reformist Sultans in the nineteenth century. Having decided to build a modern nation state out of the ruins of the multi-ethnic Ottoman Empire, Mustafa Kemal embarked on an ambitious program of modernization of Turkish society, polity and economy, using as a model (albeit with a highly selective interpretation) European modernity.

² Maria Sprova, "Europarties and party development in EU-candidate states: The case of Bulgaria", p. 804

³ Spyros A. Sofos, "Reluctant Europeans? European Integration and the Transformation of Turkish Politics", *South European Society and Politics*, pp. 243-60

⁴ İlkey Sunar, "State and Economy in the Ottoman Empire"

⁵ Reşat Kasaba, "The Ottoman Empire and the World Economy"

⁶ H. Keyder, "Rethinking modernity and National Identity", pp. 39-40

In view of this vision of modernity of the republican people, it has become virtually common place to accept today that Atatürk “believed that Turkey’s future lay with Europe and the West”⁷.

Here, I want to make the point that modernization is a wider concept than Europeanization, and when it comes to Turkish historical process of modernization, we can observe Europeanization since modernity was considered in European countries for Turkish intelligentsia in that certain time period. Sofos, clarifies the link between the modernization of Turkish society and Europeanization of Turkish society with Kemalist revolution as: “Indeed, this assertion can be supported by the fact that Western modernity, by which Atatürk was largely influenced, was in effect coterminous at the time with European modernity and that, therefore, the process of modernization he set in motion equals Europeanization”⁸.

IV. Robert Ladrech and Europeanization’s effect on party system on 5 areas

Europeanization in political science has been referred to very generally as “becoming more European like”. More specifically than this, one of the earliest conceptualizations of the term was made by Robert Ladrech who defined Europeanization simply as “an incremental process of re-orienting the direction and shape of politics to the extent that EC political and economic dynamics become part of the organizational logic of national politics and policy making”. This emphasizes what is known as the top-down approach to Europeanization with change emanating from the impact of the Union onto the national policy. From a bottom-up approach Europeanization occurs when states begin to affect the policy of the European Union in a given area. According to Robert Ladrech, “political parties have been affected by European integration, not the least of which their operating environments, national political systems, have themselves been transformed by the development and impact of EU policy-making (the Europeanization of domestic politics and policy-making)”. Robert Ladrech further suggests that Europeanization should be seen as an independent variable; and the constraints it poses on the policies of the governments and “the public perception of growing irrelevance of conventional politics” as dependent variable. Therefore, European integration influences the operating arenas, or environments, of national political parties, and the Europeanization of parties is consequently a dependent variable. For that matter, one should study the change in the environment of a country in order to analyze the degree of the impact of Europeanization on political parties. Robert Ladrech defined 5 areas of Europeanization’s impact on political parties as follows;

1-) Programmatic change: One of the most explicit types of evidence of Europeanization will be modifications in party programmes. This can be measured quantitatively and qualitatively by increased references to EU in party programmes. Ladrech clarifies programmatic change with two examples which are Italian Communist Party (PCI) and French Socialist Party (PS). In the French Socialist Party (PS), the appearance of specific recommendations for the direction of EU policy, namely in public services, besides mentions of the need to strengthen the transnational party federation, the Party of European Socialists (PES), have appeared more regularly since the late 1990s⁹. In the example of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) to the Democrats of the Left (DS), explicit and positive references to the EU, in Italian modernization and as an anchor of the supranational commitments of the party were made, eventually “instrumentalizing the EU as part of party strategy”¹⁰.

2-) Organizational change: Affiliation with EU institutions generates organizational changes. Internal party rules and statutes regarding the role and influence to the European Parliament in party congresses and leadership bodies may reflect the greater profile of European policy. For instance the British Labour Party, besides many parties, has included the leader of their national delegation to the EP on party leadership bodies, such as the National Executive Committee. Many social democratic and Christian democratic parties have incorporated references to their respective transnational party federations, the PES and EPP, into party statutes. Specifically, in Belgium, the EP delegation has full voting rights at Socialist party congresses.

3-) Patterns of party competition: The politicization of the EU may become a concern for party management, even leading to the creation of new political parties.

⁷ Muftuler-Bac, Meltem, Turkey’s Relations with a Changing Europe, p. 17

⁸ Spyros A. Sofos, “Reluctant Europeans? European Integration and the Transformation of Turkish Politics”, South European Society and Politics, p. 245

⁹ Robert Ladrech, “Europeanization and Political Parties: Towards a Framework of Analyses”, p. 9

¹⁰ Philippe, Marlière, “Social democracy in southern Europe and the challenge of European integration”, p. 13

EU issue becomes a serious matter in national political competition and what is more, usual party politics are changed according to EU objectives. British politics provides two examples of changing party strategy focusing on European policy, one positive, the Labour Party, and one negative, the Conservative Party. Although background factors accounting for a new direction regarding the EU may be different – policy evolution in the case of Labour¹¹, factionalism in the Conservatives – each leadership has sought to exploit the EU as an issue for electoral purposes. In France, the Rassemblement pour la France (RPF), formed by defectors from the neo-Gaullist party RPR at the time of the 1999 EP elections, attempts to represent a mainstream conservative party underlining “national sovereignty”, an important component of party identity.

4-) Party-government relations: Intergovernmental relations within EU bodies, may distance the government and the party leader from party programme in an unintended fashion. Party-government relations may become ‘push-pull’ in nature about EU affairs. Government is ‘pushed’ by party to maximalist positions on matters similar to party programme, especially in the area of social policy for social democratic parties. Government is ‘pulled’ by party to minimalist positions on institutional change, for instance, deeper integration that can be outside of the notions of state sovereignty. “EU competence in a new policy area triggers a new constellation of interest group strategies, which may imply a de-emphasis on party relations”¹². Different orientations between government and party on EU issues may lead changes in the party management, namely greater control over the party apparatus like in the case of the British Labour Party or more flexible or looser relations over EU issues as in the case of the Swedish Social Democratic Party (SAP)¹³.

5-) Relations beyond the national party system: Europeanization may result in new perspectives on transnational cooperation with parties from other EU member states to the extent that new organizational and programmatic activities are promoted. The four major party families represented in the European Parliament have some form of transnational party organization affiliating member national parties. The social democratic Party of European Socialists and the Christian democratic European People’s Party are the furthest along in the co-operation stage, with a permanent organization and frequent and prepared interaction¹⁴.

V. The Turkish Case: Whether JDP rule (2002-2007) Europeanized according to the Robert Ladrech’s five areas

The period since the December 1999 Helsinki summit has been a time of remarkable economic and political change in Turkey. The EU impact was already evident in the 1990s, with the 1995 Customs Union Agreement exerting a significant impact in terms of initiating important economic and political reforms. Yet arguably the real breakthrough occurred and the momentum of ‘Europeanization’ gathered considerable pace, once the goal of full EU membership became a concrete possibility with the recognition in 1999 of Turkey’s candidate status. Political parties have emerged as agents of Europeanization, while themselves being transformed in the Europeanization process¹⁵.

November 2002 general election was a turning point in Turkish political party system. Long years later a political party achieved the majority of the seats in the parliament and got the chance to form the government only by itself. A very stable government was needed in Turkey in order to achieve the required reforms and put them into practice. Hence, JDP’s single party government was seen as a hope for Turkey’s entry to the European Union. The parties that were the coalition partners of the previous government were said to be “punished” by the voters, since none of them were able to pass the 10 percent threshold required for winning seats in the parliament. On the other hand, RPP became the main opposition party by taking 19% of the vote and winning 179 seats. JDP was first welcomed with suspicion by the military because of its Islamist roots. After all, many party members were once employed within the former Virtue Party, which was shut down because of its Islamist agenda.

¹¹ Philip Daniels, ‘From Hostility to “Constructive Engagement”’: The Europeanisation of the Labour Party’, pp. 72-79

¹² Robert Ladrech, “Europeanization and Political Parties: Towards a Framework of Analyses”, p. 11

¹³ Nicholas Aylott, “Between Europe and Unity: The Case of the Swedish Social Democrats”, pp. 119-136

¹⁴ Thomas M. Dietz, ‘European Federation of Green Parties’, in Karl Magnus Johansson and Peter Zervakis (eds) *European Political Parties Between Cooperation and Integration*

¹⁵ Ziya Öniş, “Conservative globalists versus defensive nationalists: political parties and paradoxes of Europeanization in Turkey”, pp. 247-249

JDP declared that the party has no hidden agenda of transforming secularist Turkey into an Islamic state. On contrary, JDP expressed strong commitment to the EU reforms and affirmed that the party's first task would be to get Turkey into the European Union. Indeed, in three years time after the elections, Turkey went through a very radical transformation, which could not be foreseen a decade ago. This transformation was not only available for the country's laws but also for the party who realizes them; JDP-Justice and Development Party.

1-Policy Programmatic Content

According to Sofos' overlook to Turkey's political atmosphere in that conjuncture, the prospect of a deepened relationship between the EU and Turkey has played a significant role in domestic Turkish politics. According to him, Europeanization, in other words being more European, triggered market liberalization under JDP rule and led the economic transformation required, to adapt to the market liberalization necessary for EU membership, combined with the EU prerequisite of democratization, is in the process of undermining the authoritarian, paternalistic culture of state intervention. Turkey's political dilemma may in this sense be yet another example of the effect that EU-inspired deregulation has had previously in societies sharing a southern European state tradition. Europeanization process in Turkey can be considered as a major motivation in domestic politics that go beyond expected politics and that is why lead to the dilemmas for Turkish society as far as its modernization and/or Europeanization is concerned is considered as unique¹⁶.

As a result, coming from an anti-Western Islamist tradition, JDP adopted a liberal democratic party programme and embraced EU full membership ideal. The party made pro-EU reforms especially between 2002-2004 period with a considerable performance. JDP's party programme and electoral brochures were full of references to European Union and democratic ideals unlike Welfare Party (Refah Partisi) or Felicity Party (Saadet Partisi) which are clearly stated at the party's web site, <http://web.akparti.org.tr/>). This means a programmatic transformation within the political Islam tradition, due to the impact of "Europeanization process" which gained a momentum by 1999 Helsinki Summit.

After becoming a candidate country for EU membership, JDP has undergone tremendous reforms. The government has passed several constitutional amendments to meet the Copenhagen criteria and align Turkey's legislation to European law. Among these reforms, the abolition of the death penalty in all circumstances was considered as a radical transformation for Turkey, due to the fact that it used to be exercised in Turkey before. This change was considered a move that was particularly welcomed in Brussels, and a remarkable effort towards Europeanization, held by Justice and Development Party¹⁷. Moreover, the prohibition of torture of prisoners, improvements in the situation of women and women's rights, permission to broadcast television programs in Kurdish, and the reduction of the role of the military in the political arena, were the reforms to be more "European like". Derived from the reform areas, it can be noted that the government has pragmatically ignored expectations of conservative Islamists in Turkey in that conjuncture, instead made "European values Ankara's values"¹⁸ and placing the requirements for EU membership as its highest priority.

Another important point to note here is that, these reforms were not done by "a natural outcome of public support for further democratization" but it was the outcome of the government's move towards being more European, in short: "the Europeanization impact in the government's policies. According to Özbudun, "...democratization, has become a universal norm in the post Cold-War period, as well as an outcome of Turkey's inevitable integration with the greater world. The ease with which reforms on certain taboos, particularly concerning the role of military in public politics and the Kurdish rights, have been adopted is testament to this new socio-political environment in Turkey"¹⁹.

¹⁶ Spyros A. Sofos, "Reluctant Europeans? European Integration and the Transformation of Turkish Politics", *South European Society and Politics*, p. 258

¹⁷ Turkey's parliament abolished the death penalty except in times of war on 3 August 2002. On 9 January 2004 Turkey signed protocol 13 to the European Convention on Human Rights with regard to the abolition of the death penalty in all circumstances, including during wartime. The Turkish parliament ratified protocol 13 on 20 February 2006.

¹⁸ Recep Tayyip Erdogan, "Why the EU Needs Turkey" (speech at Oxford University, 28 May 2004), at www.sant.ox.ac.uk/areastudies/lectures/Erdogan.pdf

¹⁹ Ergun Özbudun & Serap Yazıcı, "Democratization reforms in Turkey", p. 3

2-) Organizational change

Turkey began to make accession negotiations with the European Union on 3 October 2005²⁰ and JDP appointed the minister of Foreign Affairs Ali Babacan as Turkey's chief negotiator for EU accession talks. This was a new and very important post in Turkish politics. However, Babacan's wide responsibility as the Foreign Minister created problems and became a point of criticism both in Turkey and in Europe. Recently, in 2009 Egemen Bağış was appointed as Turkey's chief negotiator and unlike Babacan he did not assume any other responsibility that could limit his time for EU talks.

3-) Patterns of party competition

JDP has become a pro-EU party and used this stance very well in the 2002 (JDP took 34 % of the votes) and 2007 (JDP took 47 % of the votes) general elections. Unlike JDP, Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi) has become a more skeptic party for EU membership. We can claim that JDP's pro-EU stance forced RPP to become more skeptic in EU issue because of taking the support of anti-EU and EU-skeptic masses. In that sense although RPP had never become anti-EU party and accepted Atatürk's heritage of Westernization, it transformed into an ulusalcı party from a social democratic one. Politicization of EU issue also helped JDP to garner more votes from secular, liberal and social democratic circles and RPP to gain votes from nationalist circles. Nationalistic Action Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi) on the other hand in a sense felt the need to soften its aggressive nationalist and anti-European rhetoric and has become a Euro-skeptic party rather than an anti-EU party.

4-) Party-government relations

Similar to Ladrech's argument about the impact of europeanization on party-government relation, in Turkey, Europeanization process distanced the government and the party leader from party programme in an unintended fashion. There occurred a push-pull process between the party itself and norms and values put forward by the "former dynamics" of the party. As I stated above, the change in party program triggers the change in party-government relations because there would be a superior authority -namely Europeanization-, which can contradict the party's initial orientation.

In this regard, Smith notes that, a year after Erdogan's "electoral victory, Turkey's military, judicial, media and bureaucratic circles still regard his neo-Islamist party with suspicion. Until his political conversion three years ago, Erdogan was a radical Islamist who told his followers that it was impossible "to be a secularist and Muslim at the same time" and, as mayor of Istanbul, he banned alcohol from cafés and bars. In 1999, he was imprisoned for five months for "inciting hatred on the basis of religion" after he had read a poem to a rally that included the lines: "The mosques are our barracks, the domes our helmets, the minarets our bayonets and the faithful our soldiers."²¹ Derived from his background, it is easily seen that the reputation of him comes from his conservative and neo-Islamist politics and what is more is that, he and JDP had the electoral victory by the votes who support his former studies and his general perception in politics, even his colleges and his cabinet was supporting his radical and bitter declarations.

²⁰ - On 17 December 2004, EU decided to start accession negotiations with Turkey.

- On 3 October 2005, three chapters of the Acquis Communautaire (Right of Establishment for Companies & Freedom to provide Services, Financial Services and Financial Control) opened.

- On 12 June 2006, chapter on Science and Research opened and provisionally closed.

- On 11 December 2006, continued dispute over Cyprus incited EU to freeze talks on eight chapters (Right of Establishment for Companies & Freedom to provide Services, Financial Services, Free Movement of Goods, Agriculture & Rural Development, Fisheries, Transport Policy, Customs Union and External Relations) and to state that no chapters would be closed until a resolution is found.

- On 29 March 2007, chapter on Enterprise and Industrial Regulations opened.

- On 25 June 2007, chapters on Statistics and Financial Control opened, but the opening of the chapter on Economic and Monetary Policy was blocked by French President Nicholas Sarkozy.

- On 19 December 2007, chapters on Health & Consumer Protection and on Trans-European Transport opened.

- On 17 June 2008, chapters on Company Law and Intellectual Property Law opened.

- On 19 December 2008, chapters on Economic & Monetary Policy and Information Society & Media opened.

²¹ Helena Smith, "Erdogan's veiled motives", p. 12

However, when he came in the office, it is observable that, due to the Europeanization impact on politics, he gave the priority to Europeanization, which means “westernization” for Turkey and to do so, he had to follow the way Brussels pointed out. The distortion of direction, eventually created a distance between him and his “followers” who were not only the JDP-voters but also his fellows inside of the JDP.

5-) Relations beyond the national party system

JDP found partners among European parties and strengthened its position. Silvio Berlusconi and his party Forza Italia (The People of Freedom) and José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero and his party Spanish Socialist Workers' Party were Tayyip Erdoğan and JDP's closest partners within the EU. JDP's close links to Spanish Socialist Workers' Party and some other social democratic parties weakened its competitor Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi)'s position, in domestic politics. For instance; Berlusconi and Erdoğan participated in a Turkish-Italian Business Council meeting in İstanbul, in 2003 and Speaking at the meeting, Erdoğan said that he had no doubt that Italy's support would continue during its term presidency and that he was pleased to host the Italian premier. “Starting accession negotiations with the EU is one of Turkey's top priorities, and our Parliament will do whatever this goal requires,” he stated. “Our government is determined to carry out the Copenhagen criteria as soon as possible.” On the other hand, speaking at the meeting, Berlusconi said that Italy had always favored Turkey's full membership. “Italy's support will grow even more during its term presidency,” said Berlusconi. “A greater Europe will only be possible with the accession to the Union of Turkey, Belarus, and the Russian Federation”²², he stated. Since valid efforts by Berlusconi for Turkey's full-membership, are recognizable but not enough, to conduct close relationship with European politicians and parties, for the sake of being more European like, does not necessarily lead to the full membership of Turkey, however dialogue between European parties/policy-makers seemed attractive for Erdoğan and a considerable number of trips to Europe were organized. All the negotiations done during these trips, again “Europeanized” the party itself and the politics of the party, consequently.

VI. Conclusion

Finally, I would clearly state that Justice and Development Party has been effected the ongoing Europeanization process during its rule between 2002-2007, in the areas that Ladrech put forward to analyze the Europeanization's impact on political parties. I observed that the process lead to the Europeanization of domestic politics and policy-making in the certain time period, with references to major changes in JDP's expected policy making, norms and values. That is why, this is a considerable sign that Europeanization process is much more than the transformation of the society from bottom to up, as Ladrech defined in his “bottom-up” approach, but it is notable to say that Europeanization in JDP rule in the certain time period, affected policies directly and artificially for the sake of full-membership aim of the government. This highest priority of the government made the party “Europeanized” according to the areas Ladrech suggested. The Justice and Development Party's transformation after 2007 general elections is left out of this research and it deserves a new study since the party gives strong signals of reconsidering Turkey's EU membership bid and orientates Turkey more to the Islamic world in recent years.

²² “Office of the prime minister, directorate general of pres and information”, 13.05.2003

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