T.C.
TURKISH-GERMAN UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

PARTY-BASED EUROSCEPTICISM: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS BETWEEN UKIP AND AKP

MASTER'S THESIS

Gencay Mert KÖSE

ADVISOR

Asst. Prof. Philipp DECKER

ISTANBUL, July 2023

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is an original work. I also declare that, I have acted in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct at all stages of the work including preparation, data collection and analysis. I have cited and referenced all the information that is not original to this work.

Gencay Mert Köse

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ÖZET

Parti Temelli Avrupa Şüpheciliği: UKIP ve AKP Arasında Karşılaştırmalı Bir Analiz

1950'li yıllardan itibaren ekonomik bir iş birliği temelinde başlayan Avrupa Birliği entegrasyonu, 1990'lı yıllara gelindiğinde siyasi bir birlik halini almıştır. Bu tarihten sonra Birlik hem kendi içinde derinleşmeye hem de yeni ülkelere doğru genişlemeye başlamıştır. Bu hızla gelişen entegrasyon sürecine ve hatta Avrupa Birliği'nin kendisine tepki gösteren siyasi partiler ise gittikçe güçlenmeye ve sayıları artmaya başlamıştır. Bu tez çalışmasında, parti-temelli Avrupa şüpheciliği konsepti, genel literatürden farklı olarak Avrupa Birliği üyesi olmayan iki ülkeden Avrupa şüphecisi olarak tanımlanabilecek iki siyasi parti üzerinden karşılaştırma yapılarak anlatılmıştır. Bu siyasi partiler, bir dönem Avrupa Birliği üyesi olmuş fakat 2016 yılında Avrupa Birliği'nden ayrılmış olan Birleşik Krallık'tan Birleşik Krallık Bağımsızlık Partisi ve uzun yıllardır Avrupa Birliği'ne tam üye olmayı bekleyen Türkiye'den Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisidir. Bu tez çalışmasında, bu iki siyasi partinin kuruluşları, tarihleri ve ideolojilerinin yanı sıra, Avrupa Birliği'ne karşı olan bakış açıları ve tutumları seçim manifestoları üzerinden incelenecek birbiriyle benzer ve farklı noktaları ortaya çıkartılmıştır. Karşılaştırma yapılırken iki siyasi partinin seçim manifestolarında hem Avrupa Birliği'ni doğrudan hedef alan hem de dolaylı olarak çeşitli temalar üzerinden Avrupa Birliği'ne atfedilebilecek ifadeler, frekansları ve olumlu veya olumsuz olarak nitelikleri yönünden incelenmiştir. Manuel metin analizi yönteminin ağırlıklı olarak kullanıldığı bu tez çalışmasında Birleşik Krallık Bağımsız Partisi'nin, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi'ne göre çok daha sert ve tepkisel bir tutum takındığı ve Avrupa Birliği üyeliğinin kategorik olarak Birleşik Krallık'ın bağımsızlığına, demokrasisine, güvenliğine ve insanların refahına zarar verdiği argümanı ile reddedildiği görülmüştür. Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi ise, Avrupa Birliği üyeliğini stratejik bir hedef olarak görmekte fakat Avrupa Birliği'nin Türkiye'ye olan tutumu nedeniyle üyeliğin gerçekleşmeyeceği ve Türkiye'nin kendi eksenine dönerek, belirli bir blok ve kutuptan bağımsız olarak, bölgesel etkin bir güç olma hedefi doğrultusunda hareket etmesi vurgusu gözlemlenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Avrupa Birliği, Avrupa Entegrasyonu, Avrupa Şüpheciliği, Birleşik Krallık Bağımsızlık Partisi, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi

ABSTRACT

Party-Based Euroscepticism: A Comparative Analysis between UKIP and AKP

The integration of the European Union, which commenced in the 1950s through economic cooperation, transformed into a political union by the 1990s. Subsequently, the Union embarked on both internal deepening and expansion towards new countries. As this integration process rapidly developed, political parties that expressed opposition to the European Union began to gain strength and multiply in numbers. In this thesis study, the concept of party-based Euroscepticism is explained through a comparative analysis of two political parties from non-European Union member countries that can be characterized as Eurosceptic. This approach deviates from the general literature from that point of view and provides a detailed account by examining and comparing these two political parties. One is the United Kingdom Independence Party from the United Kingdom which was previously a member of the European Union but left in 2020. The other is the Justice and Development Party from Turkey, which has been aspiring to become a full member of the European Union for a considerable period. In this thesis study, the establishment, history, and ideologies of these two political parties, along with their perspectives and attitudes towards the European Union are examined through the analysis of their election manifestos. This analysis aims to highlight both the similarities and differences between these parties, revealing their respective stances towards the European Union. In this comparative analysis, the election manifestos of the two political parties are examined in terms of their frequencies and qualitative characteristics of statements related to the European Union. This includes expressions that directly target the European Union as well as those that indirectly attribute certain themes to the European Union. By examining these aspects, the study aims to identify and evaluate the similarities and differences between the two parties' views on the European Union. In this thesis, which predominantly employs manual text analysis, it is observed that the United Kingdom Independence Party adopts a significantly more rigid and reactive attitude compared to the Justice and Development Party. The United Kingdom Independence Party vehemently rejects EU membership, arguing that it categorically undermines the independence, democracy, security, and well-being of the United Kingdom. The Justice and Development Party, on the other hand, views European Union membership as a strategic goal. However,

due to the European Union's stance towards Turkey, it is observed that AKP believes that membership will not be realized. Instead, the emphasis is placed on Turkey turning towards its own axis and aiming to become a regionally influential power, independent of specific blocs or poles.

Key Words: European Union, European Integration, Euroscepticism, United Kingdom Independence Party, Justice and Development Party

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AKP : Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi)
BNP : British National Party
CAP : Common Agricultural Policy
CFP : Common Fisheries Policy
CFSDP : Common Foreign, Security and Defence Policy
CFTA : Common Free Trade Area
CHP : Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi)
EC : European Communities
ECB : European Central Bank
ECHR : European Court of Human Rights
ECJ. : European Court of Justice
EMU : European Monetary Union
EP : European Parliament
EPP : European People's Party
EU : European Union
FN : National Front (Front National)
FP : Virtue Party (Fazilet Partisi)
FPÖ : Austrian Freedom Party (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs)
GDP : Gross Domestic Product
IMF : International Monetary Fund
LN : Northern League (Lega Nord)
M5S : Five Star Movement (Movimento Cinque Stelle)

MGH : National Outlook Movement (Milli Görüş Hareketi)

MHP : Nationalist Movement Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi)

NATO : Northern Atlantic Treaty Organization

QMV : Qualitative Majority Vote

RP : Welfare Party (Refah Partisi)

SCO : Shangai Cooperation Organization

SP : Felicity Party (Saadet Partisi)

TRNC : Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

UK : United Kingdom

UKIP : United Kingdom Independence Party

UN : United Nations

V-DEM : Variety of Democracy

WTO : World Trade Organization

YRP : Welfare Again Party (Yeniden Refah Partisi)

YSP : Green Left Party (Yeşil Sol Parti)

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1. INTRODUCTION

According to the 2023 Democracy Report by the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Institute, approximately 72% of the world's population, equivalent to around 5.7 billion people, is living under autocracy (V-Dem Institute, 2023, p. 6). The report also highlights the disappearance of all progress in the field of democracy globally over the past 35 years (ibid). The increasing strength and prevalence of this autocratic trend not only undermine societies striving for democracy but also erode the achievements of societies that have already attained democratic gains.

The process of democratization in Eastern Europe, which reached its peak with the European Union (EU) integration following factors such as the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the fall of the Iron Curtain in the 1990s, is directly and significantly impacted by these developments. The recent example of this is evident in the Russia - Ukraine War, which poses the greatest security threat to the European continent since the Second World War. Hungary's resistance to participating in the EU's sanctions, its criticism, and its alignment with Russia can be seen as a clear manifestation of this influence, jeopardizing the unity and response of the EU (Carnegie Europe, 2023).

In a security crisis of this nature, some countries prioritize their national interests over the common interests of the EU. While countries in the Western Balkans as well as Moldova and Ukraine strive for fast-track EU membership, many countries within the EU perceive the EU as a structure that has lost its importance and power. This situation leads these countries to shape society through both ideological and political interests by taking positions against the EU and utilizing this issue. Consequently, political parties that view Europe with suspicion increasingly gain votes and the possibility of coming into power. Given the increasing significance of this phenomenon, conducting academic research on Euroscepticism and expanding its scope will not only enable us to analyze and comprehend this strategy, but also allow us to make observations about the future of EU integration.

The concept of Euroscepticism has been extensively employed to comprehend and elucidate the underlying causes for unfavorable attitudes, critiques, and to a certain extent, rejection of various aspects associated with the EU, European integration, or Europe in a broader sense (Hooghe & Marks, 2007, p. 120; Halikiopoulou et al., 2012, p. 1; Bertoncini & Koenig, 2014, p. 8; Brack & Startin, 2015, p. 239).

Initially, Euroscepticism was closely associated with the British scepticism and reservations regarding European integration as the country consistently took a critical stance (Harmsen & Spiering, 2004, p. 13). The British opposition to complete economic and political integration led to earliest usage of Euroscepticism in the British newspaper, The Times, on November 11, 1985, as a means to reaffirm the British "anti-marketeer" position (Spiering, 2004). Examining the origins of this concept reveals that the objection primarily targeted the European Communities (EC) or European integration. However, initially, this objection remained confined to marginal political parties and did not gain influence within the mainstream political arena, given the prevailing positive atmosphere and enthusiasm towards further integration (Brack & Startin, 2015).

After the imposition of the Maastricht Treaty, the term Euroscepticism became a tangible expression of grievances and objections towards the transformation of the EC into a politically integrated union (Hooghe & Marks, 2007). It signified the increasing public reaction to the rapid progress of further integration, often associated with the perceived encroachment on national sovereignty. Significant milestones such as the introduction of the euro and the Schengen agreement, the 2004 enlargement, the failure of the 2005 constitutional referendums, and the Lisbon Treaty in 2007 were notable instances where the growing and mainstreaming Euroscepticism influenced the course of European integration (Brack & Startin, 2015, p. 239). Furthermore, the 2008 financial and economic crisis posed a significant challenge to the issue of trust in the European project. Brack & Startin also argue that this crisis played a pivotal role in pushing Eurosceptic discourses and political parties into the mainstream political arena, reflecting a more intolerant and hostile public opinion (ibid).

According to Halikiopoulou et al. (2012), Euroscepticism primarily revolves around three main areas of objection towards further integration. These areas include opposition to

economic integration, particularly the economic and monetary union; opposition to the expansion of the EU; and the emphasis on preserving national cultures (ibid).

Flood (2002) argues that Euroscepticism should not be considered an ideology itself, but rather a component of ideology. He suggests that Euroscepticism serves as a tool to express grievances against the EU and European integration, and it is influenced by various features, perspectives, or sides of other ideologies (ibid). For instance, right-wing parties may emphasize national sovereignty, while left-wing parties may oppose the liberal aspects of the single market (ibid). In this sense, Euroscepticism can be seen as a response to specific developments or decisions related to the EU and European integration (de Wilde & Trenz, 2012, p. 541). De Wilde and Trenz (2012) further argue that Eurosceptics find ample opportunities to voice their criticisms due to the dynamic nature of European integration, which is constantly evolving, and the EU's "unfinished" character, which allows for scrutiny on various issues.

Primarily, Euroscepticism has emerged as a response to the process of European integration, becoming its very raison d'être (Oğurlu, 2019). Opposition to further enlargement, including rejection of membership or decisions to withdraw, is often a catalyst for Eurosceptic reactions (ibid). Steenbergen et al. (2007) argue that disagreements on specific subjects, policies, or decisions create a widening gap between public opinion and the political elites, eroding trust and fueling further reactions. Building on this, Wessels (2007) categorizes Eurosceptics as "critical Europeans" who aim for a better Europe or EU, proposing alternative solutions to prevent weakening, and "adamant Eurosceptics" who ultimately advocate for the complete rejection and dissolution of the EU (p. 300).

Based on the aforementioned definitions, there is resistance against the EU project which is perceived as a structure devised by the elites, imposing rules that undermine countries' own identities and sovereignty in favor of the elites' interests. At times, the opposition is not a complete rejection but rather a response to the trajectory and specific policies of the EU. In this sense, it should be emphasized that there cannot be a clear-cut definition, and each political party exhibits a different type of opposition. Due to these variations, it would be highly beneficial to understand how different political parties embrace Eurosceptic attitude, and how they align or diverge from each other within this general trend. In this context, this thesis study will compare the United Kingdom Independence Party

(UKIP) from the UK and the Justice and Development Party (AKP) from Turkey which can be identified as "Eurosceptic."

These two political parties represent a significant convergence and divergence. Firstly, neither of them is a member of the EU at the moment. It is observed that extensive research has been conducted on EU member states under the concept of Euroscepticism in the literature. However, in this case, a comparison will be made between two political parties that are not EU members but are directly linked to the EU through geographical, historical, political, economic, and security aspects, making them part of the EU integration process. The key distinguishing feature between them is that the UK was once an EU member and chose to completely close the door to membership by leaving the EU, while Turkey has maintained its vision of full EU membership for decades, remaining a country that does not officially "close the door."

In this regard, these two parties will serve as case studies for examining the EU integration from two different perspectives. While UKIP aims for the UK's departure from EU membership, the main goal for AKP was initially full EU membership. However, it can be observed that AKP has also experienced a certain degree of "departure" from the EU, indicating that EU membership is no longer significant and a primary objective, which will be clearly detailed in the analysis section. Therefore, conducting a comparison of Euroscepticism between these two countries, located at the outer borders of the EU and not being EU members, will provide us with important insights into the EU's external relations and its global positioning. Consequently, when comparing the Eurosceptic positions of UKIP and AKP, the following key questions will be addressed:

• What are the parties' political ideologies, founding purposes, and perspectives towards the EU? How do they perceive the EU through various issues?
• What are the main similarities and differences in the parties' perspectives on the EU?
• How can we position them in Eurosceptic classification?

The thesis consists of a total of nine chapters. Following the introduction and methodology chapters, an evaluation will be made based on the existing literature on Euroscepticism. This section will examine how various authors define Euroscepticism and classify political parties under this concept. As a result of these findings, it will explain how a

generally "Eurosceptic" individual or party views the EU in various areas and how they express their opposition. Next, the reasons for the emergence of Euroscepticism will be examined. Particularly, the examination will focus on how various factors such as culture and economy contribute to and fuel Euroscepticism. Subsequently, different approaches to Euroscepticism will be explained, drawing from the literature. Finally, Euroscepticism will be examined from the perspectives of various ideologies.

The chapter number four will focus on a literature review concerning UKIP. It will examine the establishment, purpose, and ideology of UKIP. Additionally, this section will explore how UKIP has utilized anti-EU sentiment, particularly in relation to immigration, and how this strategy has contributed to the party's growth and increased voter support. Finally, it will explain the changes and transformations UKIP has undergone over the years and its current position.

The fifth chapter will analyze the findings derived from UKIP's election manifestos. It will examine how UKIP's manifestos directly address the concept of the EU, EU integration, EU policies, and EU institutions. Furthermore, it will explore UKIP's Euroscepticism through secondary themes present in the manifestos. This section will investigate how the manifestos reflect a negative stance towards the EU by addressing themes such as sovereignty, economy, immigration, identity, opposition to regulations, and democracy, in addition to the topic of leaving the EU.

The sixth chapter will present a literature review focusing on AKP, which is the second case study of this thesis. Similar to UKIP, it will explore the establishment, purpose, ideology, and perspective towards the EU of AKP. Since AKP has exhibited a changing attitude over the years, the chapter will specifically examine the shifts in AKP's perspective towards the EU through various turning points. It will also discuss how these changes have been characterized in the literature.

The seventh chapter will focus on the analysis of coding results from AKP's manifestos. Similar to UKIP, it will examine how AKP perceives the EU directly and through related themes in its election manifestos. The chapter will demonstrate the changes in AKP's perspective towards the EU over the years. The general coding categories will include AKP's views on the EU project, EU rules and integration. Sub-coding categories will cover themes

such as democracy and fundamental rights, security, sovereignty, cultural issues, the Cyprus issue, cooperation with the EU, economic factors, and AKP's vision as a "regional power." The findings derived from the analysis of the manifestos will shed light on AKP's position regarding the EU.

In the eighth chapter, a comparison will be made between the two parties based on the findings. The similarities and differences between the two parties will be identified through the common themes they share. Additionally, the discussion will focus on the unique and significant aspects of each party in relation to the themes that are not shared. It will explore why those specific themes are important and how they shape the Eurosceptic positions of each party. By examining these aspects, a comprehensive analysis of the similarities and distinctions between UKIP and AKP will be presented.

Finally, in the conclusion chapter, the overall analysis results will be discussed and observations will be made regarding what we can understand and expect for the future of EU integration. In this regard, the main purpose of this thesis is to shed light on the direction in which the future of the EU may evolve under the "threat" posed by actors who hold negative views towards the EU project. The study aims to examine the rise of actors critical of the EU and explore the potential implications for the future of the EU. By examining this phenomenon, the thesis aims to provide insights into the potential trajectory of the EU in the face of such challenges.

2. METHODOLOGY

This thesis study, aiming to examine and compare the Euroscepticism of AKP and UKIP, takes inspiration from two different works to answer the research questions stated above. The first one is a study conducted by Heinisch et al. in 2020, comparing the positions against the EU between the Northern League (Lega Nord - LN) from Italy and the Austrian Freedom Party (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs - FPÖ) from Austria, based on speeches and manifestos during the 2014 EP elections. The authors stated that they used the method recommended by Taggart and Szczerbiak (2008) for this comparison (p. 5).

According to this recommendation, they point out that the authors should focus more on party programs, speeches, statements and election manifestos (p. 5; quotation from Taggart

and Szczerbiak, 2008, p. 9). In this regard, the authors analyzed the 2014 EP election manifestos of the parties and the speeches of party leaders during the period of the 2014 EP elections (2013-2015). In their manual text analysis, they examined all expressions related to the EU and categorized them into two different categories: general orientation and sub-codes representing a policy position. In these analyses, the coded expressions were compared based on whether they were positive or negative in nature regarding the parties' perspective on the EU. Specifically, the authors have aimed to demonstrate the positions of these political parties towards the EU within this specific period by indicating the positive and negative frequencies of these expressions with numbers.

Another work that provided inspiration is the comparative research conducted by Borriello and Brack (2019) among UKIP, Front National (FN), Podemos and Five Star Movement (M5S - Movimento Cinque Stelle). In this study, the authors compared speeches, interviews, press conferences, articles and manifestos from the years 2012-2014, when the Euro crisis was most prominent, and the years 2015-2017, when the refugee crisis peaked, using various keywords. Examples of these keywords include "Sovereignty," "Democracy," "Nation," "People," "Citizen," and "Referendum" (Borriello & Brack, 2019, pp. 837-839).

Based on these two exemplary studies, the comparison of the cases' positions against the EU in this thesis will also be conducted using the manual text analysis method. In a first step, I will present a literature review, drawing on existing research on the ideologies of these two political parties. In the chapter number 4, I will make a literature review for UKIP and the chapter 6 will be the literature review for AKP. In these chapters, secondary sources such as academic articles, book chapters and news articles will be examined to determine what is mentioned about the ideologies, establishment and development processes, and positions regarding the EU of these two political parties.

Subsequently, the chapters numbered 5 (for UKIP) and 7 (for AKP) will be dedicated to the analysis sections of the expressions of the election manifestos. Unlike the aforementioned studies, the positions adopted regarding the EU will be analyzed in all accessible election manifestos, both directly and through some other themes, without a specific time frame. In this sense, a time frame was considered starting from the earliest accessible election manifesto for UKIP, which is the one from 2005, up until the 2022 election manifesto. As for the AKP,

the period covers the years from the first election manifesto in 2002 until the 2023 election manifesto.

In order to obtain the most reliable data regarding the general attitudes of both cases, the sources have been limited to election manifestos. Election manifestos serve as declarations where political parties express their thoughts, support, criticism and promises regarding various aspects of life, including their positions on the EU. As primary sources, election manifestos provide a good representation of their positions. As a complementary measure, speeches of party leaders on specific topics will also be included for illustrative purposes, although they are not included in the coding process.

In this regard, coding groups were created based on the topics most referenced in the election manifestos using the MAXQDA software program. Those expressions in the texts related to these coding groups were included within their respective coding groups. In this context, not only direct references to the EU but also indirectly related expressions were coded. For example, in the early manifestos of the AKP, the importance of EU membership for Turkey's geopolitical position was emphasized multiple times. However, in the 2023 manifesto, even though the name "EU" was not mentioned, it highlighted the significance of Turkey not belonging to a specific "pole" due to the current global geopolitical situation and emphasized the priority of the "Turkey axis." Therefore, even if the EU was not explicitly mentioned, such expressions that indicate a departure from a full-commitment attitude towards the EU in terms of Turkey's geopolitical strategy were considered in the evaluation. The length of the expressions varied from one sentence to several paragraphs. The focus was on the fundamental thoughts of the political parties regarding the respective themes. At this point, no specific length limit was imposed.

During the coding process, similar to the first study, both general expressions directly targeting the EU (general codes), and perspectives based on "sub-codes," referred to as sub-themes, were analyzed. These coding categories were specifically created for each political party, taking into account their dynamics, priorities and the way they address the topics in their manifestos. Therefore, certain categories may be present in one case and not in another, but similar expressions with similar content were examined under similar categories as much as possible.

Similar to the second referenced source mentioned above, the study also examined the expressions most referenced and their frequencies based on specific topics. Like the first source, these expressions were evaluated as positive or negative. In cases where a clear positive or negative inference could not be made, the note "partially-positive" was included, and the expression was considered as "positive." These expressions are specified in the relative analysis sections (i.e., chapters number 5 and 7).

Before delving into the explanations of each individual category, the general overview table will present the total number of codings, positive and negative frequencies, and their percentage ratios for both cases. For UKIP, the expressions are grouped under the "General Codes" category, which includes the headings "EU Itself," "EU Institutions," "EU Policies," and "EU Integration." Under the "Sub-codes" group, codings were made under the headings of "Withdrawal", "Sovereignty", "Economy", "Immigration", "People", "Anti-Establishment", and "Democracy". The sections where the analysis and explanation of the codings related to each heading are found will specify what each heading encompasses and the intended position. A graph will be presented for each coding group, illustrating which situations UKIP emphasizes the most under that heading and how frequently they do so. For example, in the codings under the "EU Itself" heading, the EU is defined as a "Superstate" nine times, and the emphasis on maintaining good relations with the EU is seen four times, along with the EU's "undemocratic, bureaucratic and corrupt nature”. Each heading will include this figure and general observations related to that heading.

In the AKP case, the "General Codes" group does not include "EU Institutions" because AKP manifestos do not make any references to the organizations and organizational structure of the EU. Under the "Subcodes" group, the headings include "Democracy and Fundamental Rights", "Security", "Sovereignty", "Culture”, "Cyprus", "Cooperation", "Prosperity" and "Regional Power". Unlike the analysis of UKIP, the expressions under these headings will be analyzed based on the years. While no significant change is observed in UKIP's position over the years, there is a considerable difference in AKP since its foundation to date. Therefore, examining the annual changes in AKP manifestos will provide insights into understanding AKP's Euroscepticism and enable easier comparisons. Hence, the analysis of AKP codings will focus not only on the most emphasized expressions but also on the changes in importance and frequency of positive/negative expressions over the years. For example, in the coding graph under the "EU Itself" heading in AKP, it can be observed that in 2002, all nine relevant

expressions were positive, whereas in the 2023 manifesto, it decreased to five expressions, three of which were negative. That allows for a valuable inference in terms of a good representation of the AKP's position towards the EU.

After these analysis chapters (5th chapter for UKIP and 7th chapter for AKP), the subsequent comparison section (8th chapter) will highlight the similarities and differences between the two cases based on all these coding groups.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW ON EUROSCEPTICISM

3.1. DEFINITIONS AND CLASSIFICATIONS ON EUROSCEPTICISM

Paul Taggart (1998) is credited with providing the first academic definition and classification of Euroscepticism. He defines Euroscepticism as encompassing both contingent or qualified opposition, as well as outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration (p. 366). Taggart argues that this definition highlights the marginal nature of Euroscepticism as the majority of political parties at that time supported European integration, while Eurosceptics represented a distinct minority (ibid: 366). According to Taggart, these "outliers" justify their position based on the unpredictability of the future of integration and the perceived risks associated with it, with the Maastricht Treaty serving as evident proof of these concerns (ibid: p. 366).

Taggart's classification of Eurosceptics involves three distinct positions (Taggart, 1998, pp. 365-366):

The first group completely rejects and opposes the existence of the EU. The second group supports the idea of European integration, but they have concerns about whether the EU is the appropriate vehicle for achieving it. They perceive the EU as being overly inclusive, particularly in terms of promoting immigration. Lastly, the third group, similar to the second group, does not reject the idea of European integration, but they view it as too exclusive in terms of geography and social aspects.

Taggart (ibid, p. 368), building upon his definition and classification of Euroscepticism, delves into how these positions manifest in reality illustrate this, he classifies political parties

based on their stances towards European integration and provides examples of such parties as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Taggart's Classification of Political Parties according to the Eurosceptic Positions

PARTY CLASSIFICATION	STANCE ON EU INTEGRATION	EXAMPLES
Single Issue Eurosceptical Parties	• They exist solely to oppose the EU. • Their main goal is to mobilize against the EU.	• People's Movement Against the EC-Union (Denmark) • Phillipe de Villiers candidacy for the French presidency in 1995 • Free Citizen's Alliance (Germany)
Protest Based Parties with Euroscepticism	• They are anti-establishment parties which also reject the current political system. • Their opposition to the EU is influenced by their marginalized status within the current system.	• Swedish Green Party • French Communist Party
Established Party with Eurosceptical Position	• It is also possible for an established party to adopt an anti-EU position.	No specific examples have been provided but it is possible for parties that are part of the government to be included in that group.
Eurosceptic Factions	• Within a pro-EU political party, it is possible for a faction to emerge where some members may reject the party's general position and hold anti-EU views.	• Eurosceptic wing in the British Conservative Party

Source: Taggart (1998, p. 368)

In another work by Taggart and Szczerbiak (2001), Euroscepticism is further divided into "Hard" and "Soft" Euroscepticism. "Hard Euroscepticism" refers to a complete rejection of the idea of the EU, including opposition to EU membership, further integration, and a demand for its dissolution. On the other hand, "Soft Euroscepticism" involves more specific criticisms of the EU on particular issues rather than a total rejection of the EU itself. The authors also identify two subcategories of Soft Euroscepticism: "Policy Euroscepticism,"

which focuses on opposition to specific policies or developments within the EU, such as joining the eurozone, and "National Interest Euroscepticism," where anti-EU rhetoric is used to protect national interests in electoral campaigns (ibid).

Kopecký and Mudde (2002) challenged the soft-hard Euroscepticism division proposed by Taggart and Szczerbiak, highlighting four weaknesses in this classification. Firstly, they argued that the category of Soft Euroscepticism lacks a clear definition, as any discontentment towards the EU could be placed in this group, making it difficult to draw a distinct line between Eurosceptics and understand the nuances of their protests. Secondly, they claimed that the distinction between Hard and Soft Euroscepticism is not clearly defined and the criteria for making this division are ambiguous. Thirdly, they argued that this classification fails to provide proper justification for the differing perspectives on the EU and EU integration. As an alternative, they proposed a division based on "diffuse" and "specific" support for European integration (ibid).

In the category of diffuse support, there are Europhiles who advocate for a fully-integrated EU with federalism, while Europhobes support limiting the EU's supranational powers and emphasize the importance of preserving the diversity of European states. In the specific support category, EU optimists believe that the EU is currently functioning well and should be further supported and strengthened, whereas EU pessimists hold the opposing view. Kopecký and Mudde (2002) also introduced additional positions based on EU optimism or Europhobia, including Euroenthusiasts (EU optimists and Europhiles), Europragmatists (EU optimists and Europhobes), Eurosceptics (EU pessimists and Europhiles), and Eurorejects (EU pessimists and Europhobes) (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Kopecký and Mudde's Typology of Party Positions on Europe

	Europhile	Europhobe
EU-Optimist	Euroenthuasiasts	Europragmatists
EU-Pessimist	Eurosceptics	Eurorejects

Source: Kopecký & Mudde (2002, p. 303)

In response to these criticisms, Taggart and Szczerbiak (2008) argue that it is normal for the boundaries between different types of Euroscepticism to be somewhat ambiguous. They suggest that the positions of political parties regarding the EU and European integration can shift based on daily political considerations and debates (ibid: p. 8).

Flood (2002) similarly highlights the blurred nature of classification by emphasizing that objections to the idea of the EU and criticisms related to specific aspects should not be conflated. According to Flood's definition of Euroscepticism, the reaction to the current form of EU integration varies. Harder stances advocate for revising certain steps taken during the integration process or, at the extreme, view the very idea of the union as a mistake and call for the cancellation of memberships (ibid: p. 1). Conversely, mainstream perspectives on the EU and European integration tend to take a reformist stance, but Flood points out the "fragility" of these positions as there is always a possibility of transitioning to a complete "Europhobic rejectionism" (ibid).

3.2. MEASURING EUROSCEPTICISM

A highly effective method to assess support for or opposition to the EU is through surveys and referendums conducted on a country basis. These primary sources provide insights into the opinions of the public regarding the EU integration process, focusing exclusively on citizens' thoughts about the EU. The Eurobarometer opinion polls are particularly valuable in understanding public sentiment towards the EU. The latest surveys published by the EU at the time this chapter was written indicate an increase in support and trust in the EU (Eurobarometer, 2022). The results show that 49% of respondents express trust in the EU, 47% have a wholly positive view of the EU and 65% are very optimistic about the future of the EU (ibid: 9-14). These percentages reflect a systematic increase in support for the EU, especially considering the backdrop of the Russia-Ukraine War. However, there has been a slight decline of 1-2 percentage points in the "image" of the EU in 2020-2021 surveys, although there has been an overall increase of 6-7 percentage points over the past 5-10 years (ibid).

Based on the previously mentioned academic definitions and classifications, it can be deduced that respondents generally hold a positive view of the EU concept, while expressing apprehensions about its functionality and the direction of integration. These concerns become more evident when examining country-specific outcomes (see Table 2). For instance, Greece, a country that has endured considerable hardships due to austerity measures and has witnessed a surge in Euroscepticism within its political landscape, exhibits the lowest level of support for the EU. According to the figures, 37% of respondents express trust in the EU in Greece where 31% hold an entirely positive perception of the EU, and only 44% possess optimism regarding the EU's future. With an average score of 37.33%, Greece ranks first in terms of Euroscepticism according to these Eurobarometer results (ibid). Interestingly, France, a founding member state of the EU, ranks second with an average score of 40%, followed by Austria with 44%, Cyprus with 44.33%, and the Czech Republic with 46.67%. In contrast, the staunchest supporters of the EU are Malta (70.67%), Ireland (70.33%), Poland (70%), Lithuania (67.33%), and Portugal (65%).

In addition to the regularly conducted surveys by the EU, referendums that address specific issues provide insights into public perception of the EU. Scholars emphasize that the referendums on the EU Constitution in France and the Netherlands have presented a

significant challenge to the discourse on EU integration, highlighting the gap between public opinion and the political elite (Brack & Startin, 2015). The causes and consequences of Euroscepticism which were intensified by the Maastricht Treaty and the constitutional referendums will be discussed further above.

Table 2: Public Support to the EU on National Survey Results of Eurobarometer Summer 2022

COUNTRIES	TRUST	IMAGE	FUTURE	AVERAGE
MALTA	71	59	82	70.67
IRELAND	58	70	83	70.33
POLAND	64	63	83	70.00
LITHUANIA	69	59	74	67.33
PORTUGAL	68	63	64	65.00
DENMARK	65	51	78	64.67
LUXEMBOURG	60	60	71	63.67
SWEDEN	61	51	69	60.33
FINLAND	60	50	67	59.00
HUNGARY	56	51	63	56.67
LATVIA	56	49	65	56.67
NETHERLANDS	52	47	69	56.00
ROMANIA	54	47	67	56.00
BELGIUM	55	47	65	55.67
SPAIN	50	44	71	55.00
GERMANY	49	50	65	54.67
EU-AVERAGE	49	47	65	53.67
ITALY	46	46	67	53.00
BULGARIA	49	51	58	52.67
SLOVENIA	44	45	66	51.67
CROATIA	42	41	67	50.00
ESTONIA	48	42	58	49.33
SLOVAKIA	44	39	61	48.00
CZECHIA	43	39	58	46.67
CYPRUS	42	37	54	44.33
AUSTRIA	44	35	53	44.00
FRANCE	34	36	50	40.00
GREECE	37	31	34	37.33

3.3. KEY ARGUMENTS OF EUROSCEPTICS

Flood (2002, pp. 9-11) provides an overview of the key arguments associated with Euroscepticism, highlighting its tendency to generate and employ numerous narratives that emphasize the negative aspects of EU integration and, to some extent, the concept of the EU itself. Table 3 presents a summary of the main arguments put forth by Eurosceptics:

Table 3: Flood's summary of the narratives on Euroscepticism

AREAS	NARRATIVE(S)
Supranationality	The EU being seen as an entity that absorbs or assimilates independent states.
EU Institutions	The EU being criticized as undemocratic, inefficient, unaccountable and having a limited connection with EU citizens.
Economic Integration	The European Monetary Union (EMU) and the European Central Bank (ECB) being described as "catastrophic" and seen as a mechanism to undermine the economic sovereignty of nation-states.
Legal framework	The dominance of EU laws is unacceptable, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) is a means to undermine the legal autonomy of member states, and a mechanism for promoting a federalist structure.
Common Foreign and Security Policy	The use of Qualitative Majority Vote (QMV) is perceived as a threat to the national interests of individual member states.
European integration	The current direction of the EU is seen as misguided and it should instead be based on intergovernmental cooperation without a higher authority.

Source: Flood (2002, pp. 9-11)

3.4. SOURCES OF EUROSCEPTICISM

> I spent six years in Brussels, where we were supposed to be defending the interests of the people of Europe. Instead, we defended the interests of the lobbyists, big industrial groups and multinationals. We defended ever-deeper integration and ever-wider federalism; a uniform, homogeneous Europe, devoid of identities. (Guardian, 2014).

These words were expressed by Adrien Mexis, a lecturer in European law at Science Po in Paris and former staffer at the European Commission in Brussels, in an article published by The Guardian just before the 2014 European Parliament (EP) elections. Mexis's sentiments echo the grievances expressed by individuals from various backgrounds who had concerns and criticisms about the EU.

Some of the main concerns raised were related to the increasing authority of the EU, the issue of immigration which also sparked Islamophobic sentiments among the population, and the already fragile economic situation in certain parts of the Union. This situation further exacerbated unemployment rates and highlighted the growing disparity between the poor and the rich. Consequently, a significant portion of the European population became critical of the EU, attributing it as the main culprit for these challenges. The uncertain future and these strong reactions ultimately led to massive support for Eurosceptic political parties.

According to Hooghe and Marks (2018), the EU can be seen as a "shock" to the people as it involves being governed by "foreigners," where elected national governments have limited powers that are controlled by a supranational authority (p. 109). They argue that the complex structure of the EU creates uncertainty regarding the stability of the labor market which is further endangered by the influx of immigration. As a result, both economic and sociological effects may be undermined by policies imposed by a higher authority that elected representatives are unable to resist (ibid: 109-110). From this perspective, Euroscepticism emerges as a response to the belief that citizens have lost their ability to directly shape decision-making processes that directly impact their daily lives. Eurosceptics perceive the EU as a "project of the elites," rooted in the notion that ordinary citizens have been excluded from meaningful participation in shaping EU policies.

Eurosceptics argue that the establishment and development of the EU were predominantly driven by decisions made by the elites, with European citizens and their interests being marginalized in the process. However, Lindberg and Scheingold (1970) introduced the concept of "permissive consensus," which suggests that citizens agreed to allow the elites to manage and shape the integration process, granting them legitimacy and authority to regulate the overall development (ibid; Hooghe & Marks, 1997). Although European citizens initially supported the project, initiated by the elites to ensure peace, economic development, and prosperity in post-World War II Europe, subsequent steps taken to deepen cooperation and transform it into a single union have raised concerns and prompted questioning of the original consent given by the citizens, as well as the future trajectory of the project (van Elsas & van der Brug, 2014, p. 3).

According to Hooghe and Marks (1997), the Bruges speech delivered by Margaret Thatcher in 1988 marked a significant turning point in the European integration process, representing a prominent and influential voice of opposition, particularly from the elite level. Despite growing dissent and concerns about the direction of EU integration, European elites persisted in their efforts and further intensified integration, ultimately leading to the Maastricht Treaty. The Maastricht Treaty, serving as the foundation of the EU, established the EMU, including the creation of a single currency with the institutional framework of the ECB (van Elsas & van der Brug, 2014, p. 4). The competences of the higher European authority were expanded to encompass areas such as foreign policies and defence through supranational institutions like the European Commission and the EP. Furthermore, qualified majority voting (QMV) in the European Council gained increased power in various other domains (ibid, p. 4). The introduction of EU citizenship also signaled a shift towards a more state-like structure in the original concept of EU integration. Flood (2002, p. 25) argues that these rapid advancements, occurring at an accelerated pace, led to the spread of suspicion and, to some extent, opposition to European integration beyond the initial British opposition, reaching continental Europe. He further notes that support for European integration was at its highest during the 1980s, but the introduction of the Maastricht Treaty in the 1990s saw a record-low level of support (ibid, pp. 2-3).

After the Maastricht Treaty, the process of integration continued along a path of further unification. However, the public response shifted from the initial permissive consensus, as described by Hooghe and Marks (2009), to what they term "constraining dissensus." This term reflects a significant decline in public support, as citizens increasingly perceive a growing gap between themselves and the elites due to the rapid advancement of European integration which they feel they have little control over (Oğurlu, 2019, p. 21). Several significant events further contributed to the negative public sentiment towards the EU and European integration. These events include the Yugoslavian War, the rejection of Norway's membership bid in a referendum, the economic crisis, and the resignation of the European Commission in 1998 (Flood, 2002, p. 6).

Despite the increasing public discontent towards European integration, particularly after the Maastricht Treaty, the EU embarked on a path of greater integration in the post-Maastricht period as it entered the new millennium. This was evident through the introduction of the euro which aimed to foster greater economic integration among member states. Simultaneously,

the EU pursued a more open-door strategy by offering membership prospects to countries in the eastern part of the continent. This approach aimed to achieve both enlargement and deepening of the Union. In 2004, the EU experienced its largest expansion to date, incorporating several new member states and it also maintained a vision of including countries such as Turkey and the Western Balkan nations within its enlargement framework.

The admission of 10 new countries to the EU resulted in a further intensification of the integration process. The removal of the "iron curtain" symbolized both the enlargement and deepening of EU integration, leading to significant developments such as the consideration of an EU constitution. However, this period, referred to as the "Post-Maastricht blues" (Eichenberg & Dalton, 2007) had several consequences. The new member countries experienced low participation in the EP elections and Eurosceptical political parties in these countries gained significant votes and notably, the draft constitution was rejected in referendums held in France and the Netherlands (Wessels, 2007; p. 288) These events, coupled with the statement by then-President of the European Commission, Juncker, declaring a deep crisis, created a pessimistic outlook for the future of EU integration (ibid). Consequently, there was an increase in hostility toward the EU among elites.

Taggart and Szczerbiak (2008) characterize certain incidents that cast a shadow on European integration, such as the rejection of the European Constitution drafts in public votes held in France and the Netherlands, as part of a larger trend. They note that many countries and politicians who were previously considered Europhile gradually changed their stance and began incorporating Eurosceptic elements in their discourse. Furthermore, the political debates within these countries increasingly revolved around the question of supporting or opposing the EU (ibid). The rejection of the EU constitution, in particular, marked a significant shift. It was the first time in history that the public, who were relatively disconnected from the decision-making process, reacted loudly and firmly by rejecting the decisions made by the elites. This shift reflected a new dynamic where public sentiment began to shape and challenge elite decisions more assertively (Hooghe, 2007).

Van Elsas (2014) highlights the issue of national sovereignty as a significant reason for the emerging trend of Euroscepticism. Citizens have started to perceive a threat to the sovereignty of their own states as EU competency and supranational powers continue to expand. This perception has fueled the rise of Eurosceptic political parties who capitalize on

these suspicions and mobilize voters by questioning various EU-related issues in national and European elections. The 2014 and 2019 elections serve as prime examples of the growing influence of Eurosceptic parties, particularly in major member states like France and the United Kingdom (UK), which hold a substantial number of seats in the EP (Taggart, 2019).

Considering the factors that have contributed to the growth of Euroscepticism, we can identify five main causal factors put forward by Eurosceptics. These are: National Identity Factor, Cultural Factors, Economic Factors, National-Supranational Dilemma and “The European Demos” question.

3.4.1 The Factor of National Identity

After initially opposing the common market, Eurosceptics gradually shifted their focus towards safeguarding national sovereignty and identity. This shift was driven by the perception of increased control from Brussels and the progression towards a political union, particularly following the implementation of the Maastricht Treaty (Hooghe & Marks, 2007, p. 121). As a result, Eurosceptics began to express concerns about the preservation of their national identities and the sovereignty of their respective states. Their opposition to the EU went beyond a mere reaction, as they feared that their own states would be weakened or destroyed, leading to a homogeneous culture (McLauren, 2002, p. 554). This indicates that support for the EU and European integration is closely tied to the protection of national identities and state sovereignty (Carey, 2002, pp. 388-391).

Carey (ibid, p. 391), drawing on the works of Deutsch (1966) and Peters & Hunold (1999), provides an explanation for this situation using the concept of a "terminal community." According to him, citizens entrust their governments with the responsibility of creating laws and representing their interests (ibid). The key question, then, is determining which entity they view as the ultimate community to whom this power should be granted. The legitimacy of the governing body depends on how individuals perceive this terminal community.

Carey (ibid, p. 391) argues that if an individual identifies with a common European identity and supports the common market, shared policies, and a legal framework imposed and controlled by Brussels, they acknowledge the EU's authority to represent them and enact laws on their behalf. In this case, they consider the EU as their terminal community. On the

other hand, if individuals prioritize their own nation-states and believe that they alone have the right to self-representation and lawmaking, rejecting any sharing or transfer of this right, they perceive their national governments as the terminal community. Consequently, they choose not to join the EU, expressing a negative stance (ibid; pp. 391-392). Furthermore, any integration steps proposed are seen as a threat and an encroachment upon their identity and their countries' sovereignty (ibid).

3.4.2 Cultural Factors

The enlargement of the EU to include Eastern European countries has had the consequence of facilitating migration from these countries to Western Europe. As a result, concerns regarding national identity, cultural aspects, the job market, social benefits, and the welfare state have arisen, attributing EU integration as the driving force behind this emerging reality (Toshkov & Kortenska, 2015, p. 910). According to Toshkov & Kortenska, the rapid influx of immigration experienced by wealthy Western European countries as a result of EU integration can potentially lead to a negative public opinion and citizens taking a stance against these perceived negative effects (ibid, pp. 911-912). This opposition may extend to European integration itself, thereby hindering the process of EU integration and jeopardizing the benefits already obtained from it (ibid, pp. 911-912). The authors also highlight the risk of potential measures to restrict the benefits of integration, such as limiting the free movement of people, in order to slow down immigration (ibid, p. 910).

The perception of EU integration as a catalyst for increased migration within the continent, as well as immigration from outside, has brought cultural factors to the forefront (Bertoncini & Koenig, 2014, p. 6). Consequently, in countries experiencing high levels of immigration, there has been a rise in concerns about "foreign invasion" and increased hostility towards immigrants and their cultures (McLauren, 2002, p. 553).

3.4.3. Economic Factors

According to Grauel et al. (2013), economic factors, particularly the fear of job loss, play a more significant role in determining scepticism towards the EU compared to political or cultural factors. The principles of free movement of goods and people, leading to immigration, can amplify anti-EU sentiments, particularly at the local community level (ibid: 26-27). This phenomenon, as part of "welfare populism," raises concerns about the

exploitation and destabilization of national social systems resulting from immigration driven by EU integration, particularly in affluent Northern European countries (Bertoncini & Koenig, 2014, p. 6). Baute et al. (2018) suggest that this situation can give rise to a social security problem that goes beyond fear and may ultimately result in complete rejection of the EU.

Hix (2007, p. 133) refers to Bolton and Roland's model (1997), which suggests that citizens whose incomes are closer to the local median, rather than the higher system-wide median, tend to oppose economic redistribution at the central level because it would negatively affect their own economic situation. He further applies this model to explain attitudes towards EU integration, stating that EU policies indirectly impact redistribution within countries through the single market, economic and monetary union. Consequently, poorer citizens in highly redistributive countries (e.g., Sweden) and wealthier citizens in countries with lower income distribution (e.g., the UK) are more likely to be Eurosceptic compared to individuals at the extremes of the income scale (ibid: 134-135).

On the other hand, Grauel et al. (2013) argue that more privileged classes tend to be more supportive of the EU and European integration. As employers or self-employed individuals, they can better control their own economic interests, making them the most beneficial group in terms of EU integration, particularly through the free movement of capital, goods, services, and labor within the EU (ibid, p. 41).

However, the introduction of the Euro as a common currency has been seen as a factor that contributes to Euroscepticism, particularly in countries with higher Gross Domestic Product (GDP) levels, while it has had the opposite effect in countries with lower GDP levels (Lubbers & Scheepers, 2010). Nonetheless, the Euro crisis has been a significant turning point that has fueled anti-EU sentiment across the board (Braun & Tausendpfund, 2013). The EU's interventions in severely affected Southern EU member states have further intensified criticism of the EU, portraying it as an "oppressor" and an "enemy of national interests" (Vasilopoulou, 2018). In these countries, radical left political parties have gained power and public support by positioning themselves as opponents of the neoliberal policies imposed by institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and ECB, drawing on their historical struggles against right-wing dictatorships (Petrović, 2019, p. 374; Bertoncini & Koenig, 2014, p. 5).

3.4.4. The National – Supranational Dilemma

Some scholars suggest that the level of Euroscepticism can also be influenced by citizens' trust in their national institutions. For instance, according to Cuenca's "Institutional Hypothesis" (2000, p. 133), EU institutions may appear more appealing and trustworthy compared to their own country's institutions if citizens lack confidence in the latter. Additionally, Grauel et al. (2013, pp. 41-42) argue that the EU is perceived as a "fountain of wealth" in terms of strengthening the national labor market, implying that it offers economic benefits and opportunities for citizens.

According to the Institutional Hypothesis, the issues experienced by national institutions, such as corruption, nepotism, lack of transparency and accountability, and their negative impacts on society, such as unemployment, social insecurity, and economic instability, contribute to the perception that EU integration and institutions can serve as a solution to these problems, however, in contrast, countries with well-established and functioning national institutions, such as Denmark and Sweden, may exhibit scepticism towards EU institutions due to concerns about potential losses resulting from European integration (Grauel et al., pp. 41-42; Bertoncini & Koenig, p. 5). Cuenca (2000, p. 168), specifically cites Mediterranean EU member states like Greece, Italy, and Spain as examples of countries with a stronger European identity compared to these Northern EU states. However, McLaren (2007, pp. 235-236) argues that citizens may be unlikely to support EU institutions if they are already sceptical of national institutions, as the complexity of the EU's institutional framework may lead them to believe that there are no promising solutions to their problems within these institutions.

Cuenca (2000, p. 149) emphasizes that trust in EU institutions is crucial and suggests that the EU itself should demonstrate the effective functioning of its institutions to alleviate scepticism. By addressing concerns and proving the competence of EU institutions, the doubts surrounding them can be dispelled (ibid). Similarly, McLaren (2007) argues that Euroscepticism primarily stems from scepticism towards EU institutions rather than national institutions. Ray (2007) adds that trust in the EU's institutional structure, particularly the decision-making process that involves national interests and requires consensus or a high qualified majority, can contribute to increasing Euroscepticism. If Eurosceptic parties come to power or governments rely on their support, it can lead to conflicts and hinder the EU

decision-making process, especially with larger countries like France and Poland (ibid). This highlights the potential risks and challenges in maintaining cooperation and integration among EU member states.

3.4.5. The European Demos Question

The legitimacy of the EU integration process, including the authority of EU rules and the power of sanctions, has been argued to rely on the participation of EU citizens in the EP elections, often referred to as the "permissive consensus" (Lubbers & Scheepers, 2005, p. 225, citing Eichenberg & Dalton, 1993, p. 507). Just as states gain legitimacy through democratic elections that establish their right to enforce laws and expect compliance from their citizens, the active participation of EU citizens in EP elections is seen as a means of legitimizing the EU's decision-making processes and the implementation of its rules (ibid).

According to Cuenca (2000, p. 148), the legitimacy and acceptance of EU institutions as well as the existence of the EU itself depend on the presence of a shared "sense" among Europeans which requires the formation of a "European demos". However, the absence of a European demos has been the main obstacle preventing the legitimacy of supranational democracy within the EU (ibid, p. 148). Cuenca argues that when people do not recognize, find legitimate or adopt a structure that imposes rules created by itself and threatens punishment or sanctions for non-compliance, it is inevitable for them to view that structure as an enemy (ibid, p. 166). In such circumstances, the concept of "democracy" cannot be applied because there is no "demos" that shares a sense of adherence or acceptance of these rules (ibid, p. 166). Additionally, the perception of the EU as elitist, lacking transparency, and being technocratic further contributes to the hostility towards it (Bertoncini & Koenig, 2014, p. 5).

3.5. APPROACHES TO EUROSCEPTICISM

There are various approaches that have been proposed to comprehensively understand and analyze Euroscepticism. These approaches provide insights into the dynamics that underlie the criticisms and objections expressed by Eurosceptics towards the EU and European integration.

3.5.1. Main Approaches to Euroscepticism

Two main approaches, known as the "Utilitarian Approach" and "Identity Approach," have been proposed to understand Euroscepticism (Gabel, 1998; McLaren, 2007 citing Inglehart, 1970; Wessels, 2007; Abts et al., 2009; De Vries & Edwards, 2009; Grauel et al., 2013; Hubolt, 2014). In addition to these approaches, Hix (2007) introduced the "Rational Choice Institutionalist Approach," which examines the influence of institutional design, and McLaren (2007) discussed "Cognitive Mobilization," which explores how individuals' political knowledge and cognitive abilities shape Eurosceptic attitudes.

The key points and main arguments of the aforementioned approaches are presented and summarized in Table 4.

Table 4: Main Approaches to Euroscepticism

APPROACHES	ARGUMENTS
Utalitarian Approach	• The level of support or objection towards the EU is influenced by a cost-benefit analysis where individuals assess the material advantages or profits they can gain. Greater utilization or profit tends to result in stronger support for the EU and European integration. • “Economic utilitarianism” focuses on personal economic benefits derived from EU integration, while “sociotropic utilitarianism” considers the benefits accrued by the nation or country as a whole. • Support for EU integration is contingent upon the expected material outcomes, particularly in terms of the limitations imposed on economically disadvantaged countries in terms of net contributions.
Identity Approach	• The Maastricht Treaty which marked a shift in the EU from economic cooperation to political integration, played a significant role in emphasizing the importance of the identity approach. This approach focuses on factors related to the formation of a single

	European identity, concerns about immigration and other cultural threats to national identity. • Individuals who primarily identify with their own nation may view the emergence of a higher identity, i.e. the European identity, and the changes associated with it as a symbolic cultural threat. As a result, they may express opposition towards the EU.
Rationalist Choice Institutionalist Approach	• Support for the EU is influenced by the policy outcomes that result from the decisions made by EU institutions. • If the decisions made by EU institutions align with the expectations and desired political outcomes of individuals, political parties or interest groups, and if they feel adequately represented and that their interests are being taken into account, they are more likely to support the EU and European integration. • Political parties and interest groups have better access to information about EU decisions which allows them to manipulate or influence the perceptions and ideas of citizens/voters regarding the EU and European integration.
Cognitive Mobilization Approach	• According to this approach, greater knowledge and exposure to EU-related issues and topics lead to reduced suspicion and negative attitudes towards the EU. • Individuals with higher levels of education, those who are more interested in politics, and those who are well-informed about politics and the EU are more likely to be supportive of the EU and European integration.

3.5.2 Ideological Approaches to Euroscepticism

Taggart (1998, pp. 382-383) emphasizes that political parties often utilize their ideological positions and principles to express opposition towards the EU, allowing them to differentiate themselves from established political parties. Ideology, therefore, plays a significant role in explaining Euroscepticism. However, he also argues that these expressions of opposition can take various forms. For instance, protest movements against the EU can emerge as factions within major political parties and even political parties sharing similar ideological foundations can have differing opinions and objections. Taggart illustrates this with the example of the Italian and French Communist parties where the former is pro-EU while the latter is anti-EU (ibid, pp. 377-383).

De Voogd (2014, p. 27) provides a similar perspective by highlighting the significant differences in opinion among right-wing parties regarding LGBT rights. When such differences arise, political parties within the same ideological spectrum try to distance themselves from one another and emphasize their distinctiveness. On the other hand, Taggart also references Haas (1968), who argued that support for EU integration is not primarily driven by ideology but rather by an ad hoc coalition formed among political elites and parties from diverse backgrounds (1998, p. 378). Additionally, both scholars emphasize that party positions can evolve over time, as exemplified by Germany's SPD which transformed into a pro-EU political party (ibid; Haas, 1968).

Hooghe & Marks (2007, p. 7) offer an explanation stating that electoral and strategic considerations as well as domestic political developments such as whether a party is in government or opposition, can influence a party's decision to change its position on EU integration. According to their bottom-up perspective, party elites listen to their voters in order to assess the prominence of the issue and determine their stance on EU integration (ibid). They take into account election results and the level of voter interest. Conversely, their top-down perspective emphasizes the role of the party and its elites as the driving force behind determining the party's position on EU integration (ibid).

According to Taggart (1998, p. 381), Euroscepticism within political parties can be classified into four types:

a) The first type includes new political parties that strongly oppose the EU because they perceive the creation of a single European identity as a factor that exacerbates existing global divisions such as the North-South divide. They argue that the EU reinforces these divisions rather than addressing them.
b) The second type consists of extreme left-wing parties that oppose the EU on the grounds that it serves the interests of capitalist classes at the expense of working classes. They see the EU as a mechanism through which the capitalist class suppresses and exploits the working class.
c) The third type is the "new populist opposition" which raises concerns about national identity. They argue that the EU's emphasis on inclusivity and the forging of diverse cultures and national identities into a single entity threatens the existence of individual national identities and states.
d) Lastly, there are left-wing parties that criticize the EU for being too exclusive. They argue that the European family is incomplete in its current form and achieving integration without the participation of all European nations would be challenging.

Regarding the left-right political spectrum and divisions concerning EU integration, Hooghe and Marks (2002) propose that the extent of political parties' positions is influenced by the increasing control exerted by the EU over national economies. However, in their subsequent work in 2007, they explicitly state that two primary factors, namely the economic consequences of EU integration and concerns related to culture, national sovereignty, and identity, are the main sources of Euroscepticism. They further assert that political elites shape their strategies based on the concerns expressed by voters derived from these factors (Hooghe & Marks, 2007).

In conclusion, taking into account both economic and identity-related factors, we can derive certain outcomes based on the classification proposed by Oğurlu (2019) and the findings of other scholars (De Vries & Edwards, 2009; Flood, 2002, p. 19; van Elsas et al., 2016; Petrović, 2019, p. 377) (see Table 5).

Table 5: Ideological Party Positions towards the EU

PARTIES	PARTY POSITIONS	EXAMPLES
Far-right Parties	These parties exhibit strong opposition to the EU due to their	National Rally (France), Lega Nord (Italy), Dutch Freedom

	shared xenophobic, anti-immigrant and anti-euro positions.	Party, the Freedom Party of Austria, Golden Dawn (Greece), Jobbik (Hungary), Direct Democracy (Czech Republic), ATAKA (Bulgaria)
Right-Wing Parties	They oppose to the idea of a continuously integrating EU. They prioritize national sovereignty and independence over increasing supranational authority. They advocate for the reintroduction of border controls, limiting freedom of movement and may reject the adoption of the euro, preferring to return to a national currency. Some of these parties also exhibit far-right ideologies, placing significant emphasis on cultural concerns and positioning themselves as protectors of national identity and their religion (e.g. Christianity) in Europe. However, it is worth noting that while they may support economic liberalization and the single market, they often express discontent with the financial contributions required for redistribution policies.	United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), Alternative für Deutschland (Germany), Swedish Democrats, Danish People's Party, Finns Party, Vlaams Belang (Belgium), Fidesz (Hungary), Law and Justice Party (Poland), Slovak National Party
Conservatives	These political parties also prioritize national and intergovernmental interests, expressing concerns that deeper European integration could impede their national monetary policies and potentially lead to increased migration into their countries. However, it is important to note that there are differences among these parties. For instance,	British Conservative Party, Dutch Christian Union, Latvian National Alliance, Civic Democratic Party (Czech Republic)

	conservative parties in the UK tend to favor a more pro-American and NATO engagement in defence while French conservatives advocate for a European defence framework with reduced dependence on the US whenever possible.	
Left-Wing Parties	These political parties primarily prioritize economic integration from an anti-capitalist perspective. They oppose to economic liberalization, globalization, the Eurozone, trade liberalization and the single market. They believe that these integration measures would widen the wealth gap in European societies and reject the idea of an "upper hegemon." They present themselves as fighters against dictators and imperialists. Additionally, they oppose Europe's reliance on the US for defence and advocate for a militarist-free Europe, limited to participating in UN peacekeeping missions.	Die Linke (Germany), Syriza (Greece), Socialist Party of the Netherlands, Five Star Movement (Italy)

The way citizens perceive the EU is closely connected to the extent of integration within their own countries and how it directly impacts their lives. Treib (2014) suggests that the success of Eurosceptic parties can be attributed to their skill in capitalizing on the frustrations arising from the negative consequences of EU integration experienced by citizens. These parties effectively organize and mobilize these dissatisfied individuals, providing them with a platform to voice their objections to the EU more prominently. By challenging established notions and amplifying the voices that have been marginalized in the political sphere, Eurosceptic parties manage to garner support. Consequently, the combination of discontent arising from the imposition of neoliberal policies and austerity measures, particularly on the left, along with concerns about the expanding supranational authority of

the EU, seen as a threat to national identities and sovereignty, has contributed to the rise of a significant wave of Euroscepticism (ibid). These existing doubts have become more pronounced, resulting in an intensified level of scepticism towards the EU (ibid).

More precisely, within left-wing circles, the imposition of austerity measures and the reduction of budget deficits have generated a sense of Euroscepticism driven by concerns that these policies would undermine the welfare state. On the right, this situation has contributed to a growing public disaffection between the prosperous North and the struggling South of Europe. Given that the crisis has disproportionately affected the southern countries, any perceived interference by the EU has fueled right-wing Euroscepticism with the argument that their nation's honor and interests have been severely disregarded and undermined (van Elsas & van der Brug, 2014, p. 18).

As evident from the overview provided in Table 5, Euroscepticism manifests in various forms and degrees across different types of political parties, regardless of a country's position within the EU or its socio-economic status. It is a phenomenon observed not only within protest parties but also within established political parties. Furthermore, while there are fundamental differences in viewpoints between the left and right political spectrums, there are also some notable similarities. For instance, both sides criticize the European Commission as an adversary to national interests and express a sense of exclusion within a framework where the interests of the EU are allegedly dominated by the German-French tandem. These observations highlight the presence of Euroscepticism across diverse political landscapes (Flood, 2002, pp. 12-13).

This suggests that Euroscepticism is gaining momentum and has emerged as a fundamental and prominent issue within the domestic politics of countries. It has significantly influenced the ideological approaches, positions and foundations of political parties, and has increasingly become a mainstream topic within society. This shift challenges the previous marginalization of Euroscepticism, posing a significant threat to EU integration and ultimately, raising concerns about the future of the EU (Oğurlu, 2019, pp. 26-27).

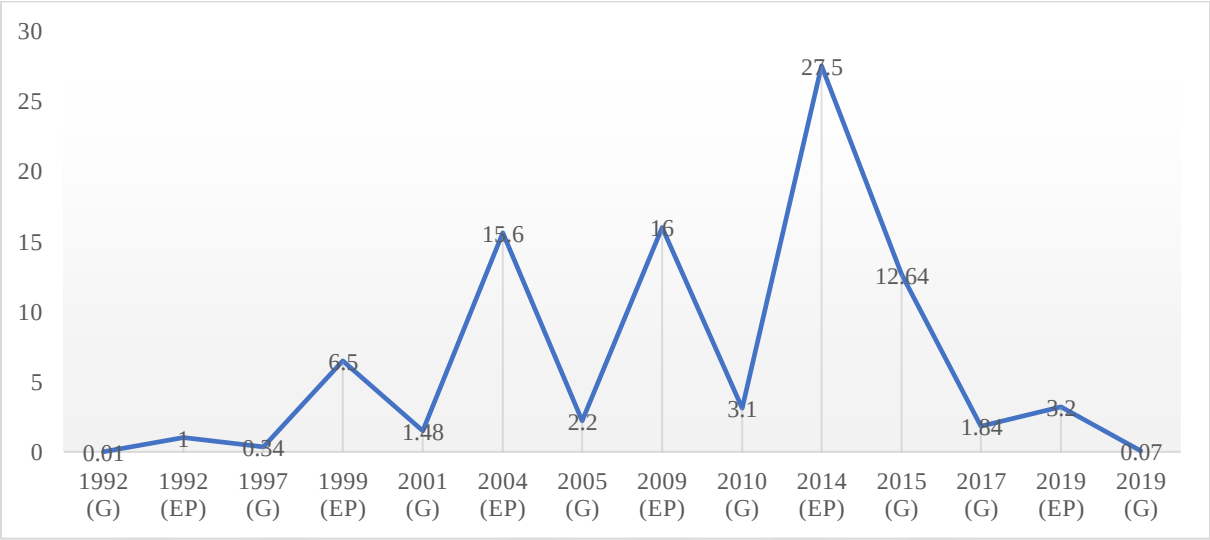
4. THE UNITED KINGDOM INDEPENDENCE PARTY (UKIP)

4.1. UKIP'S FOUNDATION

The United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) was founded in 1993 by Alan Sked, a former member of the Bruges Group founded after former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's reputed Bruges speech which is perceived to have ignited the Eurosceptic movement, along with the Anti-Federalist League members in order to go against EU integration and specifically the Maastricht Treaty (Lynch et. al, 2012: p.736; Sol, 2015: p. 142; Erdoğan, 2020: p. 231). The Anti-Federalist group which emerged in the 1980s as a response to the growing EU and European integration, eventually transformed into UKIP, becoming a political party that "injected new energy" into the established political landscape (Erdoğan, 2020, p. 231).

Particularly at a time when EU integration started to transform into a "union" rapidly by expanding its speed and scope, the fact that voices who strongly oppose this movement turned into such a political organization and took an active part in politics has been of critical importance for the history of European integration. This new young, dynamic and distinct voice, who entered British as well as the Europen politics, has achieved significant success in pushing for the issue to become visible and popular with the effect of having a specific and clear goal, that is, Britain not to be a part of the "ever-closer EU" and eventually leaving, and ultimately, it entailed them to be successful on that. The success of the Anti-Federalist League in the public announcement and publication of the Maastricht Treaty which is initially planned to be a "secret treaty" can be given as the best example of their impact (Sked, 2018).

Figure 2: UKIP's Vote Shares in the European Parliament (EP) and in the General Elections (G) as well as the Brexit Referendum



Source: data.gov.uk

4.2. IDEOLOGICAL POSITIONING OF UKIP

Looking at the academic studies on UKIP, scholars, in general, come to the conclusion that it is a single-issue and hard Eurosceptic party whose raison d'être is to leave the EU (Dye, 2015; 9-10; Sol, 2015b: 142; Sol, 2015b: 136), which destroys Britain's independence and sovereignty, political and social culture, as being far from democracy by facilitating crime and immigration.

Drawing from Sol's analysis of the fundamental ideological features of UKIP, several key points can be inferred that encapsulate the party's Euroscepticism (2015b, p. 136):

• It prioritizes the interests of the British "nation" and emphasizes British identity over a unified European identity.
• It views the EU as a tyrannical entity that lacks democracy and seeks to undermine the independence and national sovereignty of its member states by imposing its own agenda.

Consequently, the party firmly rejects the authority and influence of EU law, aiming to regain control of the UK's governance by leaving the Union. In this context, UKIP portrays the Westminster and the British Parliament as symbols of democracy and self-governance, contrasting them with the perceived "undemocratic" institutions of the EU, such as the European Commission and the ECJ.

Considering the reactionary tendencies of UKIP in relation to the aforementioned arguments, Evans and Mellon (2019, p. 77)[1] highlight that UKIP is frequently labeled as a right-wing challenger party. On the other hand, Abedi and Lundberg (2009, p. 74) classify UKIP within the broader category of "Anti-Political Establishment Parties," emphasizing that UKIP accuses the existing political establishment and ruling elites of allowing and perpetuating EU integration, which it believes undermines British independence, irrespective of public sentiment or dissatisfaction.

Lynch et al. (2012, pp.734-735) view UKIP as an example of a hard Eurosceptic party, considered a "sub-set" within the category of niche parties. However, they also note that UKIP stands out from other niche parties, such as the Greens, as it addresses a wide range of issues that directly impact people's daily lives and the interests of the nation in relation to the EU (ibid). These issues encompass areas such as fisheries policy and the cost-benefits of EU membership (ibid). Therefore, UKIP occupies a distinct position within the realm of hard Eurosceptic political parties (and niche parties in general) (ibid).

On the contrary, it can be inferred that UKIP predominantly adopts a nationalist discourse due to its primary objective and its nature as a challenger party. However, Dye (2015, p.12) highlights that UKIP made efforts to distance itself from an extreme far-right discourse, distinguishing it from another Eurosceptic party in Britain, the British National Party (BNP). In this context, UKIP gained representation in the EP following the introduction of the proportional representation system in the EP during the 1999 elections and building on this success, UKIP sought to amplify its voice beyond mere opposition and recognized the need for renewal and adaptation to ensure its continued existence (Sol, 2015b, p. 136). Seeking to position itself after this turning point, UKIP took a close stance to the Conservatives, the mainstream right-wing party which it has also ideological similarities (ibid). From that point of view, it might be argued that UKIP has entered into a process where it tries to adapt itself to the existing political establishment in order to widen its electoral base

[1] Evans and Mellon (2019, p. 77) categorize UKIP as a party that shares similarities with challenger parties. They argue that UKIP, like other challenger parties, focuses on issues that mainstream parties tend to ignore. Furthermore, they employ autocratic, nationalist, populist, and chauvinistic methods and approaches which can contribute to their electoral success. This success enables them to bring these issues to the forefront of mainstream politics and disrupt certain societal and national political divisions that have been overlooked (as referenced from Rydgren, 2005; Adams et al., 2006; Mudde, 2007; Meguid, 2008; Jensen & Spoon, 2010; Wagner, 2011; Hino, 2012; Wardt et al., 2014; Wagner & Meyer, 2017).

as well as to be heard as much as possible. Sol (2015b), exemplifies some of the right-wing-tended proposals that it has committed as directly quoting:

> UKIP's policy platform is fundamentally right-wing: apart from a hard-line policy on immigration, the party advocates deregulation, lower taxes (including the abolition of the inheritance tax), a cut in public sector jobs, a stricter policy on law and order and an increase of the defence budget. UKIP also supports the introduction of health, school and student vouchers and the creation of new grammar schools. It takes a sceptical stance on climate change and is fiercely opposed to wind farms. Originally against devolution, UKIP now defends English nationalism and the introduction of an English parliament with English- only days at Westminster. Despite its self-proclaimed libertarianism, it opposes same-sex marriage (Sol 2015b, p. 138).

Amidst its various commitments, UKIP's Euroscepticism is particularly highlighted by its strong stance on immigration. The party successfully managed to merge the "EU issue," which may not be a primary concern for voters, with the prominent issue of immigration, which garners significant public complaints (Sol, 2015a, p. 146; Dennison & Goodwin, 2015, p. 172). UKIP places blame on the EU's open-door policy and the freedom of movement principle, asserting that these factors contribute to increased migration from Eastern European countries to the West. It is argued that this situation leads to higher crime rates within the country, posing a threat to the security of the British people and the nation as a whole (Erdoğan, 2020, p. 233; Sol, 2015a, p. 146). UKIP proposes concrete and stringent measures to address this crisis, but as Sol emphasizes, it strives to maintain an inclusive approach and avoid appearing racist (2015a, p. 146).

The primary objective of UKIP was to broaden its electoral support and gain mainstream recognition, leading to an increased utilization of populist rhetoric. This strategic shift towards populism began with Nigel Farage assuming leadership in 2006 (Usherwood, 2008, p. 256). Sol (2015b, p. 137) refers to this new approach as a "strategic populist shift," signifying a deliberate use of populist rhetoric to raise awareness about certain issues and criticize the existing elites, particularly in contrast to the Conservative Party. As mentioned earlier, this involved linking less conspicuous matters such as EU integration with more pressing issues like immigration, attributing various societal grievances to the "single-issue" of the EU. This positioning characterizes UKIP as a "populist catch-all" political party (ibid, p. 138).

Following Nigel Farage's initial leadership tenure, the appointment of Paul Nuttall as the leader marked a new phase in UKIP's self-positioning. During this period, there was a shift towards more right-wing positions, evident in initiatives like advocating for a ban on

wearing the burqa in public. These moves were aimed at attracting a broader base of electoral support, including those with more radical right-wing leanings (Mudde, 2007; Lynch et al., 2012).

4.3. UKIP'S NARRATIVES ON THE EU

As a party founded with the purpose of opposing EU membership and integration, UKIP emphasizes the notion that these aspects pose a threat to British national interests, making it imperative for the country to exit the Union. In order to attract voters, UKIP sought to substantiate this argument by criticizing the establishment, structure, institutions and overall negative effects resulting from EU policies across various domains.

The party's primary emphasis is on democracy as they depict the EU as an anti-democratic organization with no public legitimacy, especially the new order of the EU after the Maastricht Treaty is targeted as being anti-democratic and the UK should turn to its independent self-governing democracy as they claim that the country's sovereignty has been destroyed from that mechanism (Sol, 2015a, p.142). The lack of public legitimacy is often being pointed out in the speeches and manifestos in particular, as they emphasize that the British people are compelled to comply with undemocratic decisions made by unelected elites who wield power without being elected by the people. UKIP contends that these elites impose laws from above, prioritizing their own interests while undermining and disregarding the interests and perspectives of the public (ibid: 142; Erdoğan, 2020, pp. 232-233).

UKIP's criticisms of the new order that emerged after the Maastricht Treaty are based on their argument that the 1975 referendum was solely about participating in the common market, and that the EU does not have the authority to unilaterally change this situation as it desires (Sol, 2015, p, 142). They assert that the EU has stolen the freedom of British society, which they believe is characterized by a libertarian spirit ingrained in their culture and UKIP presents itself as the party that can restore and protect this stolen freedom. MacMillan (2016, p. 160) similarly points out that in UKIP's depiction, the EU as single identity and its vision of a super-state consists of a dystopian society with dictatorship where any liberal values and freedom don't exist.

UKIP's significant objection and criticism of the EU is rooted in the trend of European integration that surpasses national borders and aims to create a "European Super State". UKIP staunchly opposes this trend and portrays the EU as a mechanism seeking to forge a super state by eradicating nation states and amalgamating them into a single entity, while undermining national sovereignty and authority over national matters (Sol, 2015a, p. 143). They emphasize the importance of national sovereignty and the freedom of self-governance, vehemently opposing the encroachment and destruction of these freedoms by the "bureaucratic dictatorship" of the EU (ibid). They draw attention to historical events such as the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the symbolism of freedom and democracy represented by the Parliament to emphasize their commitment to national sovereignty and democratic principles (Borriello & Brack, 2019, p. 846).

Furthermore, UKIP asserts its preference for being a significant independent global player rather than a small region within a larger European state (Sol, 2015a, p.143), or a subservient puppet-state (MacMillan, 2016, p. 161). Drawing upon the reminiscence of the old imperial era, UKIP evokes nostalgia for its position within the Commonwealth, emphasizing a sense of identity tied to a broader global perspective rather than a European one [2](Sol, 2015a, pp. 143-144).

Nevertheless, despite the negative portrayal of the EU, some scholars argue that UKIP's main issue lies in being part of the EU project rather than the project itself (Sol, 2015a; Erdoğan, 2020). According to this perspective, UKIP is not opposed to Europe as a whole but specifically to the EU. They aspire for a prosperous and peaceful continent and seek to maintain positive bilateral/multilateral relations and cooperation with European states, but they find the idea of being part of the EU project unacceptable.

[2] The emphasis on increasing integration with Commonwealth countries while simultaneously seeking de-integration from the EU is particularly evident in economic terms. The 2010 UKIP Manifesto, as cited by MacMillan (2016, p. 162), highlights the vision of establishing a Commonwealth Free Trade Area (CFTA) involving the other 53 Commonwealth nations. This demonstrates UKIP's view that EU economic integration poses a threat by allowing the EU's elite to gain control over national economies. This viewpoint is reinforced by referencing the Greek debt crisis and advocating for countries to exit the Eurozone, as noted by Borriello and Brack (2019, pp. 844-845).

4.4. UKIP AND THE BIG QUESTION OF IMMIGRATION

The migration crisis, which receded to the background after the turbulent years of the global financial crisis, regained prominence as markets recovered in the 2010s, and this resurgence played a significant role in UKIP's mainstreaming, leading to a potential electoral success (Dennison & Goodwin, 2015, p. 169). The main concerns revolved around the perceived unfairness of increasing social benefits for immigrants while the cost of living rose, granting equal access to public services for Eastern Europeans upon EU membership while still receiving benefits, and cultural factors that generated anxiety and reactions within society (Ashcroft, 2012). UKIP successfully tapped into the sentiments of millions of people who felt that the issue of immigration, which directly affected and irritated society the most, was not being adequately addressed by the political elite (ibid). This frustration resulted in people turning away from mainstream political parties and gravitating towards more extreme factions (ibid).

Due to the significance and prominence of the issue, UKIP placed significant emphasis on immigration in its campaign for the 2014 EP elections (Dennison & Goodwin, 2015, p. 173). Following their historic success in the 2014 EP elections, as the 2015 general elections approached, opinion polls clearly indicated that UKIP would receive the highest support from disillusioned voters who perceived a lack of effective governance and sought a reactionary alternative, as well as those who advocated for the UK's withdrawal from the EU (ibid: 178). In summary, UKIP's electoral strategy revolved around opposition to the existing political order with a particular focus on immigration and Euroscepticism (ibid).

An interesting aspect of UKIP's approach is its deliberate efforts to distance itself from the existing political establishment and maintain an "outsider" position, while still striving to make its message heard (MacMillan, 2016, p. 159). This strategic choice allowed UKIP to establish a comfort zone from which it could criticize and position itself against other parties, particularly the mainstream ones. By attributing the responsibility for EU integration and the immigration issue to the ruling elites, UKIP had the opportunity to present itself as an outlier and effectively politicize these issues (Sol, 2020, p. 3).

MacMillan (2016, p. 160) highlights the influence of the media in shaping UKIP's discourse. She notes that UKIP's rhetoric aligns closely with the media's portrayal of the

detrimental impact of the EU on Britain and the perceived negative consequences of unchecked immigration. This alignment with media narratives helped UKIP to maintain the prominence of these issues and bolster its popularity (ibid).

Dennison & Goodwin (2015, p. 179), referring to Green & Hubolt (2008) and Egan (2013), discuss the strategy employed by political parties to establish themselves as the primary advocates of specific issues that have significant resonance among the public. By capitalizing on these negative sentiments, parties not only seek to increase their influence but also provide insights into the underlying factors driving voter preferences. UKIP, in this context, successfully claimed ownership of the immigration issue, particularly surpassing the Conservatives in this domain (ibid).

Sol (2015a, p. 140) argues that the main factor that led to the Conservatives losing ownership of the issue was their shift towards the political mainstream,which occurred as a result of their coalition government with the Liberal Democrats. As previously mentioned, UKIP was able to leverage its outsider position to criticize the Conservatives effectively (ibid). In particular, the Conservatives faced difficulties in retaining ownership of the immigration issue as UKIP turned the tables on them, using immigration as a weapon against Labour governments since the 1960s (Vasilopoulou, 2016, p. 221).

Furthermore, the Conservative Party's ambivalent and neutral stance during the Brexit referendum campaign weakened its position and provided UKIP with more opportunities to gain ownership of key issues (Vasilopoulou, 2016, p. 221). Nevertheless, UKIP consistently maintained the immigration issue as its primary weapon of ownership, positioning itself as "the people's army" and criticizing all political parties as complicit in the crisis (Farage, 2015). As highlighted by Sol (2015b, pp. 143-144), this situation granted UKIP significant and undeniable influence over British politics, evidenced by the shift in approaches and attitudes of governing politicians towards immigration, which aligned more closely with UKIP's stance. Moreover, the growing influence of UKIP played a role in David Cameron's decision to hold the in-out referendum on British EU membership (ibid).

4.5. UKIP'S ELECTORAL BASE

As the explanation given above, UKIP has had a profile of voters who have lost their trust to mainstream parties (mainly the Conservatives) and who are fed up by the immigration and the EU. Here, it might be seen clear that with any class or ideology distinction, people who are solely dissent of tackling these issues in first place voted for it (Hanna, 2018). If we furher zoom in, Ford et al. (2012) point out two different stereotypes. On one hand, the profile of people who are truly hold grudge against foreigners and demand a bunch of strict actions to get rid of them, on the other hand, the Conservatives voters who strategically vote for UKIP in the EP elections. Sol (2015a) formulizes this as the middle-class, middle-age, Conservative men (p. 147). Dennison & Goodwin (2015) adds the features of older white men living in England to it (p. 168). In general, however, UKIP has sought to be the voice of all those who have been victimized by globalization which is blamed to the main reason of economic hardship (Ford & Goodwin, 2014).

UKIP strongly advocated for the UK's exit from the EU, tapping into long-standing Eurosceptic sentiments among the British population (Erdoğan, 2020, p. 234). During a time when the financial crisis had a severe impact on European economies, UKIP highlighted examples such as Greece, Spain, and Italy to demonstrate the negative consequences of EU integration and globalization, particularly in terms of youth unemployment (Bale, 2018, p. 8). UKIP argued that British taxpayers' money would be spent to bail out these countries and contended that the UK would fare better outside the EU, citing its own comparatively better economic situation (ibid). In doing so, UKIP portrayed the EU as a threat to financial stability and the prosperity of British citizens.

The narratives and factors that resonated with UKIP's message were also influential during the Brexit referendum campaign, particularly in representing the "left-behind" individuals from various backgrounds (Erdoğan, 2020, p. 237). Vasilopoulou (2016) demonstrates the effectiveness of these factors by referring to pre-referendum polls. The top priorities identified in these polls regarding post-Brexit negotiations included "greater control of borders and immigration from the EU" with 52% of respondents, followed by "limits on benefits EU migrants are eligible for" at 46%, "greater powers for national parliaments to block EU policies" at 29%, "freedom to establish independent trade relations with countries outside the EU" at 21%, and "an end to the EU's aim of ever closer union" at 14%. These

priorities align closely with the issues addressed by UKIP. The issue of immigration, the restriction of benefits for EU migrants, legislative autonomy, establishing independent relations with non-EU countries, and ending participation in the deepening European integration are key commitments that UKIP has consistently advocated for. The party's success and mainstream influence have not only impacted the UK but also resonated in other European countries and ultimately contributed to the UK's exit from the EU. However, this success story also poses important questions about the future direction of UKIP.

4.6. THE END OF THE SUCCESS

Following the successful outcome of the Brexit referendum, UKIP found itself in a situation where its long-standing objective of UK's exit from the EU had been achieved. However, as Sol (2020, pp.4-5) points out, this historic success also became the beginning of UKIP's downfall. The party, which had gained increasing power by critiquing mainstream political parties from the outside and receiving substantial electoral support, now faced uncertainty and challenges in navigating its future course. It can be likened to "a rabbit caught in the headlights," as the Turkish saying goes, suggesting a sense of being caught off guard or unsure of how to proceed.

Following this "victory," UKIP experienced significant internal challenges, including the resignation of its leader Nigel Farage (ibid). This departure dealt a major blow to the party as Farage played a crucial role in maintaining party unity and facilitating its mainstream success. Consequently, UKIP found itself in a state of disarray, with numerous factions vying for power and influence. Sol (2020) succinctly captures the post-referendum situation faced by UKIP with the following summary:

> One year after the Brexit vote, the disruptive effect of the referendum on UKIP was clear. The party lost its position in the first-order arena and was sent back to the margins of British politics where it came from. Once more, even though this was part of a larger reconfiguration of the national game going beyond UKIP itself, the party bears part of the responsibility: embroiled in its own internal crisis, it failed to capitalize on the difficulties of the Brexit negotiations and was hardly audible on the political stage (Sol, 2020; p. 6).

Due to the disruptive impact of this new reality, UKIP has been occasionally stigmatized as a racist and increasingly associated with far-right tendencies which contradicts its original founding values. These developments have led to internal divisions within the party and the emergence of new political factions that engage in mutual criticism. While

British Euroscepticism has clearly prevailed, UKIP has lost its power as an alternative and problem-solving force against mainstream political elites. As a result, the Conservatives have regained ownership of key issues, particularly the matter of the EU.

5. THE CODING ANALYSIS OF UKIP

As mentioned in the methodology section, in order to thoroughly examine UKIP's Euroscepticism, its vision and ideas on the EU and European integration, the analysis is focused on both direct references to the EU and EU integration as well as specific issues that can be linked to the EU. By coding the 12 accessible election manifestos, the frequency of these statements was determined, considering whether they portrayed a positive or negative stance towards the EU as well as looking at the proposed solutions. The manifestos of UKIP proved to be a valuable source of extensive and insightful data, providing both quantitative and qualitative information. They extensively criticized various aspects of the EU, its functioning, and the integration process, allowing for a comprehensive analysis. Therefore, the research would be able to shed light on how UKIP criticizes the EU on a wide range of issues, and how it constructs a compelling argument for its' main vision of leaving the EU.

When examining the manifestos, it becomes evident that UKIP adopts a strong and reactive tone, addressing various societal issues in detail, presenting practical solution proposals, and attributing negative outcomes to the EU. Looking at the manifestos over the years, particularly from the early 2010s to 2016, during period of heightened focus on EU issue, the length of the manifestos has increased significantly and the topics have been addressed in much greater detail. To be precise, in the pre-2010 period, election manifestos were mostly concise declarations, typically consisting of around 10 pages. However, by 2015, the number of pages had increased up to 76, with specific articles delving into the impacts of EU regulations on specific policies to highlight how sectors and the general public are adversely affected by these rules. Therefore, it can be argued that the EU issue gained even more prominence during the 2015 period, influenced by UKIP's success in elections.

In the context of the manifestos, a total of 843 codings were conducted. Table 1 provides an overall analysis of expressions directly related to the EU as well as sub-codings that indirectly referred to the EU.

When focusing on statements that directly mentioned the EU, a total of 224 codings were identified, accounting for 26.57% of all codings. This suggests that UKIP chose to directly criticize the EU by highlighting the costs and damages of EU membership rather than focusing on supportive themes. Within this coding group, the category with the highest number of codings was EU policies/regulations/rules, with 140 codings (62.50%). UKIP aimed to substantiate its criticisms and Euroscepticism by specifically addressing rules, policies and regulations, illustrating how their implementation hindered the prosperity of the British people.

The second largest group is the EU itself, accounting for 21.43% of the codings with 48 instances. In this category, the EU's concept, vision and the perceived harms of UK membership are discussed in a general context. These criticisms and statements tend to be abstract and overarching. The third group focuses on EU integration and enlargement, comprising 20 codings (8.93%). Within this category, both abstract and concrete expressions are found. UKIP critically discusses the negative consequences of the integration process, highlighting specific policies such as the Eurozone and Single Market and their effects. Lastly, there are 16 codings (7.14%) related to EU institutions. This category encompasses statements concerning specific EU institutions or the overall institutional structure of the EU. UKIP addresses these institutions, offering criticism and analysis of their functioning and impact.

Table 6: The Coding Analysis of Frequency of EU-Related Statements of UKIP's Election Manifestos

General Codes	*Frequency*	*Direction*	
	N, %	*Positive*	*Negative*
EU Itself	48, 21.43	7, 14.58	41, 85.42
EU Institutions	16, 7.14	0, 0.00	16, 100.00
EU Policies	140, 62.50	3, 2.14	137, 9.86
EU Integration	20, 8.93	1, 5.00	19, 95.00
TOTAL	**224, 100.00**	**11, 4.91**	**213. 95.09**
Subcodes			
Withdrawal	181, 29.24	3, 1.66	178, 98.34
Sovereignty	148, 23.91	2, 1.35	146, 98.65
Economy	109, 17.61	0, 0.00	109, 100.00
Immigration	72, 11.63	0, 0.00	72, 100.00
People	42, 6.79	0, 0.00	42, 100.00
Anti-Establishment	36, 5.82	0, 0.00	36, 100.00
Democracy	31, 5.01	0, 0.00	31, 100.00
TOTAL	**619, 100.00**	**5, 0.81**	**614. 99.19**

5.1. GENERAL CODES

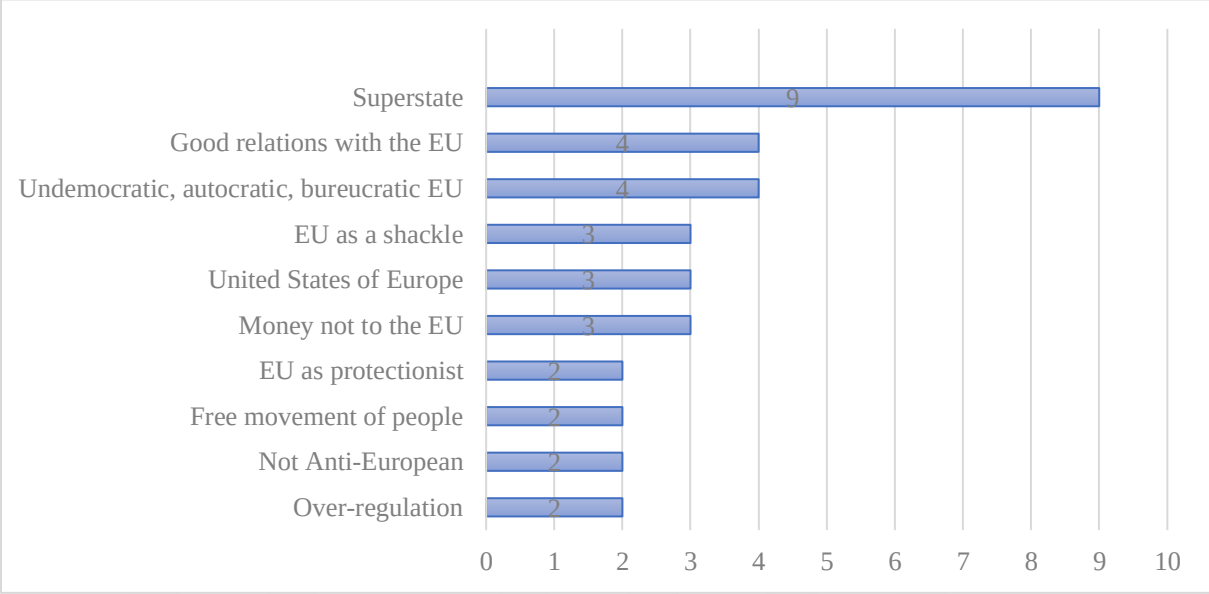
5.1.1 The EU Itself

In the codings within the "EU Itself" category, the expressions and criticisms regarding the idea of the EU and the UK's EU membership were analyzed. Out of the 48 codings in this category, 41 codings (85.42%) contained negative expressions, reflecting a very critical stance towards the EU. On the other hand, only 7 codings (14.58%) had positive expressions, indicating a more favorable perspective. These codings shed light on UKIP's views and evaluations of the EU itself and its implications for the UK.

Within this coding group, the EU is often depicted as a "superstate" or a "United States of Europe," implying that its authority and influence have extended beyond the UK's jurisdiction. Criticisms are made regarding the perceived loss of sovereignty and the belief that the UK should not be governed by an external entity across the channel. The UK's EU membership is associated with terms such as "shackles" and "bounds," suggesting a restriction on the country's autonomy. Moreover, the EU is frequently characterized as "undemocratic," "bureaucratic," and "corrupt," with the perception that its over-regulation has inflicted significant harm on the UK. Consequently, there is a strong emphasis on withholding financial contributions to the EU and advocating for an immediate end to membership. Additionally, the EU is often described as "protectionist," particularly in relation to the Customs Union, and there is a repeated call for the UK to pursue more favorable trade relationships with other countries worldwide.

UKIP highlights the importance of ending the UK's EU membership and places the EU in the category of the "rest of the World." It is suggested that terminating the UK's EU membership would bring relief not only to the UK but also to the Union itself. However, amidst the limited positive expressions found in the statements, UKIP emphasizes that it is not "anti-European" and acknowledges the significance of establishing good neighborly relations with the EU. The party believes that after the end of membership, it is crucial to foster mutual prosperity and cooperation between the UK and the EU.

Figure 3: The most mentioned issues under the coding of "The EU Itself"



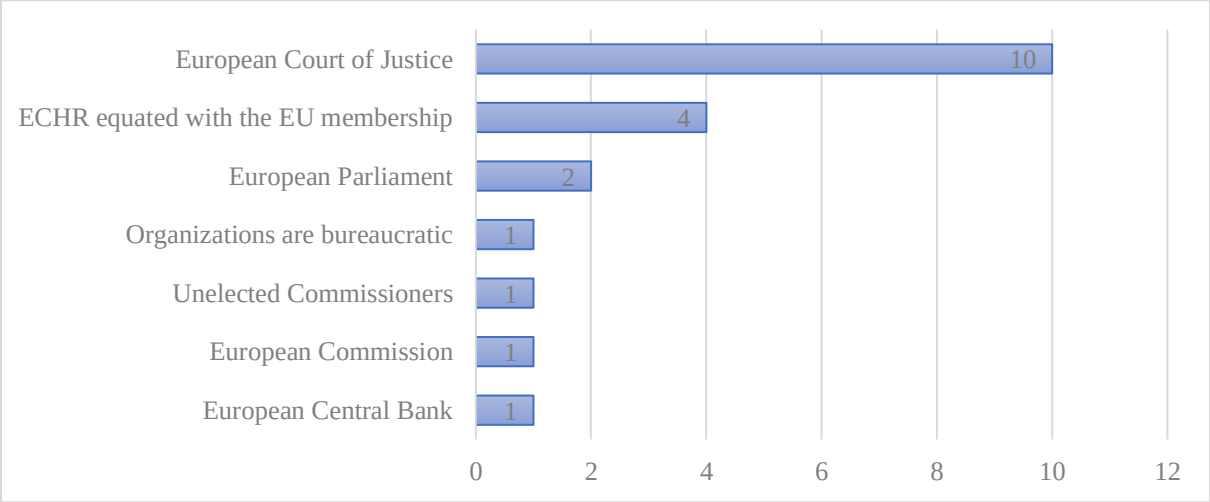
5.1.2. The EU Institutions

In this category, the focus is on statements regarding the EU institutions or the institutional structure of the EU. All 16 codings in this category included negative statements (100.00%). The main theme revolves around the rejection of the principle that EU law and rules are superior to national laws and rules within the institutional structure and functioning of the EU. UKIP argues that decisions made by democratically elected Members of Parliament in the UK should hold superiority over decisions made by non-elected commissioners who may disregard British interests and impose decisions in the opposite direction. The criticisms mainly target the perceived non-democratic nature of decision-making mechanisms, the individuals in positions of power and the bureaucratic structure of the EU.

When examining the institutions by name, it is evident that the ECJ is the most frequently targeted institution, seen as an adversary to the national interests of the British people. This institution is mentioned at least 10 times and is portrayed as the primary institution dictating EU rules. It is emphasized multiple times that the UK must immediately cease compliance with its rulings and withdraw from the jurisdiction of this court. Similarly, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) is mentioned 4 times, despite not being an EU institution, as it is associated with EU membership. UKIP argues that leaving the EU would eliminate the obligation to abide by the decisions of this court as well.

Furthermore, the EP, the European Commission and the ECB are mentioned closely together, depicted as supranational institutions that undermine the national sovereignty of the UK. UKIP asserts that the UK must free itself from the jurisdiction of these institutions.

Figure 4: The most mentioned issues under the coding of "The EU Institutions"



5.1.3. The EU Policies / Regulations

In this category, the analysis focuses on objections against specific policies, regulations, and rules of the EU. As mentioned earlier, this category provides valuable insights into UKIP's Euroscepticism, as it has the highest number of codings. It indicates that UKIP has made efforts to ground its Euroscepticism on practical and concrete arguments to the greatest extent possible.

Among the 140 codings in this category, there are only 3 positive or partially positive statements (2.14%). The remaining 137 codings (97.86%) target specific EU rules and regulations, discussing their negative impact on various industries, the overall prosperity of the British people, and proposing ways to overcome these challenges.

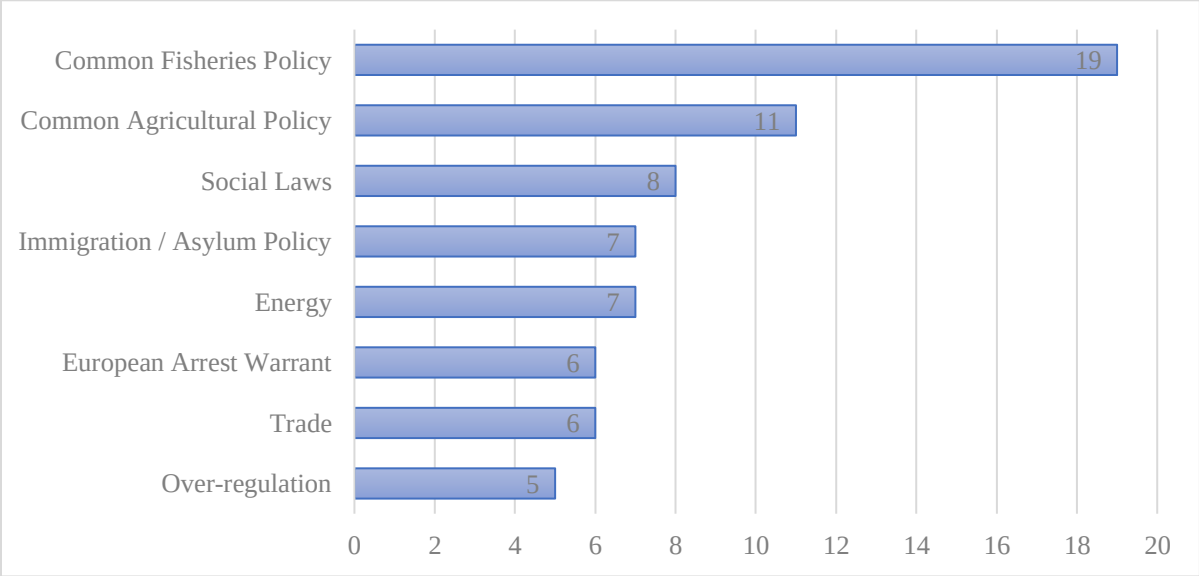
In this category, the most prominent criticism regarding EU rules and regulations is the issue of "over-regulation". The EU's ability to create and enforce rules in various matters is seen as causing significant harm and posing a threat to the welfare and interests of the UK. UKIP, advocating for "de-regulation", opposes "common policies" and emphasizes the need to prioritize and consider only British interests. Among the three positive statements identified in the coding, it is stated that after the UK's exit from the EU, all rules and

regulations would be reviewed one by one, and only those that align with British interests would be retained and applied.

Among the specific policies analyzed, the most criticized policy by UKIP was the "Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)" with 19 mentions. UKIP argues that the UK should regain control over its own waters and that the quotas and limitations imposed by the EU have severely harmed the UK's fishing industry. The second most criticized policy was the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) with 11 mentions. UKIP claims that the CAP undermines the interests of British farmers and puts the national agricultural industry at a disadvantage compared to other countries. The third most criticized policy was the Common Foreign, Security, and Defence Policy (CFSDP) with 10 mentions. UKIP advocates for independent decision-making by the UK in its relations with other countries and expresses opposition to EU initiatives such as a "joint army". UKIP emphasizes the importance of Northern Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) membership and the role of the UK within that alliance in their post-EU vision.

Another issue that has received significant attention in the manifestos are the social policies, with criticism directed towards welfare, taxes and employment in the context of EU membership. UKIP argues that the UK should have the freedom to set its own taxation policies and that EU membership has failed to generate new jobs despite the insistence of pro-EU elites. Immigration and asylum policies are also scrutinized, followed by energy policy. UKIP also expressed a commitment to withdraw from the European Arrest Warrant as soon as possible. Other areas of critique include trade policy, financial policy, transport regulations, and the fight against climate change.

Figure 5: The most mentioned issues under the coding of "The EU Policies / Regulations"



5.1.4. EU Integration / Enlargement

Under this title, UKIP's positions on further integration and enlargement policies of the EU in its manifestos are examined. Out of the 20 codings analyzed, only 1 statement (5.00%) is positive. In this statement, UKIP asserts that they are not anti-Europe but rather against political integration within the EU. The remaining 19 statements (95%) strongly oppose political unification of the EU. The concept of an EU Constitution has particularly drawn significant opposition and criticism.

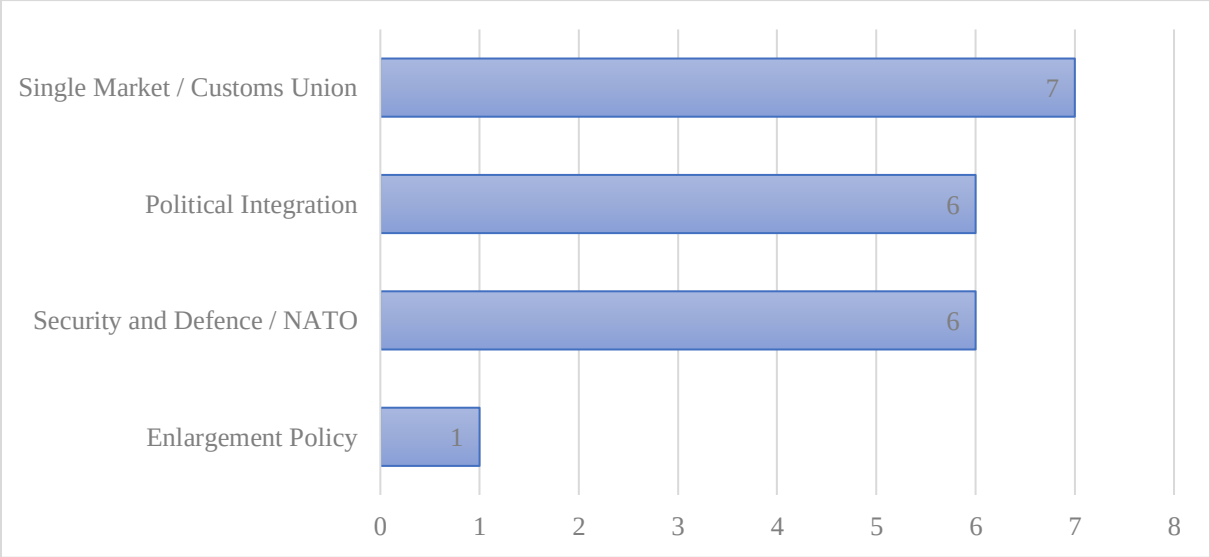
Furthermore, the integration of the EU in the areas of defence and foreign policy has been strongly criticized and contested. UKIP highlights that British security and national interests have been undermined within the framework of a common defence policy of the EU. In this regard, the proposal to establish a common EU army is firmly rejected. In contrast, the importance of NATO membership and the existence of NATO are consistently emphasized. It is suggested that relations with NATO would further develop if the UK were to leave the EU.

The Single Market, Customs Union and Eurozone, which promote economic and commercial integration within the EU, have been strongly criticized. The main argument is that the UK initially joined a common market but the EU has exceeded its original purpose by attempting to establish a political superstate. It is emphasized that the EU disregards the

opinions of member states and citizens in this transformation, leading to the rejection of the current form of the EU and the UK's participation in it.

Furthermore, UKIP criticizes the EU's policy of enlargement, particularly concerning eastern European countries. The concern is that it would result in an influx of immigration from these countries to western Europe, allowing citizens to settle and work as they wish. This aspect of further enlargement is strongly opposed by UKIP.

Figure 6: The most mentioned issues under the coding of "EU Integration / Enlargement"



5.2. SUB-CODES

As previously mentioned, in addition to the codes directly related to the EU, some various recurring themes were also examined to gain a better understanding of how UKIP expressed its Euroscepticism through different subjects. By analyzing the manifesto content, 7 key themes are identified, which were frequently mentioned or indirectly referenced, showcasing how UKIP positioned itself in opposition to the EU. These titles can be summarized as "Withdrawal", "Sovereignty", "Economy", "Democracy", "Immigration", "People" and "Anti-establishment".

A total of 619 codings were identified within this sub-coding. Upon reviewing the content, it was found that only 5 out of the 619 codings contained positive or partially positive

statements (0.81%). Conversely, the majority of the codings (614 out of 619, 99.19%) consisted of critical and reactive expressions. Particularly noteworthy is the prevalence of the negative expressions within the sub-codes in majority, while the sub-codings of "Withdrawal" and "Sovereignty" contain a small number of positive expressions.

Below is an explanation of the positions advocated by UKIP and the arguments it puts forth in opposition to the EU regarding these topics and sub-codes:

5.2.1. Withdrawal

Out of the 181 codings conducted within this sub-code, 3 were classified as positive or partially positive (1.66%) while 178 were classified as negative (98.34%).

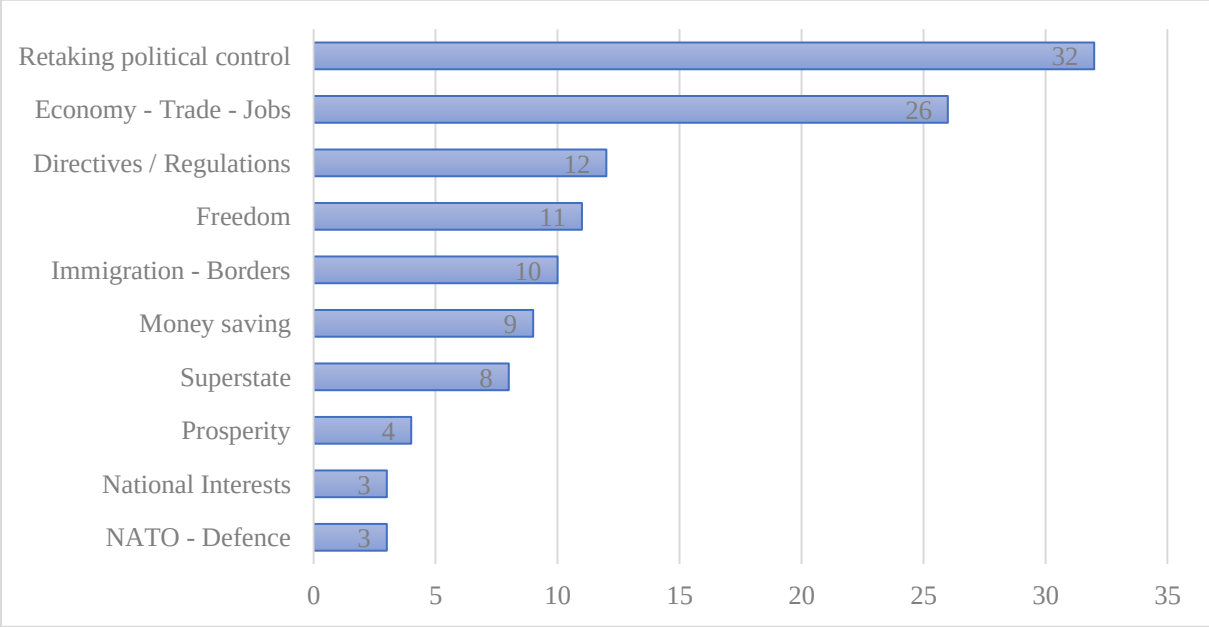
UKIP, being strongly oriented towards a complete departure from the EU, prominently employed terms associated with withdrawal. Expressions such as "withdrawal" and "out" were frequently used to signify the UK's separation from the EU, accounting for 29.24% of the codings within this sub-group.

Upon examining the expressions within this sub-coding, it is evident that the most frequently discussed subject, with 30 codings, is "retaking political control and power from the EU". All the expressions related to this subject convey a negative stance towards the EU. Additionally, a strong emphasis is placed on the economic cost and damage of EU membership as a compelling reason to garner support for UKIP's exit campaign. Among the 26 codings, it is particularly highlighted that EU membership leads to job loses, unfair trade rules and a decrease in the overall economic well-being of the UK. Another prominent theme, with 12 codings, pertains to grievances against EU directives, regulations and rules. The issue of "over-regulation" is emphasized as a primary argument for leaving the EU, asserting that the UK must have its laws crafted by democratically elected representatives to ensure its welfare and security, and the supremacy or adverse effects of EU rules must be reformed or eliminated. Furthermore, leaving EU membership is equated with "freedom" as the word freedom is associated with Brexit at least 10 times. Moreover, Brexit is presented as a necessity to control immigration and secure full border control. It is also stressed that ending EU membership will enable the UK to invest more in local services by saving money.

Following these topics, the term “superstate” appeared 8 times, emphasizing that the UK should not be part of it and should withdraw immediately. The terms “NATO – Defence” were mentioned 3 times, “national interests” 3 times, “democracy” 3 times, and “damages caused by EU membership” were specifically highlighted twice (See Figure 7).

Within this sub-coding, there are only 3 sentences containing positive expressions. These sentences aim to establish a cooperative relationship based on mutual respect through a trade agreement with the EU after the end of membership. The importance of maintaining dialogue and cooperation in the fields of defence and security is also emphasized multiple times.

Figure 7: The most mentioned issues under the sub-coding of “Withdrawal”



5.2.2. Sovereignty

The second most frequently mentioned topic under this sub-coding was “sovereignty” with 148 codings. Among all the codings, only 2 contained positive or partially positive expressions (1.35%). Similar to the positive expressions in the “withdrawal” coding, the UKIP underlines the willingness and necessity of establishing bilateral relations with the EU based on “mutual respect and cooperation” in the post-Brexit era. This priority is clearly stated in the 2018 election manifesto as directly quoting:

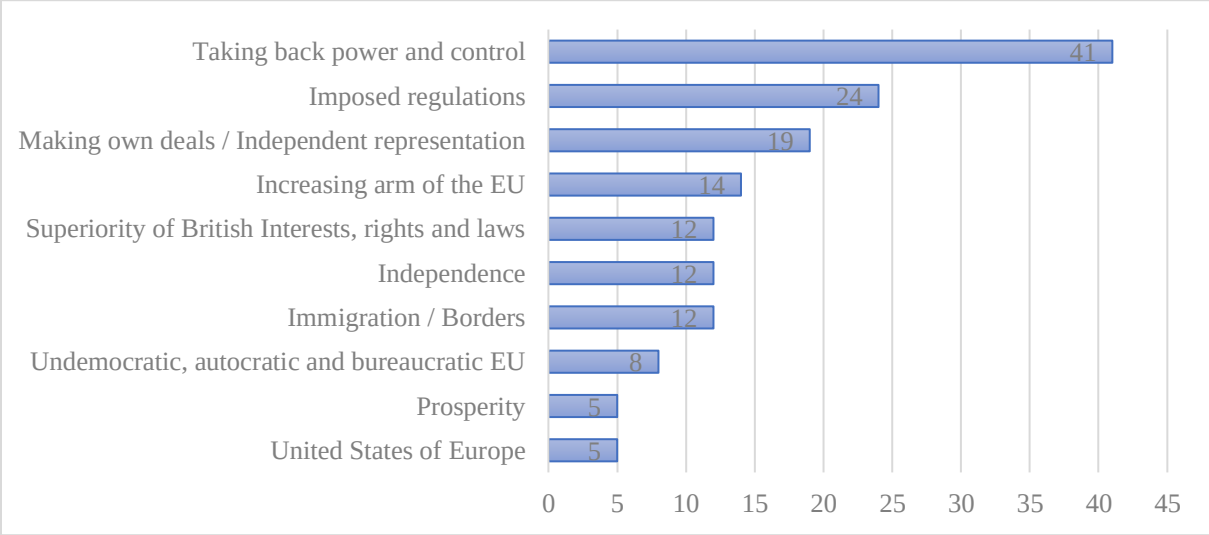
We stand for freedom from the European Union and the right to live once again under our own traditional freedoms and liberties, together with the right once again to be proud of our great country (p.1).

Accordingly, UKIP positions the UK not as the member of the EU but rather in a relationship with the EU based on equal footing.

According to this title, UKIP argues that EU membership has eroded the sovereignty and independence of the UK. The focus is on reclaiming power and control, with 41 statements highlighting this aspect. UKIP asserts that EU-imposed regulations have undermined the UK's sovereignty and authority. They argue that after leaving the EU, the UK can establish relationships with other countries based solely on national interests, enhance its economy through independent bilateral trade agreements, and have an independent representation in international organizations like the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Within this context, the EU's perceived overarch is criticized, with expressions such as "increasing arm" or "ruling across the channel" mentioned at least 14 times to which UKIP strongly objects. The superiority of EU laws over national British laws is also rejected at least 12 times as UKIP advocates the opposite. Additionally, the issue of immigration and borders is emphasized here once again, with leaving the EU seen as an opportunity for the UK to regain control over its borders and manage migration flows.

Figure 8: The most mentioned issues under the sub-coding of "Sovereignty"



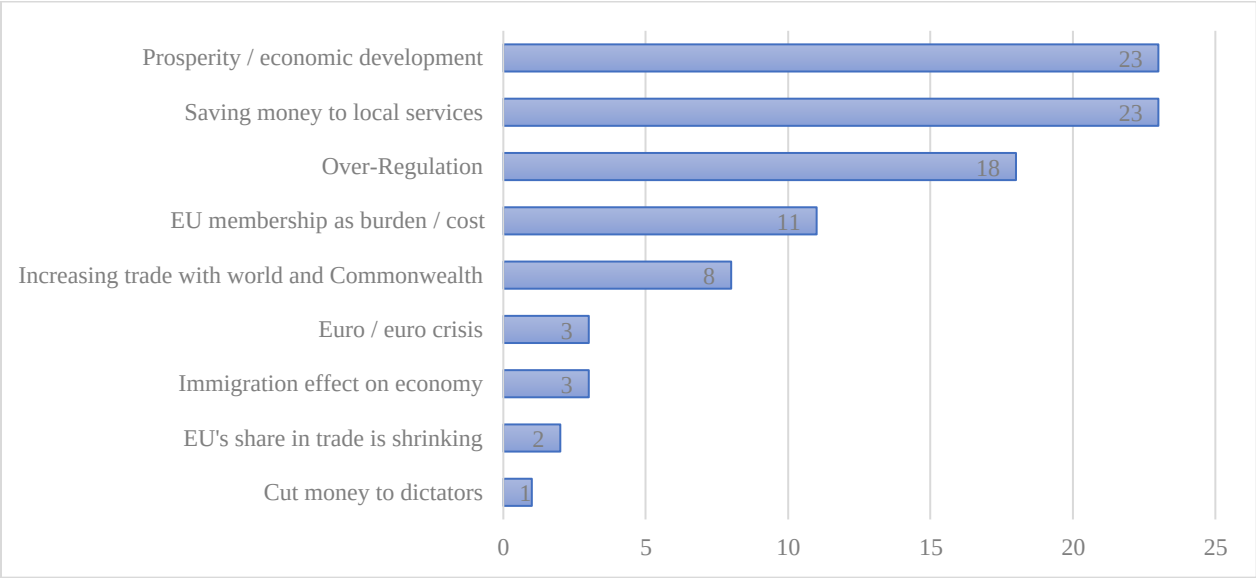
5.2.3. Economy

Moving on to the economy, it is noteworthy that all 109 codings made under this heading were defined as negative. The emphasis was placed on associating leaving the EU with the development and growth of the British economy, job creation and prosperity, mentioned 23 times. It was further highlighted 18 times that leaving the EU would allow for cost savings that could be redirected to local services, ensuring better quality services for UK citizens instead of "rescuing sinking European economies". The over-regulation of the EU in the economic sphere, detrimental to the British economy and welfare was articulated 18 times. Additionally, the EU membership was referred to as a "burden" or "cost" 11 times, while economic integration with other countries, particularly Commonwealth nations, was seen as a viable option, mentioned 8 times.

The impact of the migration crisis for which EU membership was held responsible, was mentioned 3 times in relation to its effects on the economy, with the problem expected to diminish upon leaving the EU. The Euro and Eurozone crisis were also invoked to highlight reasons for leaving the EU.

Furthermore, it was stated that the EU's share in world trade is gradually declining, and if the UK remains in the EU, its economy will suffer from the weakening European economy. Finally, it was reiterated that departing from the EU would result in the termination of economic aid and funding provided to dictators.

Figure 9: The most mentioned issues under the sub-coding of "Economy"



5.2.4. Democracy

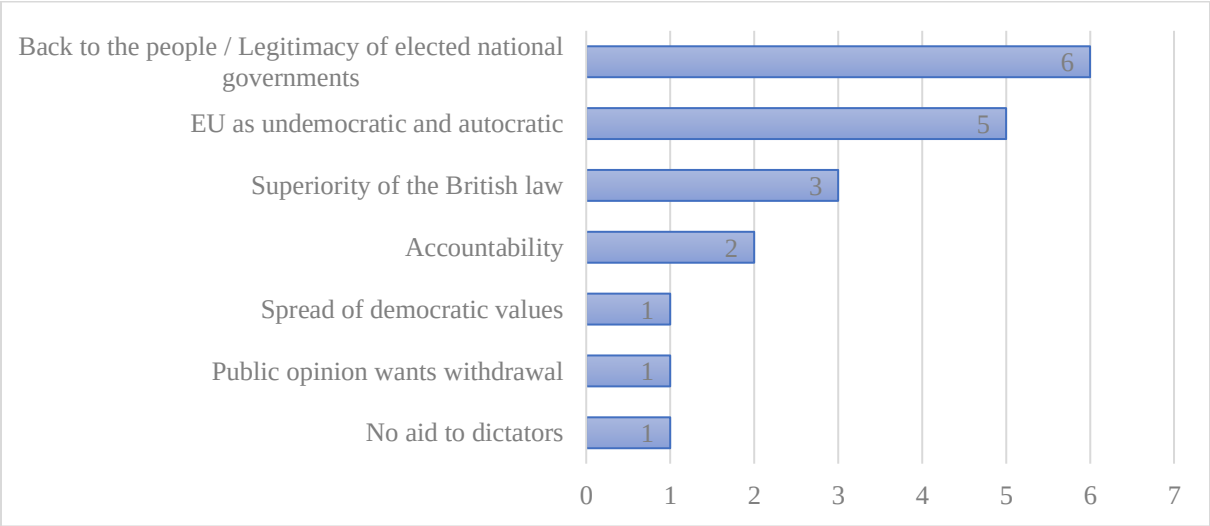
The title that was the fourth most frequent was "democracy". Similarly, all 31 codings under that title consisted of negative expressions.

In this context, the EU is portrayed as "anti-democratic" and "bureaucratic", with the expression "back to people" being prominently used. The emphasis lies on the fact that the EU is governed by unelected elite commissioners who impose rules without conserving the opinions of the people. It is argued that laws made by elected British representatives should take precedence over EU laws. Moreover, the concept of accountability is mentioned twice, highlighting the lack of accountability within the EU and contrasting it with the British democratic tradition. According to this view point, the UK upholds true democratic values and leaving the EU would enable these values to have greater impact on the world.

In the 2010 manifesto, the opposition to the EU over democracy was summarized as follows:

> We will no longer be governed by an undemocratic and autocratic European Union or ruled by its unelected bureaucrats, commissioners, multiple presidents and judges. UKIP will give power back to Westminster and to the people through binding national and local referenda and more effective, locally-elected representatives. Britain will be free to choose a new positive vision for her future, free from the EU straight-jacket. (p.3).

Figure 10: The most mentioned issues under the sub-coding of "Democracy"



5.2.5. Immigration

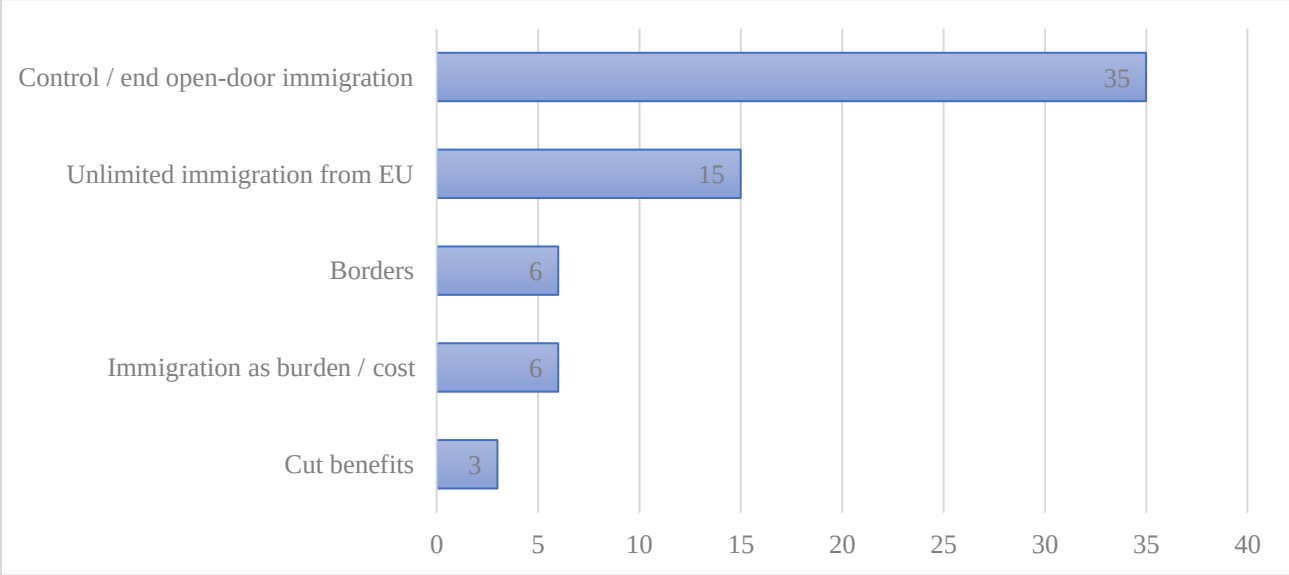
Undoubtedly, immigration was one of the key topics during the periods when UKIP garnered significant public support and achieved electoral success. The dissatisfaction stemming from this situation allowed UKIP to take ownership of the issue and use it as a prominent pretext to convince the people to support the withdrawal from the EU. This stance is evident in UKIP's election manifestos, where the issue of immigration mentioned 72 times. In these 72 statements, which are entirely negative and reactive towards the EU, the EU is blamed for the "surging" immigration crisis due to the EU rules which UKIP claims that they accelerate the influx of refugees and Eastern Europeans into the country.

At this point, almost half of the codings, 35 in total, are related to the "control of borders". The most frequently highlighted issues in this context are the cessation of the open-door policy for immigrants and the implementation of stringent border controls. Furthermore, the immigration of EU citizens to the UK is criticized and opposed in 15 instances. It is argued that this situation, particularly concerning Bulgarian and Romanian immigrants who arrived in the UK following the EU's eastern expansion in 2007, where they are able to settle, find a job and avail themselves of benefits on par with British citizens, should and will come to an end.

Leaving the EU membership is seen as a means for the UK government to establish its own immigration rules, primarily through an Australian-style points-based system, in order to

attract more skilled individuals to the country and impose strict limits on unskilled immigration, which is only feasible by leaving the EU. Additionally, immigrants are described as "burden" and "cost" in 6 codes and the necessity of reducing social benefits is emphasized 3 times.

Figure 11: The most mentioned issues under the sub-coding of "Immigration"



5.2.6. People / Nation

Under this title, statements regarding the British people, British nation, British identity and British values were coded, highlighting their superiority over the EU. A total of 42 codings were assigned to this topic, all of which contained negative remarks about the EU. Here, particular emphasis was placed on the preference and intention of the current political elites to prioritize the single European identity over the national British identity and values. Terms such as "returning power to the people" and "empowering the people" were used 11 times, while the priority of British citizens was stated 8 times. British values and culture were mentioned 5 times, and it is noteworthy that suggestions such as the "English Parliament" or "English-Day Sessions" were employed in this context.

According to the data gathered under this theme, the UK's perspectives and perceptions significantly differ from those of the EU. Its culture, mentality, political and democratic traditions are distinct, not aligning with the common structure of the EU. Therefore, the UK must assert also its cultural independence from the EU. Moreover, the EU's deepening and widening have been viewed as contrary to British interests and culture, posing a real threat to

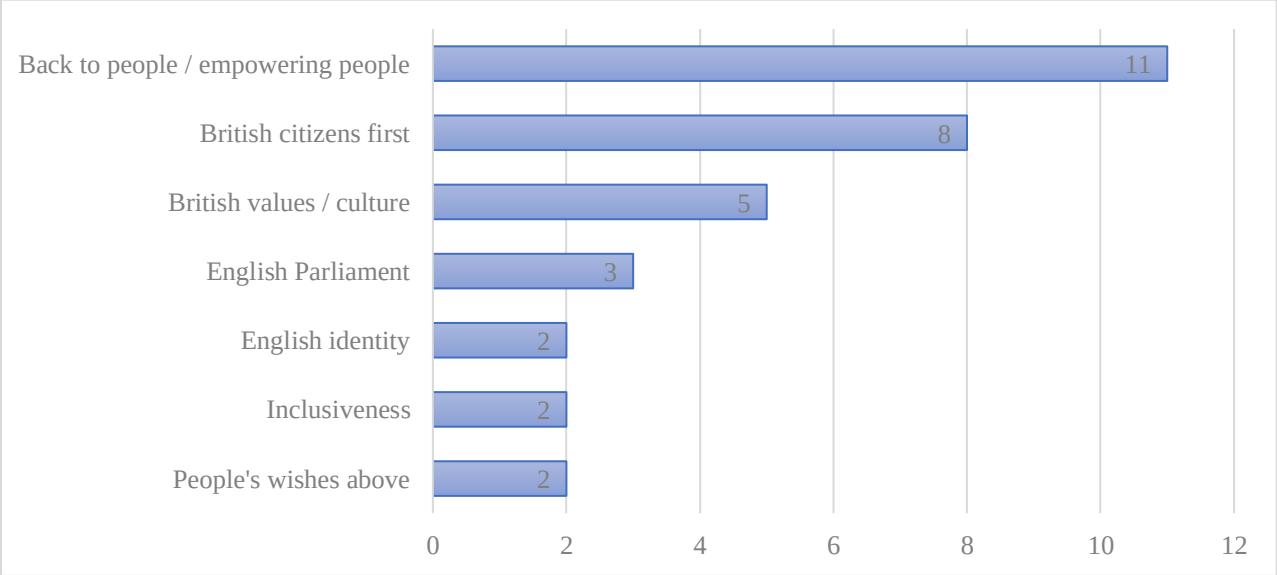
the UK's democratic and political fabric. Furthermore, the UK society has been depicted as a "growing nation" and this term of "nation" used inclusively. In the 2010 election manifesto, this inclusive nature of the British nation according to UKIP was described as follows:

> UKIP believes in civic nationalism, which is open and inclusive to anyone who wishes to identify with Britain, regardless of ethnic or religious background. We reject the "blood and soil" ethnic nationalism of extremist parties. UKIP opposes multiculturalism and political correctness, and promotes uniculturalism - aiming to create a single British culture embracing all races and religions (p.13).

As evident in the quote, UKIP embraces individuals who identify themselves as part of the British identity, irrespective of their religious or ethnic background. In this sense, it can be argued that the term "nation" is used inclusively, and diversity is particularly valued as a richness within the British identity according to UKIP's perspective.

From that point, it can be inferred that UKIP opposes the notion of a unified European identity and rejects the idea of being subsumed within a supranational society. Instead, UKIP portrays the individuals within the UK as having the freedom to embrace their own unique identities and values, allowing for the coexistence of diverse identities under a shared common identity. In contrast to the European identity, UKIP believes that differences should not be assimilated or homogenized, but rather celebrated as a form of diversity that should not be imposed from above.

Figure 12: The most mentioned issues under the sub-coding of "People / Nation"



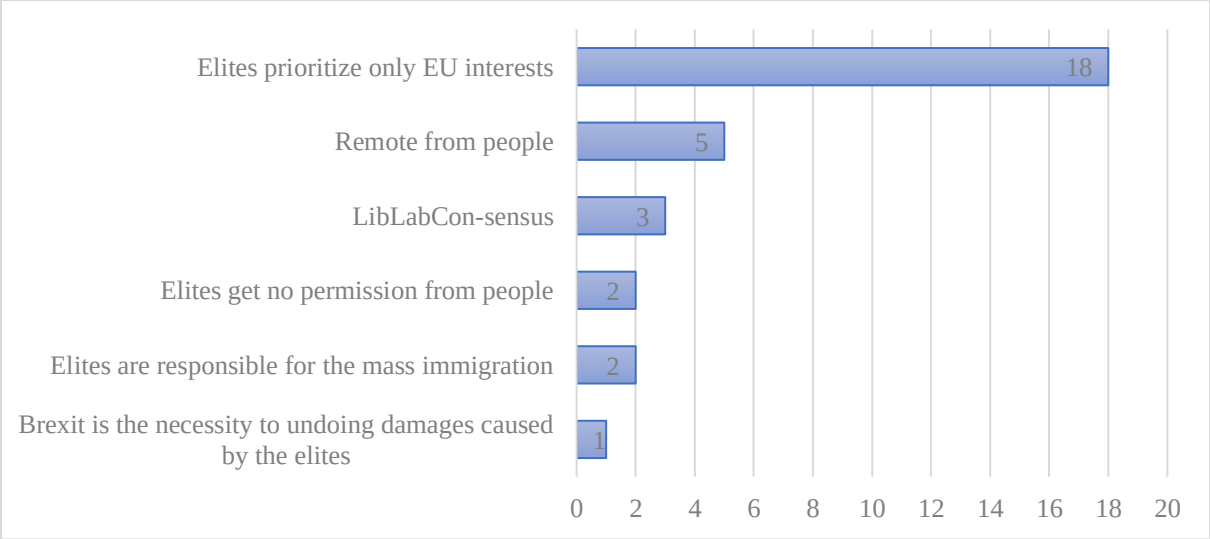
5.2.7. Anti-Establishment

The final theme, referred to as "anti-establishment", highlights how UKIP expresses its opposition to the EU by criticizing the established political parties. UKIP holds these political parties accountable for the UK's membership and the resulting damages, as well as their failure for rectify these issues. Alongside the EU, institutions, and elites, the national government of the UK and other established political parties become significant targets in UKIP's efforts to manifest its Euroscepticism.

The analysis reveals that all 36 codings express criticism, with no positive statements identified. The only exception is the Conservative government in its negotiation the Brexit agreement with the EU, but even their support is not portrayed positively as it can be seen as a form of political pressure.

The analysis indicates that in 18 codings, political parties, past governments and leaders are criticized for prioritizing the interests of the EU and EU society over the British people. This group, often referred to as the "LibLabCon-sensus", is portrayed as disconnected from the people, responsible for mass immigration and accused of making decisions without public consent. This aligns with the previous chapter's observation that UKIP finds a comfort zone in attacking the existing political order and parties from the outside. The manifestos depict the established parties as EU puppets and harming the public while consolidating their power.

Figure 13: The most mentioned issues under the sub-coding of "Anti-Establishment"



6. THE JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT PARTY (AKP)

6.1. Introduction

The second case study of this thesis revolves around the AKP which has been Turkey's ruling party since 2002. Initially driven by the vision of Turkey's full membership in the EU, the AKP has experienced significant and fundamental shifts in its stance towards the EU, ultimately transforming into a Eurosceptic party. This transformation is not only reflected in the literature, its party manifestos, and speeches of party leaders, but also evident in its tangible policies. Given the party's influential position and its evolving approach to the EU, as well as its continued dominance as Turkey's leading party in 2023 despite these evolving dynamics, exploring the AKP and comparing it to another 'successful' Eurosceptic party like UKIP is expected to yield valuable insights for the study of party-based Euroscepticism and a deeper comprehension of Eurosceptic tendencies.

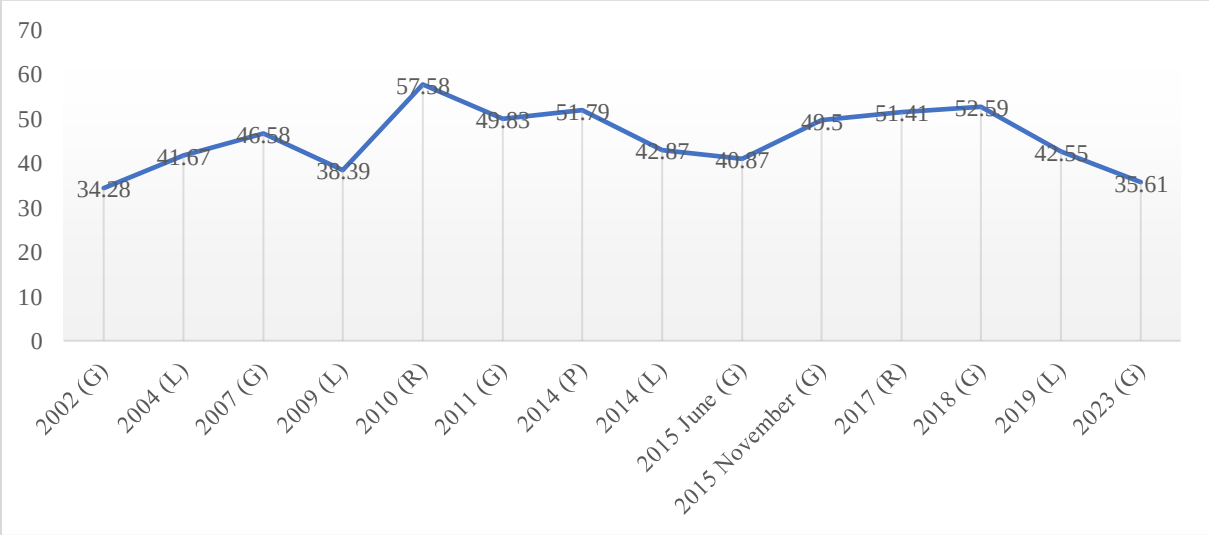
Before delving into the ideological position of the party, the general historical perspective on its stance towards the EU, and the literature review, it is necessary to briefly touch upon how the pro-EU and Eurosceptic positioning in Turkey influenced electoral outcomes.

According to Gülmez's (2020, p. 2) figures; in 2002 in which the AKP first came to power, political parties considered "pro-EU," led by the AKP, received approximately 57% of the votes. On the other hand, parties falling into the "Eurosceptic" category, such as the Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi; CHP), Nationalist Movement Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi; MHP), and Felicity Party (Saadet Partisi; SP), collectively obtained around 37% of the votes that year. Looking at the results of the most recent elections held in May 2023, we encounter a completely interesting picture. In these elections, the "People Alliance (Cumhur İttifakı)" formed primarily by the AKP, as well as the MHP and Welfare Again Party (Yeniden Refah Partisi; YRP) bloc, obtained a total of around 48% of the votes, securing a parliamentary majority (Sözcü, 2023). On the other hand, the "Nation Alliance (Millet İttifakı)," which is referred to as the pro-EU bloc and advocates for a transition from the presidential government system adopted in 2017 to a strengthened parliamentary system, only garnered about 36% of the votes (ibid). However, taking into account the also the Green Left Party (Yeşil Sol Parti; YSP), which can be classified as pro-

EU which received close to 9% of the votes, there appears to be a balance of around 48% to 45% (ibid). This situation reflects a divided country, while also clearly demonstrating that pro-European parties with their values and visions are still supported by nearly half of the country, despite experiencing a decrease of nearly 7% compared to 21 years ago. In this context, when examining the AKP's perspective on the EU and its process of change, it is key to consider the influence of various domestic factors and long-standing cleavages, such as religious-secular divides that have existed in the country for a long time.

Looking at today's results and the overall election campaign, it is evident that EU membership and perspective do not hold a decisive position or it was not as significant as compared to 2002. However, when we go back to 2002, as emphasized by Uğuz & Saygılı (2016, p. 31), the popularity of EU membership among the public was one of the key factors contributing to the AKP's electoral success. According to them, embracing the EU objective was crucial for sustaining political reforms and fostering unity among diverse groups (ibid). Recognizing the prevailing enthusiasm for membership within Turkey, the AKP actively embraced the EU process (ibid). Despite being met with prejudice due to the its' historical roots which led to the banning of its' predecessor political parties on charges of threatening the secular state order, AKP maintained a clear goal of EU membership which played a crucial role in forming a robust pro-EU coalition between the AKP and secular actors (Yılmaz G. , 2016, p. 89).

Figure 14: AKP's Vote Shares in General Elections (G), Local Elections (L) and Referendums (R)



Source: Daily Sabah & YSK

6.2. AKP AND THE EU

6.2.1. 2001-2005

AKP, was established in 2001 by the "reformist" faction of the National Outlook Movement (Milli Görüş Hareketi; MGH) following the closure of the Islamist Welfare (Refah Partisi; RP) and Virtue Parties (Fazilet Partisi; FP), which were composed of individuals associated with the MGH and called as “traditionalist” faction of the movement and had a vision of a state based on religion against the secular order in Turkey and were accused of crimes against the secular order of the Turkish Republic (Saatçioğlu, 2014, p. 90). It aimed to realize reforms on freedom of religion without eliminating the secular order, closely affiliating itself to the Christian Democratic group in Europe (ibid). Despite its origins in the MGH and its Islamist ideology, the AKP aimed to realize Turkey's full membership in the EU, diverging from its earlier trajectory of political party formation that opposed Westernization, secular nationalism and Kemalism in Turkey since the 1970s (Yılmaz & Bashirov, 2018, p. 1815). In this context, according to Başkan & Gümrükçü (2012, p.31) who label the AKP as “Euroenthuasiast” in that period, achieving full EU membership in the medium/long term and swiftly fulfilling the Copenhagen Criteria held a significant position not only in terms of implementing reforms on ensuring freedom of belief and preventing further party closures, but also in advancing issues such as pluralistic democracy and human rights that directly concerned all segments of the society. Öniş (2007), highlights the party’s capacity to rally the public towards the ultimate objective of joining the EU as carachterizing it as a “conservative globalist” party.

In this context, after coming to power alone after 2002 “earthquake elections” (Çağatay, 2002: Çarkoğlu, 2002; Öniş Keyman, 2003), AKP swiftly passed reform packages primarily in the field of human rights, such as the removal of obstacles towards the Kurdish language, the abolition of the death penalty, and the lifting of restrictions on freedom of expression to demonstrate its readiness for full membership in the EU which ultimately resulted in the European Council's decision in 2004 to initiate accession negotiations in October 2005 (Yılmaz, 2011; pp. 193-194; Başkan & Gümrükçü, 2012, p. 31-32; Saatçioğlu, 2014; p. 86).

Yılmaz (2011, p. 193), characterizes AKP’s position in these years as “*pro-EU turn of the new generation of Islamists*” by attaching great importance to it due to their perception of EU membership and the reform process as a “safe harbor” for enhancing and expanding their

religious freedom. He further mentions that this strategic position of AKP regarding EU membership envisages Turkey as a country in a context of European integration within the framework of a *'post-modern'* understanding of modernity, as emphasized by Yılmaz, where the Muslim identity and European modernity coexist harmoniously, while Kemalist nationalism, based on the founding dynamics of the modern secular republic, is seen as having an exclusive and repressive nature which adopts a modernity concept that does not fully embrace the religiously oriented segment of the society (ibid). Due to these factors, AKP, which came to power alone, aimed to quickly pass the "harmonization laws" that envisaged significant changes in the restrictive measures of the 1982 constitution in order to meet the Copenhagen criteria rapidly (Bardakçı, 2010, p. 32). Furthermore, Düzgit & Kaliber (2016, p. 2), highlight that AKP's vision regarding the EU and its objective to enhance democratic reforms that would have an impact on all societal groups are integral to its strategy of bringing its voter base closer to the center to the greatest extent possible. Similarly, Kaliber (2013) underlines that this reform process has also been a valuable tool for AKP to establish, strengthen and sustain its own presence breaking its marginal outlook within the political establishment.

To summarize, after coming to power through its electoral victory in 2002, the AKP embarked on a process aimed at fulfilling the Copenhagen Criteria and initiating negotiations for full EU membership. This strategic process was employed to overcome the party's marginalized image, draw it closer to the mainstream and strengthen its position within the established order. Additionally, the AKP has focused its efforts on lobbying for EU membership on the international stage. However, the most critical development that caused a fracture in AKP's perspective and stance towards the EU during this period was the admission of the Republic of Cyprus as the representative of the entire island to the EU. Consequently, when the Greek Cypriot Administration, possessing the power to veto Turkey's EU accession process, exercised this right to hinder Turkey's membership progress, it prompted a new phase in AKP's stance towards the EU. Gülmez (2013) briefly defines this as “the end of the golden era” of EU-Turkey relations.

6.2.2. 2005-2007

Despite the EU’s decision to start accession negotiations with Turkey on 3 October 2005, the year 2005 is seen as the onset of a period characterized by a heightened increase in

AKP's previously “restrained” critical discourse towards the EU (Gülmez, 2013, p. 7). AKP, as mentioned above, as having been utilized the high popularity of the EU among the public to establish its power through a pro-EU discourse in the previous period, has started to shift its’ direction from the EU towards domestic politics, as the EU issue started to lose significance among the public due to developments concerning the Cyprus issue and criticisms of the EU's perceived “lack of clear direction” towards Turkey (ibid, 7; Bardakçı, 2010; p. 32). To be specific, the two main factors that caused a negative shift of AKP’s position towards the EU were the Cyprus stalemate as well as the negative messages of prominent EU members states against the full membership of Turkey to the EU. Firstly, in 2004, the plan for the reunification of the island of Cyprus under a federal framework, led by the United Nations (UN), was met with opposition from the Greek Cypriot community. As a result, the Greek Cypriot side was granted full membership in the EU to represent the entire island. Secondly, prominent EU countries such as France and Germany expressed clear opposition to Turkey's full membership while putting Turkey in a privileged partnership perspective. As a consequence of these factors and developments, AKP's enthusiasm and commitment towards Turkey's EU accession significantly diminished, leading to a noticeable deceleration of the entire reform process starting from 2006. Sipahioğlu (2017, p. 56) defines this period as “*transition period between Europeanization and de-Europeanization*”. During this period, AKP was preoccupied with both the declining popularity of EU membership among the public and the accusations, especially from CHP, of fulfilling every demand of the EU without considering the country's interests (Yılmaz, 2011, p. 186).

Saatçioğlu (2014, p. 96) states that, with reference to the 2005 negotiation framework, given the EU’s high sensitivity over its’ absorption capacity of Turkey to the EU, Turkey's EU accession process was put in an "open-ended" state and efforts were made to make it as difficult as possible with expressions such as "*long transition periods*." It is further suggested that the period is evaluated within the perspective of a "privileged partnership" supported mainly by French President Nicolas Sarkozy and German Chancellor Angela Merkel (ibid). Saatçioğlu also points out that this situation led to "disillusionment" among Turkish politicians and ultimately, with the indefinite suspension of most chapters in 2006, AKP's belief and motivation in the membership process and perspective declined (ibid). As a result, AKP started to behave more critically and reactively towards the EU, and it began to signal that it would pursue its own path unless it received a clear stance from the EU (Gülmez, 2013; p. 8).

Behind the backdrop of this "threat of pursuing its own path", Uğuz & Saygılı (2016, p. 32) highlight that Turkey would adopt a separate and independent foreign policy from the EU and that it aimed to strengthen its ties with Muslim communities and countries within the framework of the "neo-Ottomanism" doctrine, with the vision of becoming a regional power. They emphasize that from that point on, Turkey started moving in this direction as they point out that Turkey's economic interactions with its non-European neighboring countries have experienced a significant boost, particularly starting from the mid 2000s (ibid). Thus, the pro-EU activism of AKP in its early years has gradually shifted towards embracing a narrative known as the "Sèvres Syndrome",[3] which portrays the EU as an Islamophobic entity aiming to divide and dismantle Turkey, hindering its development and prosperity (Gülmez, 2020; p. 5).

6.2.3. 2007-2011

Following the 2007 elections, where AKP successfully passed its second electoral test and regained single-party rule with record-breaking public support, the previous period's standoff with and reactive stance against the EU continued (Sipahioğlu, 2017, p. 56).
While EU membership was described as AKP's greatest "ultimate goal," the party's commitment to and need for the EU diminished with the strong backing of the public, and steps were not taken with the same high motivation as in the initial period (ibid).
While this situation does not imply a complete break from the EU reform process, it indicates a significant decline and loss of importance in the reform process (Saatiçoğlu, 2014, p. 87). Saatçioğlu further notes that this inclination has also been identified as "*loose Europeanization*" or "*Euroasianism*" (ibid, reference from Öniş & Yılmaz, 2009).

Another point that needs attention here is the content and nature of the reforms carried out by the AKP after this period as well as the fact that the domestic factors play an immense role regarding the pace and the scope of the reform process. The notable aspect here is that the

[3] Yılmaz (2011, p. 188) summarizes the Sèvres Syndrome as follows: After the end of the World War I, the victorious Allied Powers imposed a very harsh treaty on the Ottoman Empire which was on the losing side of the war. Accordingly, the Turks were being forced to give up much of their territories in North Africa and the Middle East. Furthermore, they were confronted with an independent Armenian state, an autonomous Kurdistan and a strong Greek presence in Western Thrace and the Aegean Islands as well as the Dardanelles. According to this narrative, Europeans saw the Turks as occupiers who had invaded these previously Christian lands and converted them to Islam and thus, they believed that they were returning the territories to their true owners. In this syndrome, Turks perceive Europeans as an enemy who seeks to divide, fragment and ultimately eradicate their presence in these lands.

AKP continued to implement reforms, particularly aimed at limiting the power of the military, which constrained its own authority from the outside, and it continued to approach these reforms from the perspective of EU membership process (Saatçioğlu, 2014; pp. 93-96). In this regard, Saatçioğlu further emphasizes that the reforms in the field of civilization, in particular, cannot be associated with AKP's increasing Euroscepticism despite plummeting support of Turkish public to the EU membership while certain issues such as Kurdish question have been affected as a result of growing nationalist trend (ibid, p. 97).

Moreover, Turkey's aspiration to become a regional power and its efforts to foster closer relations with Middle Eastern neighbors and the Arab world, as part of the "zero-problems with neighbors" doctrine introduced by Ahmet Davutoğlu, the former Foreign Minister, represented a significant shift while maintaining its European perspective. The aim was to showcase that Muslim societies can embrace democracy, modernity, and resolve issues through the utilization of soft power (ibid, 97-98; Sipahioğlu, 2017, pp. 62-63).

Towards the 2008 period, the financial crisis and subsequent debt crisis experienced by the EU further solidified AKP's sceptical and cautious stance towards the EU (Gülmez, 2020; p. 5). Here, particularly with the chapters that continued to be blocked in 2009, AKP embraced a narrative known as "*delusional Euroscepticism*," (Uğuz & Saygılı, 2016; pp. 32-33 quotation from Yaka, 2016) which suggested that the importance of Europe had diminished and was not as significant as before, but in contrast, Turkey's power and importance had increased as an important global actor. In this period, AKP leader Erdoğan persisted with his Eurosceptic position, exploring membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) as an alternative, nevertheless, he concurrently embraced a pragmatic approach by upholding the EU process in principle (ibid, p. 33).

Consequently, Yılmaz (2016, pp. 92-94), formulates this era (2005-2010) as "*Selective Europeanization Era*" which indicates that the waning influence of Euroscepticism among the public and domestic actors led to a diminished importance of EU accession in the agenda of the AKP government and other domestic stakeholders as the focus shifted towards domestic concerns. On the other hand, despite growing Euroscepticism, the AKP government independently pursued reforms in Parliament, utilizing electoral support to establish legitimacy and implement sensitive reforms concerning civil-military relations (ibid). These

reform efforts played a crucial role in the AKP's electoral triumph and garnered widespread popular backing (ibid).

In the 2010 period, the reform process continued with the addition of the "judiciary" domain to the ongoing reforms. The unresolved Cyprus issue, blocked chapters and the continued decrease in EU conditionality further diminished the motivation of both the public and the AKP, leading to a continued distancing of AKP and, naturally, Turkey from the EU (Saatçioğlu, 2016, p. 136; Sipahioğlu, 2017, p. 52).

6.2.4. 2011-2015

During the period of 2011-2014, which Yılmaz (2016, p. 94) refers to as "*De-Europeanization*," Turkey under AKP rule continued to independently pursue a limited form of reform process in certain areas in a preferred way. In this regard, Yılmaz further explains that during this period, the reform process was influenced by the political preferences of the AKP, specifically focusing on the significant reforms that curtailed the military's influence over the civilian government, as exemplified by the Ergenekon and Balyoz trials (ibid, p. 95).

According to Wódka's analysis of the 2011 manifesto, it is evident that the AKP displayed a distinct lack of enthusiasm for EU membership during this period (Wódka, 2015). He specifically highlights the usage of a more critical tone towards the EU in comparison to other manifestos, and emphasizes that the emphasis was placed on the practical benefits Turkey would gain rather than emphasizing Turkey's EU identity and values (ibid; pp. 8-9). Thus, during this period, the AKP's perspective on the EU became more pragmatic, with a focus on practical considerations. The stalemate in the EU accession process heightened the rhetoric, especially regarding the Cyprus issue and the unfavorable positions of specific EU member states towards Turkey.

Yılmaz (2016, p. 97) highlights that all these factors reveal a fundamental truth: the AKP no longer needs the EU and its democratic reform and membership process to survive, consolidate its power and maintain its rule. He continues that both the pressure from the secular base and the military on the AKP have been significantly neutralized, and moreover, the AKP has achieved sole power with record votes in 2007 and 2011 (ibid). Thus, the era of making reforms "for EU membership" has come to an end for the AKP, and this process has

been limited to the AKP's pragmatic preferences as well as capacity to consolidate its own power (ibid).

However, the aforementioned "reactive" and "cold" attitude has led to a clear rupture following the government-opposed Gezi Park protests in 2013 (Sipahioğlu, 2017, p. 61). The strong criticism from the EU regarding AKP's treatment of the protesters and the anti-AKP resolution passed by the EP received a fierce response from the AKP (Gülmez, 2020, p. 6). Accordingly, the AKP has relinquished its observer status within the European People's Party (EPP) group in the EP and has joined the Eurosceptic Alliance of European Conservatives and Reformists group (ibid, quoted from Tezcan & Aras, 2015; pp. 24-25 and Wódka, 2016, pp. 303-304; Sipahioğlu, 2017; p. 62). Additionally, membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization has started to be mentioned more frequently (Gülmez, 2020; p. 6, quoted from Dikici Bilgin, 2017; p. 204). Gülmez (2020, p. 5) further underlines that the Gezi Parkı protests marked a significant milestone, highlighting that the AKP started to openly display the Sèvres Syndrome.

Following the Gezi Park protests, there was a clear break from the reform process, and EU membership began to lose further significance for the AKP (Saatçioğlu, 2016; p. 136). In fact, the Ministry for EU Affairs in Turkey was merged with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, indicating the diminishing importance of EU integration (Gülmez, 2020; p. 10).

Gülmez (ibid, p. 6) also points out that AKP has used the Gezi Park protests as a turning point to create a narrative of "New" and "Old" Turkey. He states that following the Gezi Park protests, as the AKP distanced itself from the EU and the progress in democratic reform and membership process came to a standstill, the AKP crafted a "New Turkey" narrative according to its internal dynamics (ibid). This narrative, as he mentions from Aydın-Düzgit (2016; pp. 55-56; 2018, p. 22), redefines Turkish identity by highlighting religious values and portraying it as separate from and superior to Europe (ibid).

The new period that commenced with Erdogan's election as President in 2014 was identified by Kaliber (2014) as a distinct phase characterized by the imprisonment of journalists, limitations on freedom of expression and press, and the adoption of an increasingly authoritarian governance which resulted in Turkey being labeled as a country detached from the EU.

When June 2015 came around, the AKP, in its fourth election, was unable to obtain the majority needed to form a government on its own for the first time and made the decision to hold a new election after failed negotiations. During the period between the two elections, there was a notable increase in terrorist attacks by the PKK targeting civilians, and the AKP responded with a strong military approach (Düzgit & Kaliber, 2016, p. 2). In November 2015 elections, the AKP was now able to form a government on its own once again. This highlighted that under the leadership of the AKP, Turkey had shifted its focus entirely towards its internal issues and EU membership was no longer a tangible goal for the party. It became evident that in the new period, the EU would be positioned as an opposing pole.

6.2.5. 2015-2018

After 2015, there has been a period where it has been relatively necessary to enhance communication between the EU and AKP. The refugee crisis, which emerged as the most crucial crisis for the EU in 2015, necessitated the re-engagement of the EU and AKP, this time for a matter unrelated to membership.

With the 2016 Agreement made regarding the refugee crisis, which was hoped to revitalize the relations between Turkey and the EU and reactivate the full membership process, the EU made numerous commitments to Turkey, while in return, the AKP administration pledged to halt the passage of refugees to EU countries (İçener, 2016). It can be observed that the period following this agreement laid the foundation of a *'Transactional Partnership'* in the relations between the EU and Turkey (Dimitriadi et. al., 2018; Dimitriadi & Kaya, 2021).

Following a military coup threat faced by Turkey under the AKP leadership in 2016, a period of complete divergence between the AKP and the EU began as the AKP's inclination towards anti-Western sentiments progressively expanded (Yılmaz & Bashirov, 2018; p. 1823). The absence of solidarity and support from the EU towards the AKP during the coup attempt had a profound effect, drawing attention to the frequent labeling by AKP leader Erdogan of the EU (and the imperialist West in general) as the driving force behind the failed coup (ibid). After this date, as stated by Yılmaz & Bashirov (2018; p. 1814), a governance based on Erdogan's *'extreme personalization*' was adopted, leading to a period in which the AKP's ideology was anchored in Islamism and framed within a narrative of struggle between

Muslims and the Christian West. This situation was also evident during the referendum campaign in 2017, which marked the initiation of the transition from a parliamentary system to a presidential system. The AKP frequently expressed the belief that the forces behind the coup, orchestrated and supported by the West, were behind those who will vote/voted 'No' in the referendum, thereby clearly portraying the EU as an opposing power (Gülmez, 2020; p. 8).

Similarly, during this period, the reflections of a clear break from the EU were also observed in foreign policy and the economy as mentioned by Sipahioğlu (2017, p. 63) quoting Öniş (2010, p. 374), it can be observed that Turkey, apart from its relations with the EU, has sought to enhance its ties with developing Russia, Middle Eastern, and North African countries in terms of economic and trade relations, thereby completely diverging from the EU membership process and adopting a vision of becoming a more "*assertive and independent regional power*".

6.2.6. 2018-2023

After a transitional period as a result of the public vote in favor of the presidential system, the ruling AKP in Turkey, in alliance with the nationalist MHP, once again secured sole governance by winning the 2018 elections. Subsequently, this era was swiftly accompanied by deteriorating relations with the West and ultimately plunging the country into an economic crisis. Here, the AKP has also portrayed the West as responsible for the depreciation of the Turkish lira and the economic difficulties experienced within the country (Buhari-Gülmez, 2018).

Following another election victory of AKP in 2018 which were held under the newly adopted presidential system approved in the 2017 referendum, the EU Council declared that the membership negotiations had reached a halt due to the democratic regression in Turkey and the country's growing divergence from the EU under AKP leadership and stated that opening of new chapters was deemed impossible (EU Council, 2018).

During a speech given by AKP leader and President Erdogan on May 9, 2019 on the European Day, he highlighted that the concept of the EU had served as a source of inspiration for Turkey, particularly as a "peace project," and emphasized the positive contributions it

could make to the Turkish people's standard of living and well-being, especially in terms of democracy, human rights, and the economy (Erdoğan, 2019a). However, he also accused the EU of practicing double standards and made the following assessments:

> The need of the European Union for Turkey surpasses Turkey's need for the European Union. Without our country, the European Union cannot effectively combat existential threats such as Islamophobia, cultural racism, discrimination, and anti-immigrant sentiment that undermine its founding values. Attempts to confine the European Union within narrow confines will only be futile without the participation of countries like ours that have peacefully embraced different identities, beliefs, and cultures for centuries. The claim to represent the founding values of the European Union remains empty if Turkey does not take part as a full member. We hope that our European counterparts will set aside their ideological biases and approach the matter with justice and fairness. We expect them to put an end to discriminatory and exclusionary policies towards Turkey and to advance the process with a long-term vision and a win-win mentality (Erdoğan, 2019a)[4].

In another speech of Erdoğan in 2022, he reaffirms that posture as directly quoting:

> During this 20-year period, I have had numerous meetings and discussions with various leaders, presidents, prime ministers, ministers, and representatives of the European Union. I have personally witnessed and experienced how our steps towards full membership have been hindered and how our country has been subjected to double standards. In light of these experiences, I would like to sincerely express the following truths: Turkey, geographically, historically, and culturally, is part of the European continent and is undoubtedly committed to the goal of full membership in the European Union. Despite all the injustices we have faced, the European Union remains our strategic priority (Erdoğan, 2022a)[5].

As indicated by Erdogan's aforementioned remarks, the AKP still desires Turkey to become a full member of the EU. However, it emphasizes that the EU has not supported any of its endeavors in this regard and has consistently attempted to distance Turkey by adopting an exclusionary approach. Erdoğan, in this regard, calls on the EU to initiate steps towards engagement. As a result, it might be argued that the AKP attributes its growing Euroscepticism not to the core values, principles, organizational structure, the idea of the EU or being a member of that project in contrast to the Euroscepticism of UKIP, but rather to the EU's stance towards Turkey and its attitude towards the EU.

In this period, AKP leader Erdogan, who often issued threats to the EU regarding “opening the borders” for refugees, concentrated on addressing Turkey’s own security issues. To both counter terrorist activities along the Syrian border and facilitate the return of refugees, he conducted several military operations in northern Syria, resulting in receiving arms embargoes from several EU member countries (Sözcü 2019; Sabah, 2019).

[4] Translated by author.
[5] Translated by author.

After the year 2020, AKP's vision for the EU became increasingly regionally competitive. Especially in the context of the Eastern Mediterranean and Cyprus, tensions rose in the relations, while AKP leader Erdogan continued to emphasize that Turkey's future lies in the EU (Deutsche Welle, 2020). Regarding the Cyprus issue, while initially supporting a federal structure for the reunification of Cyprus and adopting a softer approach, AKP has now insisted on a two-state solution model, highlighting the perceived mistreatment of the Turkish Cypriot community by the EU (Anadolu Ajansı, 2020). Here, the AKP has taken some steps, such as the reopening of Varosha, as a response against the EU as a reflection of this tougher stance (Deutsche Welle, 2021). In the Eastern Mediterranean, Turkey's exploration of hydrocarbon resources has led to sanctions. The AKP has accused the EU of attempting to isolate Turkey under the name of solidarity, while also trying to usurp Turkey's legitimate energy rights. In turn, Erdoğan has called for "cooperation" as a counteroffer (ibid).

In light of the Russia-Ukraine War in 2022, Turkey demonstrated a distinct approach compared to the EU by refraining from taking sides and participating in sanctions against Russia (Anadolu Ajansı, 2023a). Additionally, Turkey assumed an independent role as a mediator, and the only NATO member who could sustain dialogue with both sides, highlighting its separate stance from the EU (ibid).

As we approach the year 2023, AKP finds itself in another election cycle, where it has maintained its campaign based on the doctrine of the "Turkish Century." In this vision which Erdoğan unveiled for the first time in October 2022, notable themes emerged such as replacing the 1982 coup constitution with a civilian constitution, taking a more proactive stance against "imperialist" powers that scheme against Turkey, and envisioning Turkey's future progress through its new system of governance and dynamics (Erdoğan, 2022b).

Burhanettin Duran (2022), describes this understanding as an inclusive vision and explains it as follows:

> The vision of Turkey Century has the experience of both integrating Turkey with the world through reforms and confronting the challenges of internal and external turbulence. It brings together the potential idealism of values and the realization of adaptation to circumstances. This vision, aiming to generate prosperity, freedom, and justice for everyone, is also aware of the harsh realities of international competition[6].

[6] Translated by author.

At this point, as the mention of EU membership fades away for the AKP, it is emphasized that Turkey should avoid taking sides in the transition to a "multipolar" world order and should maintain good relations with every bloc and party worldwide. In this context, efforts were made to develop relations with Middle Eastern countries such as Israel, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and there was a period of thaw in relations with Greece, especially after the Kahramanmaraş-centered earthquakes in 2023 (Anadolu Ajansı, 2022; Anadolu Ajansı, 2023b). With the solidarity shown by the EU after the earthquakes (Çavuşoğlu, 2023a), it was seen as normal to open a new chapter in relations, although it can be observed that the development of relations with the EU remains distant from the perspective of membership.

Moreover, During the 2023 election campaign, in response to the opposition candidate Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu's commitment to prioritize the EU issue, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, summarized AKP's stance and current perspective towards the EU as follows:

> ... Are we going to ignore our achievements in the Eastern Mediterranean? They say, 'We will sever ties with the Kremlin and return to the European Union.' Turkey does not have the luxury of going back and forth like that. Why should we rely on one place alone? Today, we are present everywhere. We have outreach to Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Why should we limit ourselves to just one place? We have been unable to join the European Union for years. Is it our fault or theirs? They have blocked all the chapters. The Greek Cypriot administration and the European Commission are to blame. Should I wait another 50 years? We negotiated for a federation in Cyprus for 54 years. It didn't work; they don't want it. They don't share anything with the Turks. I look out for my own interests, for the benefit of the Turkish Cypriots… (Çavuşoğlu, 2023b)[7]

6.3. AKP IN EUROSCEPTIC CLASSIFICATION

Due to the changing perspectives of AKP and the shifting importance of the EU for AKP, it is difficult to categorize AKP into a clear group. However, it is possible to make an assessment regarding their temporary stances.

Gülmez (2013) explains that categorizing AKP as either "hard" or "soft" Eurosceptic is challenging because AKP does not oppose the idea or existence of the EU. Instead, they are simply sceptical about Turkey's chances of becoming a member (ibid). He further emphasizes that this growing scepticism is not a result of AKP's hostility towards the EU but rather the increasing doubts and scepticism within the EU towards Turkey and therefore, according to

[7] Translated by author.

Gülmez, AKP’s scepticism is not based on concerns about threats or costs to Turkey’s sovereignty or it’s EU membership (ibid).

Başkan & Gümrükçü (2013, p. 32) state that when examining AKP's party program and election manifestos, it can be argued that AKP can be classified as "Euroenthusiast" in Kopecky & Mudde's classification, considering their emphasis on the importance of the EU idea and their high motivation towards Turkey's membership. Furthermore, in the same work, the MHP, which the AKP currently forms an alliance with, is described as "Latent Euroreject" (ibid, pp. 38-40). According to this classification, the MHP supports Turkey's reforms and the membership process on its path to the EU but views the EU as suspicious, untrustworthy and hypocritical towards Turkey as a whole (ibid). In this context, the MHP emphasizes the need for Turkey to be cautious in order to avoid weakening its sovereignty through this process, particularly regarding the Turkish identity which it perceives as a threat (ibid).

In this regard, while it can be stated that the AKP has firmly positioned itself in a Eurosceptic stance, Yılmaz & Bashirov (2018; pp. 1813-1814) also suggest that Turkey has advanced within an ideology that creates a cult of leadership by aligning itself with the Islamic world while standing against Western civilization. They further highlight that this approach combines elements such as "electoral authoritarianism," "neopatrimonialism," "Islamism," and "populism," allowing Turkey to assume a dominant role (ibid).

7. THE CODING ANALYSIS OF AKP

7.1. INTRODUCTION

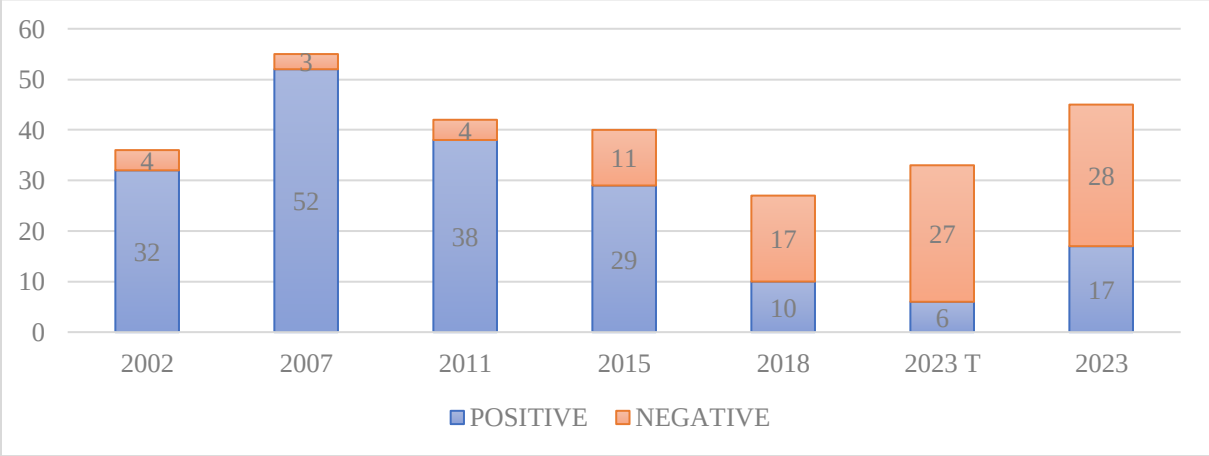
In this thesis, where party-based Euroscepticism is being examined, notable similarities and distinctions become evident when comparing the second case, AKP, with the first case, UKIP.

Considering the literature review above, as well as the changing attitude of the AKP towards the EU over the years and the significance of the EU issue, factors such as the extent of the EU issue's presence in AKP's election manifestos and the degree of attitude change should also be taken into account in the analysis. Therefore, when analyzing AKP's Euroscepticism, unlike UKIP, the analysis will also indicate the changes over the years.

The analysis included the 2002, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2018 and 2023 election manifestos of the AKP, as well as the "Turkey Century" promotional declaration released by the AKP in 2023. Considering the period in which the AKP claimed to govern Turkey for the 6th time and presented a new vision for the second century of the Republic of Turkey, the positioning of the EU in this newly depicted period also falls within the scope of this thesis. Therefore, the statements included here have also been taken into account.

When looking at the frequencies of the coding, the document with the highest number of codings related to the AKP's vision for the EU was in 2007 with 55 codings. It was followed by the 2023 election manifesto with 45 codings, 2011 with 42 codings, 2015 with 40 codings, 2002 with 36 codings, the 2023 Turkey Century declaration with 33 codings, and finally, the 2018 election manifesto with the least number of codings, which was 27 (See Figure 15).

Figure 15: The Frequency of EU-Related Issues in AKP's Election Manifestos



Among these, the year with the highest number of "positive" references was the 2007 document with 52 positive codings which is followed by the 2011 manifesto with 38 positive codings and the 2002 manifesto with 32 positive codings. This was followed by 2015 with 29 positive codings, the 2023 election manifesto with 17 positive codings, and the 2018 manifesto with 10 positive codings. The 2023 Turkey Century declaration had the least number of positive codings, which was 6.

Figure 16: The Frequency Trend of Positive EU-Related Statements in AKP's Election Manifestos through the Years

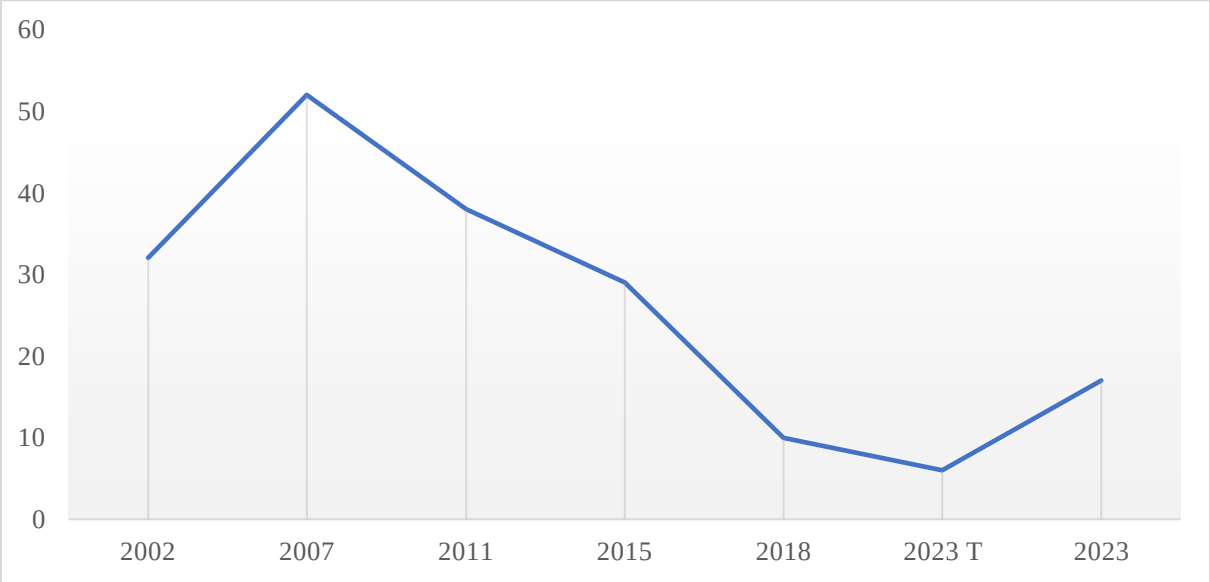
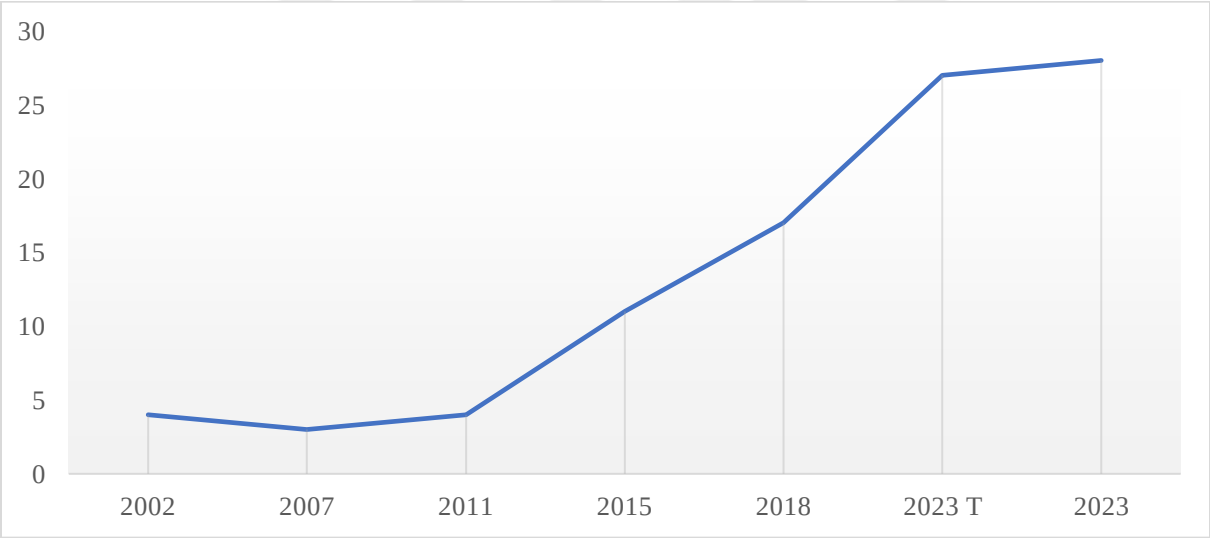


Figure 17: The Frequency Trend of Negative EU-Related Statements in AKP's Election Manifestos through the Years



In terms of proportions, the highest percentage of positive expressions towards the EU were found in the 2011 manifesto, accounting for 90.5% of the codings. Following this, the 2007 manifesto had 88.1%, the 2002 manifesto had 84.2%, the 2015 manifesto had 72.5%, the 2018 manifesto had 37.8%, the 2023 manifesto had 37.0%, and finally, the 2023 Turkey Century manifesto had 18.2% (See Figure 18).

Figure 18: The Proportional Frequency Trend of EU-Related Statements in AKP's Election Manifestos through the Years

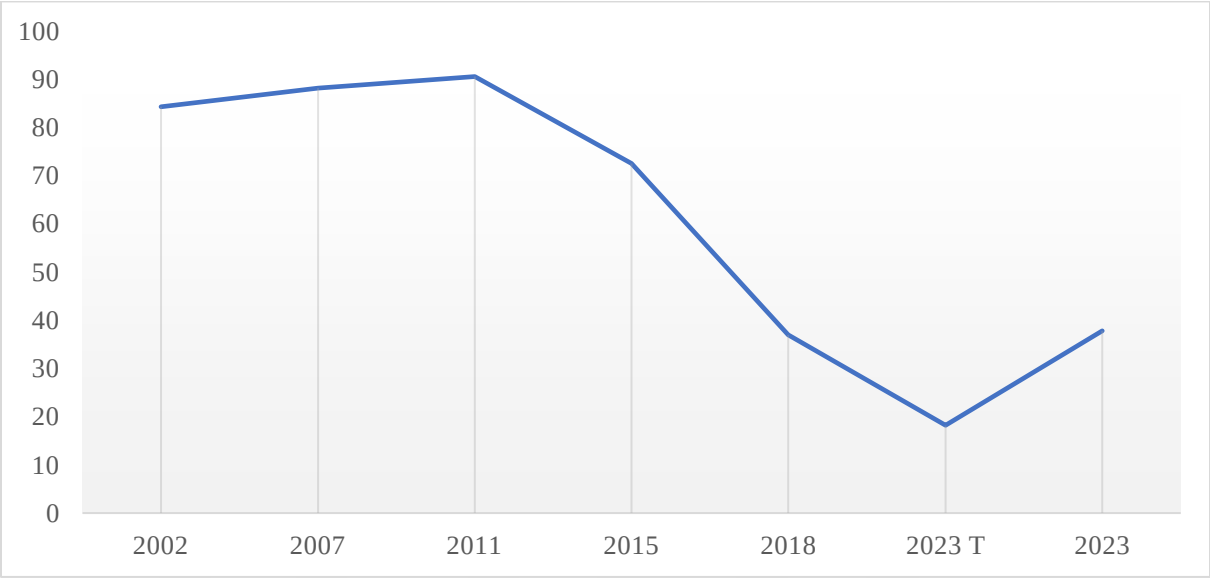


Table 7: The Coding Analysis of Frequency of EU-Related Statements of AKP's Election Manifestos

General Codes	*Frequency*	*Direction*	
	N, %	*Positive*	*Negative*
EU Itself	58, 42.34	40, 68.97	18, 31.03
EU Regulations	73, 53.28	71, 97.26	2, 2.74
EU Integration	6, 4.38	6, 100.00	0, 0.00
TOTAL	**137, 100.00**	**117, 85.40**	**20, 14.60**
Subcodes			
Democracy and FR	26, 17.93	14, 53.85	12, 46.15
Security	8, 5.52	4, 50.00	4, 50.00
Sovereignty	7, 4.83	1, 14.29	6, 85.71
Culture	16, 11.03	3, 18.75	13, 81.25
Cyprus	10, 6.90	4, 40.00	6, 60.00
Cooperation	17, 11.72	17, 100.00	0, 0.00
Prosperity	16, 11.03	15, 93.75	1, 6.25
Regional Power	45, 31.03	11, 24.44	34, 75.56
TOTAL	**145, 100.00**	**69, 47.59**	**76, 52.41**

Even from these general assessments, it is evident that the importance and perspective towards the EU were quite significant and positive between 2002 and 2011. However, this trend started to change in 2015, and from the 2018 period onwards, it became noticeably more negative and quantitatively decreased. It is possible to say that AKP's enthusiastic and fully committed pro-EU stance in its early years lost its significance after 2015 and developed in a Eurosceptic manner.

When creating the coding categories, similar to what was done in the case of UKIP, both direct references to the EU and the overall stance towards the EU were analyzed. In this context, the general categories for direct references to the EU were identified as "the idea of the EU and Turkey's membership," "EU reforms, regulations and harmonization," and "EU integration." Additionally, sub-categories such as "Democracy and fundamental rights," "Security," "Sovereignty," "Culture," "Cyprus," "Cooperation," and "Prosperity" and plus “Turkey as a regional power” were considered and coded.

Below, an analysis will be provided for each category, explaining how AKP's election manifestos approached the EU and how the initial "pro-EU" stance transformed into a "Eurosceptic" attitude.

7.2. GENERAL CODES

In the codings that directly referred to the EU, a total of 137 codings were conducted, accounting for 48.58% of all codings. Among these, the group that received the highest number of codings was related to "EU reforms, regulations and harmonization," with a total of 73 codings (53.28%). Following that, references to the EU concept and Turkey's membership in the project were coded 58 times (42.34%), while 6 codings (4.38%) focused on the EU integration process.

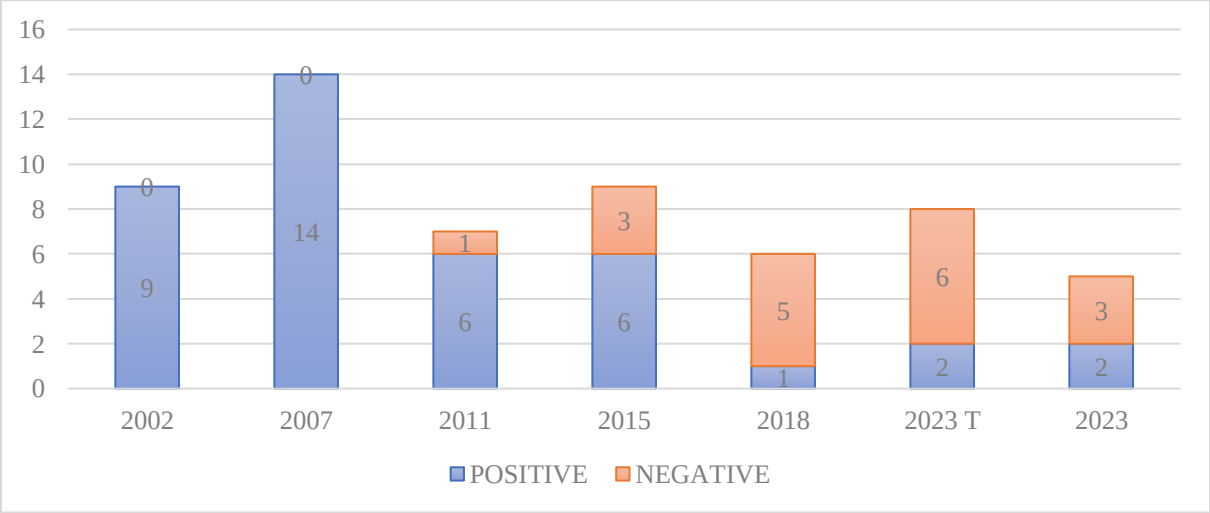
When examining the viewpoint presented here, a total of 117 positive statements (85.40%) were identified, whereas 20 statements were negative (14.60%). However, as mentioned earlier, there has been a shift towards negativity since 2015, yet positive expressions have remained dominant to a considerable extent. This indicates that the AKP does not exhibit a complete opposition to the EU concept and its institutions, implying that it can be categorized as displaying "soft Euroscepticism" rather than "hard Euroscepticism."

7.2.1. The EU Itself and EU Membership

In this first category, statements related to the idea of the EU as well as Turkey's full membership in this project were coded. In total, 58 codings were made in this group, consisting of 40 positive statements (68.97%) and 18 negative statements (31.03%).

Based on the findings of this coding analysis, it is evident that the EU concept and Turkey's membership received significant and predominantly positive attention during the period from 2002 to 2015. However, a negative trend began to emerge in 2015, characterized by a decrease in positive statements and an increase in the prominence of negative expressions (See Figure 19).

Figure 19: "EU Itself and EU Membership" Coding Analysis through AKP's Election Manifestos



Based on the coding analysis of AKP's attitude towards the EU concept and Turkey's EU membership, the following stance has been observed over the years:

All the codings from the 2002 manifesto (9 in total) contain positive and favorable statements. In this context, the EU project and Turkey's goal of full membership are described as the "natural outcome" of Turkey's modernization movement. Fulfilling the Copenhagen Criteria is emphasized as the most important building block for Turkey to reach a civilized and advanced level in various areas, particularly in terms of democracy and the economy. Furthermore, the post-Cold War global situation has accelerated regional integration movements, and the EU project which is being considered as the most successful example of

this trend, is portrayed as a goal that Turkey must be a part of due to its geographic, historical, cultural and economic proximity. In addition, the manifesto highlights that the Copenhagen Criteria, that is, EU standards, will be applied in all areas "whether or not there is membership." This conveys that Turkey can be an important actor in the contemporary world, benefiting from globalization opportunities, experiencing increased prosperity, and making significant progress in democracy and fundamental rights.

In 2007 manifesto, all 14 codings conducted were positive, underscoring the renewed emphasis on compliance with the Copenhagen Criteria. The foremost focus was placed on the gains that the membership process would bring, particularly in terms of fundamental rights and freedoms. Furthermore, the significance of the membership process in contributing to the welfare of the Turkish people was consistently emphasized, along with its potential to enhance regional and domestic security and stability.

In 2011, there was a decline compared to previous years, with only 7 codings conducted. It was the first time a negative statement was included, while the remaining 6 statements were positive, accounting for 85.7% of the total. During this period, the AKP emphasized the strategic importance of Turkey's full membership in the EU and reiterated the significance of continuing the democratic reform process. Moreover, criticisms were raised against certain countries for obstructing Turkey, highlighting their actions as a "lack of vision" and a "narrow perspective" that could potentially hold the EU back from keeping up with the changing times.

In the 2015 manifesto, 9 codings were conducted, revealing 6 positive statements (66.7%) and 3 negative statements (33.3%). The strategic importance of the EU goal was emphasized once again, stating that increased relations with other countries were not an alternative but rather complementary. The manifesto emphasized the importance of maintaining cooperation and a positive agenda, highlighted the role of financial funds in the reform process, and expressed the determination to continue the reform process despite obstacles, leading to the adoption of negative statements regarding such obstacles.

In 2018, out of the 6 codings conducted, only 1 was positive (16.7%), while 5 were negative (83.3%) which points out a discernible critical stance that emerges here. Although the EU membership was still considered strategically important, the EU was accused of

erecting "artificial barriers”. Besides that, references to reviving the historical "Silk Road" were used to reinforce a sceptical position.

In the 2023 Turkey Century declaration (2023 T), a negative attitude persisted as out of the 8 codings conducted, 2 were positive (25.0%) and 6 were negative (75.0%). It was emphasized that the membership process would continue within the framework of mutual rights and obligations, taking into account the needs for the renewal of partnership law. Particularly, the Cyprus issue was depicted as a "national case”, and the message was conveyed that Turkish interests would be protected against the West's malicious intentions within the context of the "Blue Homeland (Mavi Vatan)" doctrine[8].

In the 2023 election manifesto, out of 5 codings, 2 were positive (40.0%) and 3 were negative (60.0%). It emphasized the vision of the "Turkey Axis," summarizing the new stance as follows:

> We will establish the Turkey Axis based on multilateralism, increased cooperation, peaceful resolution of crises, empowering international organizations, and principles of humanitarian diplomacy. Our country's direction is towards both the West and the East, but primarily towards the right path, truth, and justice (p. 389)[9].

It can be interpreted that despite being sceptical of EU membership and against the idea of being a part or side of regional integrations in the emerging new world order in contrast to the post-Cold War era, a position of being multilateral and central is adopted, opposing the halt of the accession process. As an example, the 2023 election manifesto highlights Turkey's position as the only country able to engage with all sides in the Russia-Ukraine War, demonstrating Turkey's multilateral and central role leading to positive outcomes such as promoting diplomacy and successful initiatives like the Grain Corridor.

[8] Aydın (2022, p. 174) explains the doctrine as the preservation of Turkey’s control and sovereignty over the areas it possesses in the seas. According to Gürdeniz (2017, p. 35), the term refers to Turkey’s rights over all types of sources, both living and non-living, in the seas surrounding the country, and it is used to delineate Turkey’s maritime zones. In this context, the focus is primarily on opposing Greece’s claims based on the Sevilla Map and the assertions of the Greek Cypriots regarding the solution to the Cyprus issue as well as the exclusive maritime zone. In this understanding dominated by the Sèvres Syndrome, it is argued that the EU fuels and supports these opposing arguments that aim to isolate Turkey in the region (i.e., the Eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean) and challenge its sovereignty.

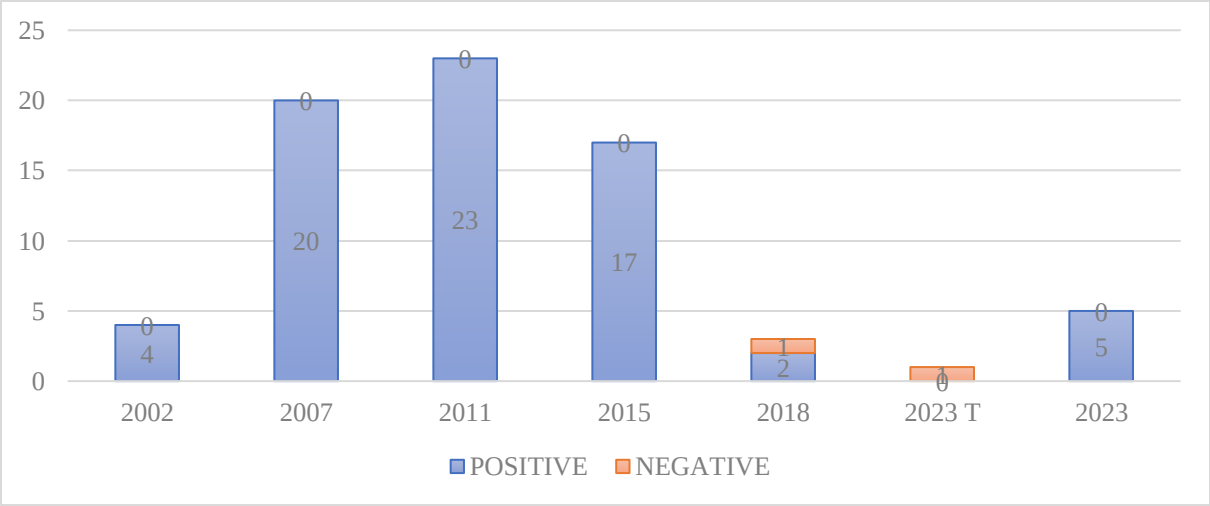
[9] Translated by author.

7.2.2. The EU Rules / Regulations

In this coding group, the analysis focused on AKP's position regarding EU regulations, standards, the importance of Turkey's compliance with these standards as well as how it positioned itself through the harmonization process with the EU acquis.

A total of 73 codings were conducted, and similar to UKIP, the group with the highest number of codings was related to EU rules and regulations. Out of the 73 codings conducted under this category, 71 of them were marked as positive (97.26%), while only 2 were marked as negative (2.74%).

Figure 20: "The EU Rules / Regulations" Coding Analysis through AKP's Election Manifestos



As previously mentioned, the period between 2007 and 2011, particularly after the Republic of Cyprus' full EU membership marked an increase in critical attitudes due to the blockades against Turkey's accession. This period also indicates, as mentioned before, a pragmatic approach where the AKP utilized the membership process to strengthen its internal position and neutralize external threats, such as the military which could be seen as a challenge to its power.

The election manifestos reflected that the years following the constitutional amendments and civil reforms after 2002 were the most favorable for EU rules, criteria and overall reform process. Until 2018, no negative statements were made in this regard, but one negative expression was identified in both the 2018 election manifesto and the 2023 Turkey

Century Declaration. Despite this, unlike UKIP, the adherence to EU standards and criteria, although diminishing in importance after 2015, was always positively received, implying that EU criteria were consistently seen as a "model." However, an argument can be made that due to the "obstacles" imposed by the EU, the AKP adopted a sceptical position.

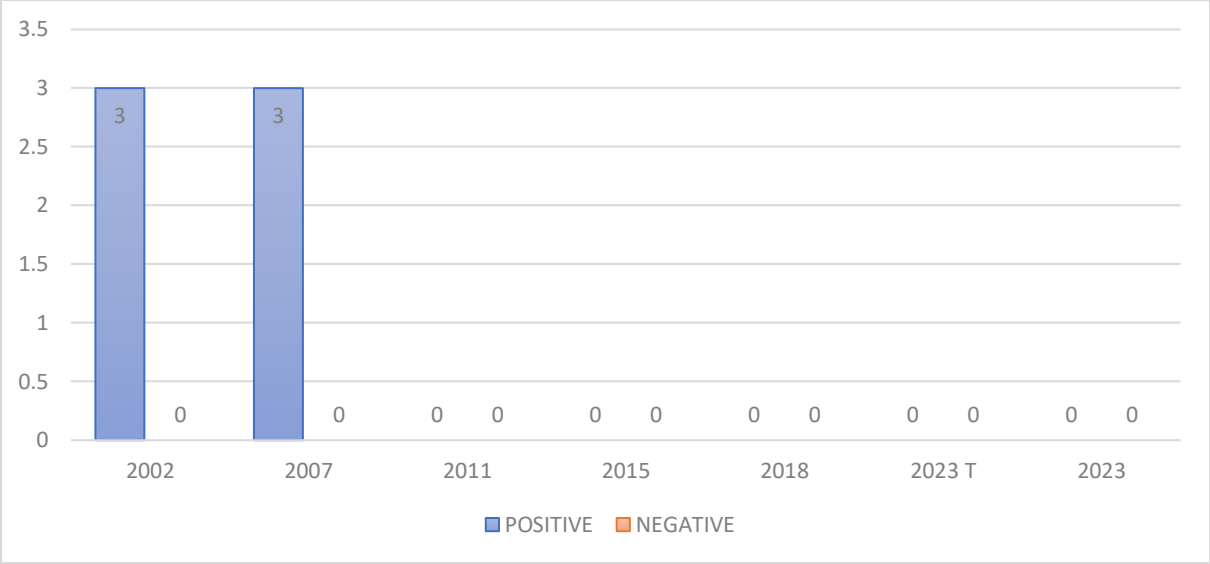
In this context, when looking at the years individually, the 2002 manifesto emphasized that reforms in various sectors (e.g., telecommunications) would be based entirely on EU rules. In the 2007 manifesto, the number of codings jumped from 4 to 20, highlighting the increasing importance of compliance with EU criteria. It emphasized that reforms would be based on EU standards in areas ranging from penal institutions, banking and insurance sector, security, Turkey's position in NATO, universities, environment, industry, agriculture, social policies and beyond, and that the reform process would be rapidly pursued in this direction. This approach was maintained in 2011 and 2015, with the number of codings reaching its peak at 23 in 2011 and then declining to 17 in 2015, but still remaining relatively high overall. In 2018, there was a sharp decrease in statements related to EU reform and harmonization, with only 3 expressions identified, and for the first time, a negative statement was included on this topic. The reform process in 2017 referred to the reforms aimed at transitioning to and developing the presidential government system adopted after the referendum in 2017 under the AKP government. Therefore, it does not refer to compliance with EU legislation but rather implies steps that the AKP would take independently of EU rules, based on its own internal dynamics.

In the context of the EU, there is a clear focus on aligning with EU legislation, particularly in the areas of regional development and the environment. This emphasis is also evident in the 2023 Turkey Century text, where the discussion revolves around reforms for developing the new governance system rather than explicitly mentioning Copenhagen criteria or EU standards, indicating the AKP's Euroscepticism. The more extensive 2023 election manifesto contains five statements that highlight cooperation and are presented in a positive light. While it doesn't explicitly refer to "EU standards", "Copenhagen criteria" or the "harmonization process", the manifesto emphasizes participation in various research and development programs, the regional advantages of joining the common transit system and alignment with the EU's Green Deal. However, it is worth noting that there has been a shift from a focus on complying with the EU's acquis for membership during the period of 2002-2015 to a more pragmatic framework of cooperation.

7.2.3. EU Integration

This group's final coding revolves around EU integration, with only six statements identified. These statements were coded three times in the 2002 manifesto and three times in the 2007 manifesto. In other years, there were no expressions related to the expansion and further integration of the EU.

Figure 21: "EU Integration" Coding Analysis through AKP's Election Manifestos



As mentioned above, the statements in the 2002 manifesto particularly highlight the significance of regional integration movements such as the EU in the post-Cold War context, emphasizing the necessity for Turkey to be part of this integration and the belief that it would lead to increased welfare for the population. Additionally, it underscores that Turkey's EU membership would greatly contribute to the EU's common security and defence policies.

In 2007, the emphasis was placed on Turkey's participation in various joint integration policies, supporting the EU's expansion policy towards the Balkans and emphasizing that it would bring prosperity, peace and stability to the region.

Following this period, election manifestos no longer contained expressions regarding the EU's overall expansion and integration policies, but it was emphasized by top AKP officials, including President Erdogan, that they supported the enlargement policy in this context, while also noting that Turkey continued to be treated "inconsistently" throughout this process. In recent times, during a press conference held in Turkey as part of hosting the

President of Kosovo Vjosa Osmani shortly after the onset of the 2022 Russia-Ukraine War, the President Erdoğan made the following remark regarding the EU's expansion policy:

> The years 1959-1963 were unfortunately the periods when Turkey experienced delaying tactics in its membership process with the European Union. Since then, Turkey has not been admitted to the European Union. Currently, there is an agenda regarding Ukraine and its process of being accepted into the European Union. We do not engage in efforts to persuade anyone to 'be admitted or not be admitted' to the European Union. We are responsible for ourselves. However, we do appreciate the efforts to admit Ukraine to the European Union. It is a positive development, but I also say to the members of the European Union, 'Why do you still have concerns, doubts, or hesitation about admitting Turkey to the European Union? (Erdoğan, 2022c)[10]

It is clear from this statement that, while the AKP continues to support the EU's enlargement policy, it perceives unfair treatment towards Turkey and maintains a reactive and sceptical attitude, with the initial enthusiasm fading away over the years.

7.3. SUB-CODES

In the sub-coding groups, the analysis will focus on how the AKP adopts a Eurosceptic stance through various themes. In total, there were 145 codings, with 69 of them being positive (47.59%) and 76 being negative (52.41%).

Among these coding groups, the category with the highest number of codings by a wide margin is "Turkey as Regional Power" with 45 codings (31.03%). It is followed by "Democracy and Fundamental Rights" with 26 codings (17.93%), then "Cooperation" with 17 codings (11.72%), "Culture" with 16 codings (11.03%), "Prosperity" with 16 codings (11.03%), "Cyprus" with 10 codings (6.90%), "Security" with 8 codings (5.52%), and finally "Sovereignty" with 7 codings (4.83%).

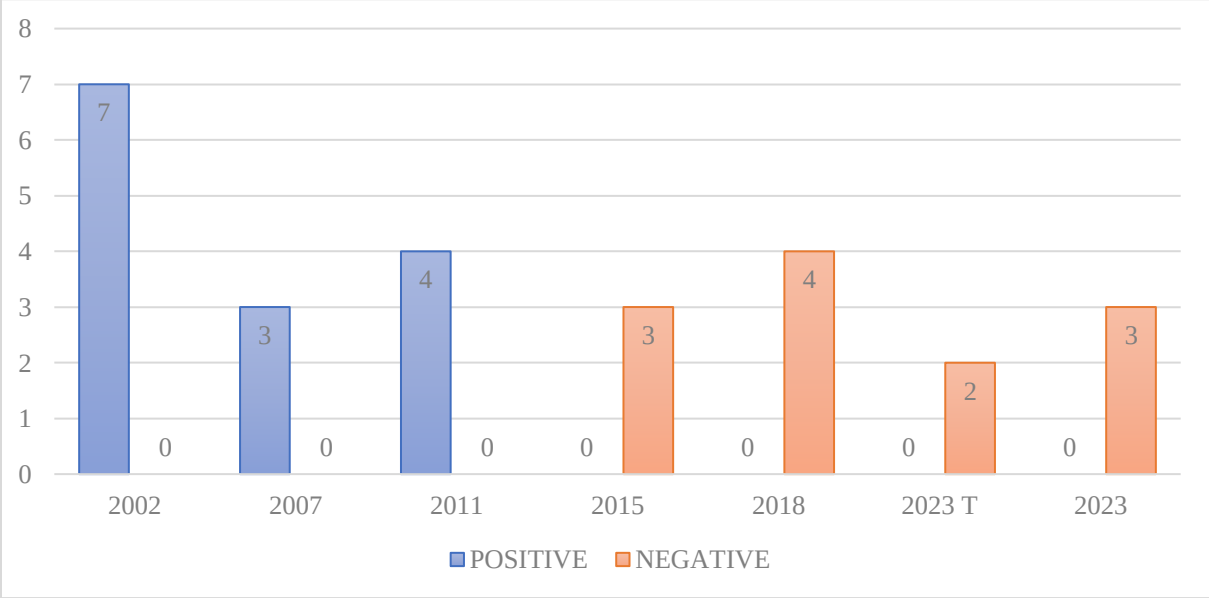
7.3.1. Democracy and Fundamental Rights

The main focus of the codings under the category of "Democracy and Fundamental Rights" was to examine how the AKP views the criteria of democracy and respect for fundamental rights, which are among the fundamental principles of the EU, how it positions itself in this regard, and how it showcases its Euroscepticism. The most interesting finding in these analyses is that the evaluations were either 100% pro-EU, meaning positive, or 100% distant from the EU, meaning negative. The position emphasized between 2002 and 2011 was the emphasis on the EU membership process and compliance with its criteria regarding

[10] Translated by author.

democracy and human rights. However, post-2015 period indicated a complete shift towards 100% negative stance, emphasizing the role of the AKP rather than the EU criteria in transforming Turkey into a fully democratic country.

Figure 22: "Democracy and Fundamental Rights" Coding Analysis through AKP's Election Manifestos



The year 2002 saw the highest number of codings related to the EU, with a total of 7 codings. During this period, it was emphasized that adhering to the Copenhagen criteria and swiftly aligning with EU standards were crucial for Turkey to become a democratic country that values human rights. In essence, the AKP viewed the EU as synonymous with democracy. It is noteworthy that the significance of the Copenhagen criteria was highlighted in preventing incidents such as party closures or military coups, underlining the importance of civil reforms and the role of elected power in ensuring that the people have the authority to bring about change.

In 2007, the number of references decreased to 3, but the significance of the Copenhagen criteria was once again highlighted, emphasizing that Turkey would continue its progress in democracy and fundamental rights by fully adhering to these criteria. The aspiration for EU membership was portrayed as the key instrument in achieving this goal.

Regarding the related codings from the 2011 manifesto, it was underscored that the actions taken by the AKP in this domain had resulted in significant advancements in Turkey's democracy and the establishment and reinforcement of a “human-centered” governance approach.

However, in 2015, there was no mention of reforms related to EU membership process in this domain. AKP emphasized that in the category of democracy and fundamental rights, the focus would continue to be on "human dignity" and highlighted that the country had freed itself from the military tutelage regime through the reforms it had implemented. It was also emphasized that for the consolidation and further enhancement of achievements in democracy and fundamental rights, a civilian constitution was needed. In this context, the Copenhagen criteria and the reforms related to EU membership process were no longer mentioned, indicating a decrease in their significance. Consequently, all codings in this regard were evaluated as "negative."

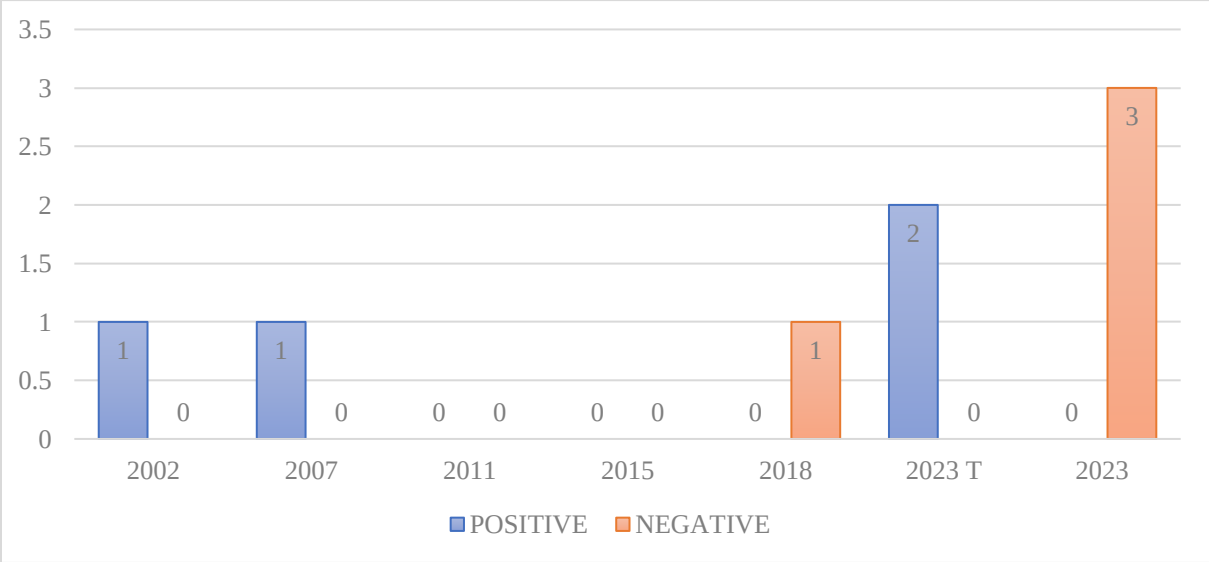
In the codings conducted in 2018, it was indicated that there was a departure from the EU reform agenda in this area, and it was stated that progress in democracy and fundamental rights would continue through reforms aimed at developing the new governance system. AKP emphasized its "reformist" approach in the new governance system, but it is noteworthy that the understanding of compliance with the Copenhagen criteria and the reform process for EU membership has completely disappeared.

In the 2023 Turkey Century text, AKP's reforms are described as primarily "protective" in nature, indicating that after the consolidation of the new government system, “complementary” reforms will be pursued. In the text, the call for a civil constitution is also strongly reiterated. Here, it can be observed that the reforms implemented by AKP, such as the EU harmonization packages and constitutional changes, which were previously argued to address concerns about judiciary and military influence, are further emphasized as “protective” measures. However, it is noteworthy that the 2023 election manifesto lists specific reforms without making any references to the EU or the membership process, even regarding the reforms carried out within the context of EU accession. This highlights AKP's diminishing emphasis on the importance of reforms within the framework of EU membership and its increasingly sceptical stance towards the EU.

7.3.2. Security

While security is not as prominent in AKP manifestos compared to other areas, it plays a significant role in shaping their Eurosceptic stance and negative outlook towards the EU. Although a total of 8 codings were conducted in this area, a trend of 100% positive or negative is also evident as the 100% positive attitude observed between 2002 and 2007 has shifted to 100% negative in 2023.

Figure 23: "Security" Coding Analysis through AKP's Election Manifestos



In this category, the shared perspective between 2002 and 2007 was that the EU was perceived as a project promoting regional stability and security. The EU was depicted as a peace project that held great importance for Turkey. According to AKP, the EU could contribute to stability in its neighboring regions and ensure prosperity and security within the country. However, by 2018, the focus shifted towards the prominent issue of terrorism in the security context. The previous narrative of the EU being seen as a security provider was no longer evident, and instead, the emphasis was on Turkey's resolute commitment to combat terrorism.

In the 2023 Turkey Century text, the EU project is viewed with scepticism as a "weak project struggling to address security concerns," contrasting its initial years. Attention is drawn to the security and economic challenges faced by the European continent following the Russia-Ukraine War, highlighting the EU's failure to cope with this crisis. Consequently, the notion that the EU could contribute to Turkey's and near region's security is no longer

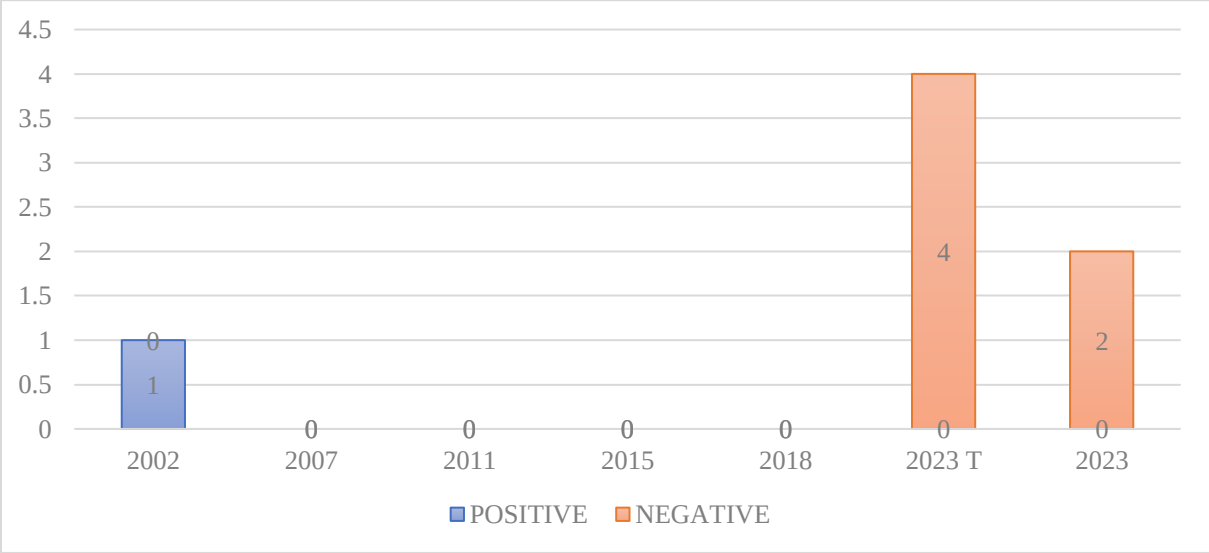
prevalent. Nevertheless, the text emphasizes that Turkey should play a more active role in the new security landscape of post-war Europe and continue to be a strong and influential actor in the field of European security and defence, particularly by fulfilling its responsibilities within NATO. The statement of "security and stability in Europe cannot be achieved without Turkey" is present in the "2023 Turkey Century" text, indicating that Turkey's position has shifted from a pro-EU stance to a more reserved, distant, and critical perspective regarding the EU's role in security and stability.

In a similar vein, the 2023 election manifesto portrays the EU, Greece, and the Republic of Cyprus as advocates of maximalist claims in the Eastern Mediterranean and Cyprus issues within the framework of the "Blue Homeland" doctrine. Consequently, they are depicted as actors that disrupt regional stability. The message is conveyed that there will be no stepping back, resulting in a repositioning of Turkey in opposition to the EU. Additionally, it emphasizes Turkey's role as the only actor capable of bringing parties together, mediating, and facilitating dialogue in the context of the Russia-Ukraine War, contrasting the EU's inability to achieve such reconciliation through diplomacy. Thus, as mentioned earlier, the portrayal of the EU as a weakening actor in providing stability and security in both the continent and Turkey's immediate region is highlighted. Turkey's position is depicted differently, emphasizing its active and leading role in resolving regional crises, in contrast to the EU. Thus, it underscores that Turkey will always be at the forefront and actively engaged in resolving regional issues.

7.3.3. Sovereignty

Contrary to UKIP, the issue of "sovereignty" has not been extensively addressed in relation to the EU in the texts. In a total of 7 coded expressions, a strong pro-EU emphasis was notable in 2002, whereas the 2023 texts feature expressions that can be considered 100% negative and sceptical towards and distant from the EU.

Figure 24: "Sovereignty" Coding Analysis through AKP's Election Manifestos



In the expressions of 2002 election manifesto, opposing Turkey's full membership in the EU was equated with jeopardizing Turkey's national sovereignty and security. Until 2023, there was a greater emphasis on codifications related to Turkey's internal issues. However, in 2023, there is a frequent emphasis on "a fully independent Turkey against dirty games" which specifically refers to the West comprising the EU. Following the emphasis on a fully independent Turkey, the focus shifts to targeting Greece and the Republic of Cyprus through the frequent mention of Turkey's domestically produced aerial vehicles and drones. Contrary to the portrayal of EU membership as supporting national sovereignty in the 2002 discourse, a contrasting narrative that explicitly targeted EU members was identified here.

The 2023 Turkey Century text, which frequently highlights the "Turkey Axis," portrays this Eurosceptic position as follows:

Our goal is to build a strong Turkey Axis in the international system on top of the solid foundations of our Republic's new century, which is effective, independent, dynamic, and resilient (p.86)[11].

It can be understood from this that Turkey envisions acting independently, and within this vision, full integration into the EU is not included.

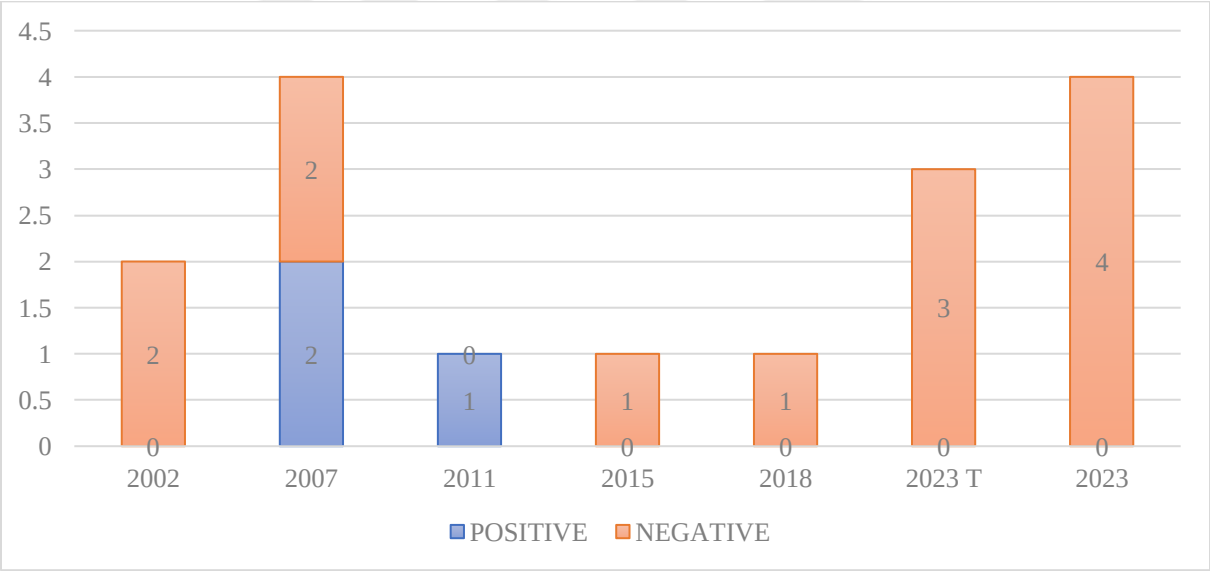
[11] Translated by author.

7.3.4. Culture

Culture has always been an important topic emphasized by the AKP. While the AKP describes itself as a 'conservative revolutionary' party, it does not explicitly refer to a European identity. However, it views the full integration of a predominantly Muslim society into the EU as crucial for the modernization, development and fostering of peace and harmony between Eastern and Western civilizations. This perspective is evidenced by the 'Alliance of Civilizations' initiative launched by then-Prime Minister Erdogan in 2005.

When examining the manifestos, it is noticeable that cultural and identity-related references are more prevalent compared to other subgroups. In this context, the years between 2002 and 2007, as well as 2023, stand out as the periods when cultural references were extensively evaluated within the AKP's perspective on the EU.

Figure 25: "Culture" Coding Analysis through AKP's Election Manifestos



The key criterion for categorizing the statements here as positive or negative, that is, as pro-EU or Eurosceptic, lies in whether the cultural references made by the AKP in its election manifestos are framed within the context of EU membership and integration, and whether they reflect a perspective that values the position of Turkish national identity and values within the EU, or if they depict these national values, identity, and cultural references as separate and significant in their own right, distinct from the EU.

In this context, in the 2002 manifesto, the AKP identified itself clearly as 'conservative' and described the Turkish society as "*a large family united by shared destiny and bittersweet memories in this geography*." (p.10). It is evident that the AKP's cultural and identity-based definition in this context does not explicitly mention EU membership or a European identity. In addition, there are notable emphases on cooperation and close relations with Islamic countries and other Muslim societies, while references to such relationships and interactions with European societies are not identified in cultural and identity-related terms.

In the 2007 manifesto, a balanced stance is evident. There is an equal emphasis on preserving Turkish identity, with a notable difference from the 2002 manifesto. It is stated that Turkish culture extends from Central Asia to the Balkans and North Africa, drawing nourishment from various sources and evolving through different stages. While acknowledging the historical roots of Turks in Central Asia and the legacy of the Ottoman era, it can be inferred that there is also a recognition of cultural ties to Europe. Additionally, the selection of Istanbul as the European Capital of Culture for 2010 is emphasized as a crucial milestone in promoting Turkish culture in Europe, which is also reiterated in the 2011 manifesto.

From 2015 onwards, the AKP has increasingly made references to its Islamic heritage in cultural matters. For instance, the inclusion of lessons on the life of Prophet Muhammad in school curriculum is highlighted as a significant step in promoting Islamic values.

At this juncture, in its 2018 manifesto, AKP defined secularism as follows, similar to its previous manifestos:

AK Party considers secularism as the guarantee of religious freedoms, different lifestyles, and the state's equal distance from all belief groups under the rule of law (p. 30)[12].

In this regard, AKP portrays Turkey as a country where individuals with diverse beliefs live together freely. While emphasizing peaceful cultural integration among the Turkish people, there is no mention of European culture or identity. On the contrary, there is a growing strong reaction towards the EU in cultural terms. In this election manifesto, AKP accuses the EU of being "Islamophobic" for the first time and claims to be the protector of all

[12] Translated by author.

Muslims against the increasing Islamophobia in Europe. Thus, a cultural conflict with Europe and a Eurosceptic stance in this field emerge.

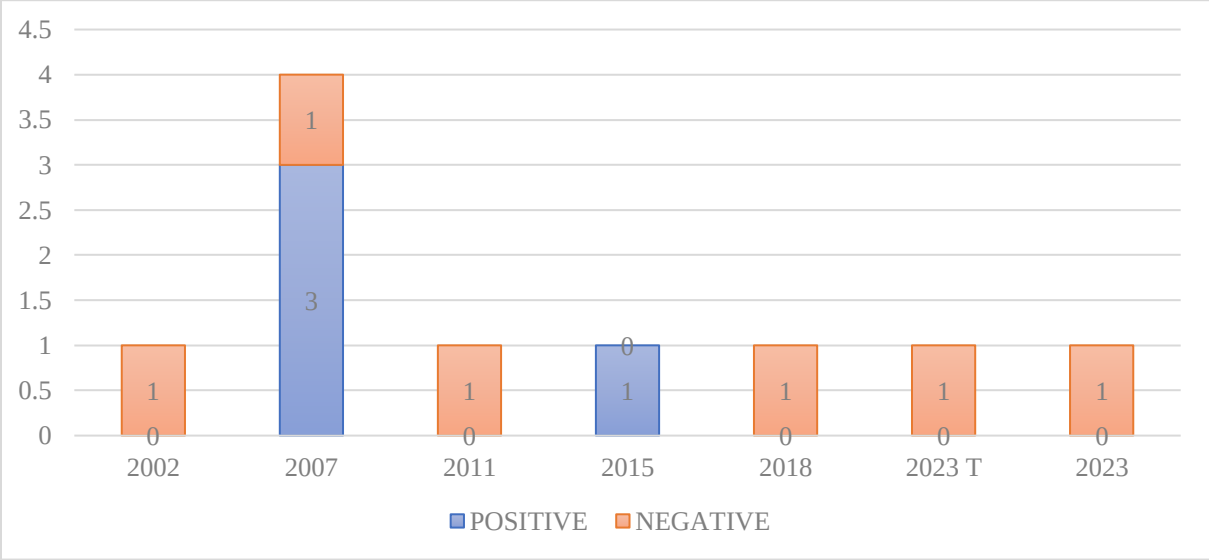
In the 2023 Turkey Century text, AKP is highlighted as a "conservative revolutionary" party. The focus is on promoting "freedom of belief for all," portraying the family as a cornerstone of Turkish culture, and reinforcing a unified nationalist Turkish identity with the slogans of "one nation, one flag, one homeland, and one state." However, there is no mention of European identity or the role of Turkish culture within the European context.

In the 2023 election manifesto, there are expressions that can be analyzed as 100% Eurosceptic. It emphasizes the importance of preserving and passing on national and spiritual values to future generations. Furthermore, it highlights the significance of promoting and disseminating Turkish culture worldwide, but this time without any reference to European identity or Turkey's position in Europe. On the other hand, there is a noticeable emphasis on increasing cultural interaction and integration with the societies of Central Asian Turkic countries, in contrast to cultural integration with Europe. The manifesto aims to enhance cultural interaction with the Asian continent within the framework of the “Asia Again (Yeniden Asya)” policy, emphasizing the goal of increased cultural engagement with Asia as well.

7.3.5. Cyprus

The Cyprus issue has consistently been a top priority for the AKP as it appears to be a major obstacle in Turkey's path towards EU membership. After a year with predominantly positive expressions in 2007, a complete Eurosceptic stance stands out from 2018 onwards.

Figure 26: "Cyprus" Coding Analysis through AKP's Election Manifestos



In the 2002 manifesto, the AKP issued a warning to the EU, stating that admitting the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus as a full member without resolving the Cyprus issue would make a solution even more difficult. After the realization of this membership in 2004, the 2007 election manifesto mentioned the issue four times, with a more moderate tone. It highlighted the AKP's shift from a reactive approach to a solution-oriented one, underlining that these steps further recognized the Turkish Cypriots. Despite stressing the importance of continuing negotiations, the manifesto criticized the use of the Cyprus issue as a precondition to Turkey's membership, considering it contrary to EU principles and international law. It was stated that the issue should be addressed as a problem to be resolved at the UN level rather than the EU level. The message was often conveyed that the rights of the Turkish Cypriots and their interests in the Eastern Mediterranean would be protected. This marks the first appearance of harsher Eurosceptic sentiments.

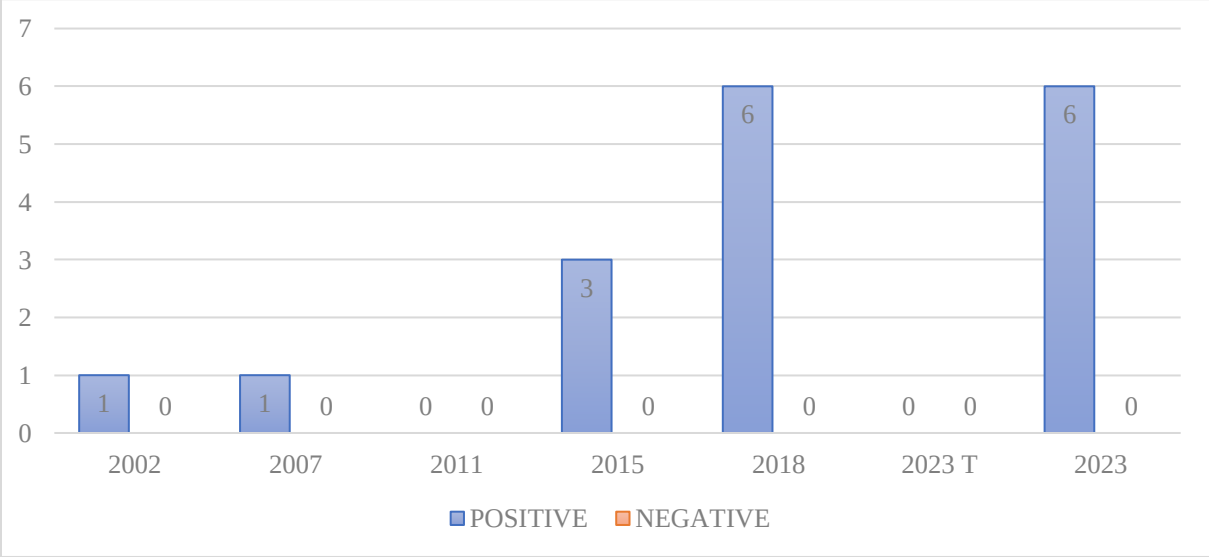
In 2011, it was emphasized that the membership of the Republic of Cyprus contradicted the EU's own rules and principles. The importance of continuing negotiations at the UN level was stressed in 2015. In 2018, along with highlighting the importance of ongoing negotiations, a clear and firm message of "we stand with the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC)" was explicitly conveyed for the first time. This shift towards full Euroscepticism becomes evident in the 2023 documents, where support for the negotiation process has ended, and the recognition of the TRNC on the international stage is advocated. The AKP criticized the treatment of Turkish Cypriots as unfair and emphasized the

importance of actions taken in the Eastern Mediterranean, citing the Continental Shelf Agreement with the TRNC as an example to underscore the continued protection of the rights of Turkish Cypriots. Meanwhile, the EU has been accused of occasionally siding with Greeks' and Greek Cypriots' maximalist claims and has been positioned as opposing to these viewpoints.

7.3.6. Cooperation

Cooperation with the EU across various areas has always been perceived as a favorable and desirable situation for the AKP, similar to the UKIP case. The main focus of this analysis is whether the AKP views this collaboration as essential for facilitating integration with the EU from a membership perspective, or if it positions the EU as just another global player in a more transactional approach, detached from the membership perspective. In this regard, it is worth noting that the periods with the highest number of references to cooperation in the manifestos coincide with the post-2016 era, characterized by the labeling of Turkey-EU relations as "transactionalist," and all the analyses conducted receiving a 100% rating, meaning they are fully positive or fully negative.

Figure 27: "Cooperation" Coding Analysis through AKP's Election Manifestos



In the 2002 and 2007 manifestos, collaboration with the EU was expressed positively with the aim of enhancing sectoral integration. For instance, in 2002, there was a positive endorsement of facilitating easier trade in the electricity sector with European countries, while in 2007, support was given for joint projects in the field of education. Similarly, in 2015, the

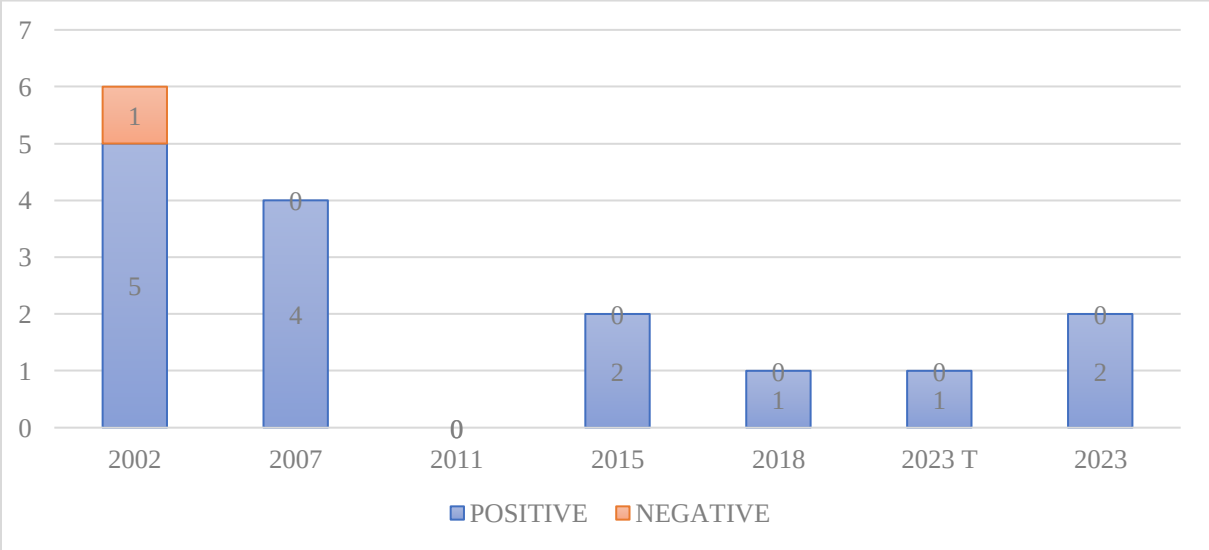
importance of maintaining shared dialogue during global crises and increasing cooperation in areas such as trade, economy and other priorities was emphasized. In 2018, the focus was primarily on the refugee crisis. High-level dialogue and collaboration were highlighted in areas such as migration, economy, transportation, counterterrorism, and energy, as well as the development of capacities for projects under the EU Accession Fund. The 2023 manifesto specifically underlines the importance of renewing the Customs Union and emphasizes the significance of financial support during the accession process, as well as the continuation of cooperation in energy and migration issues.

In this context, despite the confidence issues and the reinforced Euroscepticism that AKP has experienced, it is evident that AKP perceives the EU as a significant actor for Turkey's interests, consistently underlining the importance of cooperation and dialogue.

7.3.7. Prosperity

Since its early years, AKP has viewed Turkey's EU membership as parallel to the improvement of the Turkish people's living standards. In the post-Cold War period, characterized by increased regional integration projects such as the EU, AKP sought to capitalize on political, cultural and strategic factors as well as globalization. AKP's positive stance towards EU cooperation in this regard stems from the perception that Turkey's EU membership would serve as an economic source of prosperity. Consequently, the coding analysis reveals a prevalence of positive expressions.

Figure 28: "Prosperity" Coding Analysis through AKP's Election Manifestos



As mentioned above, AKP has viewed EU membership as an economic source of prosperity. The assumption is that increased investments and unhindered access to goods within the EU would automatically lead to the growth and development of the Turkish economy, resulting in an improvement in the living standards of the Turkish people. Unlike UKIP, which holds the opposite view, AKP believes that EU membership would bring economic benefits. Furthermore, this perspective extends beyond easier investment opportunities for European investors in Turkey. It also envisions Turkish brands and companies gaining a strong position in the European market. Consequently, a positive and supportive stance towards EU integration is observed. However, the 2002 manifesto also emphasizes the need to break free from regional dependence. The text highlights the necessity of expanding into new markets, including regions outside Europe such as North America, Latin America, and the Far East, to enhance trade and economic relations.

In the 2007 manifesto, the perspective of viewing EU membership as an economic source of prosperity continues. The text argues that Turkey's full membership in the EU would make it an attractive country for investors worldwide, leading to significant growth and increased employment, thereby strengthening Turkey's economic future. Additionally, the importance of EU funds in the development of rural areas in Turkey is emphasized.

While there is no clear statement regarding this matter in the 2011 manifesto, the 2015 manifesto focuses on the benefits brought about by economic cooperation with the EU, without specifically mentioning the importance of EU membership in this regard. The emphasis is placed on the significance of EU funds and the development of trade relations. This stance is less prominent in the 2018 manifesto, while in the 2023 texts, there is only a noticeable emphasis on the renewal of the Customs Union.

In this context, the following inference can be drawn from the above analysis: In its early years, the AKP assumed that Turkey would experience significant economic growth and development due to both the economic integration with the EU and its enhanced position for global investors resulting from EU membership. However, in the period after 2011, it accepted that full membership would not occur in the near future and adopted a stance focused on utilizing the funds available during the accession process for the development of the Turkish economy and the continuation of economic cooperation.

7.3.8. Turkey As Regional Power

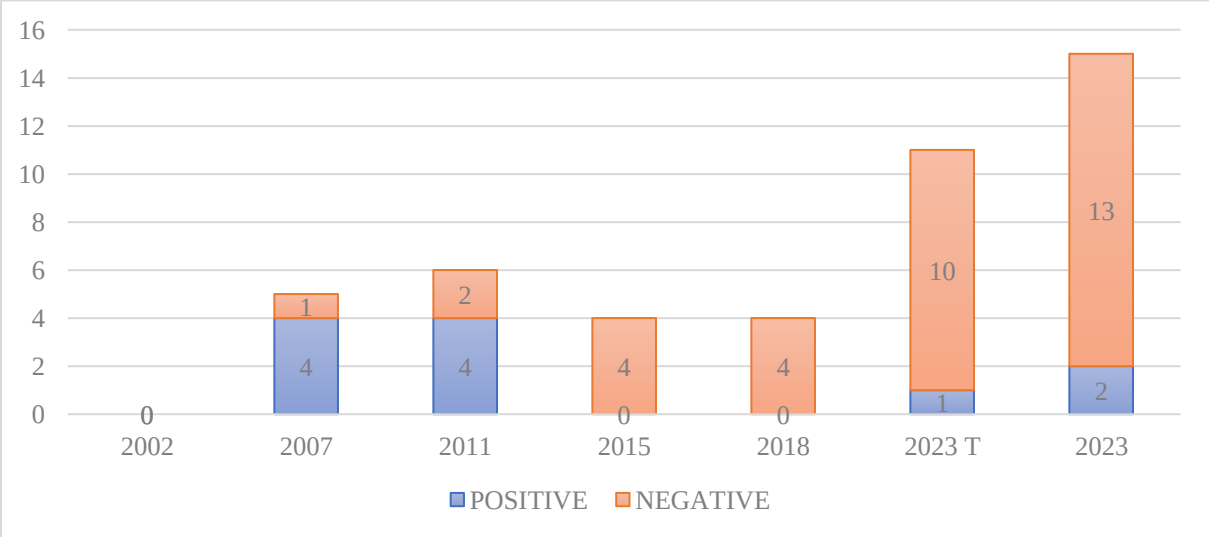
In this last coding category, the focus was on the AKP's positioning of Turkey in the international political stage, its vision for the future and the role of EU membership within that vision.

In this regard, although the 2002 manifesto did not take a clear pro-EU or Eurosceptic position, the evaluation made by the AKP regarding Turkey's geopolitical position was as follows:

> Turkey's geopolitical position has the potential to become an attraction for many cooperation projects. The transformation of this potential into regional and global impact depends on the smart utilization of geopolitics in international political, economic, and security relations (p. 88)[13].

While a clear EU vision was not foreseen here, it can be observed that the importance of evaluating Turkey's position in a way that serves its own interests was emphasized. In this context, the vision of being a "regional power with global influence" was initially introduced in this year. Particularly after 2018, there has been a more frequent emphasis on a multi-sided or neutral position rather than being part of a specific side. Since 2015, especially in this positioning, a Eurosceptic message has been conveyed, implying a distance from the EU and a determination to act "despite" the EU.

Figure 29: "Turkey as Regional Power" Coding Analysis through AKP's Election Manifestos



[13] Translated by author.

In the 2007 manifesto, the AKP outlined its vision of increasing economic cooperation and free trade among the three seas where Turkey is located, namely the Black Sea, the Mediterranean, and the Caspian Sea. The AKP put forward the goal of creating a ring of prosperity by coming together with neighboring regions. This vision aligned with the understanding of benefiting from regional integration projects and globalization similar to the EU during those years. In parallel, the AKP aimed to pursue various cooperation projects with its neighboring regions, with the aim of enhancing Turkey's image as a key and attractive country in the region. It emphasized that EU membership played a crucial role in achieving this objective. The 2007 manifesto clearly expressed this vision as follows:

> We aim to create a new image of Turkey in the international arena through all these visions and methodological principles. We believe that culturally, we must assume a central role between the East and the West, and economically and politically, between the North and the South. We define our country's global position not as a reactionary and passive bridge role, but as an active and influential central country. This definition is not a conjunctural and tactical one, but a deep and enduring strategic definition that is necessitated by our rich historical heritage and geopolitical position (p. 227)[14].

In the context of this “bridge” role, the importance of the goal of EU membership, particularly the decision to start full membership negotiations with Turkey in 2004, has been emphasized as a crucial step in line with the aforementioned vision. Additionally, the vision of creating a multidimensional foreign policy that is more explicitly and frequently expressed in the texts of 2023 is also stated as a necessity when considering Turkey's historical, geographical, cultural and strategic position.

By the year 2011, out of the 6 codings in this category, 4 were positive expressions (75.0%) and 2 were negative expressions (25.0%). It can be observed that a strong vision of a powerful Turkey that has achieved EU standards is explicitly declared, along with the statement that full membership in the EU will make Turkey a more effective and influential actor in regional and global issues. Furthermore, the texts also mention aspirations for Turkey to become a center in various fields such as health and information technology within Europe. However, in light of the 2008 financial crisis, it is also emphasized that the shift of economic power from the West to the East is expected, and Turkey is anticipated to be one of the centers of gravity in this change. In this context, it is stated that Turkey's role will have a more global nature rather than basing solely on regional context.

[14] Translated by author.

In the statements found in the 2015 election manifesto (4), entirely negative expressions have been identified. It is pointed out that in addition to European countries, alternatives should be sought in commercial relations. Turkey's position as a central country between the East and the West, particularly in sectors such as aviation, is clearly reinforced. The goal of becoming a central country that attracts investments in high-tech products from all over the world is also stated. In this coding group, where a constant emphasis on being a center is made, it can be seen that AKP's Turkey is depicted as a country that leads in regional and global issues. In contrast to the understanding that EU membership strengthens Turkey's central position, it is evident that the understanding presented here is that Turkey, independently, assumes a leadership role.

In the 2018 manifesto, all four coded statements were portrayed as distant from the EU, meaning, they are taken up under the negative statements. It is stated that the newly adopted government system will place Turkey in a more active and effective position in regional and global issues, thus contributing to regional and global peace and stability. It is underlined that the vision of a strong Turkey that leads and solves problems will be more easily achieved with this new governance system. AKP highlights the success of "diversification" in areas such as tourism and trade and emphasizes the continuation of a multidimensional foreign policy.

In the 2023 Turkey Century Declaration, out of the 11 coded statements related to this issue, only 1 (9.1%) was considered positive in terms of the EU vision, while 10 of them were identified as Eurosceptic or negative (90.9%). The most emphasized topic here is the significant change in the new geopolitical balances, also described as "multipolar," particularly in Turkey's neighboring region in light of the Russia-Ukraine War. It is underscored that Turkey will occupy a crucial position as a result of this change and emphasizes the necessity of utilizing this position effectively in line with Turkey's own interests. Furthermore, the Russia-Ukraine War is given as a critical example once again, highlighting Turkey's role as the primary actor in maintaining dialogue and generating practical solutions to end the war. Thereby, it implies the ineffectiveness of the EU and reinforces Turkey's critical role as a center country contributing to global security, despite its place in the EU security context. It is suggested that a new security conjuncture will emerge in Europe after the Russia-Ukraine War and the AKP aims to position Turkey in a more active role within this new architecture.

At this point, the coding indicates a clear departure from the emphasis on full commitment to the EU that was expressed in previous years. It is notable that Europe, faced with this new situation, has had to undergo profound changes in its governance, understanding and philosophies, while Turkey is highlighted as assuming a guiding role in this new century. In other words, AKP's perspective on the EU has shifted from seeing it as a normative power and an economic and democratic development source that needs to be aligned with its standards. On the contrary, the EU is portrayed as weakened entity that questions itself and undergoing a search for change following deep crises such as the financial crisis, migration, Brexit, and most notably, the Russia-Ukraine War. This portrayal positions Turkey as a potential power that influences Europe and takes on a leading role. From a Eurosceptic perspective, one could draw the inference that Turkey will no longer need to prove itself to the EU. Instead, the EU will need Turkey to overcome its own crises. The importance given by AKP to Turkey's position is reflected, for example, in the support for branding Turkey as "Türkiye" instead of using the English term "Turkey," clearly stating its goal to become a global technology hub, and positioning itself as an active central power in resolving regional and global crises. This transition implies a shift in focus towards the goal of a "fully independent Turkey," where the strategic importance of EU membership is considered no longer relevant.

This position has been reinforced in the 2023 election manifesto, where 15 codings were analyzed, with 2 (13.3%) being positive and 13 (86.7%) being perceived as distancing from the EU. Here, the importance of Turkey's central position is re-emphasized, particularly in terms of its key role in natural gas transportation to Europe, its mediation role in the Russia-Ukraine War, its aim to hold a crucial position in the post-war scenario, and its status as a leading country that produces practical solutions by balancing both hard and soft power and the goal to make Turkey as a global technology hub. The manifesto further strengthens the idea that Turkey prioritizes its full independence, highlighting its role as a central actor in global and regional problem-solving through multilateral diplomacy, while also becoming an independent country capable of designing and exporting warships. The text carefully draws attention to the shift in global power dynamics away from the West, emphasizing that Turkey's orientation is both towards the West and the East within the framework of the "Turkey Axis." Similarly, from a geopolitical perspective, AKP is observed to move away from seeing itself as part of the EU and instead viewing the EU as a geopolitical component of Turkey that it governs.

8. THE COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF BOTH CASES

As mentioned before, there are significant differences as well as similarities between the two cases. Although both parties initially had different perspectives on the EU idea, it is evident that there was a complete divergence in their positioning regarding this project. Below, a comparison will be made based on the findings to what extent these divergences or similarities are reflected in the manifestos and what conclusions can be drawn from their Eurosceptic positions.

8.1. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF GENERAL CODES

Firstly, when examining the codes in which the two cases directly refer to the EU, it can be observed that UKIP criticizes the EU with much more negative expressions compared to AKP, predominantly maintaining an opposing stance. Out of the 224 codings found in UKIP's manifestos, only 11 (4.91%) are evaluated as positive in this regard, whereas out of the 137 codings in AKP's manifestos, 117 (85.40%) are evaluated as positive. This indicates that UKIP is more critical of the EU idea and its organizational structure while AKP has a more positive attitude towards both EU membership and the functioning of the EU.

Figure 30: Comparative Analysis of Codes Directly Relate to the EU

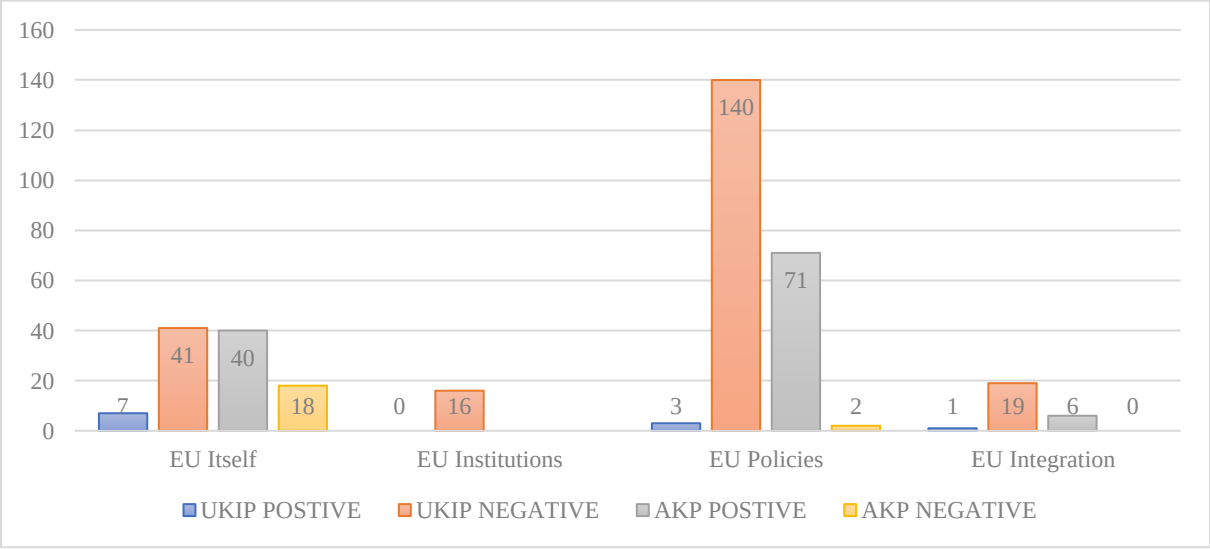
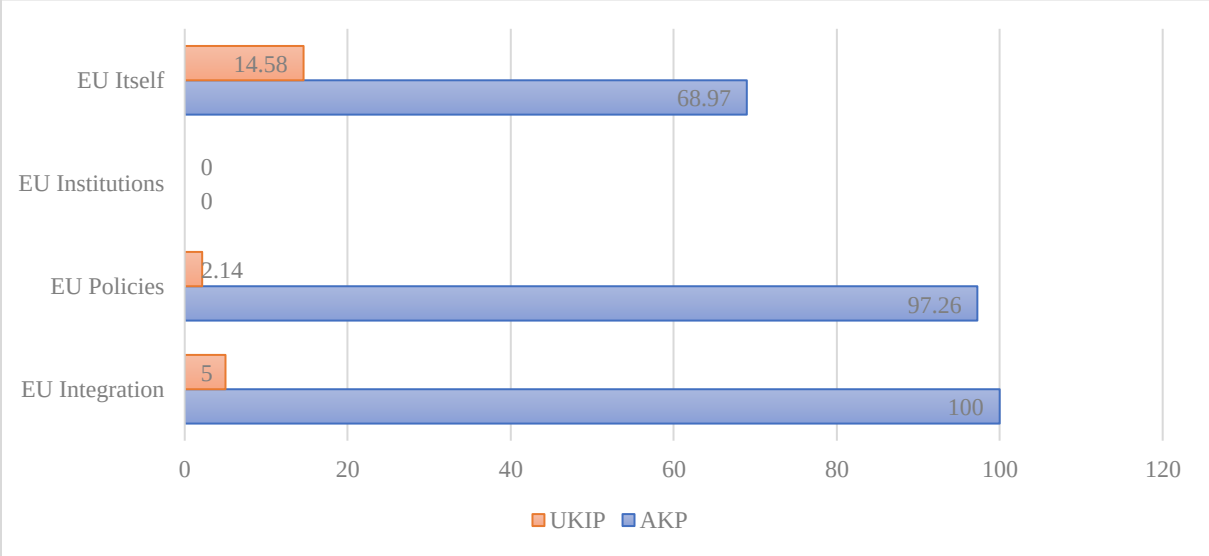


Figure 31: Comparative Analysis of Positive Codes Directly Relate to the EU (In %)



According to UKIP, the EU represents a 'superstate' that erodes the independence and national sovereignty of countries by imposing its desired form of governance, rules, and identities from the top down, dictated by unelected elitist bureaucrats. UKIP considers this structure undemocratic, bureaucratic and corrupt. It perceives it as an entity that dictates its own rules and understanding across borders without considering the histories, internal dynamics and decisions of nations. Even in the reforms it undertakes, it does not seek the opinions of the people affected. Although UKIP does not identify itself clearly as anti-European, it believes that due to various reasons, including historical, sociological and political factors, the UK cannot be a part of this project. However, it emphasizes the need to maintain bilateral relations based on mutual respect through cooperation.

In contrast to UKIP, AKP has always regarded the EU project and Turkey's full membership within this project as strategically important. Particularly in the early years, the manifestos emphasized the significant contributions of this project. This narrative has been very strong especially in terms of the economy as well as its potential to bring peace, stability and security to Turkey's neighboring region. Moreover, aspiring to meet EU standards was seen as an important step in Turkey's modernization process, and in this context, aligning with EU standards was adopted as a strategic goal during those years. Unlike UKIP, AKP sees itself as part of Europe from historical, sociological and political perspectives, aiming to solidify Turkey's position within the EU through membership. However, in recent years, the importance of full EU membership and compliance with EU criteria has diminished. To be

specific, the acceptance of the Republic of Cyprus as a full member to the EU and its' blockage on Turkey's EU membership accession as well as the opposition of many EU member states against the Turkey's accession to the EU have been the fundamental factors that undermined AKP's motivation. Beyond that, the future of the EU project is seen as uncertain, particularly due to the security crisis resulting from the Russia-Ukraine conflict, raising doubts about the fate of the project in the post-war order. In light of these uncertainties, AKP aims for Turkey to become a central political power, striving to maintain and strengthen its position in Europe without being a full member of a bloc like the EU, but rather as an independent entity. Similar to UKIP, cooperation, especially in the realm of security within the NATO framework, and the development of trade relations have become priority issues.

Similarly to what was discussed in the analysis section of UKIP, AKP has also demonstrated a similarity in recent years by focusing on increasing integration with Turkic republics in Central Asia, mirroring UKIP's aspiration to enhance integration with Commonwealth countries based on historical and familial connections. In both cases, there is a notable departure from the desire to be part of the EU and embrace a European identity, instead opting to re-embrace historical roots and strengthen interactions with these respective regions.

While UKIP explicitly targeted EU institutions in their manifestos, AKP does not exhibit a direct reaction towards the institutional structure and organizational functioning of the EU. UKIP primarily criticized supranational institutions such as the European Commission and the ECJ. Although AKP does not explicitly target these institutions in their manifestos, President Erdogan's statement, 'Sanctions do not concern us,' (Erdoğan, 2020) in response to European Council's sanctions imposed on Turkey for its activities in the Eastern Mediterranean, can be interpreted as a similar stance to UKIP. That indicates a lack of positive outlook towards decisions made by supranational institutions from above.

When it comes to statements directly referring to EU policies, regulations and legislation, which are the most discussed topics among the coded references to the EU, there is a significant divide between the two cases. UKIP categorically rejects the "common" policies of the EU in various areas, directly targeting them, and emphasizes that these rules only cause harm to UK citizens and its economy. The codings highlight the notion that only

rules deemed beneficial should be considered and implemented, while underscoring the UK's ability to establish and enforce its own rules without being obliged to adhere to specific EU standards or regulations.

In the case of AKP, EU standards and rules have been considered normatively correct. The EU rules and standards have been seen as criteria for doing things "right," ensuring quality and modernity. In this context, compliance with these standards and maintaining the reform process without full membership has been emphasized during the early years of AKP. It has been noted that after 2007, this reform process was pragmatically kept alive to protect AKP from external influences such as the military and judiciary and consolidate its power. However, since the period after 2018, there has been a notable shift in emphasis, suggesting that this reform process is no longer important and the concept of reform is only mentioned in relation to the implementation and development of the newly adopted government system. Unlike UKIP, there is no hostility towards EU rules and common policies. It is just that AKP's interest in EU membership has waned and the expectations for its realization have decreased, resulting in the diminished significance of the reform process for EU membership. Nevertheless, the AKP government has actively demonstrated its intention to be part of this integration. A notable example of this is Turkey's application for participation in the EU's PESCO military mobility project in 2021 (European Parliament, 2021).

UKIP has adopted a highly negative stance towards EU integration and enlargement, particularly regarding the accession of Turkey and Eastern European countries to the EU. They argue that such memberships would incentivize mass migration to Western Europe and deem it unacceptable for these individuals, as European citizens, to enjoy unrestricted access to social benefits while receiving equal treatment as "British" citizens. Additionally, UKIP critiques the utilization of a common currency, deeming it irrational for wealthier EU nations to spend funds on rescuing economically distressed countries like Greece. In contrast, AKP holds a contrary view, offering support for the EU's enlargement efforts, particularly in the Balkans, and emphasizing the potential for regional prosperity, stability, and economic development.

8.2. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SUB-CODES

In sub-group codings, it can be observed that UKIP is more critical of the EU with harsh and rigid statements compared to AKP. In this context, out of the 619 codings in UKIP's manifestos, only 5 were classified as positive (0.81%), while in AKP, out of 145 codings, 69 were considered positive (47.59%).

Here, sub-groups were formed based on the priorities of each party in their manifestos. While there is generally similarity and alignment in the sub-groups of both cases, UKIP differs from AKP with categories such as "Withdrawal," "Immigration," and "Anti-Establishment," whereas AKP includes categories like "Security," "Cyprus," "Cooperation," and "Regional Power," which are different from UKIP.

Figure 32: Comparative Analysis of Sub-Codes

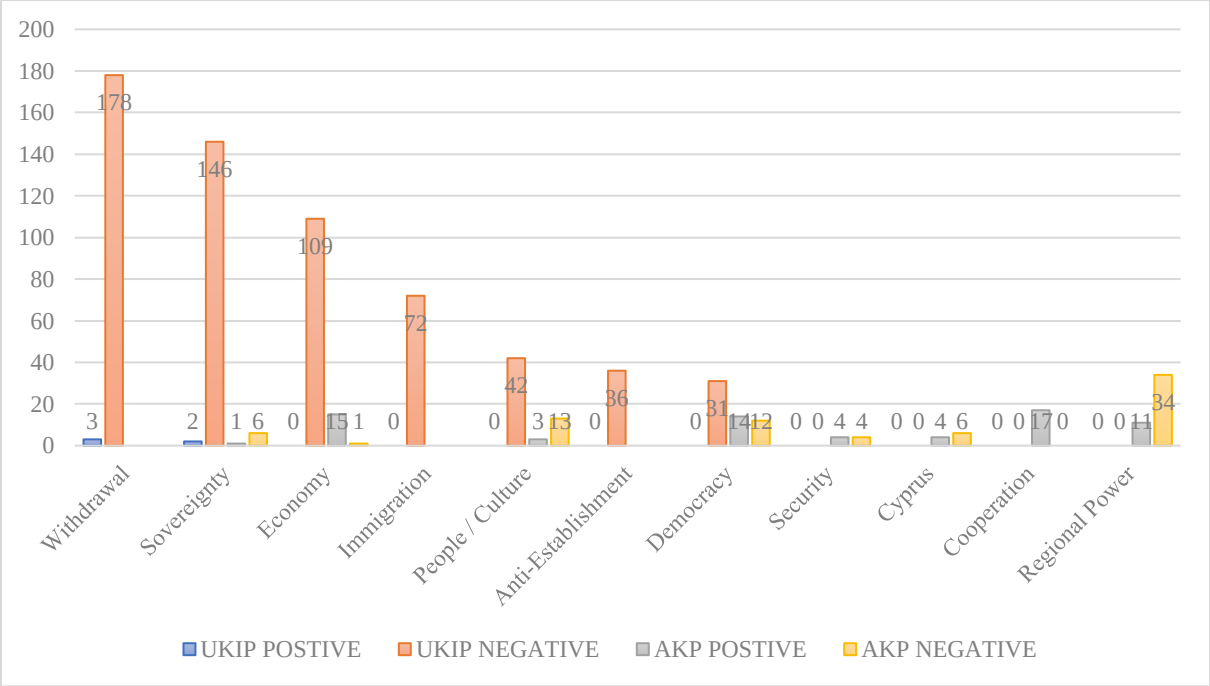
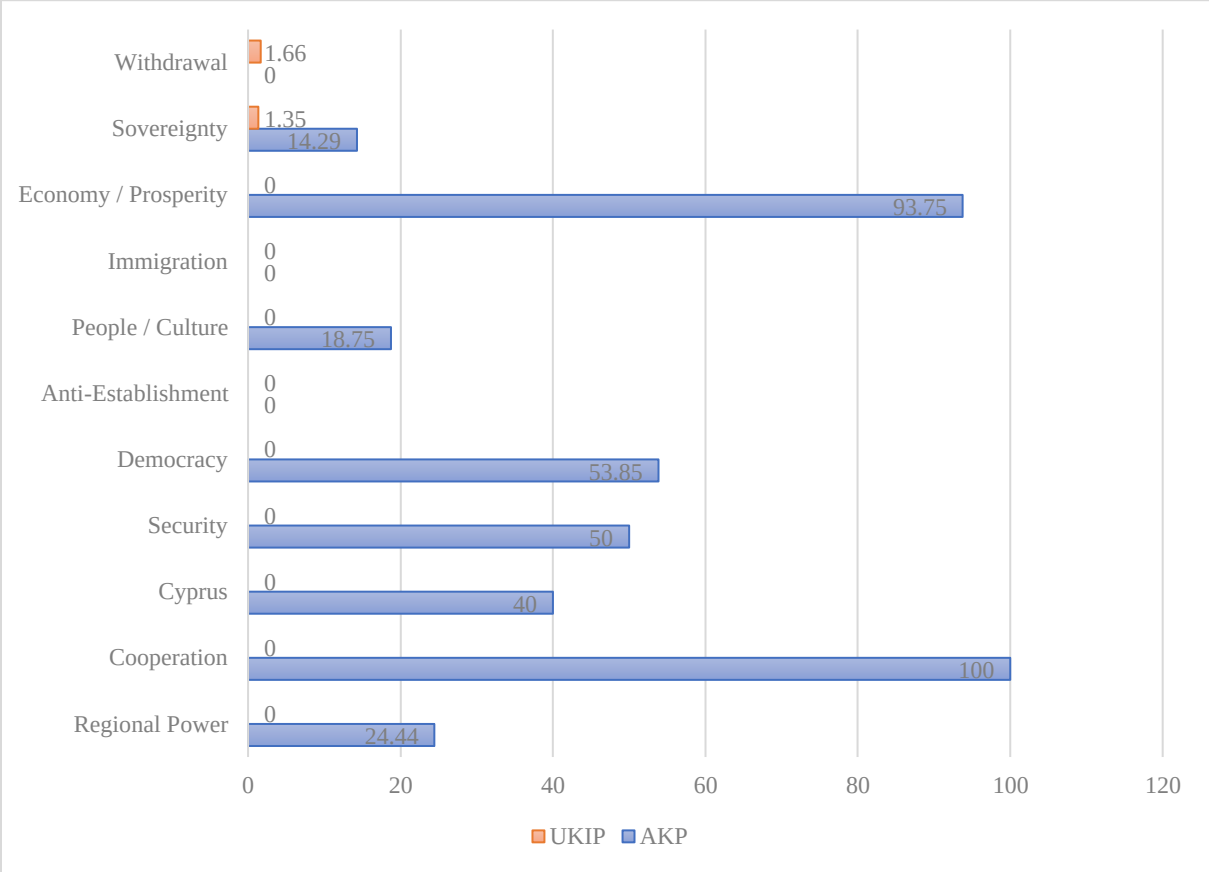


Figure 33: Comparative Analysis of Sub-Codes (In %)



According to the findings of the analysis from codings of these sub-groups, UKIP adopts the fundamental vision of the UK's withdrawal from the EU as its main objective, while AKP, on the contrary, has considered full membership as its initial primary goal. UKIP's manifestos predominantly focus on highlighting the detrimental aspects of EU membership in various aspects and advocating for an immediate end to membership, emphasizing the desired terms of the withdrawal agreement after the Brexit referendum. On the other hand, AKP's initial emphasis on full membership and alignment with EU standards has gradually transformed towards a more inward-looking approach, positioning Turkey independently from the EU. In a way, it can be argued that AKP's "departure" from the EU is implied as well. In this context, while it can be said that UKIP is effectively "leaving" the EU, for AKP, although the membership process is desired to continue on paper, the strategic importance of EU membership has diminished, and the vision is to portray Turkey as an independent regional and global actor, using its own geopolitical position, described as the "Turkey Axis," rather than being centered around the EU agenda.

From an economic perspective, UKIP adopts a rigid stance towards the EU. According to this argument, UKIP perceives the EU as a factor that has harmed the UK's national economy and many sectors. According to this viewpoint, UKIP considers the EU as a detrimental factor to the UK's national economy and various sectors. One notable example is the EU's CFP, which imposes restrictions and quotas on British fishermen, limiting their ability to fish freely in their own waters and allowing equal access to British waters for fishermen from other member countries. UKIP views this as a violation of British fishermen's rights and the collapse and exploitation of the British fishing market. Numerous economic challenges are attributed to the EU in UKIP's perspective, including the burden of financially supporting struggling countries. Moreover, UKIP contends that the EU's global economic influence is diminishing, suggesting that the UK should pursue increased economic relations with other countries worldwide while maintaining a strong economic partnership with the EU through a comprehensive free trade agreement.

For AKP, in its early years, EU membership was equated with economic prosperity. Emphasis was placed on the notion that EU membership would bring economic welfare and development to Turkey through the fundamental freedoms of the EU, such as the free movement of goods, capital and people. However, after 2015, the discourse shifted towards the importance of increasing cooperation rather than focusing solely on EU membership-based economic arguments. While the EU's economic power was still recognized, its significance decreased, and the need to diversify economic relationships by expanding trade with markets outside of Europe, particularly in the Middle East and Asia, gained prominence. Both UKIP and AKP share the desire to maintain economic cooperation with the EU, while also stressing the necessity of expanding economic and trade ties beyond Europe.

The immigration issue is a point of divergence between the two cases. For UKIP, immigration remains a significant "issue-ownership" matter, holding EU policies responsible for uncontrolled and excessive migration into the UK. UKIP emphasizes the need for the UK to regain full control over its borders by leaving the EU and implementing a point-based immigration system, similar to Australia's, to focus on controlled and selective migration. On the other hand, for AKP, immigration has not been as contentious an issue from the perspective of the EU as it has been for UKIP. However, following the migration crisis in 2015, solidarity with the EU became a major point of conflict. AKP argues that it fulfilled its responsibilities through the 2016 agreement, but accuses the EU of failing to fulfill its

commitments, particularly regarding visa liberalization, updating the Customs Union and providing additional financial aid. At times, AKP has even threatened the EU by hinting at opening the gates (Erdoğan, 2019b).

In this context, the issue of migration is perceived differently by UKIP and AKP. For UKIP, it is seen as a matter of suppression and holding the EU accountable, advocating for the erection of "walls" after leaving the EU. On the other hand, for AKP, the lack of solidarity and fulfillment of responsibilities by the EU regarding the refugee crisis undermines trust. Consequently, the importance of cooperation with the EU for the return of Syrian refugees has diminished, and the trust crisis can also be observed in the decision to engage in a joint housing project with Qatar in Northern Syria (BBC Türkçe, 2023).

When it comes to cultural and identity issues, a similar stance is observed between the two cases. Both political parties do not identify themselves under a common EU identity, but rather emphasize their own national identities. In this context, UKIP emphasizes the rejection of imposing a common European identity on sub-identities, advocating for the preservation of their national identities while being part of a diverse British society that values the differences among individuals from various ethnic and religious groups. On the other hand, AKP does not emphasize a shared European identity but instead focuses on the position of a Muslim community within the EU. The promotion and spread of Turkish culture in the EU take precedence and recent manifestos portray EU countries as displaying Islamophobia. In this sense, AKP positions Turkey under its leadership as the protector of Muslims in those countries.

UKIP is unique in its anti-establishment stance. As mentioned in the UKIP literature, the party has created its own comfort zone by distancing itself from the existing political system, allowing it to launch external attacks on established political parties and politicians, thereby gaining increased voter support. In other words, UKIP has adopted a method of criticizing political parties and leaders by focusing on their opposition to the EU.

On the other hand, before coming to power in 2002, AKP had a pro-EU agenda, emphasizing the need for Turkey to progress towards EU membership and pledging to start the membership process swiftly by meeting the necessary requirements and criteria. It was highlighted that this process would lead to gains in religious freedoms and civil reforms,

which helped AKP come to power with public support. Once in power, AKP, which remained in power consistently, fought against interventions by the "establishment" in the form of the military and the judiciary to protect its civilian governance, utilizing reforms to counter these interventions. The main opposition party, CHP, was accused of not providing sufficient support during this civilization and democratization process. As a result, it can be observed that AKP confronted both the EU elites and the EU countries opposing Turkey's membership, as well as the military and judiciary that interfered with its governance. However, due to its sole dominance in power during this period, AKP has had the sole authority to influence matters related to the EU.

While UKIP takes a firm stance against democracy in the context of the EU, the position of AKP is somewhat mixed. UKIP strongly opposes the undemocratic nature of the EU, arguing that it is governed by unelected bureaucratic elites who lack legitimacy. These elites impose decisions on national governments, undermining national identities and sovereignty and creating a system that prioritizes their own interests. UKIP calls for power to be returned to the people, with UK's Parliament and government having superior authority over EU laws.

In contrast to UKIP, the AKP initially viewed the EU and EU membership as crucial for achieving and advancing democracy in Turkey, particularly in terms of modernizing and improving fundamental rights and freedoms. Unlike UKIP, the AKP did not question or criticize the EU's democratic system and processes; instead, it used the EU's democratic values as a defence mechanism. However, in recent years, the AKP's unwavering commitment has waned, and there is a noticeable lack of motivation to prioritize the significance of the EU's democratic values and continue the reform process for EU alignment. The focus has shifted towards pursuing reforms that primarily serve Turkey's own interests rather than striving for EU membership.

In terms of security, UKIP did not establish a separate code group, but it argued that the migration crisis for which the EU was primarily blamed, led to a security crisis in the UK, emphasizing the need to regain control. Additionally, UKIP emphasized the importance of its position within NATO and the necessity of strengthening it, highlighting the continuation of cooperation with the EU for the security of the European continent.

In the early years, the AKP interpreted the EU project as a peace initiative. It received full support, based on the belief that Turkey's full membership would bring peace, stability and prosperity to both Turkey itself and its neighboring region. The significance attributed to the EU project shifted towards cooperation in common challenges such as counterterrorism, particularly after 2015. However, the 2023 Russia-Ukraine War marked a turning point in this perspective. Contrary to the initial stance, the EU was seen as a weakened entity and the need for Turkey to assume an active and influential role in the post-war order was emphasized, considering Turkey's ability to engage with all parties. In this context, similar to UKIP, the AKP highlighted the importance of NATO and Turkey's position within it, positioning itself as an "independent actor" rather than relying on the EU as a security provider. However, cooperation with the EU in this domain was still supported.

The issue of Cyprus has also been analyzed specifically for the AKP. It can be easily argued that the Cyprus issue also reflects the AKP's general perspective on the EU. Initially, the AKP supported negotiations for the reunification of the island under a federal structure. However, by 2023, this stance had transformed into a demand for the recognition of the TRNC and the precondition of engaging in negotiations based on a two-state solution. The AKP positioned itself as a counterforce against the EU's sanctions, which were perceived as favoring Greeks’ and Greek Cypriots' maximalist claims and undermining Turkish interests in the Eastern Mediterranean and gas exploration activities. Considering the significant role of resolving the Cyprus issue within Turkey's EU membership process, the AKP's opposition indicates a departure from their earlier emphasis on EU membership and a shift towards a firmly Eurosceptic position.

The issue of cooperation has been mentioned earlier, but it is deemed necessary to establish a separate coding category for the AKP. While for UKIP, continuing cooperation with the EU after the UK's departure is not seen as vital, it holds significant importance for the AKP and highlights the current stance of the party. As mentioned before, UKIP tends to include the EU within the scope of the "rest of the World" and expresses a tendency to maintain cooperation based on mutual respect. On the other hand, the AKP has given more prominence to the idea of continuing cooperation with the EU in their manifestos. This is particularly evident in economic factors such as financial assistance and updating the Customs Union. This attitude highlights the AKP's belief in the EU as an economic resource that can greatly contribute to the welfare and development of the Turkish people.

Finally, the analysis also addresses the "regional power" concept frequently mentioned in AKP's recent manifestos. While UKIP does not explicitly focus on becoming a regional or global actor, it is clear that the EU has undermined the UK's potential and its historical position as a superpower, prompting the desire to regain independent status and act as a self-reliant force. Similarly, the AKP aims to establish a fully independent foreign policy that takes actions based solely on its own interests rather than strictly aligning with a specific bloc like the EU. Both cases acknowledge the EU's significance in terms of security and economy, but being a part of the EU is viewed as compromising independence. Particularly, the AKP believes that the EU no longer possesses the capacity to address regional crises and it argues that Turkey must assume an active and influential role as a regional and global power. While UKIP does not make similar claims, the UKIP is also observed to actively collaborate with EU and NATO allies during the Russia-Ukraine War, exhibiting an inclination to lead in resolving the issue, surpassing the role of the EU (Whitman, 2023). It can be argued that this situation reflects UKIP's tendency, similar to AKP, to take active and effective steps in addressing regional and global issues, positioning itself as a regional leader separate from and superior to the EU.

9. CONCLUSION

The process of European Union (EU) integration, which began starting from the 1950s as a peace and prosperity project following the destructive wars, has undergone an ambitious evolution towards a political union over its span of more than 70 years. The perspective on this integration process, often deemed "shocking," has at times shown an increasing tendency for acceptance, yet it has also frequently led to negative reactions. Particularly in the 1990s, steps such as the implementation of the Maastricht Treaty followed by the adoption of the common currency, the Schengen Agreement, attempts at an EU constitution, and the Eastern expansion of the EU, all brought forth severe criticisms about the state and future of this project.

In this context, political parties that view this integration process negatively from various angles, commonly referred to as "Eurosceptic" parties, have progressively gained strength. They have emerged as a significant force in European politics, leveraging their opposition to this trajectory for their own domestic interests. As a result, the issue of EU

integration has manifested as a new cleavage in European politics. This consolidation has become prominently evident in the 2014 and 2019 European Parliament (EP) elections and bears relevance as a mirror for the upcoming elections next year. Hence, Euroscepticism stands as one of the foremost threats to the development and future of EU integration.

In this thesis, I aimed to conduct a comparative analysis between two political parties that could be labeled as Eurosceptic, originating from countries closely associated with the EU and in some way part of the process of EU integration. Beyond examining the position of the Eurosceptic movement within the EU and the threat it poses to the EU itself, I sought to uncover its effects and challenges in relation to the external relations and integration of the EU. In this regard, I focused on the party-based Euroscepticism exhibited by the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) from the United Kingdom (UK) and the Justice and Development Party (AKP) from Turkey. Through this analysis, I aimed to shed light on the impacts and challenges posed by this movement on the EU's external relations and integration.

These two cases hold critical significance for EU integration considering their countries of origin and their positions. Firstly, both countries lie on the external borders of the EU and are members of NATO, holding pivotal roles in European security as substantial military powers. Their collaborations in the realms of economy, finance, and trade further establish a significant connection between these cases and the EU. Moreover, both countries share a historical and cultural heritage with EU member states. On the other hand, the UK has opted to depart from EU membership through a public referendum, while Turkey stands as a country that has made EU integration a fundamental state policy for years despite not yet being admitted to the EU.

Both of these political parties, primarily on ideological grounds, oppose the EU from fundamental perspectives. UKIP emphasizes the extent to which the EU project is detrimental to the UK and asserts that only through withdrawal can the damage be mitigated. In contrast, AKP accuses the EU of applying double standards due to its condescending stance towards Turkey and attempting to hinder Turkey's empowerment. Furthermore, UKIP categorically rejects EU membership, contending that the economic cooperation-based structure that the UK initially entered into with the EU has transformed into a superstate that interferes with member states' sovereignty, national interests, and identities, even attempting to eradicate

them. Meanwhile, AKP, especially in its initial years, highlighted the rise of regional integration movements like the EU in the new security architecture post-Cold War era. It emphasized that Turkey's inclusion was imperative to align with its vision of modernization and development. However, after 2005, hurdles encountered by Turkey in its pursuit of full EU membership led to the emergence of Euroscepticism for AKP. This situation, rooted in the obstacles faced by Turkey in its EU accession process under AKP governance, underscores the notion that the EU's exclusion of Turkey is a "strategic blindness", posing a threat to the future of EU integration according to AKP's perspective.

Building on the above key arguments, both of these political parties notably amplify their anti-EU rhetoric, particularly during election periods, using this issue as campaign material. This approach is also observable in EU member states and especially during EP elections. In this regard, the form and intensification of the Eurosceptic attitudes of these two parties can be interpreted as a component of the Eurosceptic discourse emerging within the EU. Notably, during the period in which Eurosceptic parties garnered record votes in the 2014-2019 EP elections, the UK's departure from the EU and the consolidation of AKP's anti-EU stance, particularly after the attempted coup in 2016, exemplify this trend. Moreover, the record vote share gained by UKIP during this period and AKP's another election victory after an anti-EU election campaign in 2018, following a public endorsement of transitioning to a presidential system in Turkey, further corroborates this reflection.

At this juncture, in my analysis, I focused on explaining and comparing the Eurosceptic attitudes of these two political parties through their election manifestos by using manual text analysis. Firstly, I established the ideological and Eurosceptic dimensions of political parties based on the existing literature. Subsequently, I delved into their election manifestos to uncover the parties' internal dynamics and priorities. I identified statements that directly referenced the EU (such as their perspectives on the concept and membership of the EU, EU expansion, etc.) as well as indirect references through various significant topics (such as culture, security, sovereignty, etc.), which allowed me to posit both positive and negative-coded expressions that indicate their positions against the EU. Finally, utilizing the results and findings derived from the codings of both political parties, I brought forth key similarities and differences between the two parties. By doing so, I compared their positions against the EU, shedding light on their distinctive stances.

The findings obtained from the analysis notably reveal that UKIP's attitude towards the EU is significantly harsher, rigid, and negative compared to AKP. Out of all 843 codings for UKIP, only 16 were categorized as positive, accounting for a mere 1.90% ratio. In contrast, in the case of AKP, out of a total of 282 codings, 186 were evaluated with a positive nature, indicating a positivity rate of 65.96%. Furthermore, even though UKIP claims not to be anti-EU, it maintains a clear and categorical opposition to the UK's membership within the EU and its participation in the integration process. This aligns with Taggart and Szczerbiak's categorization and places UKIP, in line with the literature, as a hard Eurosceptic political party. On the other hand, AKP's Euroscepticism originates not from the core idea or essence of the EU or integration, but from the role attributed to Turkey by the EU and its behavior during this process. Consequently, a clear inference can be drawn that AKP does not possess categorical opposition to EU membership and integration. Thus, AKP can be classified as a Soft Eurosceptic party.

Examining the research findings, the initial pivotal outcome is the ambiguity surrounding the process and future of EU integration, as well as the continuously evolving and incomplete nature of integration. These issues, as Taggart (1998) pointed out, stem from the challenges associated with the EU concept's inherent adaptability. Consequently, political parties exploit the EU matter as an empty signifier, leveraging it particularly during election periods to achieve electoral success. Indeed, political parties can effortlessly manipulate and adjust their stance on the EU, adapting it to their ideological perspectives and current conditions that align with their political interests and ambitions.

In this context, the trajectory of AKP serves as a case in point. Although initially projecting a marginal appearance and emphasizing alignment with the Copenhagen criteria through a strong reformist stance, by 2023, AKP-led Turkey’s burgeoning political influence within the region has been accentuated. This is juxtaposed with Turkey's challenges in addressing regional issues effectively, resulting in the portrayal of the EU as fragile and diminishing concerning political, economic, and security aspects. This shift underscores the proposition that AKP strategically wielded the EU as a protective shield in its early years to ensure political survival. Conversely, in recent years, AKP has frequently underscored Turkey's elevation to a superior position while concurrently depicting the EU as a declining force, plagued by deep-seated challenges. Within this context, a strategic form of Euroscepticism becomes discernible in AKP's approach.

In contrast, UKIP's categorical opposition to the EU also embodies a similar strategy, although it appears distinct on the surface. UKIP, leveraging the long-standing skeptical perspective towards the EU prevalent in the country, amalgamates this with the prominent and contentious issue of immigration, thereby taking ownership of this issue. By doing so, UKIP assigns blame to both EU elites and national political elites. It asserts that withdrawing from EU membership would restore control over borders, emphasizing that the UK would consequently become a safer and more stable country, preventing the erosion of national identity and security.

At this juncture, both political parties have harnessed the EU as an empty signifier, molding it to align with their respective aims and interests. Through the narratives they have crafted, they communicate to the electorate the notion of being at a pivotal juncture. By doing so, they convey the message that if voters fail to support them, dire consequences will ensue. Ultimately, both parties have employed similar tactics to imprint upon their constituencies the belief that a catastrophe would unfold if they are not granted electoral support.

The second crucial outcome emerging from the analysis parallels the findings of Hooghe & Marks (2005), Bellucci et al. (2012), and Borriello & Brack (2019), indicating that Euroscepticism emerges based on individuals' or political parties' own national contextual evaluation or considerations of the EU or EU integration. As a result, it assumes varying natures. Borriello & Brack (2019) particularly emphasize that each country is affected by crises in distinct ways, which can consequently lead to differing reactions towards the EU. Anchored in the objective of elucidating the similarities and disparities in the practice of Euroscepticism across different countries, the analysis of this thesis, especially in the examination of election manifestos – the primary and principal source for the analysis of both political parties – reinforces this argument through the distinctions observed in the characteristics of sub-code headings.

To be more precise, the Cyprus issue plays a crucial role in reflecting AKP's perspective on the EU and the form and content of its Euroscepticism. However, this cannot be attributed to UKIP. Similarly, as previously mentioned, UKIP perceives the immigration issue as an existential threat arising from EU membership, asserting that the UK's existence, national identity, security, economic stability, and prestige are at risk of extinction. In

contrast, for AKP, the immigration issue does not pose such a threat. Instead, it highlights Turkey's duty to embrace and protect persecuted refugees fleeing conflict, particularly accentuating Turkey's obligation to provide sanctuary and shelter for those escaping war and persecution.

Similarly, due to the fact that UKIP originates from a country that was previously an EU member but then left, it has a clear understanding of the impacts and consequences of EU membership, grounding its Euroscepticism in this tangible reality. For instance, the damages caused by EU membership, evidenced through specific EU policies and regulations, have been a recurring theme in UKIP's analysis. More specifically, the obligations stemming from the Common Fisheries Policy (such as quotas imposed on British fishermen in British waters and the freedom of fishermen from other member states to fish in British waters) have been interpreted as disastrous for the British fishing industry and a direct assault on UK sovereignty.

In contrast, AKP hails from a country that aspires to become a full EU member. Particularly in its early years, AKP emphasizes a complete alignment with EU criteria, rules, and regulations, highlighting their potential to enhance the welfare of the Turkish people and promote democracy. While the significance of this emphasis has waned in recent years, it remains a consistent aspect. Even in the year 2021, a period during which AKP exhibited the most Eurosceptic tendencies, the Human Rights Action Plan announced by the Turkish Ministry of Justice underscores the integration process with the EU, indicating that even amid a more skeptical stance, the integration process remains integral (Adalet Bakanlığı, 2021, p. 20).

These findings underscore the significant error in simplistically categorizing both political parties as "Eurosceptic" in the same manner. At this point, as affirmed by Van Elsas et al. (2016), the multidimensional dynamics of Euroscepticism and the divergence in priorities, concerns, and perspectives among citizens and political parties, as also acknowledged by Hobolt (2014) and Lubbers & Scheepers (2010), must be emphasized. As the findings in my thesis corroborate, even though both political parties are right-wing, UKIP's consistent and categorical opposition to EU membership contrasts with AKP's strategic focus on criticizing the EU's perspective on Turkey's membership.

Likewise, in the realm of economics, UKIP highlights the stagnation and slowdown within the UK economy due to EU membership, underscoring the absence of new employment opportunities and the destabilization of the social security system attributed to expansion and migration policies. Conversely, AKP evaluates full EU membership, and even the negotiation process, positively, asserting that it contributes to Turkey's economic growth, development, and the welfare of its citizens. These deductions emphasize the necessity to address Euroscepticism, one of the most significant threats faced by the trajectory and future of EU integration, by considering political parties within their own ideological and national dynamics.

Moreover, within the framework of the data in this thesis, another noteworthy finding is that despite their differences, both political parties predominantly employ the "identity approach" and the factor of national identity, along with cultural factors, in their Eurosceptic narratives. UKIP unequivocally rejects a common supra-European identity, viewing it as a tool for controlling and exploiting societies across Europe more easily through stereotyping and erasing national identities. On the contrary, UKIP assesses British identity as a community formed by individuals from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds who "preserve their distinctiveness" while coming together. Culturally, especially by referencing its country's imperial history and heritage, UKIP highlights that it differs from Continental Europe in terms of democratic culture, governance, and overall understanding due to its Anglo-Saxon identity.

In contrast, AKP does not include any reference to a shared EU identity in its election manifestos. In its early years, AKP interpreted the convergence of the Muslim Turkish community with the Christian Western community as a fusion. This is evident through initiatives like the Alliance of Civilizations, initiated by AKP leader Erdogan in 2005. Although AKP had once embraced the notion of diverse cultural differences coalescing under a single European framework during those years, it has positioned itself against the EU from a cultural perspective in recent times. The description of EU member states as Islamophobic and Turkophobic has become a cornerstone of AKP's cultural-based Euroscepticism. AKP presents itself as the protector of all Muslims in Europe, irrespective of ethnic distinctions.

As highlighted under the cultural factors in the first chapter of this thesis, these concerns possess the potential to impede the development and progress of the EU integration

process (Toshkov & Kortenska, 2015). The findings of this thesis, building upon the aforementioned inference, illustrate that this situation holds a similar possibility for the external integration of the EU as well. In this context, I argue that the dominance of identity and cultural factors over material factors in shaping the abstract view towards the EU strengthens the question marks, as mentioned earlier. This in turn raises the possibility of Eurosceptic parties politicizing these concerns, particularly during times of crisis, to secure electoral victories, as stated in the initial findings. This presents the EU with its most significant threat, not only within its own borders but also among its neighboring countries, regardless of how deep the integration may be within itself or how expanded its integration capacity becomes.

Consequently, as emphasized by McLauren (2007), cultural and identity factors hold a distinct position in the EU integration process and the perspectives of individuals and political parties towards the EU, distinct from utilitarian aspects. In this regard, it can be interpreted that the attitude towards the EU emerges from the convergence and interplay of these two aspects. Especially in the case of AKP, it becomes evident that, despite resolving technical matters, the decisive aspect of Turkey's integration process will be the cultural and identity dimensions.

In addition to these findings, the analysis of UKIP confirms what Taggart and Szczerbiak assert about peripheral parties. According to their perspective, these parties enact their Euroscepticism through attacks against the political establishment without incurring significant costs from the outside, unlike the parties that are part of the government or have the potential to be part of it, classified as the "core" (2012, p. 12). The results of the UKIP analysis, specifically the findings related to the "Anti-Establishment" sub-code, unequivocally demonstrate, as highlighted by Sol (2020, p. 3), that UKIP has created a comfort zone outside of the existing political landscape. By maintaining this outsider position, UKIP accuses national elites of being puppets of the EU tyranny, portraying them as collaborators and accuses them of turning the British people into slaves of the EU, thus destroying their national identity, prosperity, and security. Particularly, UKIP distances itself from the group it labels as the "LibLabCon-sensus," and positions itself in direct opposition to this order, portraying itself as a champion advocating for the interests of its people. Moreover, it should be noted that UKIP is also categorized as an "Anti-Political Establishment Party" by Abedi and Lundberg (2009, p. 74).

Delving into the specifics of AKP, the findings from the AKP analysis confirm the argument presented by Hauge et al. (2021, pp. 1-2) that the narratives of Turkey and the EU are interconnected and shaped by the current state of relations, capable of evolving and changing. Additionally, in the same work, the authors highlight that when dominant narratives align in terms of nature, content, vision, and objectives, more positive and close relationships are observed (ibid). In line with these insights, the findings of this thesis suggest that the periods when AKP's Euroscepticism is most critical and distant from the EU (specifically the period after 2015) correspond to times when the narratives of both sides point in different directions in terms of the aforementioned aspects.

In this context, the changing of these narratives should also be emphasized as an indicator of AKP's Euroscepticism. To be precise, in AKP's initial years, it is observed that AKP's dominant "Europeanization" narrative aligned with the EU's "Membership" narrative (ibid). The common point between these two narratives is that Turkey is considered a part of Europe in terms of political, economic, and security aspects, and its future lies within the EU. However, factors such as Cyprus' full EU membership following EU's decision to start negotiations with Turkey and the opposition to Turkey's full membership by new administrations in the EU's two leading powers, Germany and France, led to the emergence of a "special candidate" narrative, which left Turkey's membership perspective more complex and uncertain compared to other candidate countries. This, as seen in the AKP code analysis, led to an increase in negative expressions and reactive discourse towards the EU, pushing AKP towards a period of de-Europeanization, as pointed out by Sipahioğlu (2017, p. 56).

From this point onwards, the AKP analysis reveals that the dominant narratives became "Turkey as the Heir" and subsequently "Turkey as a Great Power". Especially in recent years, a weakened focus on the West and a strong emphasis on Turkey as the center of the world can be observed. As highlighted by above-mentioned work, during this period, the EU's dominant narrative towards Turkey, specifically the "Distant Neighbour" narrative, becomes evident within the AKP administration. In this regard, the analysis of AKP, particularly in recent years, as seen in Figure 15, 16, and 17 in this thesis, clearly shows a surge in negative expressions towards the EU. This aligns with the findings of Hauge et al. (2021), which emphasize that the change in AKP's dominant narratives is closely connected to shifts in narratives and milestones.

This thesis's main findings, which indicate that AKP's Euroscepticism stems from the EU's strategy towards Turkey, also confirm this. Similarly, the presence of the fundamental nature of full membership within Turkey's narratives, regardless of any changes, as a key outcome highlighted in the same work, affirms the Soft Eurosceptic nature of AKP, in line with its nature even when shifts occur in the plots of EU narratives (ibid).

Finally, the fundamental difference between the two cases of this thesis, UKIP and AKP, lies in the strategies, solutions, and some key characteristics they employ in their Eurosceptic approaches. As noted in the literature review, UKIP is a single-issue political party with the ultimate goal of ending UK's EU membership. This points to a very specific and concrete aspiration. While UKIP attempts to broaden its agenda by discussing the drawbacks of UK's EU membership through various themes like immigration, its ultimate objective was achieved with the 2016 referendum. Furthermore, UKIP's electoral success has been particularly limited to EP elections. The Conservative Party's attainment of a majority in the first post-Brexit election, coupled with their reclaiming of issues like EU matters and immigration, resulted in UKIP facing an existential crisis. During this period, internal conflicts and leadership gaps led to divisions, ultimately causing UKIP to lose its position as an influential political party in UK politics.

On the other hand, although AKP initially embraced full EU membership as its ultimate goal, especially after 2013, the nature of the "Turkey as the Heir" and "Turkey as Great Power" narratives led to the presentation of more abstract, future-oriented, and long-term objectives based on historical references. Specific visions cannot be identified, making AKP unlike a single-issue party such as UKIP. This flexibility has provided AKP with an important comfort zone for maintaining its power and popularity. Additionally, AKP's popularity has been solidified through general elections, presidential elections, and referendums, bolstered by the presence of a charismatic leader. As a result, the EU issue has remained within AKP's domain, allowing it to adjust its strategy and level of Euroscepticism according to the demands of the day. Consequently, a clear solution proposal from AKP cannot be claimed; as mentioned earlier, it has always kept this as an empty signifier, open to interpretation. In this context, when looking at the contrast between an ineffective UKIP and a re-elected AKP with a majority in the 2023 elections, the nature of Euroscepticism, its differences, and the significance of strategy should be highlighted in light of the findings of this research.

Considering the research findings outlined above, it is clearly seen that the economic, political, and security crises in contemporary Europe have undoubtedly had a negative impact on the future of EU integration. Confronting successive major crises has led to a slowdown in the pace of EU integration and has raised questions about its future roadmap. Furthermore, the current ideological and organizational structure of the EU, characterized by an "unfinished" nature, provides an avenue for manipulation by Eurosceptic and reactive political parties and leaders. They interpret and create narratives around EU integration to suit their own interests and gain electoral victories. Whether through conservative and often far-right political parties focused on "national identity" winning power in national elections or the growing influence of populist anti-EU political parties in EP elections, the EU faces the possibility of being shaken and weakened.

In this thesis, I have explored the implications of this trend for the EU's external integration and have arrived at similar conclusions concerning two significant neighboring countries of the EU and countries that have been part of some form of EU integration. Alongside the uncertainties brought by the EU's incomplete and uncertain integration vision, each country has interpreted and manipulated EU integration according to its own dynamics and understanding. This underscores the mistake of placing all Eurosceptic parties in the same category.

Finally, it should be noted that the data analysis in this thesis is based solely on the election manifestos of two political parties and conducted through qualitative methods. In this context, for future research, expanding the scope of data by including speeches or increasing the number of cases studied could reinforce the aforementioned findings or uncover new insights. Additionally, building on Taggart and Szczerbiak's (2001) argument that the level of public Euroscepticism does not necessarily correlate with party-based Euroscepticism, an examination of these two political parties' Euroscepticism in terms of their formation and developmental stages could consider the "public" as a reference source by examining the correlation between the two.

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