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# Party Competition as a Driver of Foreign Policy

## EXPLAINING CHANGES IN THE BRITISH LABOUR PARTY'S IMMIGRATION POLICES AND THE TURKISH AKP'S APPROACH TO CYPRUS

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This paper explores how party competition influences states' foreign policy choices. I argue that party competition has stronger explanatory power than it is often given credit for. To examine this dynamic, I discuss some alternative explanations of policy choices, then examine two case studies and finally discuss implications that can be drawn from those case studies. The two case studies that will be analyzed are the British Labour government's decision in 1999 to pass stricter immigration controls and the Turkish AKP government's decision in 2006 to adopt a more hardline approach with regards to Cyprus. These two case studies have been chosen because many of the other variables that are often advanced as explaining policy choices would have predicted a different choice than was actually made. If party competition can override these concerns, then its explanatory power can be asserted with greater confidence.<sup>1</sup>

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*It is fruitless to debate whether domestic politics really determine international relations, or the reverse. The answer to that question is clearly 'both, sometimes'. The more interesting questions are 'When?' and 'How?'*

Robert Putnam (1988, 427).

Some scholars view states as unitary, rational actors and operate under the assumption that the state-as-actor functions like a black box on the international stage—in that one need not examine internal motivations to explain a state's behavior (Hilsman, Gaughran, and Weitsman 1992, 52). Milner and Rosendorff (1997, 67) point out, however,

The most systematic investigation of international and domestic theories of conflict, Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman's *War and Reason* (1992), provides a powerful argument that domestic politics affects international conflict. However, domestic politics is a black box for them: 'In the domestic [game], demands are presumed to be endogenous to some domestic political process, not spelled out here (36)' (Milner and Rosendorff 1997, 67).

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This article's central purpose is to spell out that domestic political process. Like many others, this article addresses state policy choices using the "second image" of International Relations theory, in which the internal politics of that state do matter. Peter Gourevitch sums up much of the existing literature concisely, stating that

The debate has centered around which aspect matters most: the presence and character of bureaucracy (Kissinger, Allison, Halperin); the pressure of the masses on policy making or the lack of such pressure (Kissinger, Wilson, Lenin); the strength and autonomy of the state (Gilpin, Krasner, Katzenstein); the drives of the advanced capitalist economy (Lenin, Magdoff, Baran, and Sweezy); the perceptual set of leaders (Jervis, Steinbrunner, Brecher); national style (Hoffmann); the logic of industrial development (Kurth); the character of domestic coalitions (Gourevitch, Katzenstein); the relative weight of transnational actors in a given polity (Nye and Keohane); the level of modernization (Morse). (Gourevitch 1978, 901)

My argument is not necessarily that these scholars are wrong, only that there is an additional factor beyond their arguments. I seek to demonstrate that party competition is also a significant driver of states' foreign policy choices. Specifically, I argue that party competition influences foreign policy by jeopardizing the domestic power position of the ruling party and incentivizing that ruling party to adopt more hardline foreign policies.

Party competition does this by aligning the two-levels of foreign policy as explicated by Robert Putnam (1988). He argues that foreign policy is the product of a two-level game in which the political leadership is simultaneously seeking power domestically by coalescing interests while internationally seeking "to maximize their own ability to satisfy domestic pressures, while minimizing the adverse consequences of foreign developments." (Putnam 1988, 434) This article builds on Putnam's work by suggesting the centrality of the competition between the ruling party and its opposition at the domestic level of the game.

Party competition has a large impact on foreign policy, because for ruling parties in democratic governments the opposition party is the major threat to their grip on power. In a democracy, the ruling party is highly unlikely to be thrown out of power via a coup or violent uprising. If they are removed from power, it will almost certainly be because they have been ejected at the polls in favor of another party. While maintaining the power position of the state might, in theory, be the main objective of foreign policy, in reality maintaining the power of the party in government will be at least as important in the

strategic calculus of political leaders. If a foreign policy issue threatens the ruling party with electoral defeat, the ruling party's entire agenda becomes jeopardized. Given that the domestic agenda is often a higher priority for a ruling party than the foreign policy agenda, we should not be surprised to see ruling parties behave strategically by adopting whatever foreign policy is most popular in order to protect their domestic agenda, which they value more. Furthermore, foreign policy shifts driven by competitive motivations are likely to be in more "hardline" directions because, as James Fearon shows, parties in power in democracies face significant audience costs if they are seen to back down in the face of foreign threats (1994).

We should also expect party competition to have its greatest effect on foreign policy issues that have a high degree of salience. After all, if the issue is of such low salience that it has little if any electoral repercussions, then the governing party is free to take whatever position it chooses without fear of undermining its domestic position. That is why Kurt Gaubatz's (1998, 117-142) modeling of party decision-making on foreign policy issues focuses on matters of war and peace; these issues will have a great deal of salience and thus increase the stakes for the governing party if it chooses to enact an unpopular policy. This article expands on Gaubatz's model by demonstrating that the same dynamic can occur regarding issues not related to war.

Ostrom and Job (1986, 555) focus on decisions regarding the use of force by US Presidents for much the same reason; they conclude that domestic considerations are more important than international considerations in explaining these decisions. This article agrees with that conclusion, but differs from Ostrom and Job's argument in that it focuses on party competition, which is not one of the domestic independent variables they analyze. The focus on party competition also differentiates this article from another major work on the topic of domestic influences on foreign policy. Milner and Rosendorff (1997, 70) examine the impact of division in government (in their analysis the division is between the executive, the legislature, and domestic interest groups). I will attempt to show that the electoral threat posed by the opposition party can also greatly influence foreign policy.

Finally, Alastair Smith (1998) models the interaction between foreign policy pronouncements and domestic constituencies, and finds that governing parties do have

one eye (at least) on future elections when they make important foreign policy decisions (his article also looks at issues related to force) and that this leads “political leaders to choose hawkish foreign policies” (246). Smith goes on to note that if international events affect regime survival and change regime behavior based as a result, making statistical inference becomes difficult due to selection effects that make the selection nonrandom (247). While Smith uses formal modeling to support his argument, this article will make a similar argument using a very different research methodology: case studies. This will allow us to dodge some the statistical inference difficulties discussed by Smith and to focus on process tracing the changes in foreign policies pursued by political leaders.

To examine this dynamic, I analyze two cases: the British Labour government’s decision in 1999 to pass stricter immigration controls (Immigration and Asylum Act 1999) and the Turkish AKP government’s decision in 2006 to keep its ports closed to ships from Cyprus (*Financial Times* 2006). There are several reasons why I chose these cases. First, they are hard cases. Many of the other variables that are often advanced as explaining policy choices would have predicted a different choice than was actually made. If party competition can override these concerns, then its explanatory power can be asserted with greater confidence.

Second, these two cases present something close to a “most different systems design.” If the two cases are significantly different with respect to the independent variables except one, and are in alignment with respect to the dependent variable, then the power of the independent variable as an explanation can be advanced with greater confidence. These two cases are quite different and thus provide an opportunity to assess the generalizability of the main argument. One case is set in the late 1990’s, the other in the 2000’s. One is the UK, the other in Turkey. One involves immigration, the other involves bilateral state-to-state relations. If the main argument works, but only in very rare and specific circumstances, then we cannot be confident in its generalizability to other cases. If however, the main argument’s power to explain phenomena holds across time and space and in contexts as widely different as these two cases, then we can be more confident in its robustness.

It is also important to test this argument against rival explanations. From an international perspective, the incentives faced by a state with respect to policy choices

can be grouped into two broad categories: economic benefits and security interests. It is assumed that if a particular policy can make a state more prosperous and more powerful, and its citizens wealthier and safer, then the state will enact that policy. Domestically, a government may also adopt a policy if it is a cherished policy goal by the party in power—whatever the international implications. However, in many cases, the governing party is enacting a policy not for these reasons, but instead to improve its standing in domestic electoral politics.

If those two international incentives (economics and security) and that domestic factor (the policy being a deeply held policy goal) predict a different result than what actually occurred while the explanatory variable advanced in this paper correctly predicts the dependent variable, then its power can be more confidently asserted. In other words, if the domestic electoral incentives can overcome the strength of these other factors when they conflict, we can be additionally confident that domestic electoral incentives are indeed powerful motivators. Also, analyzing cases in which rival explanatory factors predict a different result for the dependent variable than the explanation advanced means that we are not analyzing cases that have been over-determined. In order to advance this argument, I first discuss the rival explanations for the UK Labour government's policy shift on immigration before discussing how domestic electoral incentives influenced that decision. Second, I analyze the Turkish AKP government's shift by looking first to rival explanations and then to domestic incentives.

### **The Labour Party and Immigration Restrictions**

On May 1, 1997, the Labour Party won control of the government with 419 seats compared the Tories' 165 and the Liberal Democrats' 46 (*BBC News* 1997). In November 1999, the British Parliament passed the Asylum and Immigration Act, which replaced welfare benefits for asylum seekers with £35 per week in vouchers, ended asylum seekers' choices with respect to lodging, introduced a dispersal program under which asylum seekers who refused to be dispersed were denied vouchers, quadrupled detention capacity, and further restricted marriage for immigration purposes (Immigration and Asylum Act 1999). Why was this legislation enacted?

*The Alternative Explanations*

If the Labour government's policy on this issue had been guided by economic incentives, security, or their own core beliefs, they would not have enacted new restrictions. From an economic perspective, the immigrants created more benefits than costs. A 2008 report commissioned by the House of Lords (2008, 22) stated that immigration contributed approximately £6 billion per year to British GDP. To be fair, the report went on to review several other studies done on this question and stated:

the overall conclusion from existing evidence is that immigration has very small impacts on GDP per capita, whether these impacts are positive or negative. This conclusion is in line with findings of studies of the economic impacts of immigration in other countries including the US. (House of Lords 2008, 26)

The asylum seekers were mostly young, able-bodied men (*Daily Mail* 1999), who could work and thus fill state coffers through income and consumption taxes, but who would make few demands on the state. And it was not as if Britain was experiencing a recession at the time and thus had reason to fear the loss of British jobs to immigrants. During this period, Britain had very low unemployment. At the time of the legislation's enactment in 1999, unemployment in the UK stood at 5.7 percent (Eurostat) and was falling; that was the lowest unemployment Britain had seen in over two decades. These immigrants and asylum seekers were not draining the economy, nor were they stealing jobs from locals. Furthermore, if the Immigration and Asylum Act had been enacted for economic reasons, the dispersal policy would have been to send the asylum seekers to where there was a need for their labor. Instead, the exact opposite approach was taken, because:

The system meant relocating asylum seekers to parts of the country with a surplus of unused housing stock. Invariably this meant asylum seekers were sent to areas suffering the effects of economic decline, and therefore urban poverty, isolation and high levels of crime and violence." (*The Guardian* 2009).

Second, with respect to security, the asylum seekers were not creating problems. These immigrants were disproportionately young males (the group most likely to commit crime) and were dispersed to high crime areas (thereby further increasing the likelihood that they would commit crime), but they did not commit violent crimes at a

disproportionate rate and only committed property crime at roughly the same rate as other poor Britons. Even then the positive coefficient between immigrants and property crime was not statistically significant (Bell, Machin, and Fasani 2010, 12). Furthermore, this was before 9/11 and before the 7/7 bombings. As Petter Nesser's (2008) catalogue of jihadist attacks in Western Europe shows, there had still not been a single jihadist terror attack committed in Britain in 1999. Parliament therefore had little concern that these asylum seekers were potential terrorists.

So if the impetus behind the legislation was not economic or security related, what if it was simply a matter of the Labour Party sincerely believing in the need for stricter immigration controls? If we are not to take an extremely cynical view of policymaking, then we have to at least consider this as a possibility. But this, too, was not a major driver of the policy choice made. Immigration was not a particularly high priority during the campaign. It was not among the Labour Party's 5 key pledges in its manifesto (Labour Party 1997) while the Conservative Party dedicated a mere 31 words to immigration in its over 19,000-word manifesto (*The Times of London*, 1997). Even when Labour Party ministers did talk about immigration, they criticized the Conservative Party's Asylum Acts of 1993 and 1996 and promised to end the primary purpose rule (more on this below). So if it was not economics, security concerns, or a deep-seated belief, why did the Labour government implement new restrictions?

#### *The Party Competition Explanation- Heading Off A New Vulnerability*

The Conservative Party, which took power in 1979, had steadily tightened immigration restrictions while in power. They enacted the primary purpose rule, which gave officials the ability to deny an immigrant spouse entry into the UK if the official believed that the primary purpose for the marriage was to gain entry to Britain (*The Times* 1993). They passed the Nationality Act, which restricted citizenship for immigrants by stating that even if a person was born in Britain, one of their parents had to be a citizen or permanent resident for them to be considered a British citizen (British Nationality Act of 1981). They placed further restrictions on asylum seekers with the 1993 Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act and the 1996 Asylum and Immigration Act. These acts succeeded at restraining immigration growth (*The Times* 1997a).

*The Conservatives Find Their Weapon*

Then, the Labour Party won control of government on May 1<sup>st</sup> 1997. Shortly after that, the Labour government announced that it would scrap the primary purpose rule (*The Guardian* 1997). After this rule was abolished, Conservatives began attacking Labour's position as soft on bogus asylum seekers. They cited statistics showing that in 1995, almost 11,000 immigrants were denied entry to Britain based on the primary purpose rule and that repealing it could lead to a major influx of new migrants (*The Times* 1997b). Major newspapers began to circulate headlines such as, "Green Light for the Immigration Cheats." (*Daily Mail* 1997) This was the Labour government's first electoral setback with respect to immigration.

This legal change, Labour's stance on immigration more generally, and the traditional weakness of Labour on the issue of immigration in the eyes of the electorate (Somerville 2007, 127) combined to make immigration policy a favorite weapon of the Conservatives. It was a more natural attack issue for Tories in opposition than it had been for Labour in opposition. The previous Tory Prime Minister, John Major, had impeccable anti-racism credentials, so Labour ministers found it difficult to attack Tories as being too harsh on immigrants (*The Times* 1997a), but the fact that most Asian minorities (70%) voted for Labour (Ipsos MORI poll Jan. 31 to Feb. 9, 1997) meant that it would be awkward for them to criticize the Tories as being too soft on immigrants. These considerations no longer held once the Conservatives were the party in opposition.

*Increasing Numbers of Asylum Seekers=Increasing Salience of Asylum Policy*

At roughly the same time, immigration numbers began to soar. The number of asylum seekers in August 1997 was 60 percent higher than the number in August 1996 (*Bath Chronicle* 1998). This was not a one-month anomaly. Asylum applications for October 1997 were over 67 percent higher than the same month the previous year (*Daily Mail* 1998a). In 1996, 29,640 immigrants applied for asylum; in 1999, that figure was 89,700 (*The Gazette* 2000). And not only were more people applying for asylum, a greater percentage of those applied were being granted asylum. In the first 17 months of Labour's term in government, the proportion of asylum seekers who were successful rose by 50 percent (*Daily Mail* 1998a). And these numbers do not even include illegal

immigrants, whose numbers were also rising. The number of illegal migrants detained at the port of Dover increased fivefold from August 1997 to August 1998 (*The Times* 1998). Net immigration nearly doubled from 1997 to 1998 and did not return to the 1997 levels in following years (Browne 2002, 21).

Why was immigration on the rise? The ongoing crisis in the Balkans was certainly one contributing factor, but this argument was not compelling enough or complete enough to allow the Labour government to avoid considerable criticism over the rising number of asylum seekers. Another clearly contributing factor was the liberal nature of Britain immigration policies at the time. At the time, a family of four seeking asylum in Britain received £250 per week for housing, clothing, and income support (*Daily Mail* 1998b). In comparison, asylum seekers in Belgium, the Netherlands, and Switzerland received only medical care, food, and the equivalent of between £8.75 and £12 per week in income assistance, and that was after a much more rigorous screening process than the one imposed by the British government (*The Evening Standard* 1999). In France, asylum seekers were provided neither food nor accommodation whatsoever, and faced continual harassment from police; there, “applicants needed not just a strong case but a thick skin and endless determination to survive the process.” (*The Evening Standard* 1999)

Also, the time it took for the British government to decide on an asylum seeker’s case was long and growing. In Germany, Norway, France, Austria, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Belgium, the average asylum application cases took anywhere from 6 to 9 months; In Britain, the average case took close to 3 years (*The Evening Standard* 1999). Many cases took much longer. The backlog was spiraling upward so fast that one British newspaper noted in 1999 that “by the end of the year, the backlog of unprocessed applications is forecast to grow to a record 100,000 a level so unwieldy that the Home Office is granting an ‘amnesty’ to 20,000 who have been waiting for seven years or longer.” (*Mail on Sunday* 1999) Even those who would normally support Labour found the system severely wanting. The Labour minister in charge of immigration said that the system was in “shambles.” (*The Independent* 1998) *The Guardian* (1998), a liberal paper that largely supported the Labour government called the Home Office “a secretive, bureaucratic and appallingly managed bunker.”

Another incident that did not help the Labour government occurred in August 1999. The National Health Service released a report stating that 100,000 illegal immigrants were still residing in Britain even though they had been ordered to leave; to make matters worse, the British Home Office had earlier stated that the number was only 24,000 (*Daily Mail* 1999). Not only did it seem as though the Labour Party was losing a handle on immigrants, but it also seemed that they were trying to cover it up.

The British public was still not nearly as concerned with immigration as it would be a few years later, but it was taking notice. The proportion of Britons who thought immigration one of the three most important issues in the country stood at just 3 percent in March 1997 (Ipsos MORI March 21 to March 24, 1997); by August 1999, that figure had jumped to 10 percent (Ipsos MORI August 20 to August 23, 1999). With the issue gaining salience, the Conservatives spotted an opportunity. The repeal of the primary purpose rule, the rapid increase in asylum seekers and illegal immigrants, the relaxed nature of British laws, the enormous backlog of asylum seekers, and the reports of the taxpayer-funded benefits going to asylum seekers all became fodder for a Conservative Party searching for a way to undermine Labour.

Illegal migrants and people attempting to cheat the asylum-seeking system allowed the Conservatives to stand against immigration on law abidance grounds and avoid the sort of politically embarrassing race rhetoric that threatened to resurrect the ghosts of Lord Tebbit and Enoch Powell. This issue also gave the Conservatives the opportunity to paint Labour as naïve on foreign policy, weak with respect to law and order, and too quick to hand out taxpayer-funded largesse. Tories were quick to depict asylum seekers as eager to live on the dole and Labour as eager to oblige. The Conservative leader William Hague accused Labour of neglecting its duty to enforce the law by making Britain a ‘soft touch’ for asylum seekers, and went on to highlight a particular district where the state cared for more immigrants than elderly people (*Birmingham Post* 1999). Tory political strategists believed they were “scoring direct hits against the government on the issue.” (*The Guardian* 1999)

#### *Labour Cuts Its Losses*

Labour needed to head off this line of Conservative attack. They could do so only by tightening restrictions. Increasing immigration restrictions would also reassure voters

that they were strong on law and order while reinforcing the image of New Labour as truly centrist. A public opinion poll showed that 80 percent of Britons agreed with William Hague's assertion that Britain had become a 'soft touch' for immigrants and that 63 percent of them felt that too much was being done to help immigrants (Ipsos MORI July 20 to July 24 of 2000). A different poll found that 59 percent of Britons thought that "a very large number of those seeking asylum are cheats" and, worst of all for Labour, 63 percent of the population disapproved of their handling of asylum seekers (Ipsos MORI). Labour found itself confronted with a serious amount of what James Fearon (1994) referred to as audience costs. Fearon concluded that high audience costs would lead the democratic government to adopt more hardline policies, and, true to his predictions, that is exactly what the Labour Party did.

On February 9, 1999, the Labour Party introduced The Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 (*The Guardian* 2009). Many in the Labour Party felt it was too harsh and so staged "the most serious rebellion by Labour MP's since the election." (*Daily Mail* 1999) But Tony Blair argued that passing the act was "essential to guarantee winning a second term in office at the next election" and that failing to pass immigration reform "would leave a vacuum which the Tories could fill with their own right-wing agenda." (*The Herald* 1999) The act would go on to pass its third readings in the House of Commons on the 16<sup>th</sup> of June and receive approval from the House of Lords and royal assent in November. (*The Guardian* 2009)

### **The AKP and Cyprus**

In 2004, the European Union agreed to begin negotiations toward Turkey's accession. In 2006, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) adopted a hardline approach with respect to Cyprus, refusing to open Turkey's seaports and airports to ships and planes from the Greek-Cypriot Republic.<sup>2</sup> It did this despite the fact that it had previously taken a more conciliatory stance and despite the fact that a row over Cyprus had the power to bring EU accession talks to a screeching halt. Why did it pursue this policy?

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<sup>2</sup> To keep the language as clear and as consistent as possible, I will use the term Cyprus only when referring to the island as a whole and will use Greek-Cyprus and Turkish-Cyprus to differentiate between the two protagonists and the dispute even though the Greek part of the island typically just goes by Cyprus.

*The Alternative Explanations*

If the AKP government's policy on this issue had been guided by economic incentives, security concerns, or its own core beliefs, it would have enacted a more conciliatory policy and opened Turkish ports to ships from Greek Cyprus. Turkey's relationship with Cyprus was inextricably linked with Turkey's attempts to accede to the EU. From an economic perspective, accession to the EU would have benefitted the Turkish economy far more than anything Turkish-Cypriots could ever offer. Turkey would have benefitted from access to the single market through an increase in productivity and a reduction in prices in the services sector, which would have significantly boosted Turkish GDP (Commission of The European Communities 2004). Turkey welcomes 6 million tourists from the EU (Fuller 2008, 147) and 11.5 million EU visitors for all purposes (Pirnar) every year. The tourism industry generated \$9.7 billion (US) in 2003 (Gultekin, Bulent, and Yilmaz 2005, 63). That would almost certainly have increased if Turkey had joined the EU. EU accession would also have augmented the performance of Turkish agriculture; "with a large agricultural sector, Turkey [was] bound to benefit from European farm subsidies" (Mango 2004, 241). Overall, EU accession was estimated to create a 4 percent boost to consumption (LeJour and DeMooij 2004, 1) and an 8.1 percent increase in total exports for Turkey (LeJour and DeMooij 2004, 21). And this is but the tip of the iceberg of what the economic benefits to Turkey of accession were seen to be. Clearly, it was not economics that drove Turkey's policy turn in 2006.

From a security perspective, a hardline approach to Cyprus also made little sense. In Cyprus, Turkey maintained 40,000 soldiers, 386 tanks, 400 armored fighting vehicles, and 24 helicopters along with various other military assets (Michaletos 2006). A settlement of that island's division would have freed up those assets for other pressing security needs. At the time, post US-invasion Iraq was starting to devolve into sectarian strife (*Newsweek* 2006). Northern Iraq was becoming a semiautonomous Kurdish region that was beginning to seriously unsettle Kurdish-Turkish relations in southeastern Turkey and thus was beginning to be an enormous security headache for the AKP government (*The Washington Times* 2006). Every soldier in Cyprus was a soldier that could not be deployed to southeastern Turkey. So security incentives would also have driven the Turkish government to continue pursuing a conciliatory path.

Finally, a more hardline approach with respect to Cyprus was also not a policy that was near and dear to the hearts of the AKP. The AKP had led the drive for EU accession. It did not want to engage in any policy vis-à-vis Cyprus that might jeopardize accession. It had been pushing for a new policy with respect to Cyprus since the election that brought it to power.

In 2002, Turkey's ruling coalition fell apart (DSP, MHP, and ANAP). The three parties bickered to the point of deadlocking the government (Mango 2004, 101). In addition to this source of unpopularity, the economy was in a free-fall with the Turkish lira losing half its value and 2.5 million jobs disappearing (Mango 2004, 101). Furthermore, disillusionment with the governing institutions had become ubiquitous after the Turkish government's abysmal performance in response to an earthquake in 1999 that killed at least 18,000 people (Kinzer 2008, 198-202). To be represented in the Turkish parliament, a party must gain at least 10 percent of the vote. None of the parties that had been represented in the previous parliament were able to cross that threshold in the 2002 election (Mango 2004, 102-103). This opened the door for the CHP—the Republican Party of Kemal Ataturk—to return to parliament with 19 percent of the vote (up from 9 percent) and for the newly formed AKP to gain 34 percent of the vote and 362 out of 550 seats possible (*Financial Times* 2002).

Immediately upon being elected in November 2002, the AKP adopted a much more conciliatory approach towards Cyprus than its predecessors. Less than 3 weeks after the election while traveling to Athens to meet the Greek prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the leader of the AKP, said, "solving the Cyprus issue will not just accelerate our EU process, it will also be a concrete and useful step to overcoming the problems between Greece and Turkey." (*Irish Times* 2002) Erdogan and his party pushed for a settlement on Cyprus despite the fact that rapprochement was opposed by the military and the Turkish Foreign Ministry (Dismorr 2008, 152). It was not as if the AKP's decision to stand tough was a long-standing policy preference. So if economic incentives, security concerns, and the AKP's policy preferences don't explain the turn in the AKP's policy, what does?

*The Party Competition Explanation—Shifting the Scales*

In this section, I will examine why it made electoral sense for the AKP to adopt a conciliatory approach when it took office, discuss what happened to change the strategic calculus for the AKP, and finally assess why it made electoral sense to adopt a more stringent policy in 2006.

*The AKP's Strategic Calculus 2002-2004*

There were four main reasons why party politics dictated that the AKP take a more compromising position on Cyprus. The first two had to do with EU accession while the second two had to do with Cyprus itself. First, the issue of Cyprus was inextricably linked with EU accession, and both of the AKP's core constituencies highly supported Turkey joining the EU. The two main constituencies of the AKP were moderate Islamists and Anatolian businessmen. The moderate Islamists "believed it would gain them greater religious freedom, and above all the end on all restrictions on women wearing headscarves" (Mango 2004, 234) in state institutions, while the businessmen "wanted access to European capital and markets." (Mango 2004, 234) Also, while not a core constituency, the Kurds largely voted for the AKP in the 2002 elections (Polat 2008, 1), and like religious Turks, wanted into the EU (over 90 of Kurds supported EU accession) because they felt it would guarantee them greater freedoms. (Dismorr 2008, 124) These issues were very salient at the time. In fact, differences on foreign policy issues were "among the most significant factors that explain the difference between the [AKP] and other party constituencies." (Carkoglu, 2006, 178)

Second, it provided the AKP leaders with political cover for items on the domestic agenda they wanted to pursue but would have had a difficult time implementing without the impetus of the EU negotiating process. The AKP transformed "the EU accession process into an amplifier of its political program" (Duran 2006, 296). EU accession negotiations gave the AKP political cover to promote redefining civil-military relations (Jenkins 2006, 186) and enthusiastically enforce the IMF economic reform program that had been implemented in the wake of Turkey's economic near-meltdown in 2001 (Onis 2006, 215). There was a certain symbiotic relationship between EU accession as a driver of reform and reform as accelerating Turkey's progress towards being in line

the EU accession criteria because “the sweeping reforms Erdogan pushed through Parliament made Turkey more democratic and more economically open than it had ever been” (Kinzer 2008, 222).

Third, it allowed the AKP to differentiate itself from its predecessors. All three parties whose coalition had ended in abysmal unpopularity (DSP, ANAP, and MHP) had favored a very tough stance on Cyprus; The DSP-MHP-ANAP coalition was “as solidly pro-Turkish Cypriot as any imaginable in Turkey.” (Dodd 2000, 162) Additionally, and quite helpfully for the AKP, it also allowed the AKP to differentiate itself from previous Islamist parties. The Welfare Party had also been resolutely opposed to reunification of Cyprus and had fought with its mid-90’s governing coalition partner the DYP for being willing to compromise on Cyprus in an attempt to win favor from Europe (Dodd 2000, 162). There was one other party in the 1990’s that had also advocated for taking a softer line on Cyprus for sake of improving relations with Europe and it just so happened to be the only party other than the AKP that would be represented in the Turkish Parliament after the 2002 elections. That party was the CHP.

This was the fourth electoral calculus reason it made sense for the AKP to adopt the conciliatory approach vis-à-vis Cyprus. The only other party in government had little if any will to oppose it on the issue. The CHP had traditionally been the most willing political party to place more importance on connecting with Europe than promoting the interests of Turkish Cypriots (Dodd 2000, 163). Even if for some reason it did want to criticize the AKP for going soft on Cyprus, it could hardly do so after championing exactly that policy for years. And so it was that the AKP pushed as hard for a settlement of the Cyprus issue as any governing party in Turkey ever had. But political developments would upend all of these considerations and shift the electoral scales against reconciliation and in favor of a tougher line on Cyprus.

#### *Cyprus: Two Peoples, Two Standards*

The events surrounding the vote in Cyprus on the Annan Plan left Turks with a feeling that a grossly unfair double standard had been applied to them. In the Helsinki Declaration issued in 1999, the EU made a thinly veiled threat that failure to reach an agreement on Cyprus would result in non-accession for Turkey (Park 2005, 132). After

its election in 2002, the AKP threw its support behind the Annan Plan, which would have reunited Turkish and Greek Cyprus (Kyrus 2011, 99). The Annan Plan would have created a loose federal system that would have reunited Cyprus; the government would be in the hands of Greek Cypriots given their greater numbers but it would still have left the Turkish controlled parts of Cyprus with significant autonomy (Annan Plan for Cyprus).

Greek Cypriots already controlled most of the island, so they would accept a negotiated settlement only on extremely favorable terms. They wanted to reduce the size of the territory controlled by Turkish-Cypriots to 25 percent of the island and wanted a strong, centralized government since their greater population would allow them to dominate (Dodd 2000, 153). Turkish Cypriots wanted an end to the international isolation under which they lived. Furthermore, EU states promised that they would have that isolation ended in exchange for their support of the Annan Plan (Akgun and Tiryaki 2010, 23).

The Annan Plan needed both sides to vote for it to take effect; on April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2004, Turkish Cypriots voted in support of the plan by a 65-35 margin whereas Greek Cypriots voted against it by a margin of 74-26 (The Economist 2009a). Turkey had been told that it could not be a part of the EU if it stood in the way of a settlement in Cyprus. Would the same standard apply to Greek Cyprus? No, it would not. A week after the vote on the Anna Plan, Greek Cyprus was still admitted to the EU despite clearly being the stumbling block to an internationally brokered settlement (*The Washington Times* 2004). The Greek Cypriot government then vetoed the implementation of a plan to ease travel and trade restrictions that had been promised to Turkish Cypriots in exchange for their accepting the Annan Plan (*The Economist* 2009b). It was a humiliating sequence of events for Turkish Cypriots as well as Turks.

#### *Enter Stage Right: Merkel and Sarkozy Ride In*

In September 2005, the CDU/CSU coalition won the German federal election by a margin of 226 seats to the Social Democratic Party, meaning that Angela Merkel would replace Gerhard Schroder as Chancellor of Germany (*The Washington Post* 2005). This had major implications for Turkey joining the EU. Whereas Schroder had been one of the

leading champions of Turkish accession, Merkel was resolutely opposed, preferring a privileged partnership (*The Financial Times* 2005). Meanwhile, Nicolas Sarkozy, who was the presumed next president of France, was also publicly opposed Turkey's EU bid (*Christian Science Monitor* 2005). There was clearly no way for negotiations to be finished before Europe's second largest state, France, was lead by a politician determined to block Turkey from becoming an EU member. In any case, that seemed moot because Europe's largest state, Germany, was already lead by a politician of the same bent.

The rejection of the EU Constitution by voters in the Netherlands and France was another important event in this process, because "many observers suggested that one of the factors contributing to the defeat of the Treaty in France and the Netherlands was voter concern over continued EU enlargement and specifically over the potential admission of Turkey" (Morelli and Migdalovitz 2009, 5). Merkel and Sarkozy's opinions reflected general European opinion. In 2005, 52 percent of Europeans opposed Turkey joining the EU and 35 percent supported it (Eurobarometer 63 2005, 29). The following year, 59 percent were opposed whereas only 28 percent were in favor (Eurobarometer 66 2006, 223). By 2006, with major national leaders and a growing number of EU citizens standing opposed to Turkish accession, the door to the EU was closed in fact if not in name.

#### *2006: The Calculus of 2002 Disappears*

All of the four electoral considerations that pushed the AKP toward conciliation with Cyprus from 2002 to 2004 discussed earlier were no longer present by 2006. To take them in reverse order, first, the CHP could legitimately criticize the AKP as being weak on foreign policy if the AKP continued to offer concessions on Cyprus even after the intransigence of Greek Cypriots' actions with regards to the Annan Plan. Second, for the AKP, differentiating itself from the previous ruling parties and previous religious parties was no longer as necessary as it had been. Third, EU accession could no longer play a political cover role for domestic reforms given the clear signals from new leaders in Europe that the EU had changed its mind and that Turkey would probably not in fact be invited to join the club regardless of its actions.

Finally, the AKP had implemented other legislation that could maintain the loyalty of moderate Islamists, businessmen, and Kurds. For moderate Islamists, the AKP had put many openly devout civil servants into key positions in the bureaucracy and though it had not been successful at undoing the headscarf ban, it had continually spoken out against the ban (Baran 2010, 56-57). But the issue of headscarves wasn't just about religion; it was also about women. In 2004, the AKP issued a new penal code that criminalized sexual assault and rape within marriage for the first time, banned discrimination against women, ended the practice of giving reduced sentences for murder if it was an honor killing, and removed all references to chastity and morality from existing laws (Kinzer 2008, 161). While this may seem like small potatoes to some Western skeptics, the AKP does deserve some credit for expanding women's rights more than any other party had over the previous fifty years (Sozen 2006, 277). By expanding women's rights along with the ability to wear headscarves, the AKP had defanged the criticism that their policies were meant to subjugate women. The AKP had satisfied women as well as religious voters.

For businessmen (and all voters more generally) the AKP had delivered on its economic growth more than even the most optimistic Turk could have believed possible in 2002. From 2002 to 2006, GDP grew by more than 50 percent, inflation had been brought below ten percent, export income more than doubled and, most astonishingly, foreign investment increased from one billion dollars to twenty billion dollars annually (Kinzer 2008, 243).

On the Kurdish front, the AKP lifted the ban on publishing in Kurdish in 2003 (Mango 2004, 222) and in 2005, Prime Minister Erdogan made overtures to Kurdish voters by speaking of the Turkish governments past sins against them (Kinzer 2008, 134). Those acts were enough to not only hold onto Kurdish support, but to increase it. In the 2007 elections, 54 percent of Kurds voted for the AKP compared to 47 of the general population (Dismorr 2008, 127).

#### *The Nationalist Tipping Point: The MHP and Turkey's Ten Percent Threshold*

There was now also another consideration to take into account. The Nationalist Party (MHP) was a major concern going into the 2007 Turkish Parliamentary elections.

The MHP had received 18 percent of the vote in 1999 and had only barely missed crossing the 10 percent threshold in 2002 (SETA Foundation for Political, Economic, and Social Research 2011, 15). The MHP was starting to capitalize on the stung feelings and wounded pride of Turkish Cypriots being humiliated by Greek Cyprus and of Turkey being jilted by the EU; an opinion poll taken in March 2006 showed the MHP gaining enough support to cross the threshold (*BBC* 2007). The AKP had an ambitious agenda for its second term. It wanted to curb the power of the judiciary, entrench civilian power over the military, and create more freedom for women to wear the headscarf. To get that agenda passed, it needed a two-thirds majority in the Turkish Parliament. Whether the AKP could get a two-thirds majority depended to a considerable extent on keeping the MHP below that critical ten percent mark.

This dynamic speaks to a central component of Robert Putnam's (1988) analysis of international negotiation as a two-level game: the size of win-sets. It confirms one aspect of his win-set argument but contradicts another aspect of it. Putnam argues that the first level is the bargaining between the two states and the second level is the negotiations within the relevant domestic constituents; he defines "the 'win-set' for a given constituency as the set of all possible Level I agreements that would 'win'- that is, gain the necessary majority among the different constituencies" (1988, 437) and goes on to argue that "larger win-sets make Level I agreement more likely" (1988, 437). The events surrounding the MHP and AKP discussed here support that contention.

By greatly reducing the potential win-set for the AKP, the MHP's challenge significantly reduced the probability of Level I agreement between the Turkish government and the governments of the European Union, most especially Cyprus. That has a very important implication in that it demonstrates the huge importance of electoral systems. If Turkey used a first-past-the-post system, the MHP would have had essentially zero chance at defeating the AKP and thus would have represented an essentially zero threat to them. But because Turkey uses a proportional representation system, even with a ten percent threshold—higher than many other proportional representation systems—the ruling party is more vulnerable to pressure from an opposition party on foreign policy. That suggests that the phenomenon advanced in this paper will be stronger in proportional representation systems than in first-past-the-post systems.

However, this series of events contradicts one of the other aspects of Putnam's argument. He argues that a small win-set gives the negotiator greater bargaining leverage because it allows them to say, "I'd like to accept your proposal, but I could get never get it accepted at home (1988, 440)." But in this case, that was not of any help to the AKP. They were not able to use that as leverage against EU governments or Cyprus. The challenge of the MHP did not lead to any of the EU governments adopting a more conciliatory line with respect to the Cyprus issue. James Fearon's research (1994) helps explain why that did not happen. Fearon shows that high domestic audience costs encourage democratic government to refuse to back down in on foreign policy issues. The governments of those EU states did not adopt a more conciliatory line because as ruling parties in democratic states, they also faced very high audience costs if they were seen as being too soft on allowing Turkey into the EU or sacrificing Cypriot interests to appeal to the Turks.

Between the increasing clarity of the futility in attempting to woo Europe, the disintegration of domestic impetuses to compromise on Cyprus, and the domestic agenda threat posed by the MHP, the AKP had all the incentives it needed to hold steadfast to its refusal to accept Greek Cypriot ships. In December 2006, the EU announced that it was partially suspending Turkey's membership talks (*The International Herald Tribune* 2006). Turkey's bid to join the EU was now on ice officially as well as de facto.

## **Conclusion**

First, in some respects, these two cases lend evidence to the Downs Model. Anthony Downs argued that if voters are placed along a single axis continuum on a given issue, political parties will move toward the place on that continuum that maximizes their vote share (Downs 1957, 118). Essentially, his argument was that all else being equal a party's position on an issue will be whatever position it thinks can get it the most votes. If voters are normally distributed on the continuum and there are two parties in the system, then both parties will gradually move toward the center (Downs 1957, 118). Parties adopting different positions are attributed to either the voters being not normally distributed or taking advantage of a suboptimal position being taken by the other party (Downs 1957, 119-121). A shift in voter sentiment can lead to a shift in what is best for

the party's vote-maximization strategy. This is basically what happened in both of the cases that were studied. The British Labour government in 1999 and the Turkish AKP government in 2006 were challenged from their right, by the Conservative Party and the MHP respectively. Neither had to worry about a significant challenge from the left on the particular issue in question. Both parties had an incentive to move to the right and both did exactly that.

Second, critical events were necessary in both cases. Parties do not change their policy position for no reason. There has to be some catalytic event that makes the party see that change as necessary. In Britain, it was the sudden increase of immigrants/asylum seekers in 1997 and 1998. In Turkey, it was the failure of the Annan Plan in Cyprus and the change in openness toward Turkish accession to the EU in Europe, especially in Germany and France. In both cases however, these catalytic events were only catalytic because they changed the party competition dynamic. The catalytic events were necessary conditions for changes in party competition dynamics and the changes in party competition dynamics were sufficient conditions to lead to a new party policy. Whereas party competition helps answer Putnam's question of how domestic politics influences international relations, these catalytic events help answer the question of when that happens. Domestic influences override grand strategy concerns at the critical junctures because in these times that the decision-makers' domestic strength is most directly challenged and so must take precedence.

In summation, moves on the global chessboard are often taken not based on how they influence the game on that board, but instead are taken based on how they affect the pieces on the domestic chessboard. Both the British government and the AKP government implemented policies with significant international implications, but did so for reasons that had to do with domestic interparty competition, not international grand strategy. In both cases, the important action took place inside the black box. To return to Putnam's more interesting questions of when and how, rather than whether, domestic politics determines international relations, this article suggests that the when is at critical junctures involving highly salient issues and the how is the incentive-producing dynamic of party competition.

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