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Yeni Güvenlik Senaryosunda
Gence Koridoru'nun Stratejik Önemi

*Miguel Borja BERNABÉ-
CRESPO
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ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ / RESEARCH ARTICLE

**EUROSCEPTICISM AT THE NATIONAL AND
EUROPEAN LEVELS AND ITS REFLECTION IN
THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ROLL CALL
VOTES**

Mehlika Özlem ULTAN*

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Abstract

This article provides an overview of Euroscepticism at the domestic and European levels. The study also aims to explain how the concept of Euroscepticism finds its response in the European parliamentary elections. It aims to make a two-fold contribution to the study of Euroscepticism. First, within the scope of party-based Euroscepticism, the relationship between loyalty to the national party and loyalty to party groups after being elected as a Member of the European Parliament will be examined. Second, these loyalties will be analyzed within the framework of Eurosceptic policy issues. Thus, the stance of Eurosceptic parliamentarians in the roll call votes will be investigated from the perspectives of the arguments of both their national parties and the European Party Groups (EPG). In the study, the voting tendencies of Eurosceptic parliamentarians on issues focusing on Euroscepticism were analyzed. Thus, the level of loyalty of Eurosceptic parliamentarians at the national or European level in the European Parliamentary elections will be examined and tried to be revealed.

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Keywords: Euroscepticism, European Parliament, European Elections, Loyalty

Ulusal ve Avrupa Düzeylerinde Avrupa Kuşkuculuğu ve Avrupa Parlamentosu'ndaki Oylamalara Yansıması

Öz

Bu çalışma, ulusal ve Avrupa düzeylerinde Avrupa kuşkuculuğuna genel bir bakış sunmaktadır. Çalışma aynı zamanda Avrupa kuşkuculuğu kavramının Avrupa Parlamentosu seçimlerinde nasıl karşılık bulduğunu açıklamayı amaçlamaktadır. Avrupa şüpheciliği çalışmalarına iki yönlü bir katkı sağlanması hedeflenmektedir. Öncelikle parti temelli Avrupa kuşkuculuğu kapsamında Avrupa Parlamentosu üyesi seçildikten sonra parlamenterlerin ulusal partilerine sadakatleri ile parti gruplarına sadakatleri arasındaki ilişki incelenecektir. İkinci olarak, bu bağlılıklar Avrupa kuşkuculuğuna dair politika konuları çerçevesinde analiz edilecektir. Böylece, oylamalardaki kuşkucu parlamenterlerin duruşu hem ulusal partilerinin hem de Avrupa Parti Gruplarının argümanları açısından incelenecektir. Çalışmada, Avrupa kuşkuculuğuna odaklanan konularda Avrupa kuşkucusu parlamenterlerin oy kullanma eğilimleri analiz edilmiştir. Böylece Avrupa Parlamentosu seçimlerinde Avrupa kuşkucusu parlamenterlerin ulusal ya da Avrupa düzeyindeki sadakat düzeyleri incelenecek ve ortaya konmaya çalışılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Avrupa Kuşkuculuğu, Avrupa Parlamentosu, Avrupa Seçimleri, Sadakat

Introduction

The European Union (EU) has experienced many crises throughout its history. In order to understand the effects of these crises on contemporary European politics, the European integration process should be examined not only from the EU but also from the domestic perspectives. Euroscepticism is one of the results of the crises that the EU has faced. The separatist, Islamophobic, xenophobic or anti-immigrant discourses have been used by the national parties, and they gained support from the citizens. This political polarization and the number of Eurosceptic members of the Parliament have notably increased since the 2014 European Parliament (EP) elections. Even

though the Eurosceptic parties have won 28 per cent of the seats in the EP, they could not play a major role in the EU decision-making and policy-making process of the EU.

The crises experienced by the EU have led to a process in which both EU policies and the EU itself have been questioned more. This shows the importance of examining the Eurosceptic perspective within the Union at the national and European levels. The main argument of the study is based on the fact that Eurosceptic parliamentarians remain loyal to the Eurosceptic discourses of their national parties and demonstrate higher levels of voting cohesion when voting on topics with high levels of Eurosceptic salience. The main aim of the study is to demonstrate that Eurosceptic parliamentarians, once elected as Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), even if those parliamentarians find a party group with ideologically parallel views to their own, remain loyal to their national parties on the basis of issues focusing on Euroscepticism. To substantiate this proposition, firstly, the ideological party-based distribution of Euroscepticism at the national level will be revealed. Then, the level of loyalty of the MEPs to both their national parties and the party group they belong to during the roll call votes in the EP will be discussed. However, considering that every decision taken in the Parliament is not related to Eurosceptic policies, an analysis will be made in the context of Eurosceptic policies and issues in order to learn the loyalty of the Parliamentarians to their national parties' Eurosceptic discourse. In this context, the research question of the study is to understand within the concept of Eurosceptic issues, the MEPs of the Eurosceptic parties remain loyal to their national party discourses or become loyal to their party group in the EP.

Within the scope of the methodology of the study, firstly, the concept of Euroscepticism will be put investigated qualitatively. Then, content analysis will be made in the decisions of the 9th Parliament term between July 2019 and January 2023. Thus, Eurosceptic policy areas will be determined, and the direction in which the Eurosceptic parliamentarians voted on these issues will be determined one by one. Even though the MEPs have some other occasions to express their stances within the EP arena, like speeches and reports, this study will focus on the roll call votes as a source of information concerning MEPs' position.

At a time when there are many debates about the future of the EU, understanding the voting behaviour of parliamentarians who take a stand against the EU itself or its policies is important for understanding the consequences of decisions taken at the level of the European Parliament, where

citizens are represented. The article is structured as follows: The first section outlines the concept of Euroscepticism. With the help of this conceptualization, the study then provides an overview of the Eurosceptic parties' ideological spectrum, their stance on Europe and their seats in the 2019 EP elections. Based on this result, the loyalty of MEPs to their national parties and the loyalty to party groups are analyzed; finally, it will be tried to understand whether they stand behind their Eurosceptic discourses or whether they act within the framework of the arguments of the party groups.

1) Conceptualizing the Euroscepticism

If the origin of Euroscepticism as a term is investigated, it can be traced back to the Ancient Greeks. The term is the combination of *Euro*, *Sceptic*, and *ism*. Scepticism describes being doubtful of a situation or an object (Hobolt, van der Brug, de Vreese, Boomgaarden and Hinrichsen, 2011). When it is used with Euro, as Euroscepticism, it means being sceptical of both Europe and the matters that are related to European notions. On 20 September 1988, the term was first used by British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who was one of the advocates of opposition to the European Community. After that speech, Euroscepticism began to be studied. Ian Ward (1996), in his study whose name was *Identifying the Eurosceptic*, has tried to discuss the theoretical and practical results of being a part of the European Community and also the causes of being opposed to the integration.

There are so many studies that try to explain the theoretical and analytical basis of Euroscepticism (for example, Taggart, 1998; Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2004; Kopecky and Mudde, 2002; Sørensen, 2008). The mainly accepted definition of Euroscepticism was offered by Taggart (1998). In a wide manner, Euroscepticism “expresses the idea of a contingent or qualified opposition, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration” (Taggart, 1998, p. 366). Being aware of the broadness of this definition, in order to understand it in a narrow sense, the hard and soft Euroscepticism classification was made. According to Szczerbiak and Taggart (2000), *Hard Euroscepticism* implies the rejection of the whole project of the European economic and political integration process and opposition to being a member of the EU. In contrast, *Soft Euroscepticism* involves contingent or qualified opposition to European integration. It is characterized by being opposed to some specific policies or institutional aspects of the Union. Given its complex and diverse nature, other studies focused on conceptualizing

Euroskepticism. After Taggart and Szczerbiak, Kopecky and Mudde (2002) may be the first of them, they offer four concepts to explain the stance of European parties and people on European integration. These concepts are Euro-enthusiasts, Euro-pragmatists, Eurosceptics, and Eurorejects. In the same year, Flood (2002) also conceptualized the opposition to European integration as being *rejectionist*, *revisionist*, *minimalist*, *gradualist*, *reformist* and *maximalist*; Conti (2003) categorized it as *Hard Euroskepticism*, *Soft Euroskepticism*, *no commitment*, *functional Europeanism* and *identity Europeanism*; and Vasilopoulou (2011) conceptualized it as *rejecting conditional* and *compromising* categories. Although there were many classifications in the literature, nearly all of the researchers have accepted Taggart and Szczerbiak's distinction between hard and soft Euroskepticism and tried to use it in their studies.

While the hard and soft Euroskepticism classification expresses the level of application of Euroskepticism, there is another classification that tries to explain who applied it. The application of Euroskepticism can be evaluated in two forms. The former is party-based Euroskepticism; the latter is public Euroskepticism (Sørensen, 2008; De Vries and Edwards, 2009). Taggart (1998, p. 379) has presented these two forms and explained that party-based Euroskepticism as being “stems from a combination of identity politics, position on the most appropriate site for conflict resolution, and relative position in the political system”. In 1998, he conducted an evaluation of party-based Euroskepticism in Western European states and underlined the national party positions on the EP related to their ideologies. Then in 2004, he and Aleks Szczerbiak improved the research on Central and Eastern European states as well (Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2004).

The mapping of Taggart about party-based Euroskepticism gives a lead to so many studies later on. Some of them concentrate on the comparative analysis of states at the European level (Marks and Hooghe, 1999; Hooghe, Marks and Wilson, 2002; Almeida, 2010; Usherwood and Startin, 2013); some made a deeper analysis of countries with higher levels of Euroskepticism such as Britain (George, 2000; Ford, Goodwin and Cutts, 2012); France (Milner, 2000; Ivaldi, 2018); Poland (Szczerbiak, 2000; Markowski and Tucker, 2010); or Italy (Conti, 2003; Salvati, 2018; Pirro and van Kessel, 2018).

When the studies on Euroskepticism are analyzed, it is seen that some focus on country examples, some focus on party-based Euroskepticism, and some focus on public Euroskepticism. This study aims to determine how

parliamentarians elected based on their Eurosceptic discourse exhibit voting behaviour in roll call votes, starting from the point of party-based Euroscepticism. In the literature review, it was found that although there are studies based on voting behaviour, no content analysis has been conducted on issues based on Eurosceptical discourses. The gap in the literature has been tried to be filled with this study.

Taggart and Szczerbiak (2004) did not only suggest the propositions on the positions of the Eurosceptic parties but also mapped the ways to investigate party-based Euroscepticism in Europe. According to them, in order to explain the party-based Euroscepticism, first, it is necessary to examine the distribution of opinion on European integration among party members or supporters. Taking this argument as a starting point, this study will first concentrate on the ideological positions and the distribution of opinion on the European integration of the Eurosceptic parties.

2) Euroscepticism at the National and European Levels

The Eurosceptic parties have been one of the main ideological profiles in the domestic party system of European countries over the years. Moreover, they are becoming an important force in the EP with their more coherent vision. Although party-based Euroscepticism generally occurs in all parts of the left-right spectrum, it is used mostly by the right wing of the political spectrum, especially by the radical right parties (Treib, 2020). Most of the left Eurosceptic parties can be classified as soft-Eurosceptic, accepting European integration but generally rejecting the economic and monetary policies of the Union. To be a winner in the EP elections, the Eurosceptic parties must gain support from the national level. The key part of this success is showing their worry about the domestic effects of EU membership. Moreover, they must know well the issues that voters are dissatisfied with (Treib, 2014).

Even though there are some studies argue that the crises of the European states have caused the electoral gains of the Eurosceptic parties (Hobolt and Wratil, 2015; Hobolt and de Vries, 2016; Pirro, Taggart and van Kessel, 2018; Braun and Tausendpfund, 2020), the changing of the European crises and the discourses of these parties make it difficult to support this claim. That is true that they improved their arguments by using the dissatisfaction of citizens with the crises, but it should not be denied that they always increased their votes in the EP elections. In the 2009 EP elections, which were held nearly after the 2008 economic crisis, 20 per cent of MEPs belonged to a

Eurosceptic party. In the 2014 EP elections, the seat share increased to 28 per cent, and in the 2019 elections, Eurosceptic parties won 28 per cent of the seats in the EP again. However, after Brexit, the seat composition has changed, and now the Eurosceptic parties have 26.2 per cent of the seats (European Parliament, 2019).

From the beginning, EP elections are seen as *second-order* elections in which voters express domestic concerns (Reif and Schmitt, 1980; van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996; Taggart, 1998). Although the second-order theory was suggested by Reif and Schmitt in 1980, an increasing number of studies have benefited from it while explaining the lower rates of turnouts in the EP elections (Hix and Marsh, 2007). This theory argues that the European elections are about national issues rather than Europe, and it is seen as a tool by the voters to express dissatisfaction with the government. Thus, the increasing votes of the Eurosceptic parties may be explained from this point of view (Treib, 2014). On the other hand, as a response to this theory, the EU issue voting approach (Ferrara and Weishaupt, 2004; Tillman, 2004; De Vries, van der Brug, van Egmond, and van der Eijk, 2011) argues that the EP elections are about the EU itself and the Eurosceptic parties have succeeded due to the votes against the EU and its policies. If the EU policies are seen as low salience, citizens can perceive the EP elections as second-order (Vestergaard, 2020). In any case, the votes of the Eurosceptic parties have increased over the years and for the last two EP elections, it remains nearly the same.

During the EP elections, every member state determines its party lists, and these parties describe the party program whose priority is stated for their national context, not for the statements of the multinational federations (Rose and Borz, 2013). Since 2009, according to EP rules, a political group must consist of at least 25 MEPs elected in at least seven of the Member States. Except for the quantitative one, there is no strict criterion for the formation of the political party groups within the EP. If they can constitute a political party group, they can ignore the *political affinities* of MEPs. This shows that the main basis of the constitution of a political party group is not driven by the policy or ideological compatibility of its members. However, since these political party groups frequently use their ideologies in their discourses, it is a matter of debate whether ideology is a condition for membership or not. There are two main arguments for this debate. According to the first argument about political group membership, the most important factor is the policy or ideological pragmatic objectives of the other members. National parties and MEPs can choose suitable

political groups related to their ideological position. However, for a second argument, national parties and MEPs act in EP by their pragmatic objectives rather than ideological policies. The EP grant more power to the mainstream party groups, which is why the MEPs, even if it is not compatible with their ideological view, can enter this kind of group for their office goals (Bressanelli, 2012).

Generally, including the non-attached MEPs, the EP is constituted of eight party groups/coalitions (European Parliament, 2019). The Eurosceptic MEPs can be a part of different party groups. During the 9th parliamentary term from 2019 to 2024, after the 2019 EP elections, the Eurosceptic composition in the EP elections can be formulated within the Identity and Democracy Group (IDG) (radical right), European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) (conservative), Group of the European People's Party (EPP) (centre-right), and European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL) (radical left) groups (De Quant, 2019). Most of the Hard Eurosceptic MEPs have come together and constituted a new party group whose name is the Identity and Democracy Group. This is the first example in the EP that the Eurosceptic parties are united under the same ideological group with their Eurosceptic view. It is also a chance to influence parliamentary activities because of having 41 per cent of the Eurosceptic MEPs. The EP works on the basis of the D'Hondt system, which is effective in facilitating the majority formation and securing the operability of the EP. Thus, they can be more included in parliamentary activities like being vice president or committee chair and so on.

There are increasing studies that show the ideological party groups have been replaced by more pragmatist party groups, especially since the 2014 Parliamentary elections, both at the national and EP level. In addition, when the voting behaviour of citizens is examined, it is claimed that while the left-right spectrum was at the forefront before 2014, the pro/anti-EU dimension became more important after 2014. This can be evidenced by the increasing use of Eurosceptic discourses and the rising rate of the election of Eurosceptic parliamentarians at the national level (Hix, Noury and Roland, 2019).

In 2004, Taggart and Szczerbiak developed a model and created a constellation of Euroscepticism in order to analyze the Eurosceptic parties' positions in Western, Central, and Eastern European states. According to the model, the party's position on the left-right spectrum is unrelated to its European stance and the position of parties in their party systems is related to the expression of Euroscepticism. These arguments try to underline

the left-right ideological spectrum and party position of Eurosceptic parties in party systems (Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2004).

Radical Left	Centrist	Moderate Right	Radical Right
La France Insoumise (FR) (6)	Five Star Movement (IT) (14)	Brexit Party (UK) (29-29 ¹)	Lega (IT) (28+1 ¹)
Progressive Party of Working People (CY) (2)		Law and Justice (POL) (26+1 ¹)	Rassemblement National (National Rally) (FR) (22+1 ¹)
Communist Party of Greece (GR) (2)		Civic Democratic Party (CZ) (4)	Fidesz/Christian Democratic People's Party (HUNG) (13)
Communist Party of Portugal (POR) (2)		Conservative Party (UK) (4-4 ¹)	Alternative for Germany (GE) (11)
Left Bloc (POR) (2)		Bulgarian National Movement (BUL) (2)	Fratelli d'Italia (Brothers of Italy) (IT) (5+1 ¹)
Worker's Party of Belgium (BE) (1)		National Alliance (LAT) (2)	Freedom Party (AUS) (3)
Communist Party (CZ) (1)		Christian Union/Reforme d Political Party (NL) (2)	Vlaams Belang (BE) (3)
Red-Green Alliance (DK) (1)		Coalition of Croatian Sovereignists (HR) (1)	Vox (ES) (3+1 ¹)
Human Shield (HR) (1)		Christian Families Alliance/Lithua nian Russian Union (LITH) (1)	Forum for Democracy (NL) (3+1 ¹)
Sinn Féin (IRL) (3/1)		Democratic Unionist Party (UK) (1-1 ¹)	Sweden Democrats (SV) (3)
Left Party (SV) (1/1)			Finns Party (FIN) (2)

Sinn Féin (UK) (1/1-1 ¹)			Freedom and Direct Democracy (CZ) (2)
			Golden Dawn (GR) (2)
			Kotleba – People’s Party Our Slovakia (SK) (2)
			Danish People’s Party (DK) (1)
			Conservative People’s Party of Estonia (EST) (1)
			Greek Solution (GR) (1)
			Jobbik (HUNG) (1)
			Party for Freedom (NL) (-+1 ¹)
Sum: 21 seats (-1)¹	Sum: 14 seats	Sum: 72 seats (-33)¹	Sum: 106 seats (+6)¹

Table 1: Eurosceptic Parties’ Position on the Left-Right Spectrum (European Parliament, 2019; Treib, 2020).

After the 2019 EP elections, 23 of 27 European states’ Eurosceptic parties have seats in the Parliament; the only exceptions are Romania, Slovenia, Malta, and Luxembourg. The winners of this election were mainly the radical right Eurosceptic parties. As it is underlined in Table 1, 213 of 751 (28.4 per cent) seats were shared by the Eurosceptic parties in the 2019 EP elections. The composition of the EP has changed due to the Brexit process; now, 185 of 705 (26.2 per cent) seats are owned by the Eurosceptic party members in 2020 (European Parliament, 2019).

This table is consistent with the proposition of Taggart and Szczerbiak (2004)—a party’s position on the left-right spectrum is unrelated to its European stance—by showing the distribution of Eurosceptic parties in terms of the left-right ideological spectrum in the European party system. Although it is said that the left-right spectrum is taken into the background, when the behaviour of Eurosceptic parliamentarians in the EP is examined, it is understood that in the roll call votes, they act

according to the Euro-sceptic discourses of the left or right view, which they take part at the national level. While for the left wing, the main issue is not only the austerity policies but also poverty, social inequality, and social exclusion imposed after the Eurozone crisis (Vasilopoulou, 2018); for the right wing, these issues are accepted as immigration, racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, the economic anxieties, and also opposition to the EU itself. In both wings, the Euro-sceptic parties have some trouble with the lack of transparency in EU-level decision-making, especially in mainstream politics, but they have softened their Euro-sceptic arguments and searched for a way to transform the EU rather than withdraw from it (Treib, 2014).

This situation has pointed out that not only the hard Euro-sceptics but also the soft Euro-sceptics have toned down their opposition level to the EU and its policies. Treib (2020) has underlined the reasons behind this development. According to him, the Brexit process is one of the reasons because the difficulty of leaving the EU discourages the other Euro-sceptic parties, and they change their position from radical to moderate opposition. Moreover, some of the famous Euro-sceptic parties, like the National Rally under the leadership of Marine Le Pen, aimed the centrist voters in order to take much more votes in her campaign in 2017. That is why it softens its claims about leaving the EU and membership in the Eurozone. And finally, the low voting levels of some *hard* Euro-sceptic parties like the Five Star Movement, the Lega, and the Austrian Freedom Party forces them to tone down their opposition level to the EU. Thus, the categorization of Euro-sceptic parties as hard or soft has become more complicated.

To extend the arguments of Treib (2020) and take a glimpse at the Euro-sceptic vote in the Parliament, this study seeks to offer a certain answer to the question of whether the MEPs of these Euro-sceptic parties remain loyal to their national party discourses or become loyal to their party group in the EP, through an evaluation of Euro-sceptic issues.

3) Euro-sceptic MEPs in the European Parliament

The Euro-sceptic parties have begun to be a political force in the EP from the 2014 elections, and it was expected they to be in a strategic position in the parliamentary work. However, they could not gain attention to their attitudes in the EP. Even though there are researches that investigate the reasons for this situation (Vasilopoulou, 2013; Ripoll Servent and Panning, 2019), Brack (2013; 2015) has formulated a typology related to their various attitudes to parliamentary work. According to Brack (2012), Euro-sceptic MEPs can be classified as public

orators, absentees, and pragmatists. The public orators are concentrated on public speaking and the dissemination of negative information on the EU and European integration. They always participate in the plenary debates, but they are not focused on the day-to-day parliamentary activities. Absentees are not involved in the EP; they are focused on their voters and national issues. Even though they do not participate in plenary debates and neglect parliamentary activities, they can be active at the national level. Pragmatists both maintained their Eurosceptic attitudes and tried to achieve concrete results. They respect the institutional rules, involved in day-to-day parliamentary activities. The pragmatists are aware that they are a minority in the EP, and they do not have so much chance to affect the decision-making process. The pragmatist MEPs engaged in parliamentary activities by using diverse parliamentary tools such as amendments, motions, and reports. Unlike absentees and public orators, they develop a voice strategy, which means they decide on a case-by-case basis whether they want to become involved or not, rather than remaining a persistent opposition. Maintaining the balance between being Eurosceptic and Euro-pragmatist is difficult when they participate in the legislative process. Because they sometimes have voted against their own party reports and amendments. Brack (2015) has widened her study, and she included another kind of typology whose name is the *participants*. *The participants'* main aim is to influence the legislative process of the EP. They do not position themselves as Eurosceptics but as a legislator. Unlike pragmatists and public orators, participants not only respect the institutional rules of the EP but also adjust their behaviour to them. Even if they are elected by a Eurosceptic party, they can accept most of the amendments in order to compromise, so they can try to be a part of the possible coalitions.

Today, it is observed that hard Eurosceptic discourses are replaced by soft Eurosceptic discourses. This does not prevent criticism of the European Union itself but results in a focus on opposing certain policies rather than leaving the Union. According to Vestergaard (2020), the voting behaviour of the Eurosceptic MEPs is related to issue salience. If the issue salience is low, they can be absent or reject the legislative proposals in the Parliament. If it is high, they can vote according to their national interest and policy preferences. In some cases, even though they are opposed to the EU membership or a policy of the Union, a legislative proposal can be in accordance with their ideological views. Thus, they can be

a part of the legislative process in Parliament by accepting the proposal.

However, after becoming MEP, they can vote by following the instructions of their party group. At this point, choosing the right party group for a coalition is vital. But if MEPs have stronger ideological links to their national party than their party group in the EP, they can maintain their Eurosceptic view (Rose and Borz, 2013). They have generally complained about not being able to make their voice heard in the decision-making process. Although they have won 26.2 per cent of the seats in the 2019 EP elections, they do not have a major role in the decision-making and policy-making process of the EU. The reason behind this situation is the success of pro-integrationist parties in the election. It is probable that most of the decisions will be taken by the two major coalitions of Christian Democrats and Socialists in the EP (Braun and Tausendpfund, 2020). Due to their minority position in the EP, Eurosceptic MEPs try to find a place in the coalitions, which is why they cannot reflect their Eurosceptic ideas effectively (Benedetto, 2008).

Only 16 per cent of the Eurosceptic Parliamentarians are actively in the field of institutional representation in the Parliament. In detail, 25 of the 185 Eurosceptic MEPs are serving as vice-chairs, 3 of them are serving as chairs, and 2 of them are serving as vice-presidents in the Parliament. The vast majority of these Eurosceptic MEPs are from the ECR and EPP party groups. The fact that no parliamentarians from the radical right parties and the IDG take part in the management makes it necessary to question the Eurosceptic parliamentarians' activity in the EP and their participation in the administration. The Parliament still consists of a wide majority of pro-integrationist parties like Socialists and Christian Democrats, and probably most decisions in the EP will continue to be taken with the support of these *cordon sanitaire* parties.

Therefore, this study takes Taggart and Szczerbiak's and Treib's works as a starting point and uses an in-depth approach to understand the Eurosceptic MEP's attitude in parliamentary activities, in a more special sense, to understand whether they are loyal to their national parties or loyal to their political party group. In order to discuss it, all the activities of the Eurosceptic MEPs (185 MEPs from the 9th Parliament term after Brexit) are analyzed via Vote Watch Europe and the EP website.

Party Groups in the European Parliament	Loyalty to political group 2019-	Loyalty to national party 2019-2023
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	2023 (Percentage)	(Percentage)
GUE-NGL (Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left)	88,46	99,65
ECR (European Conservatives and Reformists Group)	87,83	99,34
EPP (Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats))	86,02	99,14
IDG (Identity and Democracy Group)	71,03	99,55
Non-attached Members (NI)		99,64

Table 2: The Loyalty of MEPs to their National Party and their Political Group in the EP (Vote Watch Europe, 2023).

Table 2 shows the loyalty of the Eurosceptic parties' MEPs in the 9th parliamentary term both to their political group and their national party at the roll call votes. From July 2019 to January 2023, MEPs' participation in decisions was examined, and it was observed that their loyalty to their national parties was very high.

Loyalty to national parties does not imply separation from the political party groups of the European Parliament. The fact that the percentage of one is high while the other is parallel to it shows that the two are not mutually exclusive. It is only natural that there is a close relationship when looking at the percentages because, in fact, they are members of the political party group that is closest to their own views. What is particularly striking here is that parliamentarians who are included in the IDG because of their Eurosceptic views are more loyal to their national party in voting.

In the literature, there are studies showing that parliamentarians form party groups according to their political views, but in some cases, they may belong to a party where they can make their voice heard even if their views are not similar. However, this study is important in that it underlines the fact that parliamentarians can remain loyal to national parties even if they belong to a party group with similar political views. In the ID Group, loyalty to the national party was around 99%, while loyalty to the political party group in Parliament was 71%. This shows that even if it is a party group formed in line with their views, Eurosceptic parliamentarians are loyal to their

national parties and participate in Parliamentary activities within the framework of national interests and views.

The most striking development in this period is that the loyalty to the IDG, a group formed for the first time by Euro-sceptic and radical right parliamentarians, remained at a very low level. The fact that loyalty to party groups and loyalty to national parties are close to each other is natural due to the tendency of party groups to be formed according to their political views. However, the widening gap between the ratios for IDG is a situation that needs to be analyzed. It is necessary to examine why loyalty to the party group is low in the IDG. For this reason, all the decisions taken in the EP until January 2023 during the 9th Parliament were analyzed; in the policy areas where Euro-scepticism is prominent, the way in which Euro-sceptic parliamentarians vote in the roll call votes is discussed. The preferences of the parliamentarians elected from national parties (left or right) that adopt Euro-sceptic arguments related to the classification in Table 1 are considered with their decisions taken in the EP. In this context, it has been tried to understand whether Euro-sceptic parliamentarians act with the discourse of the national party or the discourse of the party group they belong to in the European Party Groups (EPG) while voting in the roll call votes. For this purpose, the information shared on the www.votewatch.com website was used, and the loyalty of Euro-sceptic parliamentarians to their national parties and party groups in the Parliament is shown in Table 2 in proportion to the voting. However, for an in-depth analysis, the degree of loyalty to the national party or the EPG in roll call votes held on different policy issues should be examined. In this context, first of all, policy areas where Euro-scepticism is high are discussed. As stated before, it is seen that the moderate right and radical right-wing parties use Euro-sceptic arguments, especially about immigration, the Eurozone crisis and Brexit. Radical left parties, on the other hand, are also related to the Eurozone crisis but mostly developed Euro-sceptic arguments about austerity measures, employment and social policies (Pirro, Taggart and van Kessel, 2018, Conti, 2018).

It is possible to list these policy areas as Constitutional Affairs, Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, Foreign Affairs, Economic and Monetary Affairs, and Employment and Social Affairs. Issues related to Constitutional Affairs are about the transparency of the Union's decision-making and used by all Euro-sceptic national parties. Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, Foreign Affairs, and Economic and Monetary Affairs issues are mostly prioritized by the moderate right and radical right-wing parties. Radical left parties have developed their

Eurosceptic arguments on the issues of Economic and Monetary Affairs and Employment and Social Affairs. From July 2019 to January 2023, the 914 decisions taken in the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs were reviewed, and issues related to Euroscepticism were analyzed in detail. Some of these decisions are on *the employment and social policies of the euro area 2020*, *rules on the free movements of workers and services: intra-EU labour mobility as a tool to match labour market needs and skills*, or on *employment and social policies of the euro area 2021*. And also, the 833 decisions taken on the specified dates in the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs were reviewed. The decisions related to Euroscepticism are determined by *strengthening the international role of the Euro* and *the impact of national tax reforms on the EU economy*. All of the results of these roll call votes show that especially all Eurosceptic parliamentarians in the IDG voted in a common direction and voted negatively on the resolutions. The fact that the members of the ECR group voted unanimously on these resolutions shows that the party group also agrees with the Eurosceptic parliamentarians on these issues. It is understood that Eurosceptic parliamentarians in the GUE, The Left and EPP groups mostly voted in favour of many decisions in these Eurosceptic areas. The point that draws attention here is that these Eurosceptic parliamentarians act together with the party groups on the issues that are expected to use negative votes and move away from their national parties' Eurosceptic discourses. It is an important consideration that Eurosceptic MEPs, especially on the radical left, who put forward Eurosceptic arguments on issues such as unemployment, social policies and corruption, approach these decisions without Euroscepticism.

It is known that the decisions taken by the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, Committee on Foreign Affairs and Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs are often handled with a Eurosceptic discourse by the moderate right and radical right-wing parties. In order to analyze the right-wing Euroscepticism, first of all, the 1682 decisions taken on the specified dates in the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs were reviewed, and in particular, the decisions taken on immigration-related issues were examined. The decisions related to Euroscepticism are determined as on *the Implementation of the Dublin III Regulation*, *European Arrest Warrant and surrender procedures between the Member States*, *Implementation of the Anti-Trafficking Directive*, *Implementation of Article 43 of the Asylum Procedures Directive*, *Integrated Border Management Fund: Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and*

Visa Policy 2021-2027, Annual Report on the functioning of the Schengen area, Legal migration policy and law, on human rights protection and the EU external migration policy, or The Schengen evaluation mechanism. In all the decisions taken on these issues, IDG members have acted together and voted negatively. Other moderate rights and extreme-right Eurosceptic parliamentarians do not seem to have a strong stance. It is understood that the Eurosceptic parliamentarians of the ECR group act together with the party groups in all decisions and remain loyal to the party groups by voting against them even on Eurosceptic issues.

The 2856 decisions taken in the Committee on Foreign Affairs were reviewed, and the decisions related to Euroscepticism were analyzed as on the implementation of the common security and defence policy, on *Arms export: implementation of Common Position 2008/944/CFSP*, concerning *the implementation and governance of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)*, on *the implementation of the common foreign and security policy - annual report 2021*, or on *the implementation of the Common Security and Defence Policy – annual report 2021*. It can be stated that Eurosceptic parliamentarians belonging to the IDG voted negatively in all of these decisions. Eurosceptic parliamentarians from the radical right wing of the EPP, on the other hand, seem to mostly act together with party groups, although the subject is Eurosceptic. Eurosceptic parliamentarians who are members of the ECR also acted together with party groups, but since all the members of the ECR approach these issues with a Eurosceptic perspective, the rates of loyalty to the national party and loyalty to the political groups are close to each other.

In conclusion, IDG has acted together on Eurosceptic issues. However, it has tended to vote in line with its national interests on non-Eurosceptic issues. Thus, although there was a Parliamentary group formed with Eurosceptic motives, their level of loyalty to their national parties on non-Eurosceptic issues was very high. It is understood that the parliamentarians in other party groups do not display a strong stance like the IDG. Parliamentarians in these groups often acted with party groups, regardless of whether the subjects were Eurosceptic or not.

Conclusion

This article has presented an analysis of Eurosceptic MEPs' attitude in parliamentary activities during the 9th Parliamentary term. To find out whether they continue to behave loyal to their national parties' Eurosceptic discourses,

we used Taggart and Szczerbiak's (2004) argument on the relation between the party's position on the left-right spectrum and its European stance and combined it with Ripoll Servent and Panning's (2019) argument on Eurosceptic MEPs' behaviour in roll call votes and Treib's (2014; 2020) argument that *even the discourses have changed, but the Eurosceptic legacy remains nearly the same* as a starting point for a detailed examination of their behaviour in parliamentary activities. We subsequently discuss how our findings relate to the existing literature on Euroscepticism and national-interest party politics more generally and conclude with several avenues for further research.

The analysis revealed that although there is an important difference between the right-wing and left-wing discourse on populist politics of Euroscepticism related to their stance on Europe, the MEPs continue to defend their thoughts and discourses even after being elected as MEPs. In this context, it is understood that the national interest in Euroscepticism, which is frequently used by Taggart and Szczerbiak (2004), is still important for Eurosceptic parliamentarians today.

One of the main aims of the Eurosceptic parliamentarians in the EP elections is to obtain the results of the first-order elections, which have been held within the framework of national interest. However, as we accept that EP elections are second-order by nature, the MEPs may not continue their Eurosceptic attitudes after being elected for the EP. However, as it can be understood from the analysis, all of the Eurosceptic MEPs are loyal to their national party. This underlines that Eurosceptic MEPs continue to protect the views they defend in their national parties in the EP as well. But this is not true of all Eurosceptic parliamentarians. Instead of voting in line with the ideas of the political party group they belong to, IDG members continue to defend their national party views in Parliament.

In general, although the ratio of loyalty to party groups in the EP and loyalty to national parties are very close to each other in every party group, the IDG is an exception. Members of the IDG are more loyal to their national party, even though they are members of a party group formed along political views and have Euroscepticism at its core. The studies reviewed in the literature show that Eurosceptic parliamentarians maintain their Eurosceptic views after becoming MEPs, but they express this through general votes. The most important point that distinguishes this study from the others is that it is specific and detailed in terms of Eurosceptic issues. Considering that it is not possible to fully understand the attitudes of Eurosceptic

parliamentarians when all issues in the European Parliament are considered, the Euro-sceptic issues in the studies were selected within the scope of Pirro, Taggart and van Kessel (2018) and Conti (2018) studies and subject-based loyalty rates were tried to be revealed. This study seeks to analyze the voting behaviour of MEPs from Euro-sceptic parties, exploring, firstly, the extent to which MEPs from such parties vote with their European party group and with their national party delegation and, secondly, going into this in more depth by focusing on issues which are particularly salient to Euro-sceptic parties.

While Euro-scepticism is on the rise, parliamentarians may also choose to harden their Euro-sceptic arguments after being elected to the EP. However, as the Euro-sceptic MEPs are generally in the minority position, in order to take part in coalitions, they do not benefit from hard Euro-sceptic discourses. This occurs as parliamentarians maintain their own national party discourse and act loyal to them rather than supporting the ideas of coalitions. The paper uses voting in the European Parliament to examine the extent of party cohesion among Euro-sceptic MEPS, comparing loyalty to national parties with loyalty to party groups and finding the former is notably higher.

The possibilities for further research lie in some other directions. The first is to make a detailed analysis of the Euro-sceptic MEPs' role within the framework of Brack's classification so that it can be understood whether they are the absentees, the public orators, the pragmatists, or the participants in their legislative behaviour. Although the study investigates whether Euro-sceptic politicians made pragmatist decisions after being elected as parliamentarians, it is possible to make an assessment within the scope of Brack's (2015) classification. For example, Ripoll Servent and Panning (2019) concentrated on the applicability of Brack's typology to the Euro-sceptic MEPs' attitude in trilogue negotiations. However, it needs a more detailed and complex analysis of their participation in the legislative process related to their ideological views. The second involves making a deep analysis by choosing specific country examples. And finally, the research can be done again at the end of the 9th parliamentary term so that the MEPs' attitudes can be examined totally. This study can highlight a new point of view, so some other researchers can concentrate on this kind of analysis.

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¹ Seat changes in parentheses show changes on the composition of the European Parliament after Brexit.

2023 YILI EN İYİ DOKTORA TEZİ ÖDÜLÜ



KTÜ - Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü en iyi "Doktora Tezlerini" ödüllendiriyor.

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