

## THE IMPACT OF THE RISE OF FAR-RIGHT PARTIES IN EUROPE ON TURKEY'S EUROPEAN UNION MEMBERSHIP BID

AVRUPA'DA AŞIRI SAĞ PARTİLERİN YÜKSELİŞİNİN TÜRKİYE'NİN AVRUPA BİRLİĞİ'NE ÜYE OLMA İSTEĞİNE ETKİSİ

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### ABSTRACT

*This article investigates the impact on Turkey's European Union membership bid of the rise during the last decade of far-right parties in Germany, France and Austria – leading European Union countries. Due to the global financial crisis, terrorist attacks and Europe's immigration crisis, far-right parties have gained considerable power in these countries in the last decade. Among the most important issues that these parties have drawn on are Islamophobia and the effects of immigration. They have also strongly benefited by opposing Turkey's European Union membership bid in agreement with the opinion of a majority of people in their countries. Thus, to secure their votes against these far-right parties, it has become important for both governing and opposition mainstream parties to oppose Turkey's European Union membership. By creating such an effect, the rise of far-right parties has become one of the factors alienating Turkey from European Union membership.*

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### ÖZET

*Bu makalede Avrupa Birliği'nin önde gelen ülkeleri olan Almanya, Fransa ve Avusturya'da son on yılda meydana gelen aşırı sağ partilerin yükselişinin Türkiye'nin Avrupa Birliği'ne üye olma isteğine etkisi araştırılmaktadır. Bu ülkelerde son on yılda küresel finans krizi, terör saldırıları ve Avrupa göçmen krizi nedenleriyle aşırı sağ partiler son derece güç kazanmışlardır. Bu partilerin güç kazanırken en fazla kullandığı konular İslamofobia ve göçün etkileridir. Bu partiler, ayrıca, toplumlarının büyük bölümünün de karşı olduğu üzere Türkiye'nin Avrupa Birliği üyesi olma isteğine karşı çıkmakta ve bundan önemli derecede fayda sağlamaktadırlar. Bundan dolayı, oylarını güvende tutmak amacıyla bu ülkelerdeki önde gelen merkez sağ ve merkez sol partiler için Türkiye'nin Avrupa Birliği üyeliğine karşı çıkmak artık önemli bir hale gelmiştir. Böyle bir etki yaratmasından dolayı, aşırı sağ partilerin yükselişi Türkiye'nin Avrupa Birliği'nden uzaklaşmasına neden olan faktörlerden biri olmuştur.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** : Aşırı Sağ Partiler, Türkiye, Avrupa Birliği, Almanya, Fransa ve Avusturya.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Following Donald Trump's election as president of the United States (US), Marine Le Pen's advisor claimed that "Their world is being demolished, and ours is still under construction" ("Soli Özel: Trump Üzerinden", 2016). This statement does not seem exaggerated considering the incredible rise of far-right parties in Europe in the last decade. The global financial crisis, ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) terrorism and Europe's immigration crisis have enabled far-right parties to become very powerful in France, Austria, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Denmark, Holland, Italy, Slovakia, Switzerland, Sweden and Finland. These parties, which base their strategic policies on Islamophobia, anti-immigration and Euroscepticism, threaten Europe's liberal democratic system that the European Union (EU) has been trying, largely successfully, to establish since 1957. Considering the issue in terms of political science theory, the threat has become so serious that the third reverse wave, suggested by Samuel Huntington, might start in Europe as result of far-right parties' demolition of democracies.

The rise of far-right parties not only harms the EU and its values but also Turkey's EU membership bid. Turkey has already become alienated by the EU's inclusion of the concepts of the open-ended process and the absorption capacity in the negotiation framework document, blocking of accession negotiation chapters and Turkey's slow-down of its democratization reforms. It is possible to argue that the rise of far-right parties in several leading EU countries, particularly Germany, France and Austria, has also increased this alienation. One of the key demands of far-right parties in these countries is to exclude Muslim Turkey from EU membership, which has become a significant reason for the governing and opposition mainstream parties in these countries to adopt a similar position. Knowing that opposition to Turkey's EU membership bid is wide-spread in their societies, these parties realize that they must avoid losing more of their voters to far-right parties and regain those they have already lost. Thus, they want to send a very clear message to the public that they profoundly share their worries about Turkey.

In 2005, the center-right Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) and its coalition partner, the far-right Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ), had to accept the opening of accession negotiations with Turkey after relinquishing on their insistence on merely offering Turkey a privileged partnership instead of membership, due to Turkey introduced dramatic democratization reforms. Currently, however, the governing ÖVP seems to be the biggest enemy of Turkey's EU membership bid, because of the electoral threat of the FPÖ, which received 26.5% of the vote in the 2017 parliamentary elections. The main opposition party, the Social Democrat Party (SPÖ), faces the same pressures to oppose Turkey's admission to the EU. Likewise, in France, the ruling centrist En Marche (Forward!) and all other parties from right and left oppose Turkey's admission. It should be remembered that although the majority of French people opposed Turkey's membership, President Jacques Chirac, who believed that it would contribute to Europe's cultural diversity, approved the opening of accession negotiations with Turkey in 2005. Because in those years, the far-right National Front (FN), whose current leader Marine Le Pen gained 33.9% of the votes in the second round of the presidential elections in 2017, was not as strong as it is today. In Germany, facing the electoral threat of the Alternative for Germany (AfD), the country's two main parties, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), which mainly rejects Turkey's bid because it traditionally sees the EU as a Christian club, and the Social Democratic Party (SPD), which supported opening accession negotiations with Turkey in 2005, now race each other in their opposition to Turkey's accession. Two fundamental factors in the rise of far-right parties are Islamophobia and immigration. Thus, if the EU can overcome its present ineffectiveness to solve these problems then it would both protect its liberal democratic values and system and weaken Europe's far-right parties. By achieving the latter, Turkey would, to a great extent, get rid of a significant obstacle to its EU membership.

The first section of this article focuses on the reasons for Turkey's rapprochement with the EU (1999-2005) and its subsequent alienation. The second section investigates how the rise of far-right parties in Austria, France and Germany have affected Turkey's EU membership bid. The third section begins by defining democratization waves and reverse waves. It then makes recommendations to the EU to combat Islamophobia and the negative effects of immigration, which would help prevent the start of the third reverse wave in Europe by decreasing the power of far-right parties. This would ultimately help Turkey's EU membership bid. The conclusion evaluates the arguments presented in the article.

## 2. TURKEY'S RAPPROCHEMENT WITH THE EU AND SUBSEQUENT ALIENATION

After the leaders of EU member states declared Turkey a candidate country at the European Council's Helsinki Summit of 1999, Turkey made its most significant democratization reforms in the multi-party period that started in 1945 to achieve its target of becoming an EU member state. Between 1999 and 2002, Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit's coalition government, which was based on both leftist and rightist nationalist ideologies, adopted one comprehensive constitutional amendment package and three harmonization packages. The JDP (Justice and Development Party – *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*), which first won the general elections on November 3, 2002, accelerated the democratization process. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, leader of the JDP, kept his promise during the election campaign to implement comprehensive democratization, which was admired by large segments of Turkish people and Europeans. This included the introduction of one comprehensive constitutional amendment package and six harmonization packages. These reforms generally concerned the prevention of torture, protection of human and minority rights, democratic control of the armed forces and freedoms of speech, assembly, association, press and religion.

Regarding freedom of speech, the sixth harmonization package abolished the Anti-Terrorism Act's infamous Article 8, which banned written, oral and visual propaganda, and demonstrations and meetings made to destroy Turkey's territorial and national integrity. The same package also stipulated that the use of "force and violence" were necessary to define a terrorist action. Regarding press freedom, the fourth package ensured that journalists were no longer under a statutory obligation to reveal their news sources. Regarding freedom of association, the fourth package permitted associations in Turkey to engage in international activities like setting up branches abroad while similar freedom was granted to foreign associations in their activities in Turkey. Furthermore, in July 2004, a very liberal Law on Associations was adopted, which forbids security forces entering the buildings of associations without a court decision and no longer requires associations to inform officials when they hold their general assembly meetings. Freedom of assembly was strengthened by the seventh harmonization package in that a provincial governor can only prohibit meetings if there is a clear threat that an offense will be committed. The third package increased freedom of religion by allowing community foundations to acquire property based on the decision of the Turkish Council of Ministers while the sixth package guaranteed the right to establish places of worship for non-Muslim communities. For minority rights, the third package allowed the use of languages and dialects other than Turkish in television and radio broadcasting, and the establishment of private courses to teach them. International protection of human rights was improved by recognizing the right to retrial in civilian and military courts if the European Court of Human Rights ruled that Turkey had violated the European Convention on Human Rights. Democratic control of the armed forces was strengthened by significantly curtailing the powers of Turkey's 'shadow cabinet', the National Security Council (NSC), which is composed of both civilians and military officers and whose decisions were previously legally required to be taken into consideration by Turkish governments as a priority (Hale & Özbudun, 2010, pp. 55-62). Finally, the Turkish parliament adopted a new civil code and criminal code, which improved gender equality and human rights, respectively (Ibid, p. 62).

For people living in developed democracies, these democratization reforms might be considered ordinary, simple and inherent to a democracy. However, these reforms were revolutionary for Turkish people, given their exposure to PKK terrorism, which has been the most important obstacle to democratization in Turkey since the beginning of the 1980s, and having suffered four military coups in the multiparty period. The primary motivation for JDP governments to make these reforms was undoubtedly to achieve EU membership as quickly as possible since this has been Turkey's most important foreign policy target as part of its westernization and modernization project. These reforms also significantly increased the JDP's prestige, domestically and internationally. Thus, almost all Turkish liberals in Turkey gave great support to the JDP while the US and some EU member state leaders presented the JDP as a model to Middle Eastern and North African countries that a conservative Muslim government can achieve democratization. The Republican People's Party, which is the main opposition party, and the military were seen as most likely to veto Turkey's Europeanization because they considered that these reforms shook Turkey's Kemalist order. Another factor motivating the JDP was the fact that the Greek Cypriot Administration was soon to become an EU member. This was considered very dangerous since another veto player against Turkey could emerge in the EU. Thus, democratization reforms were conducted quickly to help Turkey become an EU member. It was also very important that the motivation of Turkish governments was not broken by special treatment elements newly introduced by the EU, namely the 'open-ended process' and 'absorption capacity', as explained below. In other words, Turkish governments have always believed that the country will automatically enter the EU once they complete required reforms and finalize the accession negotiations, as has been the case with previous candidates from Central and Eastern Europe. Following these reforms, the EU did indeed start accession negotiations with Turkey on October 3, 2005, thereby bringing Turkey closer to EU membership.

However, shortly after the opening of the accession negotiations Turkey started to become alienated from EU membership for several reasons, stemming from both the EU and Turkey. The first reason arising from the EU was its introduction of an open-ended process and the concept of absorption capacity for Turkey's Negotiating Framework Document: "These negotiations are an open-ended process, the outcome of which cannot be guaranteed beforehand. While having full regard to all Copenhagen criteria, including the absorption capacity of the Union, if Turkey is not in a position to assume in full all the obligations of membership it must be ensured that Turkey is fully anchored in the European structures through the strongest possible bond" (European Commission, 2005, p.1). By inventing the concept of open-ended process, the EU implied that the negotiations will not automatically finish with Turkey's membership. In addition, through the concept of absorption capacity, it made Turkey's membership, even if negotiations ended successfully, ultimately conditional on the EU's political, economic, social and institutional well-functioning. The EU had not implemented either concept for previous candidate countries. Critically, by introducing these concepts for Turkey, the EU made its political conditionality strategy ineffective because membership, the golden prize of EU political conditionality, was rendered ambiguous so that the EU's power to transform Turkish democracy disappeared.

The reasons that led the EU to implement these two concepts in Turkey's membership process were closely associated with the effect of increasing Islamophobia after the September 11 terrorist attacks and the effects of the 2004 Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs) enlargement. For example, a survey conducted by Eurobarometer 64 in 2005 found that opposition to Turkey's EU membership was 70 percent in France, 74 percent in Germany and 80 percent in Austria (Cited in Macmillan, 2010, p. 457). A year later, Transatlantic Trends found that 88 percent of people in nine EU countries, including 95 per cent of French and 98 per cent of Germans, saw Islam as incompatible with democracy (Cited in Ibid., p. 456). One of the most important concerns for the citizens of the EU's western members in those years was the expected socio-economic impacts of CEECs on the EU, with the free movement of their workers that would be granted, at the very latest, in seven years at the top of the agenda.



Thus, interest-seeker leaders of Germany, France and Austria applied these two concepts to Turkey's membership bid to ingratiate themselves to the voters through a message that there was nothing to worry because Turkey would not ultimately gain membership.

The second reason was that the EU in December 2006 decided to suspend eight of the 35 accession negotiation chapters and not to provisionally close any chapters until Turkey fulfills its promises regarding Cyprus. While accession negotiations were due to open on October 3, 2005, Turkey pledged to expand the 1963 Ankara Agreement to the Greek Cypriot Administration together with other countries that joined the EU in 2004. However, Turkey refused to expand the Ankara Agreement to the Greek Cypriot Administration on the basis that this would imply official recognition. Even though 13 years have passed since the start of accession negotiations, only 16 chapters have been opened and only one provisionally closed. In fact, the EU's December 2006 decision was sudden and precipitous as instead it could have tried to persuade Turkey. However, it seems that the EU immediately bowed to the wishes of the Greek Cypriot Administration.

The third reason concerns France and the Greek Cypriot Administration's unilateral blocking of several accession negotiations chapters. In June 2007, French President Nicolas Sarkozy, who used the French peoples' increasing opposition to Turkey's EU membership to gain support during his election campaign, blocked the opening of some chapters (For a detailed analysis regarding Sarkozy's opposition to Turkey, see Lagro, 2008).<sup>1</sup> In particular, blocking of the chapter economic and monetary policy had a symbolic importance since it would ensure Turkey's eventual membership of the EU's Economic and Monetary Union ("Sarkozy Blocks", 2007). Although analysts said Sarkozy's move would encourage Eurosceptics, who do not want the EU to expand further (Ibid.), Brussels did nothing to stop him. Thus, the EU's vision and Turkey's integration were sacrificed to Sarkozy's pragmatic strategy of gaining advantage in domestic politics. Turkey's motivation was further weakened when the Greek Cypriot Administration announced in 2009 that it had decided to block the opening of six negotiating chapters<sup>2</sup> due to Turkey's refusal to open its ports and airports to Greek Cypriot ships and planes.

However, the EU is not solely responsible for Turkey's alienation from EU membership since Turkey itself still has very significant democratization problems. It is true that one reason why Turkey abandoned the democratization reforms required to comply with the Copenhagen political criteria was domestic problems since 2007, such as the return of PKK terrorism, the presidential elections crisis of 2007, coup plans that were alleged but later proved inaccurate by court decisions and a failed coup attempt on July 15, 2016. Turkey, nevertheless, should have maintained its impressive democratization performance of 2002 and 2004 because these reforms have given Turkey powerful arguments against the discriminatory attitudes shown towards it in the EU. It must not be forgotten that despite the pressures of Austria and German Christian Democrats to offer Turkey a privileged partnership instead of full membership, the EU nevertheless opened accession negotiations in 2005 since Turkey had impressed almost all of Europe with its dramatic democratization reforms. However, it is also true that the EU failed to appropriately reward Turkey when it introduced the open-ended negotiating process and absorption capacity, which destroyed the effectiveness of its political conditionality strategy. The next section focuses on the negative impact of the rise of far-right parties in recent decades in Europe to Turkey's membership bid as another reason for Turkey's current alienation.

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<sup>1</sup> 11 - Agriculture and Rural Development, 17 - Economic and Monetary Policy, 22- Regional Policy and Coordination of Structural Instruments, 33 - Financial and Budgetary Provisions, 34 - Institutions.

<sup>2</sup> 2 - Freedom of Movement for Workers, 15 - Energy, 23 - Judiciary and Fundamental Rights, 24 - Justice, Freedom and Security, 26 - Education and Culture, 31 - Foreign Security and Defense Policy.

### 3. THE FAR-RIGHT PARTIES AND TURKEY'S EU MEMBERSHIP BID

In addition to the reasons analyzed in the first section, the rise of far-right parties in the EU's leading countries in the last decade, most importantly in Austria, Germany and France, have created a significant problem for Turkey's EU membership bid. Mainstream governing and opposition parties in these countries have copied the far-right parties' common rhetoric that Turkey must be denied membership to avoid losing more voters and recover their previously lost voters.

After the September 11 terrorist attacks of 2001, Islamophobia rapidly spread in European countries, which strengthened far-right parties. However, far-right parties have specifically grown in the last decade as a result of the negative effects of the global financial crisis that started in 2008, ISIS terrorism and Syrian immigration. France and Austria have the fastest growing far-right parties. The FPÖ, which represents the far-right in Austria, was established in 1956 as a racist party. After many years of basing on its rhetoric on anti-Semitism and anti-immigration, it started to use Islamophobic rhetoric powerfully after the September 11 terrorist attacks by strategically linking much of its anti-Islam rhetoric to Turkey's EU membership bid. Some of the anti-Turkey slogans used by the FPÖ on billboards during the election campaigns were as follows: "First Vienna instead of the EU with Turkey", "No gate to Fundamentalism", "Free Women instead of Headscarves by Force" and "Vienna cannot be İstanbul" (Mert, 2014, p. 90). As Devrim Kabasakal Badamchi explains, although these slogans should not be considered within the framework of hate speech since no specific group is named, they are inherently offensive because they aim to increase hatred towards Islam and Turkey (D. K. Badamchi, personal communication, May 18, 2018). Through this negative propaganda about Islam and Turkey, the FPÖ has managed to increase its percentage of votes in every election since September 11, with 10% in 2002, 11% in 2006, 17.5% in 2008, 20.5% in 2013 and 26.5% in the 2017 parliamentary elections. In addition, it is crucial to note that the FPÖ's presidential candidate, Norbert Hofer, who placed anti-immigration policies and opposition to Turkey's EU membership at the center of his election campaign, received 46.2% votes in the 2016 presidential elections while the ÖVP had to form a coalition government with the FPÖ after the December 2017 parliamentary elections.

What is more worrying for Austria is that Islamophobia is not only powerful among FPÖ voters but also among ÖVP's. Even Social Democratic Party voters have growing concerns about the presence of Islam in Austria. Thus, a majority of the Austrian people appear to be Islamophobic (Mert, p. 87), as can also be seen from two surveys conducted by different institutions. First, in 2015, the Unique Research's survey for Heute newspaper showed that 69% of Austrians do not believe Islam belongs in Austria ("Poll: Islam does not Belong", 2015). Second, a survey conducted by Chatham House in February 2017 revealed that 65% of Austrians want their governments to ban immigration from Muslim countries, which is the second highest rate in Europe after Poland (71%) ("Most Europeans Want", 2017). This growing rejection of the presence of Islam in Austria is also associated with increasing racist attacks against Muslims. As reported by the Documentation and Consultation Center for Muslims in Austria, there were 309 racist attacks against Muslims in 2017, an increase of 21% compared to 2016 ("Austria: Islamophobic Attacks", 2018). The reason for the high level of Islamophobia in Austria can be found from a survey conducted by Der Standard newspaper in 2015. This reported that 51% of Austrians said Islamic people threaten and want to change Austrian society; 40% thought that Islam is a backward religion; and, much more worryingly, 14% agreed that Muslims in Austria support the terrorist actions of ISIS ("Half of the Austrians", 2015).

In Austria, far-right policies dominate politics more than other countries in Europe. For example, as a result of the proposal of the FPÖ, the Austrian parliament banned the wearing of full-face veils in public life through the introduction of the Integration Act in 2017. In June 2017, Austrian Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz, who has been chairman of the ÖVP since

May 2017, offered to close Islamic kindergartens, claiming that it is the best way to ensure integration (“We don’t Need Them”, 2017). In fact, Kurz is an excellent example to show how a centre-right politician in today’s Europe can increase his and his party’s popularity through stealing the rhetoric of the far-right as ÖVP won the October 2017 parliamentary elections thanks to Kurz’s successful use of FPÖ’s anti-immigration and Islamophobic rhetoric, and powerful opposition to Turkey’s EU membership in the two years leading up to the vote. Particularly influential was his self-presentation as the only person able to enact the FPÖ’s anti-immigration policies (Hafez, 2017). During the election campaign, he promised to significantly limit immigration, protect country’s borders against immigrant flows, resist political Islam and stop any moves to bring Turkey closer to EU membership (“Austria’s Leading Election”, 2017; “Austria to Block”, 2017). The FPÖ’s leader Heinz-Christian Strache became very angry and accused Kurz of stealing the issues that the FPÖ has been promoting for years. Notably, throughout the 2017 election campaigns, both parties ignored taxes, trade and investment (“Austria’s Leading Election”, 2017).

After becoming the Chancellor of Austria, Kurz has continued to attack Turkey’s EU membership bid to present himself as a reliable politician who fulfills his promises to secure his votes. For example, on December 25, 2017, he declared that “For me, especially because of the policies it has conducted in recent years, Turkey has no place in the EU” (“Avusturya Başbakanı”, 2017). On March 26, 2018, on the day of EU-Turkey Summit in Varna, Bulgaria, he proposed that the EU should end Turkey’s accession negotiations, reconsider pre-accession assistance worth 4 billion Euros from structural funds that Turkey is supposed to receive between 2014 and 2020 and maintain relations with Turkey through the concept of neighborliness instead (“Kurz: Türkiye ile Müzakereler”, 2018). In short, to secure votes, Austria’s centre-right ÖVP has become the staunchest enemy of Turkey’s EU membership bid. Its strategy of securing the votes against far-right parties by opposing Turkey’s accession is also used by the Social Democratic Party, for whom Turks in Austria largely vote for. For example, on August 4, 2016, the party’s leader and Chancellor Christian Kern described accession negotiations with Turkey as a “diplomatic fiction” and recommended the EU end Turkey’s EU membership bid (“Austrian Chancellor”, 2016). On July 31, 2017, he declared clearly that Turkey cannot be a candidate for membership because the EU could never digest Turkey’s economic impact (“Austrian Chancellor to Turkey”, 2017).

The far-right’s representative in France is the FN, established in 1972 by Jean-Marie Le Pen after gathering several right-wing groups under the party’s umbrella, including fascists, anti-revolutionists who rejected the French Revolution, people who dreamed of a greater France including its colonies and authoritarian Bonapartists (Atikkan, 2014, p. 116). In the late 1970s, before immigrants and immigration was such an issue, Jean-Marie Le Pen argued that immigration was damaging French socio-economic life by causing unemployment for French citizens and cultural differences. From the 1980s onwards, FN managed to gain more than 10% of the votes in every local, general and presidential elections, with a few exceptions. Critically, in the 2002 presidential elections, Jacques Chirac had to compete against Jean-Marie Le Pen, who had received more votes than Lionel Jospin of the Socialist Party (Ibid., p. 117). Due to the rise of the FN, the international community has always been most concerned about the percentage of votes the FN will receive in each election.

Since Marine Le Pen became FN chairperson in 2011, she has benefitted from various crises affecting Europe over the last ten years, namely the global financial crisis, ISIS terror and the Syrian immigration flux. Marine Le Pen has flourished on three fronts. First, she has significantly changed perceptions so that the party is now seen like other parties. Second, she has increased the FN’s membership from 20,000 in the early 2000s to 80,000 in 2014, as the third largest party in France. Third, the FN has performed very well in elections. It received 17.9% in the first round of the 2012 presidential elections, 24.9% in the European Parliament elections and 27.1% in the second round of the regional council elections in 2015 (Stockemer,

2017, p. 2). Most shocking, however, was the 33.9% vote for Marine Le Pen in the second round of the 2017 presidential elections.

In the Marine Le Pen era, there has been very little change in the party's ideology and program compared to her father's years. In contrast to her father, she opposes anti-Semitism, uses reasonable language and makes statements within a republican discourse. The most important change is that she strongly prioritizes discourses on economic matters to attract workers and middle-class voters (Ibid., p. 4). To do so, she promises to end the negative effects of globalization while also powerfully connecting their economic problems with immigration. In her campaign for the 2017 presidential elections, for example, she pledged to suspend all immigration to France: "Mass immigration is not an opportunity for France, it is a tragedy for France" ("I will Protect", 2017). She even committed to introducing the hereditary principle in access to nationality by abolishing the old system of birthright access (Vinocur, 2017). She is also a staunch Eurosceptic, claiming that France must regain its sovereignty by exiting the EU after a referendum (Ibid.). She claims that Islam is a threat to French values and culture, so Muslims must be prevented from imposing their lifestyle on French people, with the first measures being closure of all mosques and a ban on wearing veils ("Marine Le Pen Launches", 2017). In order to frighten French people as to how Islam is supposedly destroying French culture, she often gives some examples. For instance, after an Egyptian man attacked a French soldier with machete in the Louvre Museum in February 2017 because he was not allowed to enter the museum's shopping center with his bags, she said, "France is under the yoke of Islamic fundamentalism where women cannot enter cafés or wear skirts" ("Le Pen: Seçilirsem", 2017).

Regarding Turkey's EU membership bid, although Marine Le Pen gives importance to friendship between Turkey and France, she strictly opposes Turkey's accession for religious and cultural reasons. On several occasions, she has called on the EU to stop accession negotiations with Turkey. For instance, in February 2017, she said accession negotiations with Turkey must be stopped since they had been started without taking into account the will of Europe's peoples ("Le Pen: Türkiye", 2017). She has also complained Turkey has received too much from the EU budget through its involvement in EU enlargement (Karaca, 2017). Given that the vast majority of French people oppose Turkey's EU membership, all the 2017 presidential election candidates declared their disapproval in order to secure votes. Emmanuel Macron, leader of *En Marche!*, a centrist political party established in France in 2016, expressed his opposition to Turkey's membership, while stressing that France must maintain good relations with Turkey for its own interests because Turkey is among the "new powers", together with Russia, Iran and Saudi Arabia. François Fillon, candidate of the right-wing parties, warned the EU to stop enlargement and proposed the creation of a "strategic partnership" with Turkey instead. Jean-Luc Mélenchon, leader of the left-wing populist *La France Insoumise* (Unbowed France), said that Turkey cannot gain EU membership under current conditions. There was also no supporter of Turkey's EU membership bid among the other seven presidential candidates (Ibid.). After becoming president, Macron proposed that the EU should create a privileged partnership with Turkey instead of membership ("Macron Suggests", 2018). Today in France, if any politician says something positive about Turkey's EU membership, they will inevitably suffer significant loss of votes.

In Germany, the far-right is represented by the AfD, established in 2013. Its election manifestos of 2013 and 2017 are full of extremist analysis and neo-Nazi policy proposals. In the "democracy and core values" section of the 2017 manifesto, for example, the AfD supports the introduction of the Swiss model of referenda to prevent political leaders from transferring more national powers to Brussels by signing international treaties like the Treaty of Lisbon. In the section on "Europe and Euro", the party firmly rejects the creation of a federal EU, instead demanding that the EU remain an economic union based on loosely connected nation states that keep all their sovereign powers. The manifesto also calls for abolition of the Euro and the orderly dissolution of the Eurozone ("Alternative for Germany", 2016, pp. 7-14).



In the “culture, language and identity” section, the AfD defines German as the country’s predominant culture, which emerged from three sources: the religious traditions of Christianity; the scientific and humanistic heritage of ancient Greece and Rome, the Renaissance and the Enlightenment; and Roman law. The AfD claims that the ideology of multiculturalism wants to import incompatible cultures, thereby seriously threatening Germany’s cultural unity. Here, the AfD draws attention to the issue of Islam, stating that “the AfD firmly opposes Islamic practice which is directed against our liberal-democratic constitutional order, our laws, and Judeo-Christian and humanist foundations of our culture.” In addition, it claims that “Islam does not belong to Germany”, and that the increasing number of Muslims in Germany – nearly 5 million – threatens every aspect of German life. In response, it calls for the closure of Islam studies departments in German universities and Qur’an courses, and the banning of full-body veiling in public areas and services, and headscarves for public servants (Ibid., pp. 14-22).

In the “immigration, integration and asylum” section, the AfD first argues that because Germany has become an immigration country without functioning regulations, unlike Canada and Australia, several paradigm shifts are required. For asylum seekers, it says that once the reasons forcing refugees to leave their countries disappear, their residence permits must be terminated. In addition, it supports total closure of the EU’s external borders while suggesting that the UN and the EU create shelters and asylum centers in North Africa and the Middle East to accommodate people requesting asylum in Germany or other EU states. It also warns that immigrants from other EU countries are attracted by generous state aid since Germany is one of the EU’s richest countries. Thus, it wants the EU to comprehensively revise regulations governing the free movement of workers within the single market. Otherwise, it wants Germany to impose restrictions unilaterally (Ibid., pp. 56-65).

The AfD’s specific focus on Islam and immigration significantly suits its interests according to recent research. For example, the number of immigrants increased by 51% between August 2011 and 2017, according to Germany’s Federal Statistical Office (“Almanya’da Göçmen Sayısında”, 2017). The Pew Research Center also reports that the number of Muslims living in Germany rose from 3.3 million in 2010 to 5 million in 2016 due to immigration, mostly from Syria and Iraq (Pew Research Center, 2017). The increasing number of Muslim immigrants is a powerful factor for strengthening of Islamophobia in Germany (“Islamophobia Rising in Germany”, 2016). In May 2016, for example, newspaper Bild’s poll revealed that 60% of Germans in May 2016 say “there is no place for Islam in Germany” (“Islam does not Belong in Germany”, 2016). The AfD also tries to benefit from nationwide opposition to Turkey’s EU membership bid since 64% of Germans want the EU to stop accession negotiations with Turkey, according to a 2017 poll conducted by the state-owned television station ARD (“Almanların Yüzde 64’ü”, 2017). The 2017 manifesto also states that the party firmly opposes Turkey’s admission to the EU because it is culturally different from European countries and not located in Europe (Alternative for Germany, p. 17). With these all extremist policies, particularly by severely criticizing CDU leader and Chancellor Angela Merkel’s open-door policy for migrants, and opposing the presence of Islam in the country and Turkey’s EU membership, the AfD has managed to become a new stable party in Germany, gaining 4.7% of the vote in 2013 federal elections, 7.1% in the European Parliament elections in 2014 (Berbair et.al., 2015) and 12.6% in the 2017 federal elections. Thus, today, the AfD’s rise has become one of the reasons for the leaderships of CDU and SPD to oppose Turkey’s EU membership. Because knowing that far-right’s base is about 25-30% in Germany (“Almanya’da Aşırı Sağın”, 2017) they want to secure their votes. For example, during 2017 election campaign, Merkel clearly said in a television discussion that “The fact is clear that Turkey should not become a member of the EU ... I will speak to my colleagues to see if we can reach a joint position on this so that we can end these accession talks,” (“Turkey will Never”, 2017) after SPD leader Martin Schulz promised he would end Turkey’s EU membership bid if he was elected chancellor (Ibid.).

#### **4. IS THIS THE BEGINNING OF THE THIRD REVERSE WAVE? RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EU**

According to Samuel P. Huntington's well-known analysis, there have been three waves of democratization in modern history. The first long wave of democratization, which began in the 1820s with the majority of the male population in the United States being granted voting rights, continued until 1926. In this period, which lasted just over a century, 29 countries became democratic. However, this was followed by the first reverse wave, which started in 1922 when the Fascist Mussolini came to power in Italy, and by 1942 the number of democratic states had dropped to 12. The second wave of democratization began with the allied victory in the Second World War and reached its peak in 1962, when 36 countries were ruled democratically. The second reverse wave between 1958 and 1975, which saw the number of democracies fall to 30, was most strongly felt in Latin American countries (Huntington, 1995, p. 31). During the first and second reverse waves, the following factors played major roles in the transition of democratic regimes to authoritarian ones: weakness of democratic values among elite groups and the public; serious economic troubles; social and political polarization caused by leftist governments; the exclusion of populist and leftist groups from political power by conservative middle and upper-class groups; destruction of public order by terrorism and uprisings; the intervention of a non-democratic foreign states; and the spread of anti-democratic regimes due to the impact of the collapse of one democratic regime on others (Ibid., p. 36).

The third wave of democratization began in 1974 with the collapse of the Salazar regime in Portugal. Over the next 15 years, democratic regimes were established in as many as 30 states in Europe, Asia and Latin America. After Constantine Karamanlis was elected prime minister in Greece in November 1974, he initiated democratic reforms while the death of General Franco opened the way for democratization in Spain. King Juan Carlos and Prime Minister Adolfo Suarez accelerated this process, moving the country to parliamentary elections in 1979. Turkey returned to democracy in 1983, after the 1980 military coup. The third wave of democratization affected Latin America in the late 1970s, with civilian governments taking power in Peru in 1980, Bolivia and Honduras in 1982, Argentina in 1983, Uruguay, Brazil and El Salvador in 1984, and Guatemala in 1985. In Asia, democratization in India in 1977 was followed by the Philippines in 1986, South Korea in 1987 and Pakistan in 1988. By the end of the 1980s, democratization had also completely replaced the communist regimes of Eastern Europe. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, authoritarian regimes in Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Romania were quickly overthrown and replaced by democratic regimes. Other democratic governments established in the 1980s included Grenada in 1983, Panama in 1989, and Nicaragua and Haiti in 1990 (Huntington, 2007, pp. 18-22).

Huntington argued in 1991 that it would be difficult for social scientists to predict when or how a third reverse wave would occur. However, as he emphasizes, in countries where the conditions for maintaining democracy are weak, further reversals can occur (Ibid., p. 308). The question that can be asked here is whether the rise of European far-right parties could precipitate a third reverse wave in Europe. It would not be unreasonable to see this as possible, given these parties' dramatic increase in vote share in European countries over the last 10 years: the FPÖ gained 26.5% in Austria's 2017 parliamentary elections; the FN's candidate Marine Le Pen gained 33.9% in the second round of France's 2017 presidential elections; the AfD gained 12.6% in Germany's 2017 federal elections; Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Alliance and Jobbik (the Movement for a Better Hungary) gained 49.2% and 19% respectively in the 2018 parliamentary elections; the Law and Justice Party gained 37.6% in Poland's 2015 parliamentary elections; Golden Dawn gained 6.9% in Greece's 2015 parliamentary elections; the Finns Party gained 17.7% in Finland's 2015 parliamentary elections; the Swiss People's Party gained 29.4% in the 2015 parliamentary elections; the Danish People's Party gained

21.1% in the 2015 parliamentary elections; the Party for Freedom gained 13.1% in Holland's 2017 general elections; the Northern League and the Five Star Movement gained 17.3% and 32% respectively in Italy's 2018 general elections; the Sweden Democrats gained 12.9% in Swedish general elections in 2014; and the Slovak National Party and the People's Party of Slovakia gained 8.6% and 8% respectively in the 2016 parliamentary elections. All these parties target fundamental freedoms and rights at a different level with their Islamophobic, anti-immigration, nationalist and Eurosceptic stances. If the ideologies of these parties become normalized and dominate Europe, democracies would be demolished. Worryingly, these parties are already defining Europe's center-right and center-left parties as old-fashioned institutions belonging to the twentieth century.

To protect Europe's future, while there is still time, the EU, which currently seems highly ineffective, must find solutions to eliminate the root causes – largely immigration and Islamophobia – that have led to the rise of these parties. Accordingly, here are some recommendations for the EU. Regarding Islamophobia, since European party leaders remain silent about Islamophobia to secure votes, the EU and the European Parliament should first officially acknowledge that Islamophobia is a type of racism. The latter should do this by adopting a resolution like earlier ones against anti-Semitism and anti-Gypsyism. Unless they take this critical step, hatred against Muslims may become normalized (Bayraklı & Hafez, 2017, p. 12; "EU not Ready", 2018; European Coalition against Islamophobia, 2017). Second, the European Commission and its president should publicly condemn senior politicians' Islamophobic statements. Third, the European Commission should force member states to adopt national action plans against Islamophobia. Fourth, the European Commission should organize continent-wide educational and information activities to fight Islamophobia. Fifth, the European Commission should organize country visits to meet with stakeholders to discuss key issues and assess developments (European Coalition against Islamophobia, pp. 1-2).

On combating the effects of immigration, the Brussels-based think tank Bruegel has presented significant recommendations to the EU, which collate the views and recommendations of various immigration experts. First, the EU should advertise the positive effects of immigration on economic development in different countries, as indicated by academic research evidence. Second, it should enhance its efforts to convince the countries of origin to accept the safe return of refugees. Third, it should provide more financial resources to countries of transition for refugees, such as Turkey and Balkan countries, to prevent illegal border crossing. Fourth, since the most important recent concern of Europeans is immigration in recent years, the EU should increase spending on border protection and convince EU members to provide further financial assistance. Fifth, because of different political and ideological approaches in member states, relocation of immigrants does not seem workable. Instead, it should give financial compensation from its existing funds to first-entry countries. Sixth, to facilitate their identification, it should give European IDs to immigrants and create a pan-European registry accessible for concerned institutions. Seventh, it should learn more from the best practices for integrating immigrants in member states and then promote them across Europe. Here, one of the most important practices seems to be integrating immigrants into the labor force. Eighth, EU funds should be used to provide early childhood education, teach the language of the hosting country and provide professional training (Batsaikhan et.al., 2018, pp. 164-175; see, Collett et. al., 2016; Bordignon & Moriconi, 2017; Heckman, 2012). These recommendations to prevent Islamophobia and the effects of immigration should help curb the power of far-right parties, thereby contributing to thwarting the start of the third reverse wave in Europe. It would also be very beneficial for Turkey since the rise of Europe's far-right parties significantly endangers Turkey's EU membership bid.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The declaration of Turkey as an EU candidate state at the European Council's Helsinki Summit in 1999 was a milestone for the country's democratization. Between 1999 and 2004, Turkish governments made the most important democratization reforms in the republican period regarding freedoms of speech, press, religion, assembly and association, prevention of torture, minority rights and civil-military relations, through adopting nine harmonization packages and two comprehensive constitutional amendment packages. As a result of these reforms, the EU opened accession negotiations with Turkey on October 3, 2005. Later, however, EU membership as the ultimate incentive for complying with EU political conditionality was rendered ambiguous after the EU described the negotiations with Turkey in the negotiating framework document as open-ended and subject to the EU's absorption capacity. These changes severely damaged Turkey's motivation to conduct further democratization reforms. Turkey's motivation was further weakened after several accession negotiations chapters were blocked by the EU in 2006, France in 2007 and the Greek Cypriot Administration in 2009. Nevertheless, Turkey continued with its reforms to force those EU member countries that opposed Turkey's EU membership into a corner to strengthen Turkey's hand, although it did not want to do this. Thus, Turkey became alienated from EU membership both because of EU actions and factors within Turkey itself.

In last decade, Turkey's alienation has been strengthened by another important development in the EU and the EU's ineffectiveness to solve it. This is the rise of far-right parties, particularly in Germany, France and Austria, which are among the EU's leading countries with political and economic weight, due to the global financial crisis, ISIS terror and Europe's immigration crisis. Elections in Germany, France and Austria in 2007 revealed the horrible reality after the FPÖ gained 26.5% in Austria, FN's candidate Marine Le Pen gained 33.9% in France and AfD gained 12.6% in Germany. In addition to their Islamophobic, anti-immigration and Eurosceptic policies, one of the most important factors carrying these parties to electoral success is their firm opposition to Turkey's accession to the EU for cultural and religious reasons, with which the majority of their countries' citizens agree. This rise of the far-right has become an important reason for mainstream governing and opposition parties to oppose Turkey's EU membership because these parties want to avoid losing more voters to far-right parties and regain previously lost voters.

Faced with Islamophobia and the effects of immigration, which are among the most important causes behind the rise of far-right parties, the EU has remained ineffective. If the EU continues to be passive, these parties are likely to become even stronger. The biggest threat, however, is the damaging effect of these parties on democracy, hence the prospect that the third reverse wave proposed by Huntington could begin in Europe. To combat Islamophobia, for example, as suggested by the European Coalition against Islamophobia, the EU should officially recognize Islamophobia as a type of racism, consistently condemn Islamophobic statements made by political leaders and demand that member states develop national action plans to fight Islamophobia. To eliminate the negative impacts of immigration, as recommended by Bruegel, the EU should cooperate more strongly with third countries and take stronger steps to ensure the integration of immigrants into education and employment, specifically by allocating more funding. These steps should not only help prevent Europe becoming a continent governed by authoritarian governments but also help eliminate the negative effects of far-right parties on Turkey's EU membership bid.



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