

Shifting From Europeanization to De-Europeanization in Turkey: How AKP Instrumentalized EU Negotiations

Buket Ökten Sipahiođlu*

Abstract

It has been widely studied by many Turkish and foreign scholars the European Union (EU), Europeanization and EU-Turkey relations and its effects since recently. Nevertheless, unpredictable transformation of Europeanization is relatively a new concept which has begun widely studied upon. After 2011, de-Europeanization process showed itself with slow Europeanization which by AKP defended as the reason of weakened EU conditionality. This article argues de-Europeanization is influenced by both EU and domestic factors, combining both the demotivation of the Turkish government and Turkish public about EU and the weakened EU conditionality which make Turkey's membership a continuous process. In this context this article first aims to define Europeanization and de-Europeanization processes under the influence of domestic factors (i.e. AKP government policies) and EU conditionality. Afterwards, this article gives details about the transformation process from Europeanization to de-Europeanization in Turkey by deeply analyzing domestic factors and the effect of EU conditionality. Article concludes that AKP government used extending membership process as a policy tool in order to stay on power putting forward EU's vetoes and blocked accession process.

Keywords

Turkey, AKP, European Union, Europeanization, De-Europeanization

* Lecturer, Ankara University Institute of Social Sciences. okten@ankara.edu.tr
(orcid.org/0000-0003-3815-6732)
Makale geliş tarihi : 16.03.2017
Makale kabul tarihi : 22.12.2017

Introduction

Turkey and EU has a controversial relationship since the establishment of EU. Justice and Development Party (AKP) the ruling government of Turkey since 2002, had a pro- EU policy when it first came to power. AKP government handled the continuing Europeanization process which at most experienced from 1999-2005 with the declaration of candidacy status and beginning of accession negotiations. Turkey entered a new political period with the reform process. In this period, Europeanization process was successfully continued because of strong EU conditionality combined with Turkey's motivation about political transformation. The reform process continued from 2005 to 2011 in a rather slower pace. Concerning AKP's policies it can be argued that AKP chose to Europeanize not widely as EU expected; rather selectively in the areas that fits with AKP. With AKP's third election victory in 2011, Turkey met a relatively new concept: "De-Europeanization" which can broadly be defined as the decrease in motivation about EU. It is not very far away that Europeanization was used mainly as a positive concept mainly associated with development. Being aware of the fact that international relations is a rapidly changing area, the article defends that government preferences are very decisive about orientation of the politics. It is seen that although starting very motivated about EU reforms, AKP gradually slowed down the reform process selecting the reforms which suited more with its politics.

Behind the weakened EU conditionality, de-Europeanization process accelerated since 2011. It was expected immediately to proceed the negotiations, however with the second election term in AKP's political power, EU membership enthusiasm of AKP seemed to lose which is by AKP interconnected with the EU's vetoes to Turkey. It can be argued that Turkey's EU process that is slowing down made both government and the people in Turkey demotivated about being an EU member. This "De-Europeanization" process started not only because of government's loss of interest in EU, but also because of blocked chapters in the accession negotiations and the unsolved Cyprus issue which is shortly named as changing credibility of EU membership. This article argues that, external factors like Cyprus issue and the vetoes by some countries are put forwarded by AKP government as the reason of moving away from the Turkey's EU path. According to Saatçioğlu, variation in the reforms is driven by factors other than varying credibility of the EU conditionality. If falling EU credibility was the primary causal factor, these

reforms should have to weaken much earlier than 2005.¹ Therefore, EU reforms were at the beginning used by AKP to empower itself and to prepare itself for the following elections.

Europeanization: Theoretical Framework

Europeanization is defined by Ladrech as: “Incremental process reorienting the direction and shape of politics to the degree that EC political and economic dynamics become part of the organizational logic of national politics and policy-making”.² According to Kaliber, “while EU-ization describes a more formal and overwhelmingly technical process of adjustment, the most radical impacts of which are manifested during the accession negotiations, Europeanization exists ‘as a context from which varying ideas, norms and values can be extracted and used at sub-national, national and supra-national politics’”.³ The level of Europeanization, which means the way of its interpretation and representation by different actors together clarifies the definition of Europeanization. According to Aydın-Düzgüt and Kaliber, these domestic actors are not only political actors but also journalists, intellectuals and civil society activists⁴. Early examples of Europeanization in the literature was defining the relationship between the domestic and European, where only the member states were meant. However, 2000s brought a new concept of Europeanization which included not only member and candidate states, but also third countries.⁵ With the enlargement of EU to the east, the concept of domestic has changed and as a result the definition of Europeanization has also changed: “a process of construction, diffusion and institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, ways of doing things,

¹ Beken Saatçioğlu, “AKP’s Europeanization in Civilization, Rule of Law and Fundamental Freedoms: The Primacy of Domestic Politics”, *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, Vol.16, No.1, (2014), p.88.

² Robert Ladrech, “Europeanization of Domestic Politics and Institutions: The Case of France”, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 1, (1994), p. 69.

³ Alper Kaliber, “Contextual and Contested, Reassessing Europeanization: The Case of Turkey”: Paper Presented at the 7th ECPR General Conference Sciences Po, Bordeaux (4-7 September 2013), p. 8-9.

⁴ Senem Aydın-Düzgüt and Alper Kaliber, “Encounters with Europe in an Era of Domestic and International Turmoil: Is Turkey a De-Europeanising Candidate Country?” *South European Society and Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 1, (2016), p.16.

⁵ Jakub Wódka, “Institutional Aspects of the (De-) Europeanization of Turkish Political Parties. The Case of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the Republican People’s Party (CHP)”, *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 2, (2015), p. 154.

and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of EU decisions and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourses, identities, political structures and public policies”.⁶ With the changing political aspects, Europeanization should transform itself to concepts such as politicization and socialization. Europeanization by enlargement depends on rationalist mechanisms of domestic change in rationalist institutionalism. Schimmelfennig and his colleagues developed a model which is called as “external incentive model”. According to these scholars, candidate countries first evaluate the outcomes of a probable accession and accept the changes if the benefits are more than the efforts needed for change. Parallel to this argument it can be suggested that, candidates’ EU compliance has been largely instrumentally driven.⁷

Europeanization can occur in two distinctly different ways. One is through formal policy decisions of the EU and its adaptation by national polities;⁸ the second through increased social interactions between European actors and national actors.⁹ In the first explanation, it is possible to assess Europeanization as the emergence of a common foreign policy behavior among the member states. The second path is a more constructivist way of treating the process of Europeanization. This does not mean that the process of Europeanization and the EU-ization are the same thing, but that the EU is the only institution that can offer rewards and/or inflict punishments for Europeanization or lack of it. The European collective identity and its norms and rules transcend the EU without any question;¹⁰ however, because the EU is the only institution with enforcement mechanisms, it becomes the most visible manifestation of the Europeanization process.

⁶ Başak Alpan, “Europe-as-Hegemony and Discourses in Turkey after 1999: What has Europeanization got to do with it?”, *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 2014, p. 69.

⁷ Saatçioğlu, “AKP’s ‘Europeanization’ in Civilianization...”, p. 89.

⁸ Christoph Knill, *The Europeanisation of National Administrations: Patterns of Institutional Change and Persistence (Themes in European Governance)*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., 2001.

⁹ Frank Schimmelfennig, Stefan Engert and Heiko Knobel, “Costs, Commitment and Compliance: Latvia, Slovakia, Turkey,” *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (June 2003), p. 495–518.

¹⁰ Ian Manners, “Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?” *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (March 2002), p. 235–258.

Turkey's Europeanization Process

Before AKP's first period in power, Turkey was announced as a candidate country in 1999. With the 1999 Helsinki decision, the EU credibility was strong and reform process was progressive. In order to realize the Copenhagen Criteria, the government was highly motivated. From 1999 to 2002 during the coalition government, not all the political parties were pro-EU; however this was not a reason for them to block negotiations. They rather behaved against EU not against reforms.¹¹ In October 2005, six years later that Turkey was appointed as a candidate country, accession negotiations started. It was through the perspective of EU membership that Turkey approved series of political reforms in this period from 1999 to 2005. EU's political conditionality and the Turkish desire to fulfill these political criteria for accession negotiations to begin became critical in triggering a vast political transformation in Turkey which in turn impacted the collective identity formation in Turkey.¹² Although the impact of EU in Turkish foreign policy before 1999 cannot also be denied; the most significant effect of EU was started to be experienced with the candidate status. AKP government was blamed for challenging the core premises of the regime by its secular opponents needed the European context to reveal its commitment to Western values and enhance its legitimacy in domestic and international politics.¹³ With the rejection of the proposed Constitutional Treaty in France and Netherlands, EU's absorption capacity was a subject of debate.¹⁴ Besides, some controversial areas like minority rights, civil-military relations, rule of law are not all reformed rather selectively-reformed.

In the EU, not only the requirements of Copenhagen Criteria was debated but also high population and democratic growth were also subjects of the discussions. When Germany, France and Austria proposed Turkey privileged membership in 2004, uncertainty period has begun with the possibility of being in an open ended-accession process for Turkey's EU membership which may

¹¹ Gözde Yılmaz, "From Europeanization to De-Europeanization", *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 1, (2016), p. 89.

¹² Yaprak Gürsoy and Meltem Müftüler-Baç, "The European Union's Enlargement Process and the Collective Identity Formation in Turkey", *RECON Online Working Paper*, 2008/17, p. 2.

¹³ Alper Kaliber, "Contextual and Contested: Reassessing Europeanization in the case of Turkey", *International Relations*, Vol. 27, No.1, (2012), p. 62.

¹⁴ Gergana Noutcheva, and Senem Aydın-Duzgit, "Lost in Europeanisation: The Western Balkans and Turkey", *West European Politics*, Vol. 35, No. 1, (2012), p. 68.

not be resulted with accession.¹⁵ This decreasing credibility of EU conditionality gave birth to the loud Eurosceptic coalition which clearly express its doubts about EU demands on controversial issues such as Kurdish problem, Cyprus issue, refugee problem, economical issues.

De-Europeanization: New Emerging Concept

Before beginning of the term de-Europeanization, the period from 2005 to 2010 can be called as the transition period between Europeanization and de-Europeanization. In this period, AKP had to cope with Eurosceptic movement. According to Hakan Yılmaz: “This West-scepticism, of which Euroscepticism is a constituent part, has grown particularly since October 2005. Public support for EU membership fell sharply since CHP, the main opposition party in the parliament, showed its approach by blaming AKP of submitting all the demands of EU ignoring national interest of Turkey.”¹⁶

Turkey’s EU membership effort and motivation started to slow down from 2005. Late 2004, before Brussel Summit, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, president of AKP, gave a speech in a party group meeting in a waning tone to EU not to insist Turkey any more criteria other than Copenhagen Criteria. In this speech, confident tone of Erdoğan is remarkable which is the starting of the decreased motivation of Turkey, namely AKP government, which will be experienced till today. Erdoğan emphasizes in this speech that Turkey will never bow down to unacceptable criteria of EU.¹⁷

After its second electoral victory, a new AKP was on the stage. It was much stronger both in society and against the secular base, and become less dependent on the EU as well as its democratization agenda. Saatçioğlu marks post-2005 period with the rising electoral cost. In this period, although the EU reform process and the question of membership are still significant for the electorate, public was lost its of interest in the membership. Euro-skepticism started to emerge in this period by EU’s less positive membership

¹⁵ “Ankara’dan İmtiyazlı Ortaklığa Ret”, <<http://www.dw.com/tr/ankaradan-imtiyazli%C4%B1-ortakli%C4%B1%C4%9Fa-ret/a-2527040>>, (Access date 8 October 2017)

¹⁶ Hakan Yılmaz, “Euroscepticism in Turkey: Parties, Elites and Public Opinion”, *South European Society and Politics*, Vol. 16, No. 1, (2011), p. 186.

¹⁷ “Asla Boyun Eğmeyiz”, *Radikal*, 2004, <<http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=137396>> (access date 12 June 2016)

announcements¹⁸ and rising controversy in some member states like France, Germany and Austria about Turkey's membership which put in question the Union's commitment to admit Turkey.¹⁹

Öniş explains the pessimism about the rejection proposed Constitutional Treaty in the French and Dutch referenda also injected an additional mood of pessimism. Again, media representations (or misrepresentations) of the constitutional crisis in Turkey played a role in terms of contributing to growing Euro-skepticism by helping to project the EU as an unattractive, crisis-ridden project.²⁰ De-motivation of Turkish public about EU membership changed the atmosphere in Turkey so that people started to think that even if Turkey becomes a full member, Turkish citizens will not be able to benefit all the rights that they deserve. Öniş clarifies this issue, whilst a temporary safeguard on labor mobility, such as the seven year transition period on the new Eastern European members, was quite understandable, the imposition of permanent safeguards on a wide range of crucial areas would be synonymous with a significant reduction in the concrete material benefits associated with full-membership.²¹

AKP's third victory in 2011 elections opened a new period in the de-Europeanization experience of Turkey. Since AKP won barely half of all the votes that were counted as valid, a more self-confident AKP was in the charge.²² AKP government acted as if it was alone in the reform process.²³ Why did not AKP give up insisting on its pro-EU reform policy? Because AKP needed to prepare the suitable atmosphere to win itself at least three more

¹⁸ There were two such announcements: The EU's December 2004 Brussels Summit decision which launched accession negotiations with Turkey yet declared that negotiations are "open-ended" and that Turkey could be "anchored in the European structures through the strongest possible bond" (European Council 2004: paragraph 23) (suggesting as such an alternative to membership); and the Commission's November 2006 decision to freeze Turkey's membership negotiations over eight acquis chapters, which was perceived as a setback in Turkey's accession process. Both issues were widely covered by the Turkish media.

¹⁹ Beken Saatçioğlu, "Unpacking the Compliance Puzzle The Case of Turkey's AKP under EU Conditionality", *KFG Working Paper Series The Transformative Power of Europe*, No. 14, (2010), p. 23-24.

²⁰ Ziya Öniş, Contesting for Turkey's Political 'Centre': Domestic Politics, Identity Conflicts and the Controversy over EU Membership, *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, Vol. 18 No. 3, (2010), p. 364-365.

²¹ Öniş, "Contesting for Turkey's Political 'Centre'...", p. 365.

²² For more information about general elections in Turkey, <<http://www.yenisafak.com/secim/genel-secim/>> (access date 08 September 2017)

²³ Menderes Çınar, "The Electoral Success of the AKP: Cause for Hope and Despair", *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 13, No. 4, (2011), p.110.

election till 2023 with its election slogan: ‘Turkey is ready, target is 2023’. Even though AKP did not believe to have full EU membership, or did not actually want it at all, its effort was huge to show how it fulfilled its promise about modernization and Westernization. AKP's pro-EU policy made Turkish public feel comfortable and increased their hope for better future.²⁴ According to Kaliber, The impact of Europeanization on Turkey and her contributions to the European experience are not reducible to the ebbs and flows of Turkey–EU relations. These issues deserve to be the object of a more sophisticated and nuanced analytical inquiry, which may be possible only through a clear distinction between EU-ization and Europeanization. This distinction would allow us to comprehend better varying impacts of Europe on the Turkish society and politics in different historical periods of time. It helps us to understand how and why Europeanization can still impact the varying discourses of modernization and change in Turkey, despite the substantial slowing down of the EU-ization reforms since 2005.²⁵

Deadlocked Negotiations

Not only domestic factors blocked Turkey’s accession negotiations. After 2005, the Euro crisis made the EU countries think negatively about the enlargement. Turkey has at this point a special status because of cultural, social and religious differences.²⁶ Apart from economic grounds EU has concerns about terror, instability and a mass refugee problem infiltrating the EU from Turkey.²⁷ In a recent speech, Chancellor of Germany, emphasized that EU membership of Turkey is not possible now and the accession negotiations are open-ended.²⁸ The period of ‘reform fatigue’ intertwine with ‘Enlargement

²⁴ Çınar, “The Electoral Success of the AKP...”, p. 110-111.

²⁵ Kaliber, “Contextual and Contested: Reassessing Europeanization...”, p.67.

²⁶ In the reports of the European Commission, Turkey is frequently criticized for its poor human rights record, for its treatment of minorities, insufficient implementation of reforms it has adopted, corruption, for its relations with neighbors and so on. The progress report of 2004 indicates that “Turkey’s accession would be different from previous enlargements because of the combined impact of Turkey’s population, size, geographical location, economic, security and military potential”. European Commission, Regular Report on Turkey’s Progress Towards Accession, 2004, available at https://www.ab.gov.tr/files/AB_Iliskileri/Tur_En_Realitons/Progress/Turkey_Progress_Report_2004.pdf

²⁷ Aydın-Düzgüç and Kaliber, “Encounters with Europe in an Era of Domestic...”p. 2.

²⁸ “Merkel: Türkiye’nin AB Üyeliği Gündemde Değil”, BBC Türkçe, 16 March 2016 <http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2016/03/160316_merkel_turkiye> (access date 18 June 2016)

fatigue' in the literature. Alpan argues that in the aftermath of the 2004/2007 enlargements, EU found itself in a stalemate and not able to explain its citizens that the previous enlargement rounds had been politically and economically successful and the potential membership of big countries like Ukraine and Turkey could bring benefits and not simply be a burden of EU budget.²⁹

How AKP Instrumentalized EU Negotiations?

Rational choice theory argument will help to explain policy of AKP in which the economic benefits gained from integration will determine the decisions taken by the political elites. According to this view, of which the so-called inter-governmentalism is the pragmatic example "actors calculate the utility of alternative courses of action and choose the one that satisfies (maximizes) their utility under the circumstances".³⁰ EU emerged as a strategic ally for AKP in that liberalizing democratic reforms needed for membership promised to make the rigid Kemalist model of secularism less repressive and more inclusive and neutralize the secular state bureaucracy.³¹ By proving its compatibility with European liberal democratic values, AKP had the chance to use Europeanization process a legitimacy of its disputed conservative democracy. Liberalizing reforms helped not only consolidating Turkish economy, but also it empowered AKP's position. AKP aimed to empower itself against the military and lessen military's effect which could be realized through EU reforms. Following October 2001 constitutional reform package, some legislative amendments were done. The most important change was made about the structure of National Security Council (MGK) which aims to determine Turkey's security politics. With the amendments, MGK had no powerful role as before, its role was reduced to an advisory council rather than the highest Security Council independent from the government. The number of MGK's civilian member has been increased and MGK's General Secretary would no longer have such powerful role as before.

²⁹ Başak Alpan, "From AKP's 'Conservative Democracy' to 'Advanced Democracy': Shifts and Challenges in the Debate on 'Europe'", *South European Society and Politics*, Vol. 21, No. 1, (2016), p. 23.

³⁰ "Liberal Intergovernmentalism", in Antje Wiener and Thomas Diez, eds. *European Integration Theory* (with Frank Schimmelfennig), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 68.

³¹ Burhanettin Duran, 'JDP and foreign policy as an agent of transformation', in Hakan Yavuz (ed.), *The Emergence of a New Turkey: Democracy and the AK Parti*, University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City, 2006, pp. 288.

With the ninth reform package, which came into force in 2004 include a new constitutional amendment package that abolish State Security Courts which shortly aimed to abolish military control over civilian. Other important amendment is about removing military member in two important institutions YÖK- Higher Education and RTÜK- High Audio-Visual Boards. Before, there was a military personnel in these institutions nominated by the Chief of General Staff or MGK. With these amendments, the balance of power between military and civilian authority has changed in the favor of AKP. This was the beginning of the attempts of AKP that will soon make more changes in the constitutional law in favor of itself being over both military, jurisdiction and even the public.³²

Law on Political Parties have also changed which make Constitutional Court to ban political parties. This empowered AKP which faced in 2007 the danger of banning by Constitutional Court. Previous change to the Law on Associations abolished the ban on people who have been convicted of Article 312 of the Penal Code. This is used for Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, president of AKP, who is banned before and could not run for elections.

These reforms are all pro-AKP that enhances AKP's power and its potential empowerment against military and high judiciary. No one should surprise that AKP used its first term on power with this amendments to be again on power with much more authority. In its second term on power, AKP was more powerful and self-confident which let it to select the reforms more arbitrary. Saatçioğlu gives exact data about the areas of freedom of expression and the press. The number of imprisoned journalists has been increasing steady from 15 in 2009, 57 in 2010, 68 in 2011, and 95 in 2012. Turkey has the highest number of journalist in prison in any other country in the world with authoritarian practices.³³ In the third election period, Prime Minister Erdoğan pointed out Europe to defense himself when he was accused by being authoritarian and anti-democratic as these things happen in Europe as well. When he was being asked about the cancellation election threshold in his speech at the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE), he answered that: "I respect every kind of group in Turkey Kurds, Turks, and Romans. But today in France Romans are expelled. Is that democracy? I think that people

³² Meltem Müftüleri Baç, 'Turkey's Political Reforms and the Impact of the European Union', *South European Society and Politics*, Vol. 10, No. 1, (2005), p. 28-29.

³³ Saatçioğlu, "AKP's 'Europeanization' in Civilianization...", p. 93.

who blame Turkey as being antidemocratic first should look at themselves.”³⁴ This kind of speech of Erdoğan proves how AKP challenge EU, which it did not choose to do in its first years of victory.

Other International and Domestic Factors

De-Europeanization process in Turkey affected also by some domestic and international factors like the credibility of EU conditionality and the changing foreign policy that makes AKP busier with Caucasus, Middle East, Africa and Asia.³⁵ Public support about EU in Turkey has been decreased steady last years which is also an important factor about AKP's changing EU policy. Emre Uslu evaluated this situation in one of his articles “Erdoğan's New Enemy: EU”. Erdoğan criticizes EU in many areas because of decreased public support in Turkey about EU. Erdoğan used this situation in order to attract public support to itself by saying that Turkey does not need EU anymore.³⁶

One important event in Turkey in Summer 2013, Gezi Protest also criticized by EU which distanced AKP one step more from EU.³⁷ Erdoğan in one of his speech emphasized that he does not recognize European Parliament decision regarding Gezi Protest.³⁸ Egemen Bağış, that time EU Minister in his speech point out that a Turkey which realized the most important requirements of EU, would not need EU any more. Turkey will then be a country like Norway which is intertwined EU but not a member of EU.³⁹

³⁴ “Avrupa'ya Rest Çekti: Bu Fransız Arkadaş Türkiye'ye de Fransız Kalmış”, 13 April 2011, <<http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/avrupaya-rest-cekti-bu-fransiz-arkadas-turkiyeye-de-fransiz-kalmis-17536665>> (access date 13 June 2016)

³⁵ Tezcan Ercüment and Aras İlhan, “Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi'nde Euroseptisizm: Avrupa Birliği Desteğinin Eleştiriyeye Dönüşümü”, *Uluslararası Hukuk ve Politika*, Vol. 11, No. 41, (2015), p. 16.

³⁶ Emre Uslu, “Erdoğan's new enemy: the EU”, *Today's Zaman*, February 10, 2013 <<http://webpublicapress.net/tayip-erdogans-new-enemy-the-european-union/>> (access date 12 June 2016)

³⁷ “Erdoğan: AB'nin Türkiye için ilerleme raporu hazırlamaktan başka işi yok mu?”, *EurActiv*, <<http://www.euractiv.com.tr/ab-ve-turkiye/article/erdogan-abnin-turkiye-icin-ilerleme-raporu-hazirlamaktan-baska-isi-yok-mu-028572>> (access date 12 June 2016)

³⁸ “Erdoğan: Böyle bir Avrupa Parlamentosu'nu tanımıyorum” *EurActiv*, <http://www.euractiv.com.tr/3/article/erdogan-boyle-bir-avrupa-parlamentosunu-tanimiyorum-027955> (12 June 2016)

³⁹ “Türkiye AB üyesi olamayacak”, *Vatan*, 21 September 2013, <<http://haber.gazetevatan.com/turkiye-ab-uyesi-olamayacak/570825/1/>> (access date 12 June 2016)

In 2013 the most important thing about EU-AKP relations is the change of AKP's group in the European Parliament. AKP left the European's People Party (EPP) which is Christian Democrat and joined the group Alliance of European Conservatives and Reformists (AECR). This decision of AKP was long discussed since AECR is a Euro-sceptic group which votes negatively for EU enlargement. It was questioned whether AKP give up EU. The latter EU Minister of Turkey, Volkan Bozkır clarified that Turkey had been waiting long in the EPP for its status to change from observer to permanent member. Since EPP did not keep its promise, AKP decided to leave the group and this does not create a change in the parts EU policy.⁴⁰ Erhan İçener evaluated this decision saying that "AKP becomes with this decision the political party that makes Turkey closest to EU and then puts very far away like any political party ever."⁴¹

Apart from European Parliament decision, AKP called the Copenhagen Criteria as Ankara Criteria which shows its Eurosceptic attitude. In many speeches both AKP Leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and EU Ministers of Turkey told that Turkey's economic condition is better than EU. Erdoğan criticized European Commission to prepare unfair progress reports.⁴² This shows that in the accession period of EU, not only EU related factors determine the result, but also domestic behavior of the candidate country' also determine the way.

According to Saatçioğlu, fallen public support of EU membership become a factor which has lowered the government's incentive for adopting costly reforms by showing them as less popular in front of the public and thus undermined the EU's transformative power.⁴³

After 2007, AKP has an advantageous position in the Middle East. Prof. Dr. Ahmet Davutoğlu, who become Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2009, adopted zero problems with neighbors' policy and shifted Turkey's axis from Europe to Middle East and Arab world. As Loost Lajendik pointed out: at a

⁴⁰ "AK Partinin Avrupa-şüphecisi gruba katılması tartışma yarattı" EurActiv, 11 November 2013 <<http://www.euractiv.com.tr/ab-ve-turkiye/article/ak-partinin-avrupa-phecisi-gruba-katilmas-tartma-yaratt-028675>> (access date 12 June 2016)

⁴¹ Erhan İçener, "AK Partinin AB'deki yanlış hamlesi" 17 November 2013, <http://www.zaman.com.tr/yorum_ak-partinin-abdeki-yanlis-hamlesi_2168411.html> (access date 12 June 2016)

⁴² "AB'nin Geleceği Şüpheli" 05 Mart 2011 <http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/diger/227418/Cicek_AB_nin_gelecegi_supheli.html> (access date 13.06.2016)

⁴³ Saatçioğlu, "AKP's 'Europeanization' in Civilianization..." , p. 97.

Turkish-Arab forum, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan lashed out at the EU for having double standards and for lacking a real conviction on Turkey's future inside the bloc. The barely concealed message, it seems, was this: Why bother any longer with these Europeans, always nagging; let's put all our money on better relations with our Arab brothers, always accommodating.⁴⁴ Since AKP positioned itself in Muslim countries and acted like a representative of a model democracy, which shows AKP gained alternatives to EU that led the way to de-Europeanization. This does not totally required for Turkey to give up EU reforms since EU will demand a Turkey that is powerful in a determined region. As long as AKP believes the outcomes of the reforms outweigh the costs of the reforms, the full integration process could be continued.

2008-2012 global economic crisis which was started in USA and spread to Europe, negatively affected the Turkey–EU relations -which was already uncertain- and future direction of Turkish foreign policy in general. Recent figures indicate negative growth, rising unemployment and declining inflows of foreign direct investment point towards a new era of relative stagnation, making a sharp contrast with the economic boom of the post-2001 period. The foreign policy of the AKP in recent years is partly driven by economic considerations and there is a clear attempt to diversify Turkey's economic relations away from Europe at a time when the EU itself is going through a period of deep economic and financial difficulties. The relative stagnation of the European markets, combined with growing economic and diplomatic ties with Russia, the Middle East and North Africa may push Turkey further away from the path of EU membership towards an alternative trajectory of an assertive and independent regional power.⁴⁵

According to Günay and Renda, EU has been used by the AKP to stress that AKP's political activism in the Middle East in general and in the Iraqi case in particular was legitimate since the EU explicitly acknowledged it. By using the argument that Turkey's policies are in line with those of the EU, AKP politicians warded off the criticisms that their policy in the Middle East originated from Washington and was designed to support the American policy on Iraq.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Lagendijk, Joost "Is the EU Still Important for AKP?", 15.06.2010 <<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/default.aspx?pageid=438&n=is-the-eu-still-important-for-the-akp-2010-06-15>> (access date 18 June 2016)

⁴⁵ Öniş, "Contesting for Turkey's Political Centre...", p. 374.

⁴⁶ Defne Günay & Kaan Renda, Usages of Europe in Turkish Foreign Policy towards the Middle East, *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 1, (2014), p. 56.

Conclusion

Most of the literature about the Europeanization and de-Europeanization of Turkey focused on the slowdown of the reforms since 2005. This paper aimed to analyze how AKP changed its EU policy in last 15 years since it came to power and how it used EU reforms for its empowerment. Although AKP started its political life as a pro-EU party, it mainly focused the reforms that will empower itself and guarantee its victory in the latter election periods. During its first years, AKP needed EU's power because of secular-military-judicial establishment. While AKP showed the reason of the slowing reforms as the EU credibility, it should be questioned why AKP waited till its second victory. Getting second victory, AKP has empowered itself and had the chance of selecting EU reforms rather than submitting all the reforms that are put forwarded by EU. It can be suggested that, with the second victory of AKP, de-Europeanization concept started to emerge in Turkey. As soon as AKP guaranteed its place in Turkish politics by getting self-confidence, it had the chance of selecting reforms that are needed for its empowerment by arguing the lower credibility of EU. With all these evaluations, it is seen that AKP showed an example of a political party which used EU to make socio-political change in Turkey. As a result of this change, instead of modernizing and developing, Turkey moved away from its neighbor and ally countries and approached to the East. AKP used EU reforms instrumentally, without aiming to establish liberal democracy in Turkey. Opening new negotiation chapters like those on judiciary and fundamental rights, and justice in this situation was the wrong policy option for Turkey. The argument for furthering Turkey's democratization by engaging with the country more systematically has not generated any positive steps in recent years: it has only succeeded in sending the wrong signal by providing external support for the AKP's centralization of power, thus further alienating and marginalizing Turkey's real pro-EU forces. AKP was not from the beginning a pro-EU party rather it is a modern Islamist party that has learned how to survive in an international system characterized by economic interdependence and political empowerment.

References

- Adam, Laura Batalla (2012) "Turkey's Foreign Policy in the AKP Era: Has There Been A Shift in the Axis?", *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, 11 (3), 139-148.
- Alaranta, Toni (2015), "Turkey under AKP: A Critical Evaluation From the Perspective of Turkey's EU Negotiations", *FLA Working Paper* 84, 1-25.
- Alpan, Başak (2014) "Europe –as-Hegemony and Discourses in Turkey after 1999: What has Europeanization Got to Do with It?", *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 16 (1), 68-85.
- Alpan, Başak (2016) "From AKP's 'Conservative Democracy' to 'Advanced Democracy': Shifts and Challenges in the Debate on 'Europe'", *South European Society and Politics*, 21 (1), 15-28.
- Aydın-Düzgıt Senem and Kaliber Alper (2016), "Encounters with Europe in an Era of Domestic and International Turmoil: Is Turkey a De-Europeanising Candidate Country?", *South European Society and Politics*, 21 (1), 1-14.
- Aydın-Düzgıt Senem (2016), "De-Europeanisation through Discourse: A Critical Discourse Analysis of AKP's Election Speeches", *South European Society and Politics*, 21 (1), 45-58.
- Cebeci, Münevver (2016), "De-Europeanisation or Counter-Conduct? Turkey's Democratisation and the EU", *South European Society and Politics*, 21 (1), 119-132.
- Çınar, Menderes (2011), "The Electoral Success of the AKP: Cause for Hope and Despair", *Insight Turkey*, 13 (4), 107-127.
- Günay Defne & Renda Kaan (2014) Usages of Europe in Turkish Foreign Policy towards the Middle East, *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 16 (1), 47-67.
- Jakub Wódka (2015): Institutional Aspects of the (De-)Europeanization of Turkish Political Parties. The Case of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the Republican People's Party (CHP), *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 19 (2), 153-170.
- Kaliber, Alper (2012), "Contextual and Contested: Reassessing Europeanization in the case of Turkey", *International Relations*, 27 (1), 52-73.

- Müftüler-Baç Meltem and Gürsoy Yaprak, (2010), “Is There a Europeanization of Turkish Foreign Policy? An Addendum to the Literature on EU Candidates”, *Turkish Studies*, 11 (3), 405-427.
- Noutcheva, Gergana, and Senem Aydın-Duzgit. 2012. “Lost in Europeanisation: The Western Balkans and Turkey Lost in Europeanisation: The Western Balkans and Turkey.” *West European Politics*, 35 (1), 59–78.
- Oğuzlu Tarık (2012), “Turkey and the European Union: Europeanization Without Membership”, *Turkish Studies*, 13 (2), 229-243.
- Öniş, Ziya (2009) “Conservative globalism at the crossroads: the Justice and Development Party and the thorny path to democratic consolidation in Turkey”, *Mediterranean Politics*, 14 (1), 21–40.
- Öniş, Ziya (2010), “Contesting for Turkey’s Political Centre: domestic politics, identity conflicts, and the controversy over EU membership”, *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 18 (3), 361-376.
- Saatçioğlu Beken (2014), “AKP’s ‘Europeanization’ in Civilianization, Rule of Law and Fundamental Freedoms: The Primacy of Domestic Politics”, *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 16 (1), 86-101.
- Tezcan Ercüment ve Aras İlhan (2015), “Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi’nde Euroseptizm: Avrupa Birliği Desteğinin Eleştiriye Dönüşümü”, *Uluslararası Hukuk ve Politika*, 11 (41), 1-35.
- Yılmaz Gözde (2016), “From Europeanization to De-Europeanization: The Europeanization Process of Turkey in 1999–2014”, *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 24 (1), 86-100.
- Yılmaz, Hakan (2011), “Euroseptism in Turkey: Parties, Elites and Public Opinion”, *South European Society and Politics*, 16 (1), 185-208.
- Yetkin, Murat (2004), “Asla Boyun Eğmeyiz”, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=137396> (12.06.2016)
- Uslu, Emre (2013) “Erdoğan’s new enemy: the EU”, Today's Zaman., <http://webpublicapress.net/tayip-erdogans-new-enemy-the-european-union/> (12.06.2016)
- “Erdoğan: AB’nin Türkiye için ilerleme raporu hazırlamaktan başka işi yok mu?”, EurActiv, 22 Ekim 2013, <http://www.euractiv.com.tr/ab-ve->

[turkiye/article/erdogan-abnin-turkiye-icin-ilerleme-raporu-hazirlamaktan-baska-isi-yok-mu-028572](http://www.euractiv.com.tr/3/article/erdogan-abnin-turkiye-icin-ilerleme-raporu-hazirlamaktan-baska-isi-yok-mu-028572) (12.06.2016)

“Erdoğan: Böyle bir Avrupa Parlamentosu’nu tanımıyorum” EurActiv, <http://www.euractiv.com.tr/3/article/erdogan-boyle-bir-avrupa-parlamentosunu-tanimiyorum-027955>. (12.06.2016)

“Türkiye AB üyesi olamayacak” Vatan, 21 Eylül 2013, <http://haber.gazetevatan.com/turkiye-ab-uyesi-olamayacak/570825/1/>. (12.06.2016)

“AK Partinin Avrupa-şüphesiz gruba katılması tartışma yarattı” EurActiv, 11 Kasım 2013 <http://www.euractiv.com.tr/ab-ve-turkiye/article/ak-partinin-avrupa-phesizi-gruba-katlmastartma-yaratt-028675> (12.06.2016)

Erhan İçener, “AK Partinin AB’deki yanlış hamlesi” 17 Kasım 2013, http://www.zaman.com.tr/yorum_ak-partinin-abdeki-yanlis-hamlesi_2168411.html

“AB’nin Geleceği Şüpheli” 05 Mart 2011 http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/diger/227418/Cicek_AB_nin_gel_eeegi_supheli_.html (13.06.2016)

“Avrupa’ya Rest Çekti: Bu Fransız Arkadaş Türkiye’ye de Fransız Kalmış” , 13 Nisan 2011, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/avrupaya-rest-cekti-bu-fransiz-arkadas-turkiyeye-de-fransiz-kalmis-17536665>, (13.06.2016)

Lagendijk, Joost “Is the EU Still Important for AKP?”, 15.06.2010 <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/default.aspx?pageid=438&n=is-the-eu-still-important-for-the-akp-2010-06-15>

Merkel: Türkiye’nin AB Üyeliği Gündemde Değil 16 Mart 2016 http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2016/03/160316_merkel_turkiye, (18.06.2016)