

A Typology of Academic Priorities in the EU and Türkiye-EU Relations Research

AB'de Akademik Önceliklerin Tipolojisi ve Türkiye-AB İlişkileri Araştırması

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ABSTRACT

There is a lack of comprehensive studies examining the specific topics that academics in Türkiye prioritize, their research trends, and the broader impact of their work. This study aims to address this gap by identifying the main topics and priorities in academic research on the EU and Türkiye-EU relations. It seeks to answer the main question: What topics do academics in Türkiye prioritize in their studies on the EU and Türkiye-EU relations? The study focuses on three main topics: Political Issues Within the EU (PIWEU), Political Problems in Türkiye-EU Relations (PPTREUR), and The Role of Academia in Türkiye-EU Relations (RATREUR). To explore these priorities, the study uses a survey conducted with 30 A-NEST academics and analyzes the data using the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) and the Technique for Order Preference by Similarity to Ideal Solution (TOPSIS). AHP evaluates the relative importance of the main topics, while TOPSIS ranks the subtopics, providing a clear picture of academic priorities. This study highlights the research priorities of academics in Türkiye, focusing on the EU and Türkiye-EU relations. It offers useful insights for understanding the challenges in Türkiye-EU relations and provides a foundation for addressing these challenges through both academic research and policy-making processes.

Keywords: Türkiye-EU Relations, Academic Priorities, Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP), the Technique for Order Preference by Similarity to Ideal Solution (TOPSIS), EU Studies

ÖZET

Türkiye'de AB ve Türkiye-AB ilişkileri çalışan akademisyenlerin hangi konulara odaklandığı ve araştırma eğilimleri konusunda kapsamlı bir inceleme eksikliği bulunmaktadır. Bu çalışma, AB ve Türkiye-AB ilişkilerine dair akademik araştırmalardaki temel tercihlerini ve önceliklerini belirleyerek bu boşluğu doldurmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu bağlamda, çalışmada şu temel soruya cevap aranmaktadır: Türkiye'deki akademisyenler, AB ve Türkiye-AB ilişkileri konusundaki araştırmalarında hangi konulara öncelik vermektedirler? Araştırma, üç temel konuya odaklanmaktadır: AB içindeki Politik Meseleler (PIWEU), Türkiye-AB ilişkilerindeki Politik Sorunlar (PPTREUR) ve Türkiye-AB ilişkilerinde Akademik Rolü (RATREUR). Çalışmada, 30 A-NEST akademisyeni ile gerçekleştirilen bir anket üzerinden Analitik Hiyerarşi Süreci (AHP) ve İdeal Çözüme Benzerliğe Göre Tercih Sıralama Tekniği (TOPSIS) yöntemleri kullanılarak analiz yapılmıştır. Bu yöntemler aracılığıyla, akademisyenlerin belirlenen ana konular ve alt konular arasında hangi konulara öncelik verdiği tespit edilmiştir. AHP, konuların göreceli önemini değerlendirirken, TOPSIS alt başlıklar için bir sıralama sağlamıştır. Bu çalışma, Türkiye'de AB ve Türkiye-AB ilişkilerine odaklanan akademisyenlerin önceliklerini aydınlatarak, Türkiye-AB ilişkilerindeki zorlukları anlama ve bu zorlukların üstesinden gelme konusunda önemli içgörüler sunmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Türkiye-AB ilişkileri, Akademik Öncelikler, Analitik Hiyerarşi Süreci (AHP), İdeal Çözüme Benzerliğe Göre Tercih Sıralama Tekniği (TOPSIS), AB Çalışmaları

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Introduction

Academics engaged in the study of the European Union (EU) and Türkiye-EU relations in Türkiye significantly contribute to the development of these relations by addressing conflicts between the parties, shaping public opinion, and enhancing awareness on the topic. There is a necessity for a deeper comprehension of the role and preferences of academia in Türkiye concerning the EU and Türkiye-EU relations. Academic studies on Türkiye-EU relations primarily concentrate on the internal dynamics of the EU, such as integration, security, and economic policies, as well as bilateral issues, including the Cyprus issue, democratization, and refugees.¹ Nonetheless, a thorough examination capturing the viewpoints of scholars in Türkiye on the topics they deem significant regarding the EU and Türkiye-EU relations has yet to be undertaken.

The main objective of this article is to address this gap by identifying the topics that scholars in Türkiye, focusing on EU and Türkiye-EU relations, consider most significant, and to elucidate the potential impact of their work on the future of Türkiye-EU relations. In this context, the primary research question centers on identifying the main themes and subtopics prioritized by academics in Türkiye in relation to the EU and Türkiye-EU relations. What are the key themes and subthemes prioritized by academics in Türkiye when analyzing the dynamics of Türkiye-EU relations, and how have these academic priorities evolved over time in response to changing political, economic, and diplomatic circumstances in both Türkiye and the EU?

A survey study was conducted to explore the preferences of academics working on EU and Türkiye-EU relations in Türkiye. The study survey included three rounds:

In the first round, to create a topic pool, an in-depth literature review was performed, which led to the identification of topics aligned with the research question and methodological requirements. However, very few studies (e.g., Schimmelfennig 2016; Mercan & Romya Bilgin 2023) were found regarding the topics of EU and Türkiye-EU relations in Türkiye. The topics pool was derived from recurrent topics in these EU studies.

In the second round, a questionnaire was sent with a topics pool that may affect Türkiye-EU Relations to these experts and asked them to evaluate the topics pool by revising, adding, or removing topics if necessary, and to create a typology and hierarchy structure of main topics and subtopics. After some corrections, the authors sent the final form of the hierarchy structure of main topics and subtopics to get their approval. Finally, these main topics were defined as Political Issues within the EU (PIWEU), Political Problems in Türkiye-EU Relations (PPTREUR), and the Role of Academia in Türkiye-EU Relations (RATREUR). Within the framework of EU and Türkiye-EU relations, various subtopics were defined under each main topics. In the hierarchy structure of the last form. These subtopics were specified. For PIWEU, the nine subtopics were European integration, EU security, governance and authoritarianism in the EU, the refugee crisis, economic policies, populism, countering xenophobia, EU enlargement, and Brexit. Similarly, nine subtopics were outlined for PPTREUR: The Cyprus issue, the rule of law, democratization, revision of the Customs Union, human rights, refugees, transparency/accountability, alignment with the EU *acquis*, and Türkiye's counter-terrorism operations. For RATREUR, the six subtopics were project preparation and implementation, national and international publications, establishing international connections, organizing events such as panels, symposiums, and conferences, developing policies toward EU membership, and organizing training and certification programs. These themes main and sub topics collectively capture the EU's internal dynamics, the bilateral issues in Türkiye-EU relations, and the contribution of academia to these processes. The sub-

1 Sedef Eylemer and İlkay Taş, "Pro-EU and Eurosceptic Circles in Turkey," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 23, no. 4 (2007): 561, 562.; Meltem Müftüler-Baç, "Turkey's Ambivalent Relationship with the European Union: To Accede or not to Accede," *International Relations* 13, no. 52 (2016) 90-91.; Ebru Turhan and Wolfgang Wessels, "The European Council as a Key Driver of EU-Turkey Relations: Central Functions, Internal Dynamics, and Evolving Preferences," in *EU-Turkey Relations Theories, Institutions, and Policies*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 185-188.; Eda Kuşku Sönmez, "Turkey's Ambivalent Allies in Central and Eastern Europe: Dynamics of Support for Turkey's European Union Process," *Ankara Avrupa Çalışmaları Dergisi* 17, no. 1 (2018): 153-159.; Kemal Kirişçi, "Türkiye ve Avrupa Birliği: Katılım Öncesi Dönemin İç ve Dış Politika Dinamikleri," *International Relations* 2, no. 8 (2005-2006): 79-83.

topics within each main topics were developed based on significant discussions in the literature to reflect academics' tendencies and enable an impartial analysis through ranking and weighting methods.

In the third round, experts were asked to compare only the main topics using the AHP scale for pairwise comparison and to create a ranking of subtopics within each main topic, which is utilised in the TOPSIS, allocating 100 points according to the importance of the subtopics in their relevant main topics.

A survey was conducted among 41 (39 experts responded, nine experts' forms had missing data, and finally, 30 experts' responses were included in the analysis) randomly selected academics from the A-NEST (Academic Network for European Union Studies in Türkiye), which is supported by the Delegation of the EU to Türkiye and facilitates information exchange and networking on academic EU studies.² The survey asked these academics to revise, obtain classification, and create a hierarchy structure of main topics and subtopics across the EU and Türkiye–EU literatures. Then, they were requested to conduct pairwise comparisons of the topics and to score the subtopics they prioritize according to their academic background. The survey data were analyzed using the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) and the Technique for Order Preference by Similarity to Ideal Solution (TOPSIS), both of which are reliable methods in social sciences decision-making. AHP facilitates the hierarchical organization of problems and evaluates the significance of various criteria. In this study, it helps to assess the relative weight of the main topics based on academic preferences. Using these AHP-derived weights, TOPSIS was then employed to rank subtopics according to their proximity to an ideal solution. This combined approach ensures that academic priorities are analyzed not only descriptively but also within a measurable typology framework.

The rationale for using purposive sampling is to ensure that AHP and TOPSIS are applied based on the informed and specialized views of experts in the field, thereby increasing the study's validity. These methods support the integration of qualitative and quantitative analyses, which is essential given the complexity of EU and Türkiye–EU relations, and this combined approach ensures that academic priorities are analyzed not only descriptively but also within a measurable typology framework. This research was conducted at a time when Türkiye–EU relations faced multiple uncertainties, the EU was developing new strategies for internal challenges, and Türkiye's membership process remained contested.

I. Political Issues within the EU

Recent EU studies primarily focus on political dynamics, with European integration at the center of scholarly interest. While early discussions often concentrated on integration, further examination reveals a broader range of political debates stemming from it. Especially during times of crisis, scholars increasingly examine the EU's decision-making mechanisms through theories such as neofunctionalism, intergovernmentalism, postfunctionalism, and federalism.³ This literature not only sheds light on the EU's evolving policies but also reflects the ongoing academic engagement with its political trajectory. Especially, discussions based on neofunctionalism and liberal intergovernmentalism have pointed to the changing nature of the EU over time and how the national preferences of member countries have imposed constraints on the deepening aspects of economic and monetary union.⁴ The question of how to manage the EU economy in the aftermath of crises has become increasingly important. Researchers have examined how European integration, especially through monetary union, has reshaped power relations between capital and labor. These studies highlight that Europeanization has contributed to unequal power structures among social classes, while the interac-

² Delegation of the European Union to Türkiye, "A-NEST Academic Network for European Union Studies in Türkiye," https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/t%C3%BCrkiye/academic-research-nest_en?s=230.

³ Federico Maria Ferrara and Hanspeter Kriesi, "Crisis pressures and European integration," *Journal of European public policy* 29, no. 9 (2022): 1368, 69.; Demosthenes Ioannou, Patrick Leblond, and Arne Niemann, "European integration and the crisis: practice and theory," *Journal of European Public Policy* 22, no. 2 (2015): 155, 56.

⁴ Ramūnas Vilpišauskas, "Eurozone crisis and European integration: Functional spillover, political spillback?," in *Redefining European Economic Governance* (Routledge, 2016), 361.

tion between state and market remains insufficiently theorized.⁵ Although taxation is not considered the primary cause of the economic integration crisis, certain tax policies may have exacerbated existing tensions.⁶ Moreover, disparities in fiscal policies among member states are seen as a possible source of instability.⁷ These discussions provided critical insights into the structural dynamics of the EU in times of crisis.

In response to increasing economic disparities among member states, the EU has developed policy proposals tailored to national contexts. These include promoting fiscal discipline, adopting less protectionist labor market strategies, and expanding regulations to support vulnerable groups.⁸ During these endeavors, the European Commission has gained prominence for its growing influence on national economic policies.⁹ However, despite these integrative measures, many member states have intensified protectionist practices since the 2008 crisis, including quotas, tariffs, and non-tariff barriers.¹⁰ The limited responsiveness and participatory capacity of institutions like the EU Council during such crises have raised concerns about the democratic legitimacy of EU economic governance, sparking debates on the role of national governments and the balance between supranational and intergovernmental control.

Beyond the traditional focus on crises, decision-making, and theoretical frameworks, recent integration studies have increasingly addressed European skepticism and the influence of radical right parties. These studies highlight the paradox of nationalist and Euro-skeptic actors actively participating in the European Parliament, and examine how radical right movements and political parties are shaped by or contribute to the Europeanization process.¹¹ The rise of populist parties has intensified debates on European integration, prompting scholars to explore public attitudes toward the EU and the factors influencing preferences for either deeper integration or disintegration.¹² This body of work has significantly enhanced our understanding of how populism and skepticism shape the trajectory of European integration both within and beyond the EU.

Studies on European integration have also examined far-right movements, particularly those rooted in nationalist, anti-immigration, and anti-Muslim ideologies.¹³ This body of research highlights the growing electoral potential of far-right parties in both Western and post-communist Eastern Europe.¹⁴ One recurring theme is the rejection of Türkiye's EU membership, which far-right parties have leveraged to reinforce exclusionary visions of European identity and cultural boundaries.¹⁵ The opposition to Türkiye's accession

- 5 Daniel Seikel, "European integration, power resources and social classes. A proposal for a political economic extension of the Europeanisation approach," *Journal of European Public Policy* 31, no. 9 (2024): 1.
- 6 Gül İpek Tunç and Semiha Öztürk, "The Role of Taxation in the European Union Sovereign Debt Crisis," *Journal of Ekonomik Yaklaşım Association* 32, no. 119 (2021): 144, 145.
- 7 Hale Kırmızıoğlu, "Fiscal Framework Changes in European Monetary Union Before and After Sovereign Debt Crisis," in *Global Financial Crisis and Its Ramifications on Capital Markets, Contributions to Economics*, (Springer International Publishing, 2017), 79, 80.
- 8 Jörg S. Haas et al., "Economic and fiscal policy coordination after the crisis: is the European Semester promoting more or less state intervention?," in *Economic and Monetary Union at Twenty* (Routledge, 2021), 327.
- 9 Serap Durusoy, Edgardo Sica and Zeynep Beyhan, "Economic Crisis and Protectionism Policies: The Case of the EU Countries," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 5, no. 6 (2015): 57, 58.
- 10 Armin Steinbach, "EU economic governance after the crisis: revisiting the accountability shift in EU economic governance," *Journal of European public policy* 26, no. 9 (2019): 1355.; Uwe Puetter, "Europe's deliberative intergovernmentalism: the role of the Council and European Council in EU economic governance," *Journal of European Public Policy* 19, no. 2 (2012): 161.; Haas et al., "Economic and fiscal policy coordination after the crisis: is the European Semester promoting more or less state intervention?," 328.
- 11 Dimitri Almeida, "Europeanized Eurosceptics? Radical right parties and European integration," *Perspectives on European Politics and Society* 11, no. 3 (2010): 237-238.
- 12 Brandon Malloy, Zeynep Ozkok, and Jonathan Rosborough, "Is Brexit an outlier? Euroscepticism and public support for European integration," *European Politics and Society* 25, no. 2 (2024): 21.; Hakan Yılmaz, "Euroscepticism in Turkey: Parties, Elites and Public Opinion," *South European Society and Politics* 16, no. 1 (2011): 1, 2.
- 13 Andreas Önnersfors, "Between Breivik and PEGIDA: the absence of ideologues and leaders on the contemporary European far right," *Patterns of Prejudice* 51, no. 2 (2017): 174, 75.; Ulrike M Vieten and Scott Poynting, "Contemporary far-right racist populism in Europe," *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 37, no. 6 (2016): 533, 34.; Ian Down and Kyung Joon Han, "Far right parties and 'Europe': societal polarization and the limits of EU issue contestation," *Journal of European Integration* 43, no. 1 (2021): 65.
- 14 Djordje Stefanovic and Geoffrey Evans, "Multiple winning formulae? Far right voters and parties in Eastern Europe," *Europe-Asia Studies* 71, no. 9 (2019): 1443, 44.
- 15 Ali Balci and Filiz Cicioglu, "Türkiye in the discourse of European far right: the uses and abuses of Türkiye's membership process for a counter-hegemony," *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 28, no. 1 (2020): 100.; Senem Aydın-Düzgit, "European Parliament 'doing' Europe: Unravelling the right-wing culturalist discourse on Turkey's accession to the EU," *Journal of Language and Politics* 14, no. 1 (2015): 154, 155.

has been used strategically in electoral politics, not only by ultra-nationalist parties but also by mainstream political actors seeking to neutralize far-right narratives.¹⁶ Scholars have emphasized that this resistance extends beyond concerns about the Copenhagen Criteria, reflecting broader efforts to prevent the politicization of Türkiye's membership by populist movements.¹⁷ These discussions illuminate the far-right's dual role in shaping both EU identity debates and the discourse surrounding Türkiye's place in Europe.

Since 2017, scholarly work has argued that concerns over the EU's waning influence in the Western Balkans have brought enlargement back onto the geopolitical agenda. However, progress has remained limited due to diverging interests among member states.¹⁸ These studies also explore the implications of differentiated integration and the potential marginalization of new member states. Furthermore, the literature highlights a broader shift in EU discourse from "debordering" to "rebordering," shaped by cultural resistance, conservative-nationalist reactions, and neoliberal hegemonic interests.¹⁹ Russia's geopolitical presence in the region is frequently cited as an additional factor influencing the EU's strategy. As such, the EU's approach to enlargement in the Western Balkans continues to be examined through the lens of regional competition and shifting power dynamics.²⁰

European integration studies have increasingly focused on governance, particularly exploring the rise of national and supranational authoritarian tendencies within the EU.²¹ Scholars have emphasized the need to reassess the interplay between integration models and democratic legitimacy, especially in light of the negative impact of economic crises on institutional trust.²² The absence of a coherent theoretical framework for "differentiated cooperation" in foreign policy has also been criticized, prompting proposals for conceptual models to assess its potential risks.²³ Furthermore, citizen engagement is viewed as a cornerstone of democratic governance, with studies highlighting that political knowledge about the EU is essential for fostering sustained public participation.²⁴ Overall, the literature underscores governance, legitimacy, and civic involvement as interdependent components of a functioning EU democracy.

Security-related studies in European integration increasingly address defense cooperation, cybersecurity, and EU digital sovereignty. A growing body of literature emphasizes that without integrating artificial intelligence into the EU's foreign and security policy, ambitions for global influence and strategic autonomy will remain limited.²⁵ While classical security concerns such as counterterrorism and radicalism continue to feature in integration debates, attention has also turned to the EU's evolving international partnerships.²⁶ In

16 Balci and Cicioglu, "Türkiye in the discourse of European far right: the uses and abuses of Türkiye's membership process for a counter-hegemony," 100-110; Ayhan Kaya, "Right-wing populism and Islamophobia in Europe and their impact on Turkey-EU relations," *Turkish Studies* 21, no. 1 (2020): 1, 2.; Hasan Ulusoy and Oğuz Güngörmez, "Right-Wing Populist Discourse in the European Parliament on Turkish Foreign Policy," *Insight Turkey* 25, no. 3 (2023): 170-172.

17 Balci and Cicioglu, "Türkiye in the discourse of European far right: the uses and abuses of Türkiye's membership process for a counter-hegemony," 109-110.; Katy Brown, "When Eurosceptics Become Europhiles: Far-Right Opposition to Turkish Involvement in the European Union." *Identities* 27, no. 6 (2020): 649.

18 Milenko Petrovic and Nikolaos Tzifakis, "A geopolitical turn to EU enlargement, or another postponement? An introduction," *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 29, no. 2 (2021): 157.

19 Frank Schimmelfennig, "EU enlargement and differentiated integration: Discrimination or equal treatment?," in *The European Union: Integration and Enlargement* (Routledge, 2016), 681.2016; Marie-Eve Bélanger and Frank Schimmelfennig, "Politicization and rebordering in EU enlargement: membership discourses in European parliaments," *Journal of European public policy* 28, no. 3 (2021): 407.; Mustafa Türkes and Göksu Gökçöz, "The European Union's Strategy towards the Western Balkans: Exclusion or Integration?" *East European Politics and Societies* 20, no. 4 (2006): 659, 660.

20 Ritsa Panagiotou, "The Western Balkans between Russia and the European Union: perceptions, reality, and impact on enlargement," *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 29, no. 2 (2021): 219.

21 Christian Kreuder-Sonnen, "An authoritarian turn in Europe and European Studies?," *Journal of European Public Policy* 25, no. 3 (2018): 452.

22 Arzu Demirel, "Euro Krizi ve Avrupa Birliği'nin Demokratik Meşruiyeti," *Ankara Avrupa Çalışmaları Dergisi* 16, no. 2 (2017): 26-28.

23 Maria Giulia Amadio Viceré and Monika Sus, "Differentiated cooperation as the mode of governance in EU foreign policy," *Contemporary Security Policy* 44, no. 1 (2023): 26, 27.; Pieter De Wilde, Anna Leupold, and Henning Schmidtke, *The differentiated politicisation of European governance* (Routledge, 2018), 3.

24 Evangelos Fanoulis, "Knowledge of the EU and citizen participation in European governance: an agonistic democracy perspective." *European Politics and Society* 19, no. 1 (2018): 35-48.

25 Andrea Calderaro and Stella Blumfelde, "Artificial intelligence and EU security: The false promise of digital sovereignty," *European Security* 31, no. 3 (2022): 415.

26 Raphael Bossong, "EU cooperation on terrorism prevention and violent radicalization: frustrated ambitions or new forms of EU security governance?," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 27, no. 1 (2014): 66, 78, 79.

the context of global power competition, particularly in the Asia-Pacific, scholars highlight a pragmatic shift in the EU's regional strategy, reflecting its efforts to redefine its geopolitical role.²⁷

Brexit remains a key subject in discussions on the future of European integration, particularly due to its wide-ranging implications for the EU-United Kingdom (the UK) relations.²⁸ Scholars have explored its impact on economic and social conditions in the UK, the legal divergence between EU and national laws, the status of citizenship rights, and bilateral relations with member states.²⁹ In the aftermath of the withdrawal, evolving debates have also addressed how the UK will redefine its role in European security frameworks and whether meaningful cooperation will persist.³⁰ Studies related to Brexit focus on economic and social impacts, as well as the EU-UK relations, citizenship rights, political debates from different states, and security cooperation.³¹

In EU studies that prioritize political issues, topics such as European integration, EU security, governance and authoritarianism, the refugee crisis, economic policies, populism, countering xenophobia, EU enlargement, and Brexit have become interrelated and complex focal points.

II. Political Problems in Türkiye-EU Relations

While EU studies predominantly concentrate on internal political issues, Türkiye-focused EU research has increasingly addressed bilateral political tensions that intensified after 2010. Scholars distinguish between chronic and conjunctural disputes in Türkiye-EU relations, noting a decline in long-standing issues and a rise in context-specific developments. Among the persistent problems, the Cyprus issue remains central. Although the Annan Plan briefly revived hopes for resolution, the EU's 2004 accession of the Greek Cypriot Administration without a comprehensive settlement deepened mistrust and hardened divisions. Between 2002 and 2017, shifts in Türkiye's foreign policy and evolving notions of national identity contributed to strained relations with the EU.³² Since the 2010s, geopolitical shifts in the Eastern Mediterranean, particularly hydrocarbon discoveries, the Arab Spring, and the Mavi Marmara incident, have further reshaped Türkiye's Cyprus policy, merging hard and soft power approaches.³³ The stagnation of Türkiye's EU accession process and energy-related tensions have reinforced the strategic nature of the Cyprus question, transforming it into a dynamic element of Türkiye-EU political relations.

Another chronic issue in Türkiye-EU relations is democratization, with particular attention given to gender equality, women's rights, and EU conditionality.³⁴ In the early 2000s, secular women's organizations engaged in direct lobbying with political actors; however, in the 2010s, diminishing EU influence and the rise of government-aligned NGOs led them to adopt alternative strategies.³⁵ Although the EU initially served as a normative reference point for democratization, its influence significantly waned following the deterioration of

27 Emil Kirchner, "EU security alignments with the Asia-Pacific," in *Alliances in Asia and Europe* (Routledge, 2023), 556.; Angela Pennisi di Floristella, "Security cooperation in and with Asia: towards a pragmatic turn in the EU's security policy?," *European security* 29, no. 2 (2020): 170.

28 Sevilay Kahraman, "Brexit and the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement in comparison: EU principles and practices of governing the neighbourhood," *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 31, no. 3 (2023): 944-945.

29 Julien Navarro, "A disruptive moment? Parliaments, Brexit, and the future of European integration," *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 29, no. 4 (2021): 443.

30 Simon Sweeney and Neil Winn, "EU security and defence cooperation in times of dissent: analysing PESCO, the European Defence Fund and the European Intervention Initiative (EII) in the shadow of Brexit," *Defence Studies* 20, no. 3 (2020): 224, 41, 42.

31 Başak Alpan and Özgehan Şenyuva, "Brexit in Turkish Political Debates: End of the Road or a New Trajectory?" in *Changing Perceptions of the EU at Times of Brexit Global Perspectives* (Routledge, 2020), 45, 46.

32 Mustafa Onur Tetik, "Discursive reconstruction of civilisational-self: Turkish national identity and the European Union (2002-2017)," *European Politics and Society* 22, no. 3 (2021): 380, 81.

33 Kıvanç Ulusoy, "The Cyprus conflict: Türkiye's strategic dilemma," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 18, no. 4 (2016): 393, 94.; Sinem Akgül Acikmese and Dimitrios Triantaphyllou, "The NATO-EU-Türkiye trilogy: the impact of the Cyprus conundrum," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 12, no. 4 (2012): 555,56.

34 Yannis Stivachtis and Stefanie Georgakis, "Changing Gender Attitudes in Candidate Countries: The Impact of EU Conditionality—The Case of Türkiye," *European Integration* 33, no. 1 (2011): 88.

35 Hande Eslen-Ziya and Nazlı Kazanoğlu, "De-democratization under the New Türkiye? Challenges for women's organizations," *Mediterranean Politics* 27, no. 1 (2022): 117, 18.

Türkiye-EU relations after 2007. This transformation in the relations has been addressed with concepts such as Europeanisation. While civil society organizations have remained central to democracy debates,³⁶ EU funding has in some cases increased their financial dependency rather than strengthening their institutional capacity.³⁷ The adaptability of these organizations under shifting political and financial conditions is another recurring theme in the literature.³⁸ Overall, the EU's role in promoting democratization, especially through civil society engagement, appears to have weakened in parallel with political estrangement between the parties.

By 2005, democratization in Türkiye had entered a period of stagnation, shaped by both domestic political dynamics and the EU's waning leverage. This decline weakened public confidence in the EU accession process and reduced incentives for political reform.³⁹ Research has identified persistent obstacles to democratization, including corruption, human rights violations, and economic instability. While the EU's conditionality contributed to economic progress after 1999, improvements in fundamental rights remained limited, and corruption continued unabated. Social and political unrest, military tutelage, and restrictions on freedoms further hindered democratic development.⁴⁰ Between 2002 and 2010, EU-backed reforms advanced, though scholars emphasize the influence of Turkish national identity in shaping the trajectory and interpretation of these reforms.⁴¹ Additionally, debates over the EU's strategic handling of Türkiye's membership, particularly regarding migration and cultural identity, have further complicated the democratization discourse.

In the broader democratization discourse, transparency and accountability emerge as persistent concerns in Türkiye-EU relations. Scholars have particularly scrutinized the functioning of independent regulatory bodies and the structural weaknesses in political party and campaign financing.⁴² Research has highlighted that pervasive corruption undermines Türkiye's EU accession prospects and necessitates systemic reform rather than piecemeal measures. The entrenchment of political favoritism, declining performance in international corruption indices, and inadequate enforcement mechanisms have all exacerbated the problem.⁴³ Furthermore, studies point to the politicization of the judiciary through the strategic appointment of loyal individuals and the erosion of judicial independence as key obstacles to rule of law.⁴⁴ These dynamics collectively weaken democratic governance and hinder alignment with EU norms.

Numerous studies indicate that Türkiye-EU relations have historically developed on an economic basis, with the Customs Union providing substantial benefits to Türkiye, particularly by enhancing efficiency in the manufacturing sector until 2004. However, the EU's shift in trade strategy toward Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) in 2006, combined with the loss of momentum in the accession process, has revealed the structural limitations of the Customs Union.⁴⁵ In response, Türkiye has increasingly advocated for its modernization

36 Münevver Cebeci, "De-Europeanisation or counter-conduct? Türkiye's democratisation and the EU," *South European Society and Politics* 21, no. 1 (2016): 119, 20.

37 Özge Zihnioğlu, «European Union funds and the assumed professionalization of Turkish civil society organizations,» *Turkish Studies* 20, no. 5 (2019): 658, 59.

38 Zihnioğlu, "European Union funds and the assumed professionalization of Turkish civil society organizations," 671; Özge Zihnioğlu, «The 'civil society policy' of the European Union for promoting democracy in Türkiye: golden goose or dead duck?,» *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 13, no. 3 (2013): 381-83, 97.

39 Paul Kubicek, "Political Conditionality and European Union's Cultivation of Democracy in Türkiye." In *Democracy Promotion in the EU's Neighbourhood*, 26-47: Routledge, 2013.

40 Demet Yalcin Mousseau, "Is Türkiye democratizing with EU reforms?: An assessment of human rights, corruption and socio-economic conditions," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 12, no. 1 (2012): 63, 64, 76.

41 Elisabeth Johansson-Nogués and Ann-Kristin Jonasson, "Türkiye, its changing national identity and EU accession: explaining the ups and downs in the Turkish democratization reforms," *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 19, no. 01 (2011): 113,14.

42 Gül Sosay, "Delegation and accountability: Independent regulatory agencies in Türkiye," *Turkish Studies* 10, no. 3 (2009): 341-363.

43 Fikret Adaman, "Is corruption a drawback to Türkiye's accession to the European Union?," in *Türkiye and the EU: Accession and Reform* (Routledge, 2020). ; Firat Kimya, "Political economy of corruption in Türkiye: declining petty corruption, rise of cronyism?," *Turkish Studies* 20, no. 3 (2019): 351, 52.

44 Digidem Soyaltin-Colella, "How to capture the judiciary under the guise of EU-led reforms: domestic strategies of resistance and erosion of rule of law in Türkiye," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 22, no. 3 (2022): 441, 43; 57, 58.

45 Kamil Yılmaz, "The EU—Türkiye Customs Union Fifteen Years Later: Better, Yet not the Best Alternative," in *Türkiye and the EU: Accession and Reform* (Routledge, 2020), 246. Yonca Özer, "Modernising the EU-Türkiye Customs Union as an interest-driven initiative," *Ankara Avrupa Çalışmaları Dergisi* 19,

to encompass sectors such as agriculture, services, and public procurement. These efforts aim not only to mitigate the disadvantages Türkiye faces due to the EU's FTAs with third countries, but also to promote economic growth by expanding trade volume.

Counter-terrorism has emerged as a key area of focus in academic studies on Türkiye-EU relations. Following the Paris and Brussels attacks in 2015–2016, the EU adopted a more integrated approach to counter-terrorism, emphasizing intelligence sharing, diplomatic coordination, and internal security. These developments also fueled the rise of nationalist and far-right sentiments within certain member states. While the EU has attempted to formulate consistent policies in response to such threats, its approach often frames each attack as a catalyst for advancing external security objectives.⁴⁶ In its engagement with Türkiye, the EU emphasizes the need to balance security measures with the protection of fundamental rights. However, strategic and normative divergences between the two parties, particularly concerning definitions of terrorism and proportionality of state response, have led to recurrent tensions in bilateral relations.⁴⁷

The refugee crisis triggered by the Syrian civil war introduced a new dynamic to Türkiye-EU relations, offering grounds for cooperation in areas such as border management, humanitarian assistance, and migration governance. The EU's approach has centered on Türkiye's geopolitical significance, support for refugee accommodation, and conditional financial assistance. However, this cooperation has been hindered by Türkiye's democratic backsliding and the EU's diminishing normative influence, raising doubts about the credibility of EU norms in external relations.⁴⁸ Studies also emphasize that the securitization of European borders and the externalization of migration policies have significantly influenced Türkiye's migration regime, leading to comprehensive policy reforms.⁴⁹ While the cooperation framework initially created mutual benefits, unmet expectations and diverging political values have undermined trust and momentum.⁵⁰ In parallel, academic debates have linked the precarious legal status of Syrian refugees in Türkiye with broader questions surrounding European identity, integration values, and the erosion of normative commitments on both sides.⁵¹

Considering these discussions, the study identifies the revision of the Customs Union, alignment with the EU *acquis*, human rights, rule of law, democratization, and institutional transparency as chronic issues in Türkiye-EU relations. In contrast, Türkiye's counter-terrorism efforts and the refugee/migration issue are addressed as conjunctural problems that have gained prominence in recent years.

no. 1 (2020): 175-97. Çağrı Erhan, Aysun Gürbüz, "Türkiye'nin AB İle İlişkilerinde Alternatif Model Arayışı: 'Kapsamlı Ekonomik Entegrasyon Anlaşması,'" *Ankara Avrupa Çalışmaları Dergisi* 12, no. 1 (2013): 47-78

46 Mai'a K Davis Cross, "Counter-terrorism in the EU's external relations," *Journal of European Integration* 39, no. 5 (2017): 609,10.

47 Gizem Alioğlu Çakmak, Volkan İşbaşaran, "Terrorist Attacks in Europe and Türkiye: Securitization of Türkiye in the 8th European Parliament Plenary Debates," *Contemporary Research in Economics and Social Sciences* 4, no. 1 (2020): 7-33.; Çiğdem Nas, "The EU's Approach to the Syrian Crisis: Türkiye as a Partner?," *Uluslararası İlişkiler* 16, no. 62 (2019): 45-64.

48 Ipek Demirsu and Damla Cihangir-Tetik, "Constructing the partnership with Türkiye on the refugee crisis: EU perceptions and expectations," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 21, no. 6 (2019): 625,26; 38, 39.

49 Meltem Muftuler-Bac, "Externalization of migration governance, Türkiye's migration regime, and the protection of the European Union's external borders," *Turkish studies* 23, no. 2 (2022): 309-10.; Burak Tangör and Alpay Alpaydin, "Human security governance: the case of Syrians in Türkiye," *European Security* 32, no. 2 (2023): 327, 28.

50 Mustafa Abbas, "After crisis: Health, politics and reflections on the European refugee crisis," *Medicine, Conflict and Survival* 35, no. 4 (2019): 295-307.; William V Pavlovich, "Noxious geopolitics, festering populaces and transmutable pasts: reframing the limits of acceptable politics through European refugee crises," *Patterns of Prejudice* 52, no. 2-3 (2018): 244.

51 Feyzi Baban, Suzan Ilcan, and Kim Rygiel, "Syrian refugees in Türkiye: Pathways to precarity, differential inclusion, and negotiated citizenship rights," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 43, no. 1 (2017): 41.; The Republic of Türkiye is a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol, maintaining the geographical limitation to the 1951 Convention, thus retaining resettlement to a third country as the most preferred durable solution for refugees arrived due to the events occurred outside of Europe. Türkiye has been undertaking legislative and institutional reforms to build an effective national asylum system in compliance with the international standards. For details see: UNHCR Türkiye, "Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Türkiye," [https://www.unhcr.org/tr/en/kime-yardim-ediyoruz/refugees-and-asylum-seekers-tuerkiye#:~:text=The%20Republic%20of%20T%C3%BCrkiye%20is,e-vents%20occurred%20outside%20of%20Europe.](https://www.unhcr.org/tr/en/kime-yardim-ediyoruz/refugees-and-asylum-seekers-tuerkiye#:~:text=The%20Republic%20of%20T%C3%BCrkiye%20is,e-vents%20occurred%20outside%20of%20Europe.;); For formal refugee definition in Türkiye see: The Presidency of Migration Management of Türkiye, <https://en.goc.gov.tr/refugee.>; For details about Türkiye's geographical restriction see The Presidency of Migration Management of Türkiye, <https://en.goc.gov.tr/conditional-refugee.>

III. The Role of the Academy in Türkiye-EU Relations

Academia plays a pivotal role in Türkiye-EU relations by fostering knowledge exchange, policy dialogue, and institutional alignment. Through collaborative initiatives, scholars contribute to building a resilient partnership grounded in shared values. A key dimension of this relationship has been the EU's financial support mechanisms. Projects funded through EU structural funds have significantly contributed to Türkiye's economic, social, and cultural development, extending beyond the scope of EU accession.⁵² Academic cooperation has been strengthened through programs such as Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe, which have facilitated student and staff mobility and fostered interdisciplinary collaboration. For instance, in 2020, over 43,000 participants from Türkiye engaged in Erasmus+ mobility activities across diverse educational fields.⁵³ These initiatives have improved educational quality, intensified intercultural exchange, and enhanced Türkiye's integration into the European Research Area. Especially the projects carried out under Horizon 2020 have accelerated Türkiye's integration into the European Research Area by enhancing its science and technology capacity.⁵⁴ Moreover, EU funding has supported regional development projects in infrastructure, rural development, environmental sustainability, and employment, contributing to the reduction of regional disparities and the promotion of sustainable development.⁵⁵

Academic events such as panels, symposiums, and conferences held in Türkiye and EU member states have served as important platforms for dialogue between scholars and policymakers. These forums have enabled multidimensional discussions on the complexities of Türkiye-EU relations and have facilitated the development of international academic networks. Academics who maintain direct communication with decision-makers have assumed a consultative role by producing policy-relevant research and detailed analytical reports. Furthermore, collaborations between cultural exchange initiatives and civil society organizations have promoted mutual understanding and strengthened intercultural dialogue. One of the most well-known initiatives contributing to cultural exchange between Türkiye and the EU is the Erasmus+ Program.⁵⁶ EU-Turkey Civil Society Dialogue also focuses on dialogue and collaboration between civil society organizations in Türkiye and the EU.⁵⁷ These interactions have played a vital role in challenging stereotypes and fostering a sense of shared European identity.

National and international academic publications have played a vital role in analyzing the challenges of Türkiye's EU accession and proposing policy-oriented solutions. Rather than limiting Türkiye-EU relations to the realm of foreign policy, these studies have addressed issues closely tied to domestic dynamics, including democratization, social transformation, and institutional reform. In doing so, they provide both theoretical insights for academic discourse and practical guidance for policymakers.⁵⁸ By encompassing the political, economic, social, and legal dimensions of the accession process, these evaluations illuminate its multidimensional character.

Educational initiatives, such as training programs, seminars, and workshops, have played a strategic role in promoting EU values and norms within Turkish society. These activities not only enhance public un-

52 T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı Avrupa Birliği Başkanlığı, "TR- AB Mali İş Birliği," https://www.ab.gov.tr/tr-ab-mali-isbirligi_5.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com; Kivılcım Romya Bilgin and Sezgin Mercan, "European Financial Assistance Provided to Türkiye and the CEECs: An Equity Shift," *Turkish Studies* 12, no. 3 (2011): 491-510.

53 European Commission, "Erasmus + 2020 in Numbers," https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/factsheets/factsheet-tr-2020_en.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

54 T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı Avrupa Birliği Başkanlığı, "Horizon 2020," https://www.ab.gov.tr/horizon-2020_49614_en.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

55 European Commission, "Türkiye Financial Assistance under IPA," https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/overview-instrument-pre-accession-assistance/turkiye-financial-assistance-under-ipa_en?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

56 Betül Bulut-Sahin, Perim Uyar, and Bugay Turhan, "The impact of the Erasmus Program and the institutional administration of internationalization in Türkiye," *Higher Education Governance* 3, no. 2 (2022): 133-134.

57 Directorate for EU Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Türkiye, *Civil Society Dialogue Programme Between Türkiye and the EU*, (2022), 4-14, https://www.ab.gov.tr/siteimages/pub/small_csd_v_compendium_eng-310723.pdf.

58 Sezgin Mercan, Kivılcım Romya Bilgin, Haluk Karadağ, and Yelda Ongun, "Academic Trends in European Union Studies in Turkey within the Framework of Turkey-EU Relations," *International Relations* 19, no. 76 (2023): 54, 55.; Pelin Sönmez and Hikmet Kırık, "Turkish-EU Readmission Agreement: A Critique of EU-Turkey Migration Dialogue," *Security Strategies* 13, no. 25 (2017): 1-5.; Galip Yalman and Asuman Göksel, "Transforming Turkey? Putting the Turkey-European Union Relations into a Historical Perspective", *International Relations* 14, no. 56 (2017): 23-25.

derstanding of the EU but also foster institutional engagement with the reform agenda. Programs targeting youth, civil society actors, and public sector employees have been particularly effective in disseminating knowledge on EU principles and in reinforcing Türkiye's alignment with the EU accession framework.

Projects fostering cultural and social cooperation have played a pivotal role in strengthening societal ties between Türkiye and EU member states. Initiatives such as shared heritage research, educational exchanges, and artistic collaborations promote intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding. Expanding the reach of such programs to include diverse social groups and engaging a broader range of local stakeholders should be viewed as a strategic component of Türkiye's EU integration efforts. In the long term, these efforts can help consolidate a more resilient and inclusive foundation for Türkiye-EU relations.

IV. Data Collection and Method

Data Collection: To acquire experts' judgments, it is employed purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling strategy in which researchers deliberately pick participants based on particular features, since the applied method AHP is based on experts' opinions for weighting main topics. Furthermore, to gather scores of subtopics of each main topic by distributing 100 points, it is utilised in TOPSIS. Therefore, it is necessary to determine the optimal sample size. The AHP approach typically employs a sample size ranging from 2 to 100 experts.⁵⁹ The AHP approach does not have a definitive minimum sample size; nonetheless, several studies have utilized sample sizes ranging from 4 to 9, while only a limited number have exceeded 30.⁶⁰ In the TOPSIS, including more expert evaluations in the model yields more consistent results. In this content, considering the assumptions of AHP and TOPSIS approaches, it is specified that the optimal sample size as roughly 25-30 experts and the questionnaire was conducted on these academics (experts) registered with A-NEST, a network established to promote academic studies on the EU and enhance collaboration among scholars and researchers in Türkiye.

Data collection commenced on September 3, 2021, and concluded on March 3, 2022. The questionnaire was sent to 41 experts to ensure the optimal sample size, and 39 experts responded to the questionnaire. After removing the forms with 9 missing data, it finally had 30 experts who had answered every question on the survey. This study was approved by the Başkent University Institutional Review Board and Ethics Committee and supported by the Başkent University Research Fund. Anonymity was guaranteed to all participants, and this was ensured by centrally collecting all anonymous replies online. Written notice of their rights, including the ability to refuse the research and withdraw up until the moment of data pooling, was given to the potential participants. The survey study included three rounds:

In the first round, to create a topic pool, an in-depth literature review was performed, which led to the identification of topics aligned with the research question and methodological requirements. During the in-depth literature review, the study was confined to peer-reviewed academic works (articles, book chapters, and reports) published in English and Turkish after 2000 on EU studies and Türkiye-EU relations. However, very few studies (e.g., Schimmelfennig 2016; Mercan & Romya Bilgin 2023) were found regarding the topics on EU and Türkiye-EU relations in Türkiye and no studies were excluded. Thus, such as PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) reporting was not applied. Finally, the topics pool was derived from recurrent topics in these EU studies.

In the second round, a questionnaire was sent with a topics pool that may affect Türkiye-EU Relations to these experts and asked them to evaluate the topics pool by revising, adding, or removing topics if it is

59 Muhittin Şahin and Halil Yurdugül. «A content analysis study on the use of analytic hierarchy process in educational studies.», *Journal of Measurement and Evaluation in Education and Psychology* 9, no.4, (2018): 376-392.

60 Darko et al. "Review of application of analytic hierarchy process (AHP) in construction.", *International journal of construction management* 19, no.5, (2019):436-452.

necessary, and to create a typology and hierarchy structure of main topics and subtopics. Then, the writers combined the judgments of these experts concerning the hierarchy structure of main topics and subtopics. After some corrections, the writers sent the final form of the hierarchy structure of main topics and subtopics to get their approval. Some experts recommended simple changes and these changes were conducted on the hierarchy structure of main topics and subtopics. Consequently, the writers obtained 3 main topics and 24 subtopics of these main topics in the final form. The final form of the hierarchy structure of main topics and subtopics is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: The Last Form of the Hierarchy Structure of Main Topics and Subtopics

Main Topic	Subtopic
Political Issues Within the EU (PIWEU)	Anti-Xenophobia in the EU
	Brexit
	EU Economic Policies
	EU Enlargement
	EU Integration
	EU Security
	Governance and Authoritarianism in the EU
	Populism in the EU
	Refugee Crisis
Political Problems in TR-EU Relations (PPTREUR)	Cyprus Problem
	Democratization
	Harmonization with the EU Acquis
	Human rights
	Refugees
	Revision of the Customs Union
	Rule of law
	Transparency/ Accountability
	Türkiye's Counter-Terrorism Operations
The Role of the Academy in TR-EU Relations (RATREUR)	Establishing International Connections
	National and International Panel, Symposium, Conference, etc. Arrangement
	National and International Publication
	Organizing Training and Certificate Programs
	Policy Development to Become a Member State
	Project Preparation and Execution

Note: *the main topics and subtopics are in alphabetical order.*

In the third round, since Miller stated that the upper limit of the number of items that can be distinguished by the brain at the same time and processed in short-term memory to make comparisons is 7 (seven)⁶¹, experts were requested to compare only the main topics using the scale in AHP for performing the pairwise comparison, which has ranged from 1 (equally important) to 9 (extremely more important) developed by

61 George A. Miller, "The magical number seven, plus or minus two: Some limits on our capacity for processing information.", *Psychological Review* 63, no.2, (1956): 81–97

Saaty.⁶² The scale of AHP and the format of the pairwise comparison matrix given to the experts are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2: The Scale of AHP and the Format of Pairwise Comparison Matrix

The Scale of AHP		The Format of Pairwise Comparison Matrix			
Intensity of Importance	Definition	Main Topic	PIWEU	PPTREUR	RATREUR
1	Equal importance				
3	Somewhat more important	PIWEU	1		
5	Much more important				
7	Very much more important	PPTREUR		1	
9	Absolutely more important	RATREUR			1
2, 4, 6, and 8	Intermediate values				

PIWEU: Political Issues Within the EU, PPTREUR: Political Problems in TR-EU Relations, RATREUR: The Role of the Academy in TR-EU Relations.

At the same time in the third round, to create a ranking of subtopics in each main topic, which is utilised in the TOPSIS method, the writers asked the experts to distribute 100 points according to the importance of the subtopics in the relevant main topics. As a result, building on the involvement of A-NEST academics, the study employed a rigorous methodological framework to systematically analyze their research preferences and priorities.

Methodology: To support the integration of qualitative and quantitative analyses, which is essential given the complexity of EU and Türkiye-EU relations, we used a combined approach ensures that academic priorities are analyzed not only descriptively but also within a measurable typology framework. In this context, firstly, we created a typology and hierarchy structure of main topics and subtopics and obtained pairwise comparisons of the topics and prioritization of subtopics from experts' judgements. Secondly, for ranking and comparing which topics gain more prioritization the most widely used composite methodological approach, which is the integration of the AHP and TOPSIS, was applied. AHP was used to calculate the weights of topics, while TOPSIS ranked subtopics based on their closeness to the ideal solution.

The Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP): This technique was first recommended by Saaty.⁶³ AHP is suitable for multiple topic selection problems (MCSP). The decision issue must first be arranged in a hierarchy of levels to employ this technique. The problem's objective or overarching purpose is located at the top level. Main topics, subtopics, and so on are represented at higher levels. The choice possibilities are represented on the final level.⁶⁴ But, in most of the studies, AHP is commonly used only for obtaining the weight of the main topics. To gain weight on these main topics, Saaty developed a new scale for performing the pairwise comparison, which has ranged from 1 to 9 as indicated in Table 2⁶⁵. When relative assessments of any main topics are obtained through pairwise comparison, Saaty has suggested a technique (the eigenvector method) for calculating the relative weights of the topics.⁶⁶ The AHP roughly consists of four main phases: (i) computing the geometric mean of each individual pairwise comparison (a_{ij}) to get the integrated pairwise comparison (A) matrix, (ii) obtaining a normalization matrix (A_{norm}) of the integrated pairwise comparison (A)

62 Thomas L. Saaty, "A scaling method for priorities in hierarchical structures", *Journal of mathematical psychology* 15, no. 3, (1977): 234-281; Thomas L. Saaty, *Decision Making for Leaders-The Analytic Hierarchy Process for Decisions in a Complex World*, (RWS Publications Press, 1990).
 63 Thomas L. Saaty, *A scaling method for priorities in hierarchical structures*; Thomas L. Saaty, *Decision Making for Leaders-The Analytic Hierarchy Process for Decisions in a Complex World*, (RWS Publications Press, 1990).
 64 A. S. M. Masud and A. R. Ravindran, "Multiple Criteria Decision Making", in A. R. Ravindran (Ed.), *Operations research methodologies*, (CRC Press, 2009).
 65 Thomas L. Saaty, *A scaling method for priorities in hierarchical structures*; Thomas L. Saaty, *Decision Making for Leaders*.
 66 Thomas L. Saaty, *Decision Making for Leaders*.

matrix, (iii) finding the optimal weight matrix (w) by taking the k^{th} power of the A_{norm} matrix, and (iv) checking inconsistency in pairwise comparison by calculating Consistence Index (CI) and Consistency Ratio (CR). The main phases of the method with mathematical expressions are succinctly explained below:

(i) *Computing the geometric mean of each individual pairwise comparison (a_{ij}) to get the integrated pairwise comparison (A) matrix:* In the first phase, to create the integrated pairwise comparison (A) matrix, the geometric mean is used, which is widely used way to integrate individual judgments into a collective judgment⁶⁷. The formula of geometric mean (GM) is illustrated in Equation 1. The GM should be conducted on each individual pairwise comparison (a_{ij}).

$$GM = \left(\prod_{i=1}^n x_i \right)^{\frac{1}{n}} \quad i = 1, 2, 3 \dots n \quad (1)$$

(ii) *Obtaining a normalization matrix (A_{norm}) of the integrated pairwise comparison (A) matrix:* The second phase of the method is a normalization matrix of the integrated pairwise comparison (A) matrix. The normalization matrix (A_{norm}) can be found by using the formula as indicated in Equation 2.⁶⁸

$$A_{\text{norm}} = \frac{a_{ij}}{\sum_{j=1}^n a_{ij}} \quad i = 1, 2, 3 \dots n \quad (2)$$

where a_{ij} is any value in the integrated pairwise comparison matrix (A). This operation can be done more practically as follows: First, all the values in each column are summed, then all the values in the relevant column are divided by the column total.

(ii) *Finding the optimal weight matrix (w) by taking the k^{th} power of the A_{norm} matrix:* In this phase of the method is to find the optimal weight matrix (w) by taking the k^{th} power of the matrix A_{norm} in Equation 3.⁶⁹

$$w = \lim_{k \rightarrow \infty} \frac{A_{\text{norm}}^k e}{e^T A_{\text{norm}}^k e} \quad (3)$$

where e is the unit column matrix and e^T is the transpose of the unit column matrix (e). In this approach, the minimum k value should be equal to the number of criteria/dimensions (n).

(iii) *Checking inconsistency in judgments (pairwise comparison) by calculating CI and CR :* The last phase of the method is to check inconsistency in judgments (pairwise comparison), the AHP method offers a way to quantify these inconsistent judgments by calculating Consistence Index (CI) and Consistency Ratio (CR) as expressed in Equation 4, 5 and 6.⁷⁰

$$\lambda_{\text{maks}} = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n \left(\sum_{j=1}^n a_{ij} w_j / w_i \right) \quad (4)$$

$$CI = \frac{\lambda_{\text{maks}} - n}{n - 1} \quad (5)$$

$$CR = \frac{CI}{RI} \quad (6)$$

67 J. Aczél and Thomas L. Saaty. "Procedures for synthesizing ratio judgements." *J Math Psychol*, no.27, (1983): 93-102.

68 Bruce F. Baird, *Managerial Decisions Under Uncertainty: An Introduction to the Analysis of Decision Making*, (John Wiley & Sons, 1989).

69 Patrick T. Harker, "The art and science of decision making: The analytic hierarchy process," in B.L. Golden, E.W. Wasil and P. T. Harker (Eds.), *The Analytic Hierarchy Process: Applications and Studies*, (Springer-Verlag, 1989).

70 Thomas L. Saaty, *A scaling method for priorities in hierarchical structures*; Thomas L. Saaty, *Decision Making for Leaders*.

where a_{ij} is any value in the integrated pairwise comparison matrix (A) and w is the weight matrix. RI indicates the experimentally derived random index value. If all the evaluations are exactly consistent, then $\lambda_{max} = n$ (where n is the number of primary criteria being taken into account in the current calculations) otherwise, $\lambda_{max} > n$. As a general rule, the Consistency Ratio (CR) ≤ 0.10 states an acceptable level of consistency for pairwise comparison in AHP.⁷¹

Technique for Order Preference by Similarity to Ideal Solution (TOPSIS): Hwang and Yoon first developed TOPSIS for the MCSP.⁷² According to TOPSIS, the preferred alternative should be both the farthest from the negative ideal solution and the nearest to the ideal solution.⁷³ The approach makes use of an index that combines how far an option is from the negative-ideal solution and how near it is to the positive-ideal solution. The preferable option is the one that maximizes this index value. TOPSIS calculates the proximity of alternatives to the ideal solution using the criterion weights determined by the AHP method. This method provides academics for ranking and comparing which topics academics prioritize more in their studies. TOPSIS has increased the reliability of the study by enabling meaningful results to be drawn from survey data. TOPSIS consists of six main steps: (i) creating a decision matrix (X_{ij}), (ii) obtaining a normalization matrix (R_{ij}) from the decision matrix (X_{ij}) using the vector normalization method, (iii) acquiring a weighted normalized decision matrix (V_{ij}), (iv) specifying ideal positive (and ideal negative solution (values, (v) calculating the Euclidean distances (and from positive and negative ideal solutions (and), and (vi) computing the relative distances (C_i) of each alternative from the positive ideal (the best values) and negative ideal (the worst values) solutions by using Euclidean distances (and , which emphasize how an alternative is closeness to positive ideal solution and far from negative ideal solution. The main steps of TOPSIS with mathematical expression are explained in summary below:⁷⁴

(i) **Creating a decision matrix (X_{ij}):** In order to apply the method, a decision matrix (X_{ij}) of $m \times n$ size must be created first, which shows the value of the i^{th} alternative according to the j^{th} criteria. The general structure of the decision matrix is shown in Equation 7.

$$X_{ij} = \begin{bmatrix} x_{11} & x_{12} & \dots & x_{1n} \\ x_{21} & x_{22} & \dots & x_{2n} \\ \cdot & & & \cdot \\ \cdot & & & \cdot \\ \cdot & & & \cdot \\ x_{m1} & x_{m2} & \dots & x_{mn} \end{bmatrix} \quad (7)$$

where m row vectors express the number of alternatives and n column vectors denote the number of criteria.

(ii) **Obtaining a normalization matrix (R_{ij}) from the decision matrix (X_{ij}) using the vector normalization method:** The vector normalization method is used for obtaining the normalization matrix (R_{ij}) from the decision matrix (X_{ij}).⁷⁵ In vector normalization, the direction of the criteria does not change. The vector normalization is calculated using Equation 8.

$$R_{ij} = \frac{x_{ij}}{\sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^m x_{ij}^2}} \quad (i = 1, 2, \dots, m; j = 1, 2, \dots, n) \quad (8)$$

71 Masud and Ravindran, *Multiple Criteria Decision Making*; R.Aktaş, M.M. Doğanay, Y. Gökmen, Y. Gazibey, and U. Türen, *Sayısal Karar Verme Yöntemleri*, (Beta Yayınevi, 2015).

72 Ching-Lai Hwang and K. S. Yoon, *Multiple Attribute Decision Making-Methods and Applications*, (Springer-Verlag, 1981), 129.

73 Milan Zeleny, *Multiple Criteria Decision Making*. (McGraw-Hill, 1982): 327-388.

74 Hwang and Yoon, *Multiple Attribute Decision Making-Methods and Applications*.

75 Nolberto Munier. *A Strategy for Using Multicriteria Analysis in Decision-making: A Guide for Simple and Complex Environmental Projects*, (Springer, 2011).

The values of R_{ij} represent the scaled values by the vector normalization method. The values of R_{ij} are obtained by dividing each value (x_{ij}) by the square root of the sum of the corresponding column vector and normalizing it. Thus, a scale in the range (0–1) is obtained without disturbing the proportionality between the values in the matrix.

(iii) *Acquiring a weighted normalized decision matrix (V_{ij}):* At this step, it is necessary to obtain a weighted normalized decision matrix. The weights (w_j) of each criterion should be determined by the decision maker using different multi-criteria decision-making methods such as AHP. The weighted normalized decision matrix (V_{ij}) obtained by multiplying each value of r_{ij} with the relevant criterion weight (w_j) is shown in Equation 9.

$$V_{ij} = \begin{bmatrix} w_1 r_{11} & w_2 r_{12} & \dots & w_n r_{1n} \\ w_1 r_{21} & w_2 r_{22} & \dots & w_n r_{2n} \\ \cdot & & & \cdot \\ \cdot & & & \cdot \\ \cdot & & & \cdot \\ w_1 r_{m1} & w_2 r_{m2} & \dots & w_n r_{mn} \end{bmatrix} \quad (i = 1, 2, 3, \dots, m; \quad j = 1, 2, 3, \dots, n) \quad (9)$$

(iv) *Specifying ideal positive (and ideal negative solution (values:* In this step, ideal positive (the best values) and ideal negative solution values (the worst values) should be obtained. If the direction of the criterion is utility, the positive ideal solution consists of the largest value in the relevant criterion, and the negative ideal solution consists of the smallest value in the relevant criterion. On the other hand, if the direction of the criterion is cost, it is formed from the smallest value in the relevant criterion for the positive ideal solution, and from the largest values in the relevant criterion if the negative ideal solution is in the relevant criterion. How to determine the ideal negative and positive solutions are shown in Equation 10.⁷⁶

$$\begin{aligned} A_j^+ &= \text{Max} / \text{Min}(v_{ij}) \quad (j = 1, 2, 3, \dots, n) \quad \text{if the direction of criterion is utility} \\ A_j^- &= \text{Min} / \text{Max}(v_{ij}) \quad (j = 1, 2, 3, \dots, n) \quad \text{if the direction of criterion is cost} \end{aligned} \quad (10)$$

(v) *Calculating the Euclidean distances (and from positive and negative ideal solutions:* For each alternative, the Euclidean distances (and from both ideal solutions are calculated by exploiting the formula as expressed in Equation 11.

$$\begin{aligned} S_i^+ &= \sqrt{\sum_{j=1}^n (v_{ij} - A_j^+)^2} \quad (i = 1, 2, 3, \dots, m; \quad j = 1, 2, 3, \dots, n) \\ S_i^- &= \sqrt{\sum_{j=1}^n (v_{ij} - A_j^-)^2} \quad (i = 1, 2, 3, \dots, m; \quad j = 1, 2, 3, \dots, n) \end{aligned} \quad (11)$$

It shows the total distance of the th alternative from the positive ideal solutions and th alternative from the negative ideal solutions. The closer an alternative is to the positive ideal and farther from the negative ideal, the more likely it is to take the lead in the ranking.

(vi) *Computing the relative distances (C_i) of each alternative from the ideal solutions by using Euclidean distances (and :* In the last step, the relative distances (C_i) of the alternatives from the ideal solutions are calculated according to Equation 11.

$$C_i = \frac{S_i^-}{(S_i^- + S_i^+)} \quad (i = 1, 2, 3, \dots, m) \quad (12)$$

76 J. Lu, G. Zhang, D. Ruan, and F. Wu, *Multi-Objective Group Decision Making: Methods, Software, and Applications With Fuzzy Set Techniques*, (Imperial College Press, 2007).

Here, the C_i^{th} alternative represents the relative distances from the positive ideal and negative ideal solutions. A large value indicates that the alternative is close to the ideal positive solution and far from the ideal negative solution. In this way, all of the C_i takes a value between 0 and 1. Alternatives are ranked from largest to smallest according to their values.⁷⁷ The alternative with greater value has better performance.⁷⁸

The combined use of these methods has allowed for both qualitative and quantitative analyses, enabling a more comprehensive evaluation of the data and providing insight into which topics academics prioritize in their studies on EU and Türkiye-EU relations.

V. Findings

In the study, to achieve the goals, it is first applied the four-step AHP method to compute the weights of the topics. Firstly, the writers computed the geometric mean of each individual pairwise comparison (a_{ij}) to get the integrated pairwise comparison (A) matrix. Secondly, they obtained the normalization matrix (A_{norm}) of the integrated pairwise comparison (A) matrix. Thirdly, they found the optimal weight matrix (w) by taking the k^{th} power of the A_{norm} matrix. In the last phase, it is checked the inconsistency in judgments (pairwise comparison) by calculating Consistence Index (CI) and Consistency Ratio (CR). The results of the main phases of AHP and the weights of the topics whose sum of scores is equal to one are represented in Table 3.

Table 3: The Results of Main Phases of AHP (n=30)

Integrated Pairwise Comparison Matrix (A) ^a				
Main Topics	PIWEU	PPTREUR	RATREUR	
PIWEU	1.000	2.088	2.562	
PPTREUR	0.479	1.000	2.732	
TRATREUR	0.390	0.366	1.000	
Normalization Matrix (A_{norm})				
Main Topics	PIWEU	PPTREUR	RATREUR	
PIWEU	0.535	0.604	0.407	
PPTREUR	0.256	0.290	0.434	
TRATREUR	0.209	0.106	0.159	
4 th Power of the A_{norm} Matrix ^b				
Main Topics	PIWEU	PPTREUR	RATREUR	
PIWEU	0.534	0.534	0.534	
PPTREUR	0.296	0.296	0.296	
TRATREUR	0.170	0.170	0.170	
Optimal Weight Matrix (w)				
Main Topics	PIWEU	PPTREUR	TRATREUR	Total Weight
Weight (w)	0.534	0.296	0.170	1.000
Checking Inconsistency In Pairwise Comparison				
CI=0.045		CR= 0.077		

Note: **PIWEU**: Political Issues Within the EU, **PPTREUR**: Political Problems in TR-EU Relations, **RATREUR**: The Role of the Academy in TR-EU Relations. (a): We computed the geometric mean of each individual pairwise comparison (a_{ij}) to get the integrated pairwise comparison (A) matrix.⁷⁹ (b): To obtain stable results, the minimum k value should be equal to the number of criteria/dimensions (n)

77 M. M. Doğanay, "Hisse Senedi Fonlarının Çok Kriterli Karar Yaklaşımı ile Derecelendirilmesi" *Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi*, 57, no. 3, (2002): 31-47; J. Lu, G. Zhang, D. Ruan, and F. Wu, *Multi-Objective Group Decision Making: Methods, Software, and Applications with Fuzzy Set Techniques*.
 78 Hwang and Yoon, *Multiple Attribute Decision Making-Methods and Applications*; Rohit Joshi, D. Banwet, and, R. Shankar. "A Delphi-AHP-TOPSIS based benchmarking framework for performance improvement of a cold chain" *Expert Systems with Applications*, 38, no. 8, (2011); Majid Behzadian, S. K. Otahsara, M. Yazdani, and J. Ignatius. "A state-of the-art survey of TOPSIS applications." *Expert Systems with Applications* 39, no. 17, (2012): 13051-13069.
 79 Aczél and Saaty, *Procedures for synthesizing ratio judgements*.

and the more likely it is to take the lead in the ranking. The , and scores and the ranking ID of each subtopic are represented in Table 4.

Table 4: The S_i^+ , S_i^- , and C_i Scores and the Ranking ID of Each Subtopic

Ranking ID	Main Topic	Subtopic	Positive Ideal Solution (S_i^+)	Negative Ideal Solution (S_i^-)	Relative Distance (C_i)
1	PIWEU	EU Integration	0.0175	0.0280	0.6151
2	PIWEU	EU Security	0.0219	0.0239	0.5215
3	PIWEU	Governance and Authoritarianism in the EU	0.0241	0.0232	0.4911
4	PIWEU	Refugee Crisis	0.0236	0.0227	0.4901
5	PIWEU	EU Economic Policies	0.0230	0.0205	0.4715
6	PIWEU	Populism in the EU	0.0248	0.0210	0.4581
7	PIWEU	Anti-Xenophobia in the EU	0.0271	0.0177	0.3950
8	PIWEU	EU Enlargement	0.0270	0.0162	0.3752
9	PPTREUR	Cyprus Problem	0.0285	0.0156	0.3537
10	PIWEU	Brexit	0.0291	0.0139	0.3240
11	PPTREUR	Rule of law	0.0281	0.0131	0.3179
12	PPTREUR	Democratization	0.0292	0.0133	0.3123
13	PPTREUR	Revision of the Customs Union	0.0306	0.0114	0.2703
14	PPTREUR	Human rights	0.0303	0.0111	0.2682
15	PPTREUR	Refugees	0.0308	0.0098	0.2407
16	PPTREUR	Transparency/ Accountability	0.0328	0.0078	0.1925
17	PPTREUR	Harmonization with the EU Acquis	0.0326	0.0074	0.1854
18	RATREUR	Project Preparation and Execution	0.0348	0.0056	0.1374
19	RATREUR	National and International Publication	0.0348	0.0055	0.1366
20	RATREUR	Establishing International Connections	0.0346	0.0053	0.1327
21	PPTREUR	Türkiye's Counter-Terrorism Operations	0.0349	0.0052	0.1303
22	RATREUR	National and International Panel, Symposium, Conference, etc. Arrangement	0.0350	0.0048	0.1197
23	RATREUR	Policy Development to Become a Member State	0.0354	0.0047	0.1179
24	RATREUR	Organizing Training and Certificate Programs	0.0359	0.0042	0.1055

PIWEU: Political Issues Within the EU, PPTREUR: Political Problems in TR-EU Relations, RATREUR: The Role of the Academy in TR-EU Relations.

As scrutinizing the results in Table 4, while the subtopics having three smallest scores indicating closeness to positive ideal solutions (the best values) are “EU Integration”, “Governance and Authoritarianism in the EU”, and “Refugee Crisis” respectively, the subtopics having three highest scores expressing that it is far from negative ideal solutions (the worst values) are “EU Integration”, and “EU Security”, and “Governance and Authoritarianism in the EU” successively. Considering the relative distances (C_i) of each alternative, which indicate that the closer an alternative is to the positive ideal and farther from the negative ideal solutions and express an alternative with greater value has better performance, the writers explore that whereas the subtopics of the PIWEU are in the top three, the subtopics in the last three belong to the RATREUR. On the other hand, the subtopics PPTREUR are in the middle rank. Moreover, the writers discover that the most important topic is PIWEU as it has nine subtopics in the top ten.

Table 4 provides a detailed ranking of the 24 subtopics based on their relative distance (Ci) scores. Key observations include that the PIWEU (Political Issues Within the EU) category has dominated the top three positions in the ranking:

EU Integration (Ci = 0.6151): This subtopic indicates that the integration process and the challenges encountered in EU studies are considered the most important themes by academics.

EU Security (Ci = 0.5215): The EU's security concerns, particularly in the context of external threats and defense policies, play a central role in shaping policies.

Governance and Authoritarianism in the EU (Ci = 0.4911): This result highlights the increasing academic interest in governance issues and authoritarian tendencies within the EU, particularly in the context of rising populism.

The subtopics in the PPTREUR category have ranked in the mid-levels:

Cyprus Problem (Ci = 0.3537): Ranking highest within this category, it has been considered one of the most significant issues in Türkiye-EU relations.

Rule of Law (Ci = 0.3179) and Democratization (Ci = 0.3123): These subtopics are among the fundamental elements of Türkiye-EU relations and have garnered significant interest from academics.

The subtopics of the RATREUR category occupy the lowest positions in the ranking:

Project Preparation and Execution (Ci = 0.1374), National/International Publications (Ci = 0.1366), and Establish International Connections (Ci=0.1327): The subtopics that scored the highest in this category indicate that academics place limited importance on these activities.

Organizing Training and Certification Programs (Ci = 0.1055): This subtopic, being at the bottom of the ranking, reveals that the indirect impact of academic activities is perceived to be lower.

When evaluated in general, it is observed that the superiority of the PIWEU subtopics in the ranking indicates that the internal issues of the EU hold central importance in academic studies. This situation reveals that the reflections of EU policies on Türkiye and other candidate countries are viewed as a critical research area by academics.

Another notable finding related to the research is that the subtopics of PPTREUR rank in the middle, indicating that academics believe bilateral issues between Türkiye and the EU are important, but their interest in Türkiye-EU relations has become a matter that needs to be questioned compared to EU-focused issues. This situation may reflect the perception that resolving the EU's internal issues is a prerequisite for progress in Türkiye-EU relations.

The low ranking of the RATREUR subtopics indicates that academics see their roles in policy-making and public opinion formation processes as less critical. However, this situation indicates that the indirect impact of academic studies may be evaluated in the long term.

Conclusion

This article demonstrates that, despite persistent challenges and the stagnation in Türkiye-EU relations, scholars in Türkiye have not abandoned the field of EU studies; however, the thematic and methodological focus of these studies has significantly evolved. Interviews with academics from the A-NEST network reveal a noticeable shift in research priorities compared to the pre-2010 period. This reorientation is driven by several factors. First, although Türkiye formally maintains its EU candidacy, its normative and strategic divergence from full membership goals has led to a growing academic focus on EU integration and internal political dynamics rather than enlargement. Second, as chronic bilateral issues receded with the opening of accession negotiations, scholars increasingly adopted a pragmatic orientation addressing contextual and evolving challenges. Third, the prolonged stagnation in the membership process has reduced motivation for

enlargement-centered research, encouraging academics to explore alternative dimensions of Türkiye-EU relations.

The study categorizes academic priorities into three main domains: PIWEU, PPTREUR, and RATREUR. Among these, PIWEU emerges as the most prominent, receiving over half of the total weight in the preference ranking. This finding indicates that academics perceive the EU's internal developments, such as integration, governance, security, and economic policies, as critical to shaping the broader context of Türkiye-EU relations. EU-level changes are viewed as structural determinants of Türkiye's accession prospects and its relationship with the EU.

PPTREUR, the second-ranked category, encompasses enduring bilateral concerns such as the Cyprus issue, democratization, and harmonization with the EU acquis. Although these remain important, their lower ranking implies that scholars regard them as secondary to the EU's own internal evolution. The Cyprus issue, in particular, stands out as a chronic impediment, frequently cited as a central unresolved dispute.

RATREUR, which addresses academia's own role, including research, conferences, and project-based cooperation, ranks lowest in perceived relevance. This suggests that scholars see their contributions as indirect and long-term, rather than as immediate influencers of policy or public opinion. Nonetheless, the inclusion of this category reflects a recognition of academia's potential to support policy formation and societal awareness over time.

At the subtopic level, EU integration, governance and authoritarianism, and the refugee crisis top the list, illustrating how internal EU issues dominate the academic agenda. While PPTREUR subtopics such as the Cyprus issue and the rule of law occupy mid-level positions, RATREUR themes consistently rank lower. These results underscore the academic consensus that addressing the EU's internal political and institutional challenges is a prerequisite for advancing Türkiye-EU relations.

In conclusion, the study not only contributes original empirical findings but also resonates with existing literature on Türkiye-EU relations. It highlights a strategic reconfiguration of academic interests in Türkiye, with a strong emphasis on internal EU dynamics, a moderated focus on bilateral concerns, and a cautious outlook on academia's direct influence in the policy domain. While PIWEU leads in scholarly relevance, the continued attention to PPTREUR confirms the persistent importance of bilateral tensions. The relatively limited emphasis on RATREUR reflects the perceived distance between academic work and short-term policy shifts but acknowledges the field's long-term transformative potential. These findings provide a structured roadmap for future scholarly inquiry and underscore the evolving role of Turkish academia in shaping the discourse on Türkiye-EU relations.

Author Contribution Statements

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