

Can EU Act as a Democracy Promoter? Analysing the Democratization Demand and Supply in Turkey-EU Relations

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Abstract: *The EU's role to assist Turkey in its democratization efforts has been debated during Turkey's candidacy. However, in the second decade of the 21st century, this role of the EU lost its visibility while Turkey seemed to lose its interest in reform movements. This paper, inspired by Pevehouse, defines the EU as a supplier of democratization mechanisms and Turkey as an actor in need. Although lack of enthusiasm and disengagement have come to characterize Turkey-EU relations, this study aims to demonstrate that there are differences between the governing and the opposition actors' views on the EU and its role in the democratization of Turkey. Data collected from the speeches of opposition parties' parliamentarians between 1 January 2011 and 31 August 2016 demonstrates the similarities observed in these parties' concerns regarding democratic practices and the perception of the EU as an actor strengthening democracy, while indicating that the EU, as a supplier, overlooked their concerns during the process.*

Keywords: *Democratization, European Union, parliamentary debates, opposition parties*

Introduction

Turkey's European Union (EU) membership bid has been seen as an important anchor on its way to becoming a more liberal democracy. Even to start the negotiations to become a member required democratization reforms, amendments to existing regulations and legislation. The membership of Republic of Cyprus to the Union, the negative attitude towards Turkey's membership displayed by some Member States, i.e. France, the destructive impact of the economic crisis on the EU, the lack of will to use conditionality on Turkey, and, last but not least, Turkey's waning interest to become a member of the EU resulted in slowing down these democratization steps.

This paper is inspired by Pevehouse's terminology on international organizations' role in assisting democratization efforts by supplying causal mechanisms. In this case, the EU is the main democracy promoter; through its instruments it is the supplier, while the demanding actor is Turkey. However, it has been observed that on the demand side Turkish government policies and the speeches of the President clearly did not prioritize EU membership. This disengagement reflected on Turkey's democratic reform movements and some of the literature even started to define the regime in Turkey as competitive authoritarianism. (Esen

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and Gümüşçü 2016) (Özbudun 2015). In 2016, one of the main discussion topics in Turkey-EU relations has been the EU-Turkey Statement on 18 March 2016, a.k.a the EU-Turkey Refugee Deal. An optimistic perspective defends this deal, since it initiated talks between Turkey and the EU; the pessimistic perspective argues that the deal would not take Turkey-EU relations further and would not have a positive impact on Turkey's reforms. The process of negotiations and the deal itself had been criticized internationally (Şenyuva and Üstün 2015), since it disregarded the EU's own principles and it has been a tool for the EU in implementing its short-term policies, lacking any long-term perspective on strengthening ties with Turkey. Thus, neither the negotiations nor the deal highlighted the conditionality principle in EU-Turkey relations. While the supply side lacked serious interest in democracy promotion, one can still observe the will of the opposition parties at the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA) to work with the EU since it is [still] referred to as the anchor for Turkey's democratization and an exemplary model to promote democracy internationally. This paper, noting the differences between the government's position and the opposition's views, separates the demand side into two. The paper analyses the TGNA minutes between 2011 and 2016. In the 2011 general election, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP) won 49.83% of the total votes and got 341 of the seats (out of a total of 550) while Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (CHP) won 25.98% of the votes and 112 of the seats and Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (MHP) got 13.01% of the votes and 71 seats in the parliament (Gümrük Oyları Dahil Türkiye Geneli Seçim Sonuçları 2011). There were more than 30 independent parliamentarians who won seats in this election. This was AKP's biggest electoral win since 2002. In that year, AKP's share of votes was 34.28% and in the 2007 elections its share was up to 46.58%. The 2011 election gave almost half of the popular support to AKP and 2010 was the last year that the Turkish parliament accepted extensive reform packages in line with the EU membership goal. Thus, the beginning of 2011 to the end of August of 2016, just after the failed coup attempt, is taken as the time frame in analysing opposition parties' speeches in relation with the EU and democratic practices.

The first part of the paper summarizes the literature on the international organizations' role as a democracy promoter. The second part demonstrates the positive impact of the EU on Turkey starting from the Helsinki Summit in 1999, where Turkey's position was elevated to candidacy. Since the relations between Turkey and the EU are not considered to be exemplary, the golden years of Europeanization and democratization in this perspective seem to be forgotten. This part of the paper aims to remind all of the potential of the EU to supply the mechanisms that had pushed Turkey to reform itself.

The following section dwells upon the demand side of the relationship from 2011 to 2016. In this part, the article divides the demand into two: the government and the opposition, since their attitudes towards the democratization reforms, on EU-Turkey relations, expectations from the EU, and priorities are distinct from each other. Although this part provides the rhetoric from the government side on the relations with the EU, the main aim is to demonstrate the similarities and differences of the opposition parties regarding their expectations and priorities on EU-Turkey relations in relation to democratization by analysing opposition party members' speeches between 2011 and 2016.

In the conclusion, the paper shows that the demanding actor's opposition still holds a strong dedication towards reform, although public opinion polls and the daily rhetoric of Turkish domestic politics indicate otherwise.

International Organizations as democracy promoters

The role of international organizations in assisting democratic transition and consolidation has been debated broadly. Although there is wide literature on democratization analysing the reasons and the ways to establish a democratic system (such as social conflicts, actors not being able to impose their rule, the need to have economically developed societies with a more advanced division of labour), for the purposes of this paper the possible impact of international organizations on domestic actors is the main interest of the study. (Gleditsch and Ward 2006)

The literature also varies in defining democracy and the democratization process, since there is a constant debate on utilizing solely political terms or the need to refer to the social and economic processes together (Burnell 2005). The debate on the influence of external actors on democratization has been explained through structures and actors², focusing on issues including political and economic interdependence, geographical proximity, domestic political elites, power asymmetries, the impact of international events and processes. Therefore, it would be wrong to argue that there is only one way to explain the democratization process or the impact of the international organizations in this process.

If one aims not only for a representative democracy (where citizens have the opportunity to choose competing agendas and hold decision makers accountable for their actions), but also a participatory or even deliberative democracy (in which exclusion and marginalization are avoided), access to reliable and relevant information is possible (Bexell, Tallberg ve Uhlin 2010), and the significance of opposition groups and their elites becomes a subject of democracy promotion. In order to achieve a liberal democratic system where political and civil pluralism are promoted by the international organizations, one of the approaches present in the dedicated literature argues in favour of supporting groups outside the power structure who have the will and capability to challenge the government's power (Burnell 2005). The cooperation between external actors, domestic opposition, and international institutions is assumed to create opportunities for democratic mobilization and life-saving protection to domestic activists (Schmitz 2004).

According to Pevehouse, diplomatic and economic pressures, and international organizations' membership can force countries to liberalize and international organizations

² For detailed analysis see: E.N. Muller, "Dependent Economic Development, Aid Dependence on the United States and Democratic Breakdown in the Third World", *International Studies Quarterly*, 29, 1985, pp. 445-469; L. Whitehead, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore Maryland, 1986; J.S. Kopstein and D.A. Reilly, "Geographic Diffusion and the Transformation of the Post-Communist World", *World Politics*, 53(1), 2000, pp 1-37; S. Levitsky and L.A. Way, "Linkage, Leverage and the Post-Communist Divide", *East European Politics and Societies*, 21(1), 2007, pp. 48-66; D. Brinks and M. Coppedge, "Diffusion is No Illusion: Neighbour Emulation in the Third Wave of Democracy", *Comparative Political Studies*, 39(4), 2006, pp. 463-489; D. Berg-Schlosser, "Neighbourhood Effects of Democratization in Europe", *Taiwan Journal of Democracy*, 4(2), 2008, pp. 29-45; R.D. Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: the Logic of Two-Level Games", *International Organization*, 42(3), 1988, pp. 427-460; H.V. Milner, *Interests, Institutions and Information: Domestic Politics and International Relations*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1997; T. Risse, S.C. Ropp and K. Sikkink (eds.), *the Power of Human Rights: International Norms and Domestic Change*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge; H. Yilmaz, "External-Internal Linkages in Democratization: Developing an Open Model of Democratic Change", *Democratization*, 9(2), 2002, pp. 67-84; F. Schimmelfennig and U. Sedelmeier (eds.), *The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 2005.

may lower the risks that domestic activists face during the democratization process. Through the principle of conditionality associated to the membership perspective and the enforcement of those respective conditions, democratic international organizations can *supply* the causal mechanisms to assist the democratization effort (Pevehouse 2002). However, it is crucial that the supply side should be vigilant in its commitments to promote democracy. Levitsky and Way summarize the relationship between international organizations and domestic actors by stating that linkage to the West would create constituencies for adherence to international norms and may even shape voter preferences, since they would support integration (Levitsky and Way 2005) with democracy promoting organizations.

In this literature, one can see reference to the *soft power* of these international organizations, as they can put pressure on authoritarian governments. The EU has been perceived as the only fully functioning international organization, although it should be admitted that it is a unique type of polity, which holds this kind of ability around its borders through its membership carrot. The EU has been proud that it does not only provide support for civil society, but can also put pressure on governments and opposition parties through its conditionality clause. One should also emphasize that for international support to be successful in fuelling the democratization process, there must be a sympathetic ground among the citizens at the domestic level. This will be called the “demand” of the domestic actors.

Was the EU a democratizing force for Turkey?

Since 1999, when the EU elevated Turkey’s status to candidate state, the necessary steps to start the negotiations were taken and to become a negotiating candidate country has been the main aim. After the Helsinki Summit, political, administrative and judicial reforms were speeded up, and the government was keen on taking necessary steps in order to improve respect for human rights, democracy and rule of law. Titles which were prioritized in this regard were: freedoms of thought, expression and association, the fight against torture, training of public service personnel on human rights issues, improving the judiciary, measures against discrimination, and alleviating regional disparities (Baykal 2002). In 2001, constitutional amendments were made in line with these priorities and the 2001 Progress Report stated that “The constitutional amendments adopted by the Turkish Parliament on 3 October 2001 are a significant step towards strengthening guarantees in the field of human rights and fundamental freedoms and limiting capital punishment. The amendments narrow the grounds for limiting such fundamental freedoms as the freedom of expression and dissemination of thought, freedom of the press and freedom of association” (Commission 2001).

Following this report, in 2002, there were three more reform packages which demonstrated “the determination of the majority of Turkey’s political leaders to move towards further alignment with the values and standards of the European Union” (Commission 2002). The 2003 Progress Report showed appreciation of Turkey’s efforts: ‘Turkish government has shown great determination in accelerating the pace of reforms, which have brought far-reaching changes to the political and legal system’ (Commission 2003) and in 2005 Turkey officially opened the accession negotiations with the EU.

Initiation of negotiations was highly welcomed by the Government, media, civil society organizations and opposition parties in general, with the exception of MHP. The front page of *Milliyet*, a mainstream daily newspaper, was illustrated with EU stars and its headline read, "New Europe New Turkey" (*Milliyet* 2005). Daily newspaper *Sabah* highlighted the statements made by (former President) Abdullah Gül: "we will bring the international standards to Turkey" (*Dünya için önemli adım* 2005). In the parliament, a day after the start of the negotiations with the EU, Yaşar Yakış, AKP member and former foreign affairs minister, said "it has been the most important step towards the accession process and we see this process as the most important modernization project since the establishment of the Republic. As a parliament, which achieved this, we should be very proud and happy" (Yakış 2005). The public opinion polls showed that public support for EU membership was 59% in 2005 (Commission 2005) and 54% in 2006 (Commission 2006). CHP Vice-Chair at the time, Onur Öymen, said that "Turkey should not expect the accession negotiations to start at the beginning of 2005, although if it happens it would be a good thing" (CHP: AB'de 2005'i beklemeyin 2004). After the start of the accession negotiations, in October 2005, there were criticisms from CHP regarding mainly the Cyprus question. However, these criticisms did not suggest an attitude against the membership since the CHP has been renowned for its support of the EU process. Before the 2007 elections, CHP's electoral declaration also stated that the party will speed up the integration efforts to the EU (Dizdaroğlu 2007).

After the negotiations started, although the process did not speed up as it should have, still the EU membership and reforms were on the agenda. As the progress reports suggest, the Parliament passed laws regarding the political criteria (Commission 2006), and they had positive consequences on the execution of ECHR judgements (Commission 2007). However, the decision of the Council in 2006 (on not opening eight of the negotiating chapters related to Cyprus and not closing any of the chapters until Turkey implements the Additional Protocol to the Association Agreement), debates on the Mediterranean Union (proposed by former French President Nicolas Sarkozy) and German Chancellor's Angela Merkel infamous interview with *Deutsche Welle*, in which she argued that "a privileged partnership is a way to keep close ties between Turkey and the EU" (İnal and Yeğenoğlu 2005) exacerbated the negative attitudes towards Turkey's full Union membership. It has been observed that since the French and Cypriot vetoes on the opening of chapters, Turkish efforts in reforms to be undertaken to guarantee its membership decreased over the years.

Since 2008, the progress reports demonstrated a slowing down in reform processes and alignment to the EU criteria on the road to full membership. The constitutional referendum bringing changes in the composition of the Constitutional Court and the High Council of Judges and Public Prosecutors (HSYK), introducing an Ombudsman; narrowing down of the area of competence of military courts in favour of civilian courts; the strengthening of positive discrimination (affirmative action) in favour of women, children, the elderly, the disabled, and widows and children of war veterans; and the introduction of new rights, such as personal data protection, the removal of certain restrictions on the right to travel abroad and children's rights (Özbudun 2012) took place in September 2010. This referendum has been a very divisive one, since the opposition parties argued that the constitutional amendments were increasing the power of the government, establishing a tyranny of the majority, while ignoring the minorities and the opposition. Some of the opposing activists argued that the

changes have opened the way for a presidential system in Turkey without creating a strong checks and balances system (Neden Hayır Diyolarlar 2010).

The Progress Report in 2011 declared “a new composition of the High Council that is more pluralistic and representative of the judiciary as a whole. Sixteen of its judicial full members (out of twenty-two) and all twelve substitutes are now elected directly by judicial bodies’ (Commission 2011). However, the opposition parties and various activists were strongly against this kind of judgment. CHP argued that this amendment would only bring more partisan judges into the judiciary system (Referandumla Değişen Anayasa Maddeleri 2010), MHP protested, since these changes would mean politicization of the judiciary system, and it has also been critical of the Ombudsman, by arguing that this new institution would be utilized as a tool to recruit AKP supporters only (MHP 2007).

Regarding the fundamental rights, Turkey has been criticized in the progress reports, i.e. 2012 Report stated that “There has been very limited progress as regards fundamental rights” (Commission 2012). The 2014 Report reads that “legislation adopted in the area of judiciary raised serious concerns as regards judicial independence and impartiality, separation of powers and rule of law” while the internet bans were perceived as the measures limiting the freedom of expression (Commission 2014). Thus, it can be argued that since 2014, the tone of the EU on the progress of Turkey in meeting the democratic values has been toughened. However, in 2015, the publication of the Progress Report was delayed due to the negotiations on the flow of migrants. The statement on refugees, in March 2016, foresaw a one-for-one principle, meaning all irregular migrants crossing from Turkey into the Greek islands will be returned to Turkey; and for every Syrian returned to Turkey from the Greek islands, another Syrian will be resettled from Turkey to the EU. As part of the deal, a significant financial support (up to 6 billion EUR) was promised to Turkey, and accelerated implementation of Turkey’s roadmap for visa liberalization; however, only the budgetary chapter, 33, was accepted to be negotiated. This delay has been criticized vastly by democracy supporters. The media outlet Financial Times reported “The move [delay] has been hotly debated for weeks because a delay appears to favour the party of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkey’s president, whose authoritarian tendencies were a deep concern for the EU until the migration crisis blew up”. (Barker and Wagstyl 2015). The Atatürk Society of America published an open letter stating that “We do not want to believe that the EU is willing to trade its own founding principles over untrustworthy promises of an autocrat” (Atatürk Society of America 2015). Al-Monitor wrote “...the biggest shame lies with Juncker and his declaration that the EU withheld a report in order to improve Erdogan’s chances in the Nov. 1 election” (Mortimer 2016).

Although 2015 and 2016 progress reports emphasized the backsliding in fundamental rights, democratic institutions and rule of law, the lack of vigilance at the supply side of the democratization process decreased the effect of EU’s conditionality on Turkey. The 2015 report stated that the pace of reforms had slowed down, the independence of the judiciary and the principle of separation of powers had been undermined (Commission 2015). The 2016 report was one of the toughest reports published by the EU, drawing attention to the detentions and arrests of several HDP members of Parliament, the lack of enforcement of rights stemming from the European Convention on Human Rights, changes in the structures and composition of high courts which are not in line with European standards, arbitrary

application of the law having negative impact on freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and freedom of the press (Commission 2016).

Demand in Turkey for EU to act as a democratizing force

On the demand side, the opposition parties' and the government party's positions on the EU are distinct from each other. Although AKP governments had been active in implementing the reforms with an aim to start the negotiations, the enthusiasm regarding the membership and democratization reforms gradually faded away as years passed by. After the publication of the EU-Turkey Statement on refugees, there has been an enthusiasm observed regarding visa liberalization. The statement expressed that "the fulfilment of the visa liberalisation roadmap will be accelerated vis-à-vis all participating Member States with a view to lifting the visa requirements for Turkish citizens at the latest by the end of June 2016, provided that all benchmarks have been met" (European Council 2016). The debates on the deal in the public sphere lacked the details of the benchmarks, in total 72, including revising legislation and practices on terrorism in line with European standards (European Commission 2016). In May 2016, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan reacted to the changes asked by the EU in legislation on terrorism by stating that "We'll go our way, you go yours", (BBC Turkish 2016). Ömer Çelik in an interview said that Turkey had survived "a coup attempt by a terrorist organisation", adding: "We have the PKK, Daesh (Isis) and other groups launching attacks so it would not be intelligent to make an amendment in the terrorism law at this point" (Pitel and Brunnsden 2016). In another speech after the European Parliament's recommendation on freezing relations with Turkey, President Erdoğan once again reminded the EU of the refugee agreement and said "If you go any further, these border gates will be opened. Neither me nor my people will be affected by these empty threats" (Weise ve Foster 2016). In 2013, then Prime Minister Erdoğan had criticized the EU's attitude towards Turkey by saying "the EU has strategic importance, but how much? After a certain point, we will decide as well. We are continuing with patience, but of course we will put an end. Is EU indispensable for us? No. If they do not take us in, it is not end of the world. We continue our way with stability" (Ergin 2013). Similar speeches have been given by former PM Davutoğlu (Başbakan Davutoğlu'ndan AB'ye vize resti 2016) and Minister of Foreign Affairs Çavuşoğlu on other occasions, i.e. "visa liberalization is not a favour. This is to end a double standard and injustice. Even citizens of countries which are not candidates got this" (Erdoğan'ın ardından Çavuşoğlu da rest çaktı: Başımıza kakmayın 2016).

The literature argues that the rising support for the AKP made it unnecessary to utilize the EU in domestic politics as was the case in 2002 when AKP came to power (Uğuz and Saygılı 2016). Especially after the membership of Cyprus in 2004 and the aforementioned political quarrels, the EU seemed less attractive to Turkey. In addition to these quarrels, the Eurozone crisis affected the Union dramatically, forcing it to adopt more introverted policies. While the EU was hit by the economic crisis, the diversification efforts of Turkey in terms of markets helped the country at the time. This illusion of economic well-being decreased the enthusiasm towards the Union in general. Keyman and Düzgit argue that Euroscepticism in Turkey after 2005 was shifted to the "weak EU-strong Turkey" axis (Keyman and Düzgit 2013). This understanding found its place in the public as well. Eurobarometer surveys demonstrate that in 2004, 62% (European Commission 2005) of the respondents

supported the future membership of Turkey to the EU; in 2016, support had decreased to 39% (European Commission 2016).

Although there is a decrease in support for EU membership at the governmental level and among the public, the parliamentary debates demonstrate an interest in the relations with the EU as a way to improve democratic practices among the two opposition parties, CHP and BDP/HDP³. The third opposition party, MHP, is the least enthusiastic party as regards the EU; however, its parliamentarians still refer to the relations with the EU or EU norms and values when discussing the way to achieve a more democratic country. Historically, MHP's position towards the EU has been sceptical and it has been argued that "EU demands for minority rights constitute a direct threat to the power of the Turkish state and the unity of the nation by continuing the centuries-old Western strategy of dividing the Turkish nation by creating 'artificial minorities', taking them under Western patronage and provoking them to rebel against the state" (H. Yılmaz 2011).

Opposition parties in the Parliament as demanding actors

This section dwells upon the opposition parties' speeches between 1 January 2011 and 31 August 2016, regarding relations with the EU and improving democratic practices. The speeches of parliamentarians from CHP, MHP, BDP/HDP opposition parties are included in the analysis. When one looks at these speeches giving reference to the EU in relation to problems faced in democratic practices, it has been seen that CHP and BDP/HDP members were the most vocal in the Parliament, while MHP members' participation in the debates were limited. The CHP and BDP/HDP parliamentarians' speeches main points show similarities with each other in terms of the steps that should be taken in strengthening the democratic practices in the country. In terms of rhetoric, these two parties are also closer to each other than CHP and MHP.

MHP parliamentarians' speeches in 2011 drew attention to the freedom of speech and press, detention of journalists (Türkkan 2012), independence of the judiciary (Çelik 2011), the need for an inclusive constitution revision process (Korkmaz 2011) in reference to the EU and democracy. In 2012, MHP parliamentarians criticized the judicial regulations since they were not able to meet the standards set in the EU *acquis* (Adan 2012), while Tuğrul Türkeş, who became a member of AKP in November 2015 after he was expelled from MHP, associated EU membership with the democratization in Turkey (Türkeş 2012). In 2013, once again MHP criticized the judicial reforms and claimed that the new regulations implemented are far away from the EU *acquis*. (Bal 2013) In 2014, MHP continued to give reference to the EU *acquis* and the need for steps taken in judicial reforms to meet the European standards; in 2015, we could observe a decline in the number of speeches on these issues. During the

³ This paper uses BDP/HDP as the acronym to specify the Kurdish parties since the names of the parties have been changed in the period of this analysis. In 2007 and 2011 elections, Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi, due to the 10% threshold in the electoral system entered into the elections with an independent candidate block which gave them the opportunity to form a group in TGNA. In June 2015, Halkların Demokratik Partisi, decided to enter the elections as a party and got 13.12% of the votes. In the November 2015 elections, their support decreased to 10.76% against the backdrop of the terrorist attacks of the PKK and the rising tensions not only in the Southeast Anatolia, but all around the country.

2015 debates, only three speeches were delivered referring to the EU, judicial reform needs and the standards. In 2016, criticism of the EU increased from MHP benches, accusing the EU of supporting terror (Akçay 2016); harmonization with the EU education systems were seen as damaging due to the lack of respect of Turkish values (Depboylu 2016) and EU reports were seen as ways to interfere with domestic politics in trying to humiliate the President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (Koçdemir 2016).

The minutes demonstrate that BDP/HDP's and CHP's talking points show similarities regarding the EU process and issues being debated in the parliament. Both parties emphasized the importance of EU norms and values and the need to align with them. CHP parliamentarian Namık Havutça clearly stated that Turkey's direction should be reaching the contemporary civilization level, EU norms and high democracy standards (Havutça 2014). İdris Balüken reminded the parliament that retreating from EU norms means retreating from democratic rule of law (Balüken 2014). The data also shows that independence of judiciary is another common concern of these two parties. In 2016, CHP parliamentarian Zeynel Emre reiterated that the 2015 Progress Report warns Turkey about political pressure on the courts and, in his speech on 29 June 2016, Mithat Sancar gives reference to the Venice Commission together with the 2015 Progress Report regarding concerns about the independence of the judiciary in Turkey. (Sancar 2016) Freedoms of press and expression appear as two other debating topics of CHP and BDP/HDP parliamentarians in reference to the EU accession process. Ekşi, who was a journalist before becoming a CHP parliamentarian, emphasized the importance of the free press in a number of speeches in the parliament, giving references to the EU Progress Reports and the detention of journalists (Ekşi 2011, 2012).

Since 2011, minority rights have been on the agenda of CHP. Both CHP and BDP/HDP parliamentarians raised the problems faced by Roma people and HDP specifically raised the Kurdish problems i.e. education rights and decentralization as part of their party *raison d'être*. It should be said that from the CHP parliamentarians these issues are not vocalized in the parliament speeches. Tütüncü refers to the rights of the minorities, specifically Roma, and has accused the Government of pretending to introduce legislation to comply with the EU norms, but, in reality, to continue the discrimination against the Roma people (Tütüncü 2011). Long pre-trial detentions, the importance of opening Chapters 23 and 24, freedom of communication and internet bans, secularism, excessive use of police force and EU's role as an anchor for Turkey have been other topics that both parties' parliamentarians raised their voices on. In 2011, Hamzaçebi, CHP parliamentarian, said that "Out of 128 thousand people in the prisons, 55 thousand are not convicted. This fact is not suitable for a country aiming to be an EU member state in the 21st century" (Hamzaçebi 2011). On his part, Mengü highlighted the importance of complying with EU regulations in audio-visual media services in order to prevent arbitrary practices regarding the broadcasting activities of opposition TV channels (Mengü 2011). In 2012, Aydoğan referred to the EU as "a democratic culture and an entity aiming to spread democracy around" (Aydoğan 2012). Kaplan in his speech on 20 June 2012 focused on Chapters 23 and 24 regarding the fundamental rights and judiciary, while Buldan talked about freedom of the press and international agreements, including the responsibilities under the EU membership in 2011 (Buldan 2011). Respect for the Copenhagen criteria, internalization of EU norms and values have been brought into the debates in TGNA by BDP group members. In 2012, CHP parliamentarian Erdemir read

a letter to the PM consisting of 12 points on suggestions to overcome structural problems in Turkey. One of these points focused on the importance of the EU not only for economic purposes, but also for democracy and human development of the country (Erdemir 2012). Korutürk outlined the need for democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, gender equality, workers' rights and, more importantly, secularism on the way to EU membership (Korutürk 2012). CHP parliamentarians in 2016 focused on Chapters 23 and 24. Sibel Özdemir's speech emphasized these chapters' importance in order to prevent political pressures on media and protect the freedoms of the press and expression (Özdemir 2016).

After analysing debates in the TGNA, we come to realize that in 2016 the debates on democratization, rule of law and EU references have been the highest since 2011. CHP and HDP parliamentarians' speeches emphasized the independence of judiciary, rule of law, freedom of the press, respect for fundamental human rights, protection of religious freedoms, freedom of expression, the need for good governance, protection of secularism, transparency, and gender equality, and both of the parties criticized the EU in delaying its progress report in 2015. The EU's decision to delay the report until after the general elections in Turkey on 1 November 2015 has been criticized widely, not only in the Turkish Parliament, but in the international media and among the civil society organizations. Leaked transcripts of a meeting between President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Juncker and Tusk raised questions regarding the delay in relation to the 2016 refugee deal between Turkey and the EU. These questions have found their place in the debates at the TGNA. On 20 April 2016, HDP parliamentarian Ahmet Yıldırım said "this delay harmed the dignity of the EU, in the name of protection of this government which is in power for 13 years" (Yıldırım 2016). On 1 March 2016, CHP parliamentarian Haluk Pekşen stated that "this delay shows that there is a negotiation between the government and the EU and this is the shame of the EU. Where is the rule of law?" (Pekşen 2016).

Among three opposition parties, BDP/HDP has been the only one highlighting decentralization as a policy to achieve EU norms in democratization. This rhetoric found no supporters on CHP and MHP benches. In 2011, Nazmi Gür's speech pointed out that if EU membership is to be pursued, this can be done through strong local governments, emphasizing the importance of reaching the level of EU standards: "if we aim to be an EU member state then we need to strengthen local administrations, subsidiarity principle to strengthen democracy and endure a democratic Turkey" (Gür 2011). In 2012, it was argued that an inclusive democratization can be achieved through the decentralization (Balüken 2012) process and in 2014 the need to accept and implement the European Charter of Local Self Government is mentioned (Zozani 2014). The same demands from HDP benches continued in 2016. The other two distinctive points raised by HDP parliamentarians have been the rise in security oriented policies damaging freedoms, i.e. the security-freedom dilemma, and linking the EU membership to the peace process in Turkey. HDP member Filiz Kerestecioğlu Demir, in her speech in June 2016 says "Turkey can move forward on the way to the EU if the peace can be established in Turkey and democracy is provided" (Demir 2016).

The Gezi protests and the following conflicts with police forces in 2013 were also reflected in the parliamentary debates. Hasip Kaplan, from BDP, spoke on 19 June 2013 highlighting

the importance of Chapters 23 and 24 regarding the freedom of assembly, judiciary reform, fundamental rights and the fight against discrimination, in order to prevent protests such as Gezi spreading across the country. (Kaplan 2013) CHP parliamentarian Ali Özgündüz pointed out the necessity to prevent excessive use of police force in social movements as a principle under the Copenhagen Criteria and as a part of the regulations of the European Court of Human Rights (Özgündüz 2013). In 2014, CHP member Nazım Havutça's speech once again referred to these points, while Ali Haydar Öner said the "EU opened only 13 chapters. Where is the progress? During the Gezi Park protests their evaluation is very bad. What are they saying? Europe's assessment is that civil society is not considered an important part of democracy and a legal stakeholder in Turkey" (Öner 2014).

Although the EU has been perceived as an important actor for Turkey to move forward in its democratization efforts, the opposition parties' parliamentarians also criticized the EU after the failed coup attempt on 15 July 2016. As a democracy promoter, it was expected from the EU to react sooner to the attempted coup. Former President of the EP Martin Schulz visited Ankara only in September and his statement following this visit read:

I once again firmly and clearly condemn the attempted coup. The European Parliament's support for democracy in Turkey remains unequivocal. I have paid tribute to the courage of Turkish citizens who took to the streets to defend democracy and derailed the plan of the plotters. It was their civic vigilance and the unity of Turkish political forces that stood up for democracy. Some paid the highest price for this: they deserve all our memory and gratitude (European Parliament 2016).

However, this was a rather late response to an attempted military coup which hit the parliament not only politically, but also physically. CHP parliamentarian Öztürk Yılmaz's speech criticized the EU since it did not respond as strong and as fast as it should to the events of 15 July, but he also highlighted the importance of EU norms and values and its ability to criticize Turkey on protection of fundamental rights since Turkey is a negotiating country. (2016) MHP parliamentarians' criticisms have been tougher, i.e. on 16 August 2016 Ruhi Ersoy says "Here, hypocrisy; the steps taken after the 15th July coup attempt, in fact junta, and indeed terrorist attempt have been perceived as violations of human rights by the West. Yes, EU can warn Turkey, but we would like to see the EU warn the terrorists and support democracy as well" (Ersoy 2016).

Conclusion

The data collected from the speeches of opposition party members in the parliament between 1 January 2011 and 31 August 2016, demonstrates that CHP and BDP/HDP parties have commonalities when they refer to democratization and relations with the EU. CHP supporters are known to be critical of Kurdish demands regarding local governments and educational rights; therefore, one cannot see the support of CHP on these issues in Parliament debates. However, when it comes to the freedom of speech, assembly, press, independence of judiciary, and the separation of powers, their attitudes are similar to each other. In this framework, Chapters 23 and 24 are highlighted as crucial chapters to be opened in the negotiations.

This data, while showing the similarities of opposition parties' concerns on democratic practices and perception of the EU as an actor in strengthening democracy in the country, also demonstrates that the EU, as the supply side, overlooked concerns of these parties especially on the amendments regarding the judicial system. As the parliamentary debates have revealed, the opposition parties clearly oppose the changes, arguing the risk of politicization of the system. However, we see that the Progress Report of 2011 concluded that the new composition of the High Council was pluralistic and representative of the judiciary. Only in 2014 did the concerns of the opposition parties find their place in the Progress Report. As the literature suggests, the international organization aiming to supply the mechanisms for democratization needs to keep a vigilant eye on the developments in the country where it wishes to see democratic reforms. The EU policies towards Turkey, including the migration deal, removed the most important principle of the relations, the conditionality.

The high support for the main political party, the lack of incentives to further democratic reforms in relation to the EU, and the EU's lack of vigilance as a supplier have created a gap in Turkey-EU relations. Nevertheless, two of the opposition parties in the Parliament still rely on the Union to move towards a strengthened democratic system. Since 2011, one can see an increasing trend in the parliamentary debates among CHP and BDP/HDP parliamentarians to give references to the EU as an anchor and a democratizing force. During the referendum debate in 2017, the gap between the president's office, Government, and MHP and the EU continued to be visible. "No" campaigners, mainly CHP, HDP and opposition group among MHP voters, continued to give references to the need for democratic reforms. However, relations with the EU were not the main debating topic since the public opinion also showed negative tendencies when it came to closer relations with the EU. Further research may focus on the speeches of the "No" campaigners and the usage of relations with Europe as part of the campaign.

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