

# The Effect The of European Union on Middle and East European Countries and Turkey Regarding Democratization



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**Abstract:** Democratization process began in Turkey in 1946 when the multi-party elections took place in Turkey. This democratization period gained speed in 1999 when our country was recognised as a **candidate** for full membership. The political parties realized some reforms and regulations with the Effect of the European Union (EU) integration process in order to become ready for the **Copenhagen criteria** and the legal *acquis* of the EU.

In the past, Middle and European countries had communist regimes. However, at the end of cold war, these countries abandoned their communist regimes about 60 years later in order to get full membership to the EU. Thus, this issue has a cultural and significance at the same time.

EU has an important role in the democratization period for the Middle and East European countries. After the collapse of the Eastern bloc, the EU has decided itself to the transformation period for the Middle and East European countries. Although there is no consensus on the definition of Democratization from the EU perspective, we are going to look into the concept of Democratization in line with the European Union criteria in the first section of this study.

In the second part, the demands about political criteria (democracy, rule of law, human rights of minorities, institutional stability) of the EU from the candidate countries are categorized. In the third and fourth parts, the process of Turkey, Middle and East European countries have been explained. The final part states the EU is more successful on the matter of Democratization for the Middle East European countries.

**Keywords:** Turkey, European Union, Middle and East European Countries, Democratization, Human Rights, Supremacy of Law.

## 1. The Concept of Democratization in The EU

It is important to define the democracy and how democracy can be conceptualized from the European perspective. Modern democracy is a sort competition of selected representatives and a governance system including local people. In other words, competition does not only affect the process of elections but also it is a tool of civil

people using non-governmental organisations or some interest groups that have impact on the public policies. In the process of making public policies, cooperation among selected representatives is as the competition between them (Schmitter and Karl, 1996).

European Union and Copenhagen criteria convey the significance of an available and possible existence of democracy which based on Conditions and certain procedures. Democracy, superiority of law and basic freedoms should come up together within this framework.

The European Union supports representative liberal democracy can be examined under three main titles.

### **1.1. The Conditions of Democracy**

#### **1.1.1. Political Rights**

- Every citizen has right the to stand for election,
- People who have legislative prerogative and executive power come to power with the result of the right choices,

#### **1.1.2. Personal Freedoms and Human Rights**

- There is a platform which creates a free debate and freedom of belief,
- There is a platform which supplies reliable information, independent media companies and freedom of press,
- It is also possible to follow the performance of government and statement,
- There is a check balance system which prevents extreme power of the governments, controlling it through some institutions, mechanisms and some independent sources,
- People have the right of Establishing organisation and help one another to protect their own values as well as their interests,
- There is a limitation for the state for intervention towards private life of the local people,

#### **1.1.3. Supremacy of Law**

- The whole conditions have been guaranteed on legal basis,
- Implementing mission of all the Conditions undertaken by independent courts and judiciaries,
- All the legislations must be fulfilled for every citizen equally,

## 2. The Demands of The European Union About Political Criteria From The Candidate Countries

We may categorize the political criteria of the candidate countries for full membership to the European Union (Gürsoy, 2011).

- **Democracy:** In its simplest terms, democracy can be defined as having the right of control over political leaders as exercised by citizens who have equal and broad rights (Lord, 2001).
- **Rule of Law:** Rule of law refers to the fact that every man, woman and child has equal rights and the state should implement the entire rules in the same way for each citizen in the country. Equality under the law means that elected governments in a state management have the same responsibilities. In other words, ruler cannot move in an illegal way because they should obey the rules. Otherwise, they will be subjected to judgement by independent courts (Gürsoy, 2011).
- **Human Rights:** "Basic rights and freedom" can be defined as treating all people in a way that does not subject them to discrimination and marginalization based on their certain Attributes such as citizenship, nationality, language, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual, orientation, age and talents. Some of human rights examples are to be free and equal, to have personal security, to set up a family, to attend elections freely, to appropriate, to work under good Conditions, to have a rest, to receive education of high quality, etc. (<http://abkampi.ces.metu.edu.tr>). In terms of personal freedom, the right of free speech, the right of establishing an organisation, freedom of press and knowledge acquisition etc. can be listed. So we cannot disregard personal freedom and basic human right. In addition, these personal freedoms and human rights are the guarantee of political rights. For examples, freedom of speech or knowledge acquisition is crucial and if there is no freedom of speech or knowledge acquisition in a place, it would be impossible to consider that civil people can use the right to elect and be elected in an appropriate.
- **The Rights of Minorities:** When we look at general definition of minorities in the perspective on UN, we see the general definition of Francesco Capotorti in 1978. According to Francesco Capotorti, in a society with the population of members being less than the others, they are non-sovereign but members of this group of people are the citizens of the country and have different kind of language, religion, culture and different life styles. These people are the minorities in a country and they try to preserve and maintain their own peculiar attributes in

the place they live. Moreover, as Capotorti mentioned, the minorities have sense of solidarity (Oran, 2004).

In the process of “nation–state”, the minorities were living under the sovereign nation state and they Gained importance at the end of 20th century in terms of international Relations. In this period, minority groups started to Express their differences Regarding aspects concerning ethnicity, religion and language in a more comfortable way.

European Union countries demand from the candidate countries to protect the fundemantal rights of the minorities and EU also states that candidate countries should confer some positive rights to all the cultural and ethnic groups within the candidate countries (Özgün, 2013).

- **Institutional Stability:** This concept emphasizes that each group contributes to the democratic regime regime in an attitude–based and behavioural way, Being respectful and staying connected to it. Some examples could be provided such as political parties, large masses which are easy to manipulate some military and bureaucratic state institutions, etc. If these groups do not consider moving out of pariament or deciding not to obey the rules, it is a signal towards the consolidation of democracy. In this kind of regimes, loser of the elections and whole crucial political actors prefer to join the free elections again. In other words, they do not choose to engage in anti–democratic behaviours. Furthermore, they think that the other ideas that belong to other groups of people and this leads to an environment of trust towards the regime (Gunther, Puhle, Diamandourus, 1995).

### 3. Democratization of The Middle and East European Countries

Democratization process in Middle and East European countries is a little different than the other European countries. In other words, other European countries were not under authoritarian rightist political structures, and their political parties were communist totalitarian regimes. So, they preferred democratic regimes when they were under leftist regimes. Communist state government became very effective in political and economic areas among the local people at the same time. In Middle and East Europe, Democratization leads to political liberalization and capitalist economy at the same time in these countries.

It was not an easy step because most of East European countries were an ally of Soviet Union in the past. From this perspective, joining the EU and becoming a full member to EU was highly significant and a very crucial step for these countries. We cannot ignore the oppressive role of the Soviet Union and in a sense, of Russia, in delay observed among most of the Middle and East European countries with respect to their transition to democracy. Since these countries became a member of EU, the power and Effect of Russia diminished in these Middle and East European countries (Gürsoy, 2011).

All of the political and socio-economic improvements showed that for Middle and East European countries, constitutional amendmends are so essential. The first thing to be done was that the political and economic rules and regulations of current administrations would come to an end in Middle and east Europea countries. This process had three main aspects.

The first one was about private ownership, privatizations and free market which were significant and an economical programme prepared by the statesmen. The second one was concerned with bureaucratic issue. For instance, these Middle East and East European countries made some legal changes on the role of state and allowed some institutions to transform and make different structures.

The last one was about altering the regulations in the written constitution for a better constitutional structure and reducing the state intervention with fundamental rights and freedom. Thus, the basic aim was the liberalization of the society more (Tunç and Türkoğlu, 2007).

Among these countries, Poland was the first country that adopted democracy in 1989. There was a community and this community was not under the authority of the state. The leader of this community was Lech Walesa who negotiated with state and at the end of the negotiations, he achieved to conduct semi-free elections in Poland. During the Cold War, uprising took place in some of the communist countries and the Soviet Union suppressed these uprisings. Yet Mikhail Gorbachev decided to realize some steps towards transparency. These steps are known as *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*. The Soviet Union did Show any intervention to Poland and this behavior became a hope for the other communist countries. To illustrate, in Hungary people made their first assembly in March, 1990. In the Czech Republic, the Velvet Revolution caused the old regime to collapse and in June, 1990, the firs election was held there. On the other hand, another revolution happened in Bulgaria and the sate government changed itself.

A bloody revolution occurred in Romania and the dictatorship of Nicolae Ceaușescu collapsed.

Significant changes have been observed in the Democratization process concerning Middle and East European countries with regard to the agreements made with the EU. In this period, EU played a very effective role here. This is because the Soviet Union had collapsed; and during that period Middle East European countries put forward their demands concerning their full EU membership. Thus, this process had quite an effect on Democratization. It means that more pressure was exerted on the candidate countries. From this perspective, the Middle and East European countries as candidates should change or make new rules and regulations with the coordination of EU. It should be noted that this pressure made the relations stronger between EU and Middle and East European countries gradually. EU helped those lands in the economic field. The aim was to develop economic and social situations of the candidate countries and improve the formations of the institutions as well as the infrastructure in candidate countries.

There is no doubt this economic aid reduced the level of adaptations problems of the Middle and East European countries in EU and especially in left wing political groups, this economical support reduced the willingness to become radical and turn back to Communism in these countries. European Union supported knowledge transfer and technical aid for investments. These sort of activities and aids made more the political parties more powerful, and some non-governmental organisations and some of the state institutions lent their support for full membership to the EU in the candidate countries.

#### **4. Democratization of Turkey**

In Turkey, the multi-party system was realized in 1946 and the Democrat Party (DP) came to power in the election held in 1946. With the establishment of the government of DP, Turkish political system gained a more democratic status. This date, however, is later compared to the other dates of the EU countries. Also the development of democracy in South, Middle and East European countries was realized when these lands got the membership for European economic community. However, the situation was very different for Turkey. In other words, Turkey made the application for the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1987. Despite becoming more democratic and with the process of consolidation happening at the same time in the other candidate countries, in our country of consolidation is still going on. The radicalization in the society and

lack of trust from the opposing groups led to Military coups in 1960 and 1989 and military interventions later in 1971 and in 1997 in Turkey. Democracy has been put aside sometimes and afterwards, a transitional period followed. The deficit regarding political rights, human rights, personal freedoms and rule of law is still going on. As a result of this situation, some basic conditions of democracy have not come true in its fullest sense yet (Gürsoy, 2011).

In 1999, with the Helsinki summit get the status of candidate country and European commission Published a document known as "accession partnership 2000". In this document there were some expectations from our country for full membership to the EU. Turkey presented her national program on Copenhagen criteria and a calendar for full membership to EU again in the year of 2001 (Dağı, 2001). Following a highly sceptical evaluation, the EU decided to initiate membership negotiations with Turkey on November 3, 2004. The Commission recommended Turkey to deal with the political criteria sufficiently (Tezcan, 2005). Until December of 2004, EU countries put an obligations for Turkey in order to complete her missions. This reform movement gave a great Speed to Turkey in terms of negotiations (Commission Report, 2004).

Accessing partnership document has some priorities and for this situations several constitutional reforms were realized by the Turkish parliament. To illustrate, between 2001 and 2004 the parliament made two major constitutional reforms. Civil law and criminal code were accepted by the parliament. The government established a group of reforms to monitor and follow up the Relations between Turkey and EU actively. The Turkish government also established a General Secretary Office for EU in June 2002. Also each ministry and public body created their own related units (Sözen ve Shaw, 2003).

In modern democracies, non-governmental organisations play an important role and to improve them, the law of associations came into force so that the level of state interference on non-governmental organisations and its field of activities in Turkey would be reduced (İKV, 2006).

Another problem was that the Military had a political effect on Turkish policies. However, in European Union countries politicians consider that the Military should be strong for the enemies in a candidate country and also it should be less effective with regard to the political issue. In other words, the Military should be dependent on democratic control in the domestic politics in a country. EU gave some suggestions to Turkey about the civil-military Relations and in the progress reports in 1998, 1999,

2000 and 2001. They stated that for Turkey there was a need for change with regard to the control of civil politicians on Military service (Cizre, 2004).

Turkey made some regulations on the National Security Council and identified the missions of the National Security Council again. So, Turkey came closer to practices which EU countries had adopted. In August 2004, the prime minister assigned a civil general secretary for the Council. Moreover Justice and Development Party (AKP) government allowed Turkish Court of Accounts in order to raise budget transparency and add some funds to general budget. AKP government was eager to control under the Turkish parliament. It was a natural reflection of democratization process.

In general, Turkey has achieved many good things since the EU countries declared Turkey as a candidate country in 1999 and from 1999 to 2006 Turkey has been able to succeed in many Things Regarding Democratization (Erdal ve Çolakoğlu, 2007).

## **5. Turkish Government's Amedments on EU Politicies**

The motivating force of the AKP government Between 2002–2006 was the full membership to the EU. During that time, the leading party supported the full membership strongly, and thus, made necessary reforms according to the Copenhagen Criteria. Many Democratization reforms, such as the freedom of speech, opening TV channels in Kurdish, the amendments on Cyprus and Armenian policies have been put into practice. AKP took important steps in order to reduce the military force on Turkish policies. Business world, intellectuals from Turkey, western World Especially Brussels supported AKP and its reforms. However, when the negotiation period slowed down in 2006, the Relations Between Turkey and EU started to decrease.

In 2010, the referandum of constitution result 58% of "YES" to the AKP government. AKP leaders started to consider that nothing could threaten or prevent their policies. In addition economic crisis damaged the EU countries. However, Turkish economy continued to grow during this period. After this, PM Erdoğan thought that EU was not that essential for Turkey.

On the other hand "Arabic Spring" flourished the desire for leadership of Turkey in the Middle East, Bakans and Caucasus, which is a constructional heritage from the Ottoman Empire. As a consequence, the reforms initiated by the government were halted and EU wrote Turkey's progress report in a way that included heavy criticism. In one speech Turkish PM Erdoğan said "The Mission of the EU is to write a report, our



mission is to execute what we know and what we want for our nation". In another speech Turkish PM also stated the following: "We are not taking into account EU decision on Turkey". This reply and declaration was clearly Against EU's condemnation for security forces violence in Gezi Park protests in June 2013.

In 2012 Burhan Kuzu, who is an AKP deputy, declared he had casted away the whole progress report. The reactions of Turkish PM Erdoğan Against demonstrations were indications of the enf of EU dream.

## 6. Conclusion

From past to present, EU has placed a particular significance to Democratization. At the end of the 1970's and at the beginning of the 1980's. European Union contributed to South European countries on democratic consolidation process during the course they were candidates. European Union applied the procedure to the Middle and east European countries from 1990's to 2000. However, a relatively similar process was not observed for the case of Turkey.

On the other hand, EU supported the demand od South, Middle and East European countries for full membership to EU and gave an opportunity to political parties, nin-governmental organisations, Trade and financial institutions and the other related institutions aforementioned in order to improve the process in a speedy way.

The communities in Middle and East European countries believed that if they could achieve the reforms properly, they could have better life conditions in the future; and in this circumstance they could put up with economic difficulties. For instance, comparing Turkey with Poland, Romania democratization issue has been accepted by the political perspective. And this also makes the entrance process speedier in these countries.

From the perspectives of our country, there is no possibility for full membership to EU in the near future. Consequently, in some parts of Turkish community, particularly among conservatives and nationalist, new reforms and regulations have been percieved as a threat rather than an opportunity.

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