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## The effect of international relations on democratization of Turkey between 2002-2010 during justice and development party rule

### 2002-2010 YILLARI ARASINDA ADALET VE KALKINMA PARTİSİ İKTİDARI DÖNEMİNDE ULUSLARARASI İLİŞKİLERİN TÜRKİYE'NİN DEMOKRATİKLEŞMESİNE ETKİSİ

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#### Abstract

Democratization takes place under different conditions in every country. The social structure and that of state play important roles, and there are many other internal and external factors for this process. Turkey also went through different phases for democratization processes. This is a qualitative study and formed by reviewing related literature and evaluating. It focuses on external factors between 2002 and 2010 because there was a struggle and long-lasting conflicts between secular elites and conservative democrats during this time. With the help and encouragement of European Union (EU), Justice and Development Party governments were able to eliminate the status quo inherited from 1980 military coup. Although democratization of Turkey proceeded with the effect of many different factors, the effect of international relations in this era was priceless for the governments of that time. Especially Turkey's candidate process to membership of EU enforced conditionality by these countries. Even more the ruling party consented to democratize. Under the control of them, Turkey made a relatively smooth transition to more democratic state.

#### Özet

Demokratikleşme her ülkede farklı koşullarda gerçekleşir ve bu süreçte toplumsal yapı ve devletin yapısı önemli roller oynar. Ayrıca daha birçok iç ve dış faktör de bulunmaktadır. Türkiye de aynı şekilde, demokratikleşme süreçlerinde farklı aşamalardan geçmiştir. Bu çalışma da bu süreçlerden birisine odaklanmaktadır. Şu haliyle nitel bir çalışma olup, ilgili literatürün taranması ve değerlendirilmesiyle oluşturulmuştur. 2002-2010 yılları arasında laik seçkinler ile muhafazakar demokratlar arasında bir mücadele ve uzun süreli çatışmalar olduğu için, bu çalışma da dış etkenlere odaklanmaktadır. Avrupa Birliği'nin yardım ve teşvikiyle Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi hükümetleri 1980 askeri darbesinden miras kalan statükoyu ortadan kaldırmayı başardı. Türkiye'nin demokratikleşmesi birçok farklı faktörün etkisiyle ilerlese de bu dönemde uluslararası ilişkilerin etkisi o dönemin hükümetleri için paha biçilemezdi. Özellikle Türkiye'nin Avrupa Birliği'ne adaylık sürecinde bu ülkeler tarafından bazı koşullar talep edilmiştir. Zaten iktidar partisi de bu demokratikleşmeye razıydı. Avrupa Birliği'nin kontrolü altında Türkiye, daha demokratik bir devlete nispeten yumuşak bir geçiş yaptı.

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**Key Words:** Democratization in Turkey, Secular Elites, Justice and Development Party, International relations, Conditionality, Contagion.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Türkiye'de Demokratikleşme, Laik Elitler, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, Uluslararası ilişkiler, Koşulluluk, Bulaşma.

## Introduction

The political history of the 20th century was full of the agonies of democratization in many countries. Especially during the second half, various countries experienced coup d'états, and the ruling military forces were not eager to give way to democratization, and they demanded the status quo they established continue as they desired. However, there were some other factors pushed forward for democratization. Turkey was not any exception to these developments, and its democracy improved under the tutelage of military forces. Nevertheless, the developments during Justice and Development Party (JDP) era between 2002-2010 forced the whole country to democratization. During this process, the helping hand of the Western countries was granted to the ruling party.

After defining democracy and democratization, this study evaluates the different processes of democracy's establishment in societies. In addition, external factors have been studied in more detail. In this context, how Turkey democratized under the JDP government between 2002-2010 was evaluated with the effect of international relations. For this, first of all, the historical background in Turkey and authoritarianism and its reasons were discussed in response to the liberalization movements that the EU entered after the 1980s. As a matter of fact, during the February 28 process, authoritarianism had reached its peak. Later, when the JDP came to power, it deeply felt the military tutelage and sought a legitimate basis for itself. However, in this period, the JDP, which tightly clung to western values and democracy, also received the support of western states. Adoption of western values meant that JDP made a legitimate policy against military tutelage, because the soldiers, who had been the pioneer of westernization in Turkey for 200 years, could not develop any discourse against such rhetoric. Thus, it was seen that Turkey took important democratization steps especially with the support of western states. This study aims to indicate how Turkey went through these processes and how they fit into democratization theories.

## Literature Review

### Democracy

Democracy is derived from the Greek word "demos". This word literally means people. In the original Greek, it means "the poor" or "the many". Democracy is understood as rule by demos. Although it means the rule of the people in its current form, as with many political concepts, this concept has very different interpretations. In this context, it would be a broad and explanatory definition to basically describe it as "government of the people, by the people and for the people" as defined by Abraham Lincoln in his Gettysburg Address (Heywood, 2015).

This statement emphasizes equality, which is indispensable for democracy, primarily because it focuses on people. Moreover, it emphasizes the equal distribution of political power within the society. The concept of government, in addition, shows that democracy brings people's common interests to the fore (Naidu, 2021).

Behind the development of the understanding of democracy, the idea of freeing individuals from the oppression of the state and providing them with a free environment that will enable all kinds of development can be sought. As a matter of fact, the beginning of democracy movements in Western societies in the 18th century caused the state models to change. Nation-State is an important milestone in the development of democracies, which puts the individual and citizens in the foreground against the kingdoms and empires that prioritize the state and the dynasty (Huntington, 1991).

Democracy has an important place in modern societies as a result of the development of a process. For example, in the 19th century, the term democracy had some pejorative meanings. This concept, which was just beginning to be demanded by the societies of that time, was humiliated as "mob rule" or "the regime of the ignorant masses" (Azmanova, 2020). However, over time, the concept of democracy has become so entrenched that all ideologies of the 20th century defined themselves as democrats first and foremost (Heywood, 2015).

The importance of democracy arose from the importance of the state. As a supreme human organization, the state holds certain privileges that no one else enjoys, such as legitimate violence (Üngör, 2020). Accordingly, it also is the sovereign jurisdiction. In this respect, states are/were very effective in violating the rights of individuals. In fact, many of the concepts that individuals pursue, such as freedom and justice, were obtained as a result of the struggles against the state. The transformation of the state, which is the legitimate authority, by the people and the sharing of this authority by everyone has emerged as democracy (Held, 1991). Thus, the rights of individuals will be more effectively protected against the state. As a matter of fact, a democratic government prioritizes the people over the state (Ighodalo, 2012).

The idea of people living in a way protected from the domination of the state and removing the obstacles that will enable the development of modern people has been an important factor in the transformation of state structures. The concept of democracy has developed with the idea of minimizing the potential of states to produce problems in this regard. In fact, the fact that the state administration, which is very open to abuse, is in a system that can be changed has been defined as democracy by some. In this context, democracy is a system in which political parties lose elections (Przeworski et al, 2000).

Democracy is also a balance between different political forces in their relations with each other. Since there is always the possibility of those who hold the state authority to use force against others, keeping them under control with different control mechanisms is the most important indicator of democracy in the modern context (Przeworski, 2005).

People's social and political lives constantly generate new problems and new concepts, and institutions are created to respond to these problems. In this context, human life develops on a constructivist plane. New conceptualizations are also needed, as similar problems constantly arise regarding the concept of democracy. We even come across broader definitions of relatively old concepts like democracy. In this context, Dahl (2008) points out three important dimensions of democracy. These dimensions are defined as competition, participation, and civil and political freedoms. He also reveals other criteria of a liberal democracy in which these concepts exist. However, since all of these criteria cannot be found in a democracy which is

an ideal, Dahl used the term “polyarchy” instead (Dahl, 2008).

According to Dahl, these criteria are the right to vote, the right to be elected, the right of political leaders to compete for support and votes, free, fair, and frequent elections, associational autonomy, freedom of expression, availability of alternative sources of information, public policy dependent on voters and other forms of expression of preferences (Dahl, 2005).

Today, the election of the people who will rule the state and the regularity of these elections are important indicators of democracy, but they are not enough on their own. In addition, people should have the freedom to organize, disseminate their ideas, broadcast, assemble, engage in political debates, and run election campaigns (Shirazi et al., 2010). Although elections are an important indicator of democracy, fraudulent elections and vote counts are important threats. In addition, the threats and censorship of the opponents by those who hold the legitimate authority are an indication that democracy has not been established at an ideal level despite the elections (Levitsky & Way, 2002).

Even though democracy emerged as a regulating principle in the relations between the state and society at first, it has become quite rich in content over time. At this point, we can define democracy from the perspective of how the state will be governed, as well as from the point of view of how tolerant civil life is to different opinions and lifestyles.

### **Democratization**

Democratization, which can be defined as the process of transforming an authoritarian regime into liberal democracy in its most basic sense, is the product of a number of processes. When an old regime loses the legitimacy and declines as a result, it constitutes a situation in the state structures that have taken a step towards democratization in the historical process. In the next stage, the structures and processes necessary for the transition to democracy should be implemented gradually. After that, in order for the democratic structure to be consolidated, institutions and processes must turn into an accepted norm in the eyes of both the elites and the society. Therefore, only methods allowed in democracy should be used to seize power in the elites of a society that has completed its democratization processes. Other uses of force indicate that democracy is not established (Przeworski, 1991).

Although the democratization adventures of the 20th century started with the collapse of authoritarian regimes and the establishment of a more liberal system, the societal processes of democratization that passed this stage continued thereafter. In a state where democratization continues, liberalization of institutions takes place gradually. Likewise, the greater interest of the society in political processes and their participation are an important indicator of democratization in the modern sense. The liberalization of the political system means that different forces compete to take over the government. Likewise, the participation of citizens in politics means that individual rights and freedoms will increase more (Dahl, 2008).

The democratization process is not just about the transformation of the state structure. Social transformations also play an important role in this process. Some analytical tools developed in this context aim to help the issue be better understood. For instance, the modernization approach states that social and economic conditions must be ready for a society to democratize. Therefore, emphasis is placed on the social structure here. Second, the transition theory argues that societies experience some struggles in their transition to democracy and as a result influence the behaviour of political elites. Generally, these processes started with the emergence of nation states in the 20th century and continued after the formation of a common identity. After this stage, some political struggles were experienced, and the states were forced to some transformations. Afterwards, habituation to the new situation was experienced in the society. Structural theory, on the other hand, takes into account the long-term processes of change and argues that there are transformations towards democratization as a result of the relations and interactions of social, political and economic forces with each other in society and state relations (Potter, 1997).

### **Establishment and Sustainability of Democracy**

Although official procedures are an important indicator of democracy, they alone cannot constitute the sufficient infrastructure. In fact, the establishment of democracy in a country is mostly seen as a gain obtained after great struggles. However, the sustainability of this in a society depends on the existence of many different factors. The fact that democracy is embedded in both political and social culture and that the actors do not seek any alternative are important prerequisites for sustainability.

The continuity of democracy depends on the restructuring of mentalities as well as institutions and organizations in accordance with this understanding. In this context, there is a risk of returning to other regimes for a society that does not see democracy as only game in town. The establishment of democracy depends on its emergence as social behaviour beyond state institutions. In addition, it is important that this behaviour is attitudinally embedded in people's character, rather than being a political and insincere behaviour. Finally, this regime needs to be established constitutionally and protected by laws (Linz & Stepan, 1996).

Although democracy in the modern context has been won after the struggles of civil society against the states, the conditions of the changing world do not limit the sustainability of this achievement only to the compatibility of state institutions. Especially with the new identities formed with nation states, preventing the majority from oppressing the minority stands as an indispensable condition for democracy. At this point, the idea of building dams against possible reverse waves has emerged for pluralist and participatory democracy to be consolidated. To achieve this, requirements such as the spread of democratic values to the whole society, the dissolution or neutralization of anti-democratic actors within the system have come to the fore. In addition, the construction and continuity of civil authority in state structures where military authority is very strong is an important prerequisite for democracy. Furthermore, the modern world emphasizes the importance of a decentralized administration system for the sustainability. Beyond all these, conditions such as justice in the judiciary, the balanced distribution of economic resources to the society and providing economic stability are indispensable (Schedler, 1998).

Discussed with a pejorative language until the 20th century, democracy became the indispensable management style of the 20th century. However, the establishment of democracy in each country was formed by the direction of its own internal dynamics, and these processes differed from society to society. The new understandings, in which the transition to democracy was not only evaluated through official processes, also discussed what stages the state and society went through in the democratization processes. When we look at the experiences of different societies that have gone through the democratization process, it is seen that there are different approaches to democratization.

### Sequence and Gradualism

The first of the approaches to democratization processes claimed that it was a gradual process and emerged through certain stages. According to this approach, this process requires the completion of some rational stages. With the emergence of successive processes in the structure of both the state and society, it is predicted that democracy will gradually settle. In this context, certain conditions that arise while the process is continuing give way to the next stage (Marangos, 2005). It was claimed that if this order is not realized, democratization will be interrupted (Mansfield & Snyder, 2007).

The gradualist approach does not claim that the democratization process proceeds on a linear plane. According to them, this process has its ups and downs. It states that more democracy is needed to strengthen democratic institutions. It also emphasizes the importance of democratization of institutions even when the democratization tendency is very weak. On the other hand, the sequentialist approach does not accept the transition of institutions to democracy so quickly and even states that fast transition may foster problems (Carothers, 2007).

Gradualism recognizes that the rapid transformation of the regime into democracy is inherently risky and therefore requires more careful action. However, unlike the sequentialist approach, it does not accept slowing down or stopping the transition process. In fact, the situation claimed by the sequentialist approach is quite conducive to the preservation of the status quo and provides a suitable ground for constantly producing new excuses in the transition to democracy. It is quite common for autocratic leaders to oppose democratic rule and not to embrace the rule of law. Democratic transformations are usually carried out by the pro-democratic civilian forces, so delaying or stopping the democratization process may not yield positive results (Carothers, 2007).

Gradualism advocates transformative democracy and at the same time states that it is appropriate for this transformation to appear as a bottom-up process. While making institutions more democratic by using current opportunities, the inclusion of the society in these processes is important for the operation of a healthy process (Törnquist, 2011).

### Socioeconomic Conditions

The establishment of liberal democracy in Western European societies took place with the processes of industrialization and modernization. In the process of transition from agricultural society to industrialized urban society, many habits of people changed, as well as their economic and political behaviors. The richer urban society and its organized action accelerated the democratization process. Likewise, the most important tool of democratization in the modern world is the activity of the society and the appropriateness of their economic level. As the welfare level of the societies increases, the literacy rate and the desire to act in an organized manner also increase. Accordingly, the democratization movements that emerged in the society also affect the state structure (Przeworski et al., 2000).

Industrialization and urbanization cause great changes in social structures. The complex class structure that emerged because of these processes emphasizes the more liberal value of individualization. People's need for more rules and order brings along the rule of law principle. Different situations that develop as a chain effect with each other trigger the democratization process. In addition, the increase in the literacy rate of people brings about opening to the outside world. The growth of the middle class because of the increase in economic activities is one of the most important indicators of modernization. All these effects naturally impose democratization on society and the state (Madland, 2011). However, the level of economic development does not necessarily lead to democratization. It should be evaluated only as a factor promoting democracy (Heo & Tan, 2001).

### Political Culture

There are approaches that try to explain the rapid transition of some societies to democracy and the resistance of others to the transition with their political culture. The political culture of societies is formed under many factors (Turan, 1984). For example, while a country like the United States of America established by people who came to this land by escaping the pressure of the states they lived in previously attaches great importance to freedoms (Hollifield, 2004), it is seen that traditional and religious structures play important roles on political culture in some other countries. In fact, many factors such as historical experiences, geographical location, relations with other states, literacy rate of the society play

a role in the formation of this culture (Pye & Verba, 2015).

It is possible to say that the whole of the 20th century passed with the agonies towards democratization of different societies. In this context, many ideas about democratization have been put forward and different observations have been shared. For instance, Max Weber stated that the Protestant ethic promotes capitalism and economic wealth (Weber, 2005). In addition, there have been those who have linked the rapid development of democracy in Northwest Europe to the enriching society of the capitalist order (Stokes, 1986).

The concept of political culture is widely used to describe the current situation in countries that have a slow transition to democracy, as well as in countries that cannot transition to democracy. Political culture is used as a keyword that explains not only the transition processes to democracy, but also the slow processes in the transition and the inability at all (Abdulkaki, 2008).

### **Elite Attitudes**

Behaviors of political elites played an important role in the transition of some societies to democracy or becoming more authoritarian. The elites, who develop certain tendencies according to the political culture they live in, play an important role in the democratization of institutions. Especially in authoritarian regimes, elites who do not want to change the status quo they keep can be an obstacle to the transition to democracy with the state opportunities they have (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2006). On the other hand, elite behaviors played an important role in the creation of the EU, which entered the establishment phase after World War II (Grilli, 1994).

### **External Factors**

The geographical location has important effects on the democratization and authoritarianism of some societies. The relations they enter with the countries around them can be an important factor determining the direction of democratization. The effects of different phenomena on the democratization of some societies by international relations have been revealed. It is possible to categorize them as follows.

### **Contagion**

The proximity of states that have taken important steps towards democratization to neighboring countries and their interactions with them can trigger the democratization process by integrating political institutions of democratic countries. This situation is expressed with the concept of “contagion”. Especially after the Cold War, the democratic institutions of the EU influencing the countries that broke away from the Eastern bloc and triggering the democratization process in these countries can be given as an example of contagion (Whitehead, 1996). In addition, there are cases where contagion effect that causes societies to become more authoritarian (Moraski & Reisinger, 2010).

### **Control**

Control over a country, in the sense of inspection by other countries or the international community, is the observation and encouragement of that country's democratic initiatives by other countries. It can be understood as a foreign country's being decisive in domestic politics and directing it to democracy. For example, some oppressive policies can be developed for some authoritarian regimes in order to transform them into democracy. The purpose of the pressure made here is to influence policies in a way that encourages democratization within the country (Youngs, 2009). In particular, the international community, which was highly influenced by the modern West, adopted democratization as a norm and forced the countries around. Although it is included in another classification in the literature, financial aids to a country are solutions that will operate control mechanisms effectively. Along with the financial aids, these countries are put under pressure to institutionally lead to democracy (Crawford, 2000).

### **Consent**

In the modern world, where democratization is accepted as a norm, there are groups that want to transition to democracy within many authoritarian regimes. There is a movement in this direction in some societies, both with the pressure of the international society and with the consent of the forces that are pro-democracy. In this context, the international environment, systems, and actors that influence a country create a complex linkage politics by supporting the pro-democracy forces in that country. The democratization that emerges in this way occurs both with the encouragement of the international

system and with the consent of the internal powers (Whitehead, 1996).

### Conditionality

The effectiveness of international organizations in the modern international society is quite high. Conditionality is that these organizations or the states that are active in these organizations put some goals and some conditions in front of other states. This concept, which emerged in the developed democratic West, emerges as the EU and the USA demand that other countries democratize their institutions in return for their aid to these new democracies, countries trying to democratize, and even non-democratic countries. In this context, it is seen that the concept of control and conditionality are closely related to each other (Schmitter, 2001).

### Methodology

This is a qualitative study, and it is a process analysis of the period of 2002-2010 in Turkey under the rule of JDP. As democratization process may emerge in different forms in different societies and even in one society in different periods, the focus of this study is the international relations factor that pushed the country into democratization. Moreover, this process was analyzed under the effect of contagion, control, conditionality, and consent which are the terms that push countries into democratization as tools in the hands of foreign powers. This study investigated the process of democratization in Turkey under the effect of these terms during 2002-2010 period. The reason that we chose this period is that JDP as a conservative democratic party ruled under the tutelage of Kemalist army in Turkey, and the western countries, which had been indispensable supporters of secular Kemalists, started to support a conservative party, against which the secular elites could not develop effective opposition. All these processes were analyzed in this study.

### The Effect of International Relations on Democratization of Turkey between 2002-2010

#### An Overlook to Westernization in Turkey

In any international relations literature where Turkey's foreign policy principles are evaluated, it is stated that one of the foremost principles is westernization. The Adventure of Westernization is a dream that both the state structure and a significant part of the society have

followed for the last few centuries in Turkey (Oran, 1996). In this respect, westernization and policies towards it are taken for granted as a legitimization tool. Therefore, the political moves that encourage westernization have not been discussed very much in Turkey (Yilmaz & Shipoli, 2021). Even the opponents of westernization have been criticized with pejorative language (Azak, 2012).

Westernization movements in Turkey accelerated in the last century of the Ottoman Empire. The acceleration of these movements emerged with the Republic of Turkey, which was founded on October 29, 1923 (Kushner, 1997). Kemalist intellectuals, who emerged as a new ruler elite after the collapse of the sultanate, started a solid westernization move in Turkey (Mateescu, 2006). However, these westernization movements emerged in the form of eliminating the traditional and religious elements in the social structure and bringing the social life to a western and contemporary appearance rather than the transformation of the state and society within the framework of democratic principles (Dai, 2005).

On the other hand, the Turkish army, which is the undertaker of Kemalist ideology, continued its tutelage over politics in a way that prevented the emergence of other forces that would rival it in the political arena. In some cases, the whole system was redesigned using instruments such as a military coup (Akkoyunlu & Öktem, 2016). In this context, it can be argued that Turkey's Kemalist army is an important obstacle to overcome in the transition to western-style liberal democracy (Yavuz & Özcan, 2007).

Turkish political life, in which the influence of bureaucratic tutelage was felt for many years, focused more on cultural reforms at the point of westernization. The democratization of state institutions has progressed very slowly in Turkey over long periods.

#### EU after 1980s

The oil crisis that emerged in the 1970s and other problems triggered by it forced the countries that were then called the European Economic Community to adopt conservative policies. However, the revival of liberalism in the world of the 1980s and the efforts of European countries to keep up with it brought great changes (Clifton et al., 2003). One of these changes was the Single European Act signed in 1986. The aim here is to transform into a single market by the end of 1992 (Moravcsik, 1991).

Moreover, a set of criteria set by the EU countries in June 1993 was one of the milestones of liberal transformations. Along with these criteria, some demands have been put forward from the countries that will become a member of the EU. These were popularly known as Copenhagen Criteria. Considering the content of these demands, first of all, the state applying for membership is required to establish institutions that will continue the democratic administration. At the same time, these institutions will prioritize human rights and allow a functional market economy. In addition, these states will accept the obligations and the intent of the EU (Nello & Smith, 1997).

### **Situation in Turkey after 1980s**

Turkey has always felt as a part of Europe. However, it is not an accepted situation in Western societies that Turkey is a part of them with the same enthusiasm (Ahiska, 2003). Despite this, starting from the 19th century, Turkey has tried to resemble western societies in the context of institutionalization in every period. The adventure of westernization was so intense especially after the establishment of the Turkish Republic that the conservative, liberal and pro-democratization governments of Turgut Ozal, which were not adopted by Kemalist soldiers in Turkey in the 1980s, constantly resorted to the reference of westernization in order to impose their liberal policies (Duman, 2018). In fact, in this process, the governments of Turgut Ozal, which aimed to ensure the bureaucratic transformation of the state in a democratic direction (Öniş, 2004), were confronting the military tutelage with the liberal values of the West (Nasr, 2005). In the face of this situation, the soldiers had to develop different rhetoric against the idea of westernization which had been accepted for a long time and turned into a tool of legitimation.

With the military coup on September 12, 1980, Turkey entered a period of relative softening in political and social life. However, as of the beginning of the 1990s, important social developments emerged in Turkey that would worry the secularist elite. The rise of Islam in general and political Islam in particular were alarming developments for the secular elite. The murders of journalists and academics, which started again in 1989, were used as a propaganda tool to warn the secular society. Especially the murder of journalist Ugur Mumcu in 1993 increased the fears and reactions in the secular circles (Kibaroglu & Caglar, 2008).

The ongoing process witnessed developments that would justify the propaganda of the secular elites in the eyes of their own society. The emergence of the Islamist Welfare Party as the first party in the general elections held on 4 December 1995 became an important instrument in which the military elite would show the secular society how their concerns came true.

The reactions to the rise of the Welfare Party were so intense that the psychological conditions were not suitable for this party, which came first with 21% of the votes in the general elections, to form a government. That's why the True Path Party and the Motherland Party, two center-right parties, formed a government. However, these parties did not have a majority to form a government, as their voting rates were 20% and 19%, respectively. In the face of the rise of an Islamist party, other parties, which were in search of different alternatives, came up with a solution. In this case, a development that could not occur under normal conditions took place in the Turkey of that day, and the Democratic Left Party supported the government from outside, and thus the ANAYOL government was established. However, since the vote of confidence given to the government was below the number specified by the constitution, the constitutional court, which evaluated the application of the leader of the Welfare Party, Necmettin Erbakan, canceled the vote of confidence on 14 May 1996 (Dilaveroğlu, 2012).

With the collapse of this government, the way for the Welfare Party's efforts to form a government was paved. The REFAHYOL government was established on 28 June 1996, especially after the True Path Party agreed to form a coalition government. The February 28 process, which would bring very important changes in Turkey's future, started with this government (Dilaveroğlu, 2012).

Under the leadership of the military elite, propaganda against the Islamic movements that had been going on for a while in Turkey reached its peak with the establishment of the government by the Welfare Party. In this period, Necmettin Erbakan's attempt to try different alternatives in foreign policy and his desire to enter close relations with the Arab world was met with great reaction. In addition, various organizations of the Party organs were constantly followed, and some excessive and radical acts were shown to the public through the media. The rising tension in the country focused all attention on the National Security Council meeting to be held on February 28, 1997. The President presided over the



National Security Council meetings held at the end of each month at that time. However, it is known that the military wing of the board was taking all the decisions (Yavuz, 1998).

The decisions of the National Security Council, consisting of 18 articles in total, started with the need to meticulously protect the secularism guaranteed in the constitution. Afterwards, the council demanded the transfer of schools, dormitories, and foundations, which emerged as private enterprises beyond the control of the state, to the Ministry of National Education. It was underlined that some groups in Turkey wanted to take the country away from the level of contemporary civilization, and at this point, they recommended to implement 8 years of uninterrupted education throughout the country in order to raise awareness of the youth and to save them from the influence of various outbreaks (Menek, 2016).

The most controversial one of the February 28 decisions is 8 years of uninterrupted education. With this decision, the secondary school section of Imam Hatip schools was closed and children in Turkey who took a 3-year break from education after 5th grade and went to Qur'an courses and memorized the Qur'an during this period were prevented. Considering the problems that this would cause, the board resolutions stated that the necessary administrative and legal arrangements should be made for the Qur'an courses to operate under the responsibility and control of the Ministry of National Education. In addition, it was implied that Imam Hatip schools were more in number than necessary, and it was requested that the number of schools be held at the level of need and in accordance with the current laws. Among these articles, there is an article demanding the prevention of Iran's anti-regime activities in the country, as if trying to consider the close relations that Welfare Party organs had with the Islamic Republic of Iran before 28 February. The headscarf worn by university students and civil servant women was presented as a practice that harms the contemporary face of Turkey, and the necessary laws were requested to be implemented to prevent wearing it (Menek, 2016).

It was stated that in the solution of the country's problems, the understandings that emphasize the concept of the ummah instead of the concept of nation should be banned (Sel, 2019).

In addition to the emphasis on modernization in the Council's resolution, it was clearly stated that there is a longing by reactionary movements for

ancient regime. In fact, this debate was inherited from the Ottoman period to the new republic and was kept on the agenda throughout this period. Therefore, modernization and westernization have been adopted as a norm in Turkish politics. In this context, the social and political movement, which was started by Welfare Party leader Necmettin Erbakan in the 1970s and called Milli Gorus, constantly made negative statements against Western values. In fact, anti-Westernism was used as a psychological weapon against all religious-oriented movements, including Erbakan, in that day's Turkey (Arpacı, 2020).

At that time, when the elements of psychological warfare were used effectively, scandalous social events emerged that would put the Erbakan government and people with religious tendencies in a difficult situation. Especially the capture of Muslum Gunduz, who is the sheikh of the sect, naked with Fadime Sahin and their presentation to the media made the psychological atmosphere even more tense (Çağlar, 2012). In addition to these, the support of many state organs and non-governmental organizations, especially the judicial bureaucracy, in this process led by the soldiers meant that all these psychological conditions were created against Erbakan. At the same time, on 21 May 1997, the Supreme Court of Appeals Chief Public Prosecutor's Office filed a lawsuit to the Constitutional Court for the dissolution of the Welfare Party (Mecham, 2004). Under these circumstances, Necmettin Erbakan had to submit his resignation to President Suleyman Demirel on 18 June 1997. On 30 June 1997, a new government was formed under the leadership of Mesut Yilmaz, head of the Motherland Party (Ali, 1998).

The period when the witch hunt started in Turkey was during this government. With the Mesut Yilmaz government, an 8-year education started, and the headscarf ban began in universities. These events, which caused great social upheaval at that time, were carried to even greater heights. Especially the expulsion of headscarved mothers from military ceremonies had a profound effect on the psychology of conservative society (Madi-sisman, 2017). In the same period, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who would mark the next period of Turkey, was the mayor of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality. The process of his imprisonment would mean the shining of a new figure in Turkish politics (Mecham, 2004).

A new election was held in Turkey on April 8, 1999, and Bulent Ecevit's Democratic Left Party emerged as the first party. While the Nationalist

Movement Party emerged as the second party, the Virtue Party, which was founded to replace the Welfare Party, which was closed on 16 January 1998, entered the parliament as the third party. While the coalition government formed by the Democratic Left Party, the Nationalist Movement Party and the Motherland Party under the leadership of Bulent Ecevit took office, another scandal broke out in the same period. Merve Kavakcı, a member of the Virtue Party, who entered the parliament with a headscarf at the swearing-in ceremony of the deputies, was met with protests from all other parties and Kavakcı was not allowed to take the oath (Peres, 2012).

In fact, all these events have left deep traces in the memory of the conservative society, which makes up 65-70% of Turkey's average. Therefore, the psychological environment that would bring Erdogan to power alone in the next period was created.

On May 14, 2000, a congress was held in the Virtue Party. Abdullah Gül, the representative of the innovative wing, and Recai Kutan, the representative of the conservative wing, also supported by Necmettin Erbakan, attended this congress as candidates. Even though Recai Kutan came out of this congress as the leader of the party, the votes given to Abdullah Gül showed the power of the innovative movement within the party organs. While Recai Kutan received 633 votes in this congress, Abdullah Gül received 521 votes (Özdemir, 2015). In fact, this congress heralded the innovative wing that it was time to form a new party.

The economic crisis that came with the Ecevit government in February 2001 completely changed the balance in Turkey. The JDP was founded on 14 August 2001 under the leadership of Erdogan, during the period of severe economic crisis conditions. The preparation process for the November 3, 2002 elections, which would be held 1 year later, also started (Heper & Toktaş, 2003).

### **JDP Era and Helping Hand of Westerners**

In these elections, the JDP, which received 34.3% of the total votes in Turkey, won 66% of the parliament, 363 out of a total of 550 deputies, due to the d'Hondt system. The second party, the Republican People's Party, entered the parliament with 178 deputies. In this case, 46% of the Turkish electorate could not be represented in the parliament (Sabuncu, 2006).

Although the number of deputies was quite high, the deep effects of the military tutelage that existed in Turkey for a long time was also felt on the JDP. Even though Erdogan had established the government as the ruling power, he was in a powerless position against the tutelage in the system. This situation made itself so clear that he could not become prime minister immediately after the elections. The new cabinet established under the presidency of Abdullah Gül took office and Erdogan could not even become a member of parliament during this period (Taş, 2015). Already at the time of his imprisonment, it was written in the newspaper *Hurriyet*, which was an important representative of the military tutelage of that day, that Erdogan could not even be a neighborhood representative (Özkır, 2013).

However, it was during this period that the first helping hand to Erdogan was extended by the United States of America. Erdogan, who went to Washington as the guest of the then US President George Bush, was welcomed there as the Prime Minister. On his return, the elections held in Siirt province were canceled and Erdogan was elected as a deputy from there, and he became the Prime Minister as of March 2003 in the next process (Lazaris, 2016).

When Erdogan became the prime minister, he had some opportunities against the military tutelage that stood very strong against him. For example, Turkey's application for full membership was accepted at the EU Helsinki Summit in 1999, and many laws left over from the 1980 military coup began to be changed. Establishing associations and holding peaceful meetings, which were forbidden especially at that time, were reviewed together with the EU membership process, and softer laws were started to be enacted. In addition, after the economic crisis that broke out in 2001, Turkey's obtaining a loan from the IMF and the implementation of economic measures accordingly had brought the economy to a healthier state in the past 2 years. The acceptance of the EU reforms as democratization moves and the positive response from large sections of the society were important opportunities for Erdogan. To clinch this opportunity even more, he added people from different political views to his party and defined himself as a liberal conservative democrat (Doğanay, 2007).

In fact, Erdogan needed a new definition so much that even though he defined himself as a liberal democrat, it was constantly stated by the secular elite that he was an Islamist coming from the tradition of National View of Erbakan. Erdogan,

on the other hand, repeated the phrase "I took off my national view shirt" to overcome this problem (Yılmaz, 2016).

The JDP'S liberal stance and the inclusion of people from all walks of life as a whole strengthened its pluralistic and democratic structure. In fact, the three-term rule, which is one of the founding principles, polished the democratic appearance of the party. As this rule necessitated, no one could hold a position in party organs for more than three terms.

In addition, the JDP gave importance to the EU reforms from the first day of its government and received a great support from the EU. EU countries' adoption of liberal policies as of the 1980s and liberal democracy demands from participating countries along with the Copenhagen criteria were postponed by the Turkish State during the 1990s. The JDP'S adoption of these criteria led to the highest level of support for it.

In this case, the ineffectiveness of the old rhetoric used by the secular elite caused some discourse changes in them. Realizing that the old rhetoric did not leave the necessary impact in the face of the strong democratic outbursts of the ruling party, the secular elites, especially under the leadership of the military bureaucracy, launched the campaign "Are you aware of the danger?". However, the ruling party, which received the support of conservative and liberal sections in Turkey, carried this support even higher until the next elections (Sağır, 2015).

Throughout the period, the EU showed what steps Turkey should take and what steps it had taken until then, along with the reports and accession partnership documents it published. On 19 May 2003, the EU published a new accession partnership document and stated that the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights should be respected. They also requested that measures be taken regarding ill-treatment and torture. Bringing prison conditions to EU standards, judicial independence and democratization were also emphasized. In addition, the legal reforms made were mentioned positively and they were asked to be put into practice. In addition, the importance of freedom of the press was emphasized and it was requested to implement the reforms in this regard (Müftüler Baç, 2005).

The functioning of the National Security Council, which they saw as contrary to the democratic structure until then, was mentioned

and it was requested to ensure the control of the civilian wing within the council. The way to overcome the opposition from the soldiers in domestic politics emerged as taking refuge in the EU and the West. We can say that westernization and modernization had been used by the Kemalist Elite as a weapon against the conservative people for a long time in Turkey. In fact, the anti-Westernism in the conservative world was constantly humiliated by the Kemalist elites. Under the new conditions, the existence of a government that defended western liberal democracy was a very difficult situation for the Kemalists (Dai, 2005).

Although the JDP was the ruling party, the segments that actually held the power in the state structure were the secular elites, who had the support of the Kemalist army. Although the JDP had significant public support, it was in a politically weak position. In order to overcome this weakness, the implementation of westernization and modernization, which had been made a norm and a tool of legitimacy by the Kemalist Elite, was effectively implemented and the support of western states was received.

In this context, effective struggles were carried out with the hope that Turkey's full membership would be accepted in the progress report to be published by the EU in October 2004. So much so that in July of that year, the Grand National Assembly did not take a recess, and the integration package was issued with a busy shift (Gülmez, 2008).

In the new regime established after the 1980 military coup, the soldiers made necessary arrangements to have a say in almost all organs of the state. For instance, the General Staff (the chief of the army) had a representative in the Higher Education Board. With the constitutional amendment made on May 7, 2004, this practice was abolished. The EU had already criticized this situation very often. Likewise, the abolition of the state security courts, which continued to exist as an important pressure apparatus in the hands of the state, coincided with this period (Göztepe, 2011).

While it was stated in the EU progress report published in 1998 that Turkey did not fulfill the Copenhagen criteria, in the progress report published in November 2003, the government's acceleration of the reform process and its determination in this regard were appreciated. The support of the EU in this way is an invaluable treasure for the JDP, because at the same time the

years of fierce opposition from the secular elite had begun (Bulut, 2011).

During this period, the EU constantly talked about the effectiveness of the army in the state and highlighted in its reports that necessary arrangements should be made to reduce it. In addition, many liberal democratic initiatives such as minority rights, freedom of expression and rule of law were demanded. The government, which meticulously followed all these, took important steps towards democratization and strengthened the increasing support of the EU. As a result, in the progress report published on October 6, 2004, it was stated that Turkey fulfilled the Copenhagen criteria to a great extent and negotiations could begin (Bulut, 2011).

Receiving the continuous support of the EU on reforms, the government was also taking all kinds of democratization steps that would reduce the effectiveness of the military in the state. In this context, for the first time, a civilian was appointed as the general secretary of the National Security Council in August 2004 (Gürpınar, 2013).

Another issue that has always been a problem between the EU countries and Turkey was the Cyprus issue. Within the framework of the EU harmonization reforms, the Cyprus issue was dealt with in a liberal understanding by the government in 2004, going beyond traditional state policies. During this period, an important solution package regarding Cyprus was prepared by the United Nations and published as the Annan Plan in March 2004. Within the framework of this plan, a federal structure was foreseen in Cyprus. In this context, with Turkey's leadership, a public vote was held in Cyprus on this issue and the Turkish section supported the plan by 64%. However, Greek Cypriots rejected this plan by 76%. As a result, Cyprus became a member of the EU in May 2004 as a divided island. However, Turkey's approach to a democratic solution on this issue was welcomed by the EU (Kasım, 2007).

One of the most important factors in the JDP government's gaining the support of the EU was the implementation of reform movements, which had not emerged so decisively in previous governments. Especially after the process in which the Turkish state consistently followed conservative policies on Cyprus issue, this government's search for democratic solutions had an increasing effect on this support.

While the JDP carried out many reforms within the country with the foreign support it received, major political problems arose. In the new situation, where the old political rhetoric had lost its effect, the pro-Western powers shifted in Turkey. In 2007, secular elites in Turkey started the campaign with the slogan "Are you aware of the danger?" and unfurled "Army to duty" banners in their protests (Canveren, 2021).

In fact, it was later made public that the army was preparing another coup in 2004. However, the balance of different forces in domestic politics and the lack of a psychological environment made any intervention against the government impossible. However, in the presidential elections in 2007, the direct intervention of the army in politics emerged and the 27 April memorandum, known as the e-memorandum, took place. 361 deputies participated in the Presidential election in the parliament, which was held on the same day just before the memorandum. Abdullah Gül, the Presidential candidate of the JDP, received a total of 357 votes there. Abdullah Gül, who could not be elected president in the 1st round as required by the constitution of that day, had enough vote potential to be elected in the 3rd round. However, this issue was taken to the Constitutional Court, as fewer than 367 deputies, the quorum for the meeting, which had been put forward by the secular elite months ago, participated in the voting. As a matter of fact, the Constitutional Court also annulled this vote (Acar & Çelebi, 2012).

Later, the description of the chief of staff as "not a so-called secular, but essentially a secular president" was perceived as a message to the government. The blockage of the system in all this psychological environment led the ruling party to go to the new general elections. In the general elections held on July 22, 2007, the JDP increased its votes compared to the previous election and received 46.6% of the votes (Acar & Çelebi, 2012).

For the ruling party, which received the support of almost half of the society, there was no obstacle in choosing the President. Abdullah Gül was elected President on 28 August 2007, with the participation of the newly formed parliament and the Nationalist Movement Party in the parliamentary vote (Acar & Çelebi, 2012).

In the following period, when the political crisis in Turkey was emphasized in the 2008 progress report of the EU, the ruling party was supported against the secular elite. Later, the start of

Ergenekon trials against soldiers in Turkey was also reflected in the 2009 progress report, and the government's democratization steps were appreciated (Ayдын-Düzgit & Keyman, 2013).

The peak point of this process was the referendum held on 12 September 2010 in which some articles of the constitution were changed. In this referendum, the number of members of the Constitutional Court was changed. The number of members of the high council of judges and prosecutors was changed, too. In this referendum, 3 of the changes in 11 articles in total received a great reaction from the opposition. In addition to the above-mentioned two, narrowing the mandate of the military judiciary and introducing judicial review for dismissals in the Supreme Military Council were another change (Yüksel et al., 2011).

### Discussion

It is against social existence to attribute the democratization breakthroughs that emerged at that time in Turkey only to external forces. Demand for democracy in Turkey's internal balances and very broad segments was an important obstacle in front of the secular elite. However, during the February 28 process, the soldiers were able to get the support of a very large segment. However, the abuses that emerged in next period caused this support for the military to disappear.

The rapid liberalization of both the economy and the state structure of European countries after the 1980s paved the way for them to demand the same things from other countries in their periphery. At this point, the secular sections of Turkey, which until that time were considered natural allies of the Westerners, then entered a great impasse (Dai, 2005). In fact, secular people also had some concerns. Especially the fear of changing the regime of the state made them pause on the transition to a democratic order. On the other hand, it is a fact of the history of politics that no power holder wants to change the status quo they have established.

At this point, westernization and modernization, which the secular people had used as a means of legitimacy until that day, emerged as a backfiring gun for them. The Westerners' constant demand for democratization and Turkey's goal of becoming a member of the EU put the secular elites in a very difficult situation. It is a big change that conservative democrats, or as the secular elite called them, the reactionary, Islamist and conservative segments came to a pro-

Western line and supported democratization during JDP rule. The secular elite, which had previously been the natural ally of the westerners in the past, lost this position and the legitimation tool they created passed into the hands of their rivals. The secular elites, who were constantly being exposed to the criticism of the West, went through great changes and abandoned the rhetoric of westernization and came to a Eurasian and pro-Russian position (Aktürk, 2015).

### Conclusion

Democratization processes vary according to the structure of each society. Turkey's geopolitical position and its proximity to European countries left it open to all kinds of influences from that side. This is an example of contagion. In this context, the demands of the Westerners on Turkey, especially in the membership processes, and Turkey's need to respond to these are examples of conditionality. In addition, the JDP, which was the ruling party of the conservative sectors, which saw the oppression of the secular elites for a long time, was always very eager to realize the reforms demanded by the EU against the secular soldiers who were keeping the tutelage over the regime. This shows the consent of ruling party to the reforms. In addition, the fact that Western countries constantly monitor the situation with their progress reports and repeat their demands seems to be an example of control.

It is not correct to attribute the democratization of Turkey to external factors only, but it should be underlined that external factors are a very important legitimation tool. Under the effect of external factors, together with internal factors, the power of secular elites was weakened and their control over the state organs was eliminated.

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