

Türkiye's European Union Accession Process Evaluation in The Context of Kemalism

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Abstract

Republic of Türkiye's involvement with European integration dates back to Democrat Party period. It is clear how difficult and questionable this period of many years is. Türkiye 's European Union accession process, which started to accelerate especially since the first half of the 2000s, was resolutely criticized by many nationalist intellectuals in the same period. The central point of these criticisms was that the European Union process would wear out the nation state and was absolutely incompatible with Kemalist principles. In terms of the ideology of Kemalism, which was shaped as the mortar of the nation-building project in the early Republic period, it was undoubtedly an acceptable fact that the European Union membership, which would mean the transfer of the sovereignty of the nation-state, was viewed negatively. Based on the fact in question, the aim of this article is to give a brief summary of the European Union process, which accelerated in the first half of the 2000s and gradually faded in the second half, and then to evaluate the European Union membership process from the Kemalism ideology perspective. Thus, it will be put forward whether the EU membership process and the Kemalism ideology constitute two separate poles, as asserted by nationalist intellectuals.

Keywords: *Ataturk's Principles and History of Turkish Revolution; European Union; Customs Union, History of the Republic of Türkiye*

Introduction

From its establishment until İsmet İnönü reign, the Republic of Türkiye took its place in the international community as an anti-imperialist, fully independent state that adopted the principle of reciprocity in foreign politics. The Republic of Türkiye, which Atatürk founded on full independence and anti-imperialism principles, was considered a leading state, particularly for colonial and semi-colonial countries that had not yet gained their independence as of that date. Accordingly, the cadre that founded the Republic achieved its goal in a short while and succeeded to create a modern nation-state that was respected in the international arena. Thus, Türkiye, which was on the way to becoming an independent and civilized country during the Atatürk period, was thrown off course and away from the path followed by the founding ideology, and was pushed into a new process in which cultural dependency was added to economic dependency. Thus, Türkiye, which was on the way to becoming an independent civilized and modern country during the Atatürk period, was thrown off course and away from the path followed by the founding ideology and was pushed into a new period in which cultural dependency was added to economic dependency.

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However, looking at the pre-Republic period, it will be understood that the Atatürk period contains an important parenthesis in the general political adventure followed in Türkiye since the last period of the Ottoman Empire. Especially in the period until the Atatürk's era, relationships of dependency were established between the Ottoman Empire and Western capitalists, and a period was experienced in which the sovereignty of the state in economic, legal, cultural, etc. areas was eroded and integrated into western capitalism (Tekeli, 2010: 34). The period in question symbolically began in the economic field with the Baltalimanı commercial treaty signed in 1838; It continued by spreading to the superstructure institutions with the Gülhane Tanzimat Edict of 1839 and Ottoman Reform Edict of 1856 and left its mark on the critical period of the last hundred years of the Ottoman Empire (Özsoy, 1994: 137; Doc., 1983: 260). The Empire, which was weakened economically by the capitulations during the mentioned period, was no longer able to achieve any gains for its own interests, and moreover, it *completely lost the opportunity to carry out an independent and effective Ottoman policy* (Kuştemir ve Oktik, 2022: 705). As the Ottoman Empire became Westernized and continued to understand the modernization project as Westernization, it was thrown into a situation that was open to exploitation by the imperialist West, both economically and culturally. As a result of this situation, the Ottoman Empire was dragged to bankruptcy and important tax items were confiscated by the Düyun-u Umumiye (Ottoman public debt administration), an institution appointed by the “capital circles” to which it was indebted (Adiloğlu and Yücel, 2021: 71). This position of the Ottoman Empire vis-à-vis the West continued in a similar manner during the Republic period, except for the Atatürk's era.

European states, on the other hand, acting according to the economic interests of the “world capitalists” (Atatürk's Speeches and Statements [ASD] I, 2006: 248), as of the Second World War, began to make plans to unite economically and politically in order to evolve in the direction of capital, to create an alternative to the United States' rise to the position of being the center of capitalism, and to unite their interests. However, undoubtedly, the real goal was to get a larger share of the surplus value obtained from global imperialist exploitation. Finally, with the European Coal and Steel Community established on 18 April 1951, the targeted economic unification path was officially started. In 1957, the Treaty of Rome was signed with the participation of other European states, and the European Economic Community [EEC] was established together with its organs such as the Council, Commission, Parliament, Court of Justice, Court of Auditors and Economic, Social and Advisory Committees (İlhan and Kırac, 2010: 191, 193). And the Republic of Türkiye, which turned towards Westernization again after the death of Ghazi Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Türkiye applied for associate membership in the European Economic Community on July 31, 1959. This application was made by the Democratic Party leader and Prime Minister Adnan Menderes, who was still in power (T.R. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Directorate of European Union [EU] Affairs, 10.03.2023). With the Ankara Agreement signed with EEC countries on September 12, 1963, the Republic of Türkiye fully entered the path of joining the said community. After this date, all governments that came to power insisted on direct integration into Europe by following the same foreign policy, contrary to Atatürk's political practices and discourses.

The European Economic Community was renamed the European Union by the Maastricht Treaty, officially known as the Treaty on European Union, which was signed in 1992 and went into force in 1993 (Kırac and İlhan, 2010: 193). Along with economic integration, the way for political integration was also paved by European countries with this agreement. On the other hand, Türkiye applied for full membership in 1986, during the rule of the



Motherland Party under the Prime Ministry of Turgut Özal but received a negative response from the EEC (Zenginoğlu, 2018: 486; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye, Directorate for EU Affairs, 10.03.2023). However, despite this, it seems that Türkiye has not given up on the Tanzimat-type Westernization path. The most obvious example of this is the admission of the Republic of Türkiye to the Customs Union with the Decision No 1/95 of the EC-Türkiye Association Council, which came into force in 1996 and was presented to the public as a great success. Pursuant to this decision, which was taken as a continuation of the integration process initiated by the 1963 Ankara Agreement, Türkiye was also included in the Customs Union and in this way had to be directly connected to the economic interests of Europe unilaterally. Subsequent governments continued the EU process with the same policy, and as a result, Türkiye was officially declared a “candidate country” by the EU Council. Later, at the Copenhagen Summit held in December 2002, the EU decided to start the negotiation process with Türkiye (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye: 2023).

In this study, firstly, the history and content of the European Union and Kemalism will be reviewed. Then, Türkiye-EU relations will be analyzed. And finally, it will be tried to examine whether the Kemalist founding philosophy, and therefore Mustafa Kemal's theory and practice, are compatible with the EU's philosophy, aims and practices.

1. History of The European Union

A possible early thought of European unity can be traced back to the Middle Ages. The idea of establishing the necessary mechanisms to eliminate conflicts between nations has been expressed by many thinkers and it has been emphasized that peace can only be established in this way. Saint-Pierre and Victor Hugo's plans for the establishment of the United European States, Immanuel Kant's project to ensure eternal peace... In addition, thinkers such as Montesquieu, Voltaire, Proudhon, and Saint-Simon advocated the idea of integration or unity based on political liberalism and peace (Canbolat, 2002: 90; Yerlikaya, 2005: 73).

The first serious attempts to form a union accelerated with the search for markets for increased production with the beginning of Industrial Revolution towards the end of the 18th century. For this purpose, England and France signed a trade agreement in 1786. With this agreement, it was aimed to improve the trade of industrial products by regulating the high customs tariffs (Karluk, 2002: 1; Yerlikaya, 2005: 73). The Paneuropean Union, developed by Count Kalergi in 1924, and the European Federal Union, proposed by French Foreign Minister Briand in 1930, could not be implemented after the states declared that they would not give up their sovereign rights (Erçin, 2002: 3; Yerlikaya, 2005: 73). After this, an important development took place; with the Ouchy Convention signed on July 18, 1932, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg took the most important initiative to create unity in Europe. So, these countries achieved the first economic unification (integration) and became known as Benelux countries after the Convention (Cesur, 2005: 14). The Benelux countries would further consolidate the unity by signing the Monetary Agreement, which would initiate the practice of fixed exchange rates among them, in 1943, and the Customs Union Agreements in 1944 (Arslaner, 2004: 3). In the following period, the destruction caused by the Second World War began to validate the idea that conflicts between European countries could only be prevented by establishing unity. In his speech at the University of Zurich on September 19, 1946, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill addressed the people of Europe and made an important call to create a united Europe by protecting Europe's common heritage: “*For a*

permanent peace on our continent, the United States of Europe should be established.” (Schulz-Forberg, 2004: 98; Soytürk, 2017: 73). For this purpose, England and France signed the Treaty of Dunkirk against the Soviet threat on March 4, 1947. One year after this agreement, on March 17, 1948, the Treaty of Brussels was signed with the participation of France, England, and the Benelux countries and thus the Western European Union was established. Germany and Italy also joined this union with the Treaty of Paris signed on 23 October 1954 (Özdemir, 2002: 2; Yerlikaya, 2005: 76; Karluk, 2002: 9).

As stated above, European countries began to seriously consider the idea of forming a union after the Second World War. Jean Monnet, who was considered the opinion leader of the European Union, advocated the concentration of steel and coal, the most important raw materials of heavy industry, to prevent a new war in Europe. Within this framework, Treaty of Paris, which established the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) was signed on April 18, 1951, under the leadership of French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman (Kaya et al., 2020: 4). With the Treaty of Paris, restrictions on the trade of iron ore, scrap iron, coal and steel products between France, Germany, Italy, and the Benelux countries were eliminated. A common tariff rate began to be applied towards external countries. Although it was initially considered as a commercial organization, it is an entity that laid the foundations of today's European Union (Manisalı, 2002a: 52; Yerlikaya, 2005: 77; Aydoğan, 2002: 119; Aygün, 2006: 66; Tuna, 2007: 16).

Today's European Union (EU) was called the European Economic Community (EEC) when it was established in 1957 with the Treaty of Rome, which was signed with the participation of France, Germany, Italy, and the Benelux countries and entered into force on January 1, 1958. With the same treaty, the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM) was also established. Later, these three organizations, ECSC, EEC and EURATOM, were merged in 1967 to create a single European Community (EC). The United Kingdom, Denmark and Ireland joined the Community as full members on January 22, 1972. The accession of Greece in 1981, and Portugal and Spain on January 1, 1986, increased the number of members of the Community to twelve. The “Single European Act” was signed during this period and thus another important stage in European integration was passed. Because with this act, a complete single market was achieved instead of Common Market and all trade barriers among the member countries were removed until 1992. At the same time, the free movement of capital and labor was fully ensured. This situation meant that economic integration had made serious progress (Kaya et al., 2020: 4). In the following period, with the accession of Finland, Austria and Sweden in January 1995, the number of EU member states increased to fifteen (T.R. Directorate for EU Affairs: 19.10.2023; Manisalı, 2002a: 52; Manisalı, 1996: 10; Manisalı, 2002b: 47; Aygün, 2006: 66).

With the Maastricht Treaty signed by all EC member states on February 7, 1992, the Community took the form Union and was now called the Union. (Kaya et al.: 2020: 19). In this way, European countries paved the way for unification not only economically but also politically. In July 1993, the Copenhagen summit set the criteria for the acceptance of the Eastern Bloc countries' full membership in the EU, which was disintegrated by the collapse of the Soviet Union. These criteria, known as the Copenhagen Criteria, are as follows:

- Ensuring the stability of democracy and democratic institutions (such as legal order, multi-party system, respect for human rights, protection of minorities and pluralism),



- Transitioning to a functioning market economy that can handle the competitive environment that a single market can create,
- Expanding the capacity to undertake rights and obligations arising from Community Law,
- Adaptation to the objectives of the political, economic, and monetary union. (Morgil, 2006: 93, 101)

As of 1 January 2002, the common currency of the twelve members of the EU was the euro, and on 1 March 2002, the only legal currency in the same countries was officially the euro. After it became known as the European Union, the Community made another enlargement in 2004 and increased the number of members to twenty-five (Merdanoğlu, 2006: 63 et al., 75 et al.; Yanık, 2005: 104-107).; Yanık, 2005: 104-107). Then, with the inclusion of Bulgaria and Romania on January 1, 2007, the number of members reached 27 (T.R. Directorate for EU Affairs, (t.y): 38).

2. Structure of The European Union

The bodies of the Union consist of institutions such as the Council of the European Union, the European Commission, the European Parliament, the European Union Summit, the Court of Justice of the European Union, the European Court of Auditors, and the European Central Bank.

2.1. Council of Europe (Summit)

The Treaties establishing the Union did not foresee an institution called the Summit. In the following process, it was decided to convene the Summit of Heads of State and Government regularly at the 1974 Paris Summit. The EU Summit was later incorporated into the Founding Treaties by establishing a legal basis (Topal, 2008: 18). The EU Summit takes place with the participation of the prime ministers or heads of state of the EU member states and the President of the EU Summit and the President of the European Commission. The summit meets four times a year and undertakes the task of taking decisions that determine the priorities and basic policies for the development of the Union and the integration of Europe. The summit cannot carry out legislative activities (Topal, 2008: 18). The summit is chaired by a President appointed by the member states for a period of 2.5 years, whose term of office can be extended once. The President represents the Union internationally and cannot hold any national office (T.R. Ministry of EU Affairs, (t.y): 8).

2.2. The Council of the European Union (Council of Ministers)

It is made up of national government ministers from each member state. Depending on the issue to be decided in the Council, relevant ministers of the member states participate. For example, if an issue related to the economy is to be decided, the economy ministers of the governments of the member countries participate. The presidency of the Council of the European Union changes hands among member states every 6 months. To support the Council in its work, there is the Committee of Permanent Representatives and working groups consisting of the Ambassadors of the member states to the European Union. The Council of the European Union determines the common foreign and security policy of the European Union member states, while ensuring the harmony between the economic policies of the

member states. More precisely, it has joint authority with the European Union Summit in determining these policies. Additionally, the Council has the authority to conclude agreements with third parties on behalf of the EU. The voting weight of the member states in the Council is determined according to their population, physical and economic size according to the “Qualified Majority Method”. Accordingly, Germany and France have 29 votes in the Council, while Estonia and Slovenia have 4. It has powers equivalent to those of the parliament existing in parliamentary democracies. The Council is the decision-making and legislative body of the Community. It deals with the drafts prepared by the Commission and ensures their enactment. In summary, the Council can be said to be the body that shapes, manages, and determines the foreign policy of the European Union (T.R. Directorate for EU Affairs, (t.y): 9-10)

2.3. European Commission

It consists of twenty independent commissioners appointed by the governments of the member states by mutual agreement for a period of five years. The chairman of the Commission shall be appointed by the Council from among the commissioners for two years. The Commission is the designer, executive and coordinator of the Union's policies. It is one of the main organs of the Union and its headquarters is in Brussels. The Commission functions as an independent government. In this context, the Commission can be called the “Government of the EU”. The Commission, which also has an office in Luxembourg, has representatives in member countries and different parts of the world. The said Commission also has its own differences. For instance, the General Secretariat of the Council has more powers than the United Nations Secretariat (UN). However, it has less authority than the government of a democratic country, despite being likened to an executive body and government. It has the distinction of being the institution that initiates the legislative process and, as the executive body of the Union, is responsible for implementing the acquis communautaire, budget and programs and for administrative supervision. It consists of 27 members, one from each member state. These people are called “commissioners”. The Commission, composed of Commissioners, is submitted to the vote of confidence of the European Parliament. After receiving the vote of confidence, the appointment is made by the EU summit. The term of office of the commissioners is 5 years and the commissioners are authorized to protect the general interests of the European Union instead of the interests of their own countries. (T.R. Directorate for EU Affairs, (t.y.): 12-13. ; Özarlan, 2005: 233-234)

2.4. European Parliament

This Parliament is the joint parliament of the European Union member states. The European Parliament has a range of supervisory and control powers; it supervises the exercise of EU legislative and executive powers and controls the functioning of all EU institutions, bodies and organisms. The number of seats in the European Parliament is 626. The Members are directly elected by voters in all Member States. European citizens, who are citizens of EU member states, vote in European Parliament [EP] elections held every five years. The European Parliament is made up of 705 Members elected in the 27 Member States of the European Union. Seats are allocated based on population of each Member State. Accordingly, Germany has 99, France has 72, Luxembourg and Estonia have 6 seats. Members of the European Parliament form political groups not by nationality, but by political affiliation. (T.R. Directorate for EU Affairs, (n.d): 6). Political groups of; the European People's Party Group



(EPP), the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D), Renew Europe (previously ALDE), the Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA) and Identity and Democracy (ID) are represented in the Parliament (Akçay ve Deniz, 2021: 25-29). Decisions are taken by majority vote after the meeting quorum is reached in the parliament, (Topal, 2008: 20). The EP shares legislative power with the Council. Acceptance of changes take place with the approval of both institutions. EP has supervisory authority over other EU institutions (T.R. Directorate for EU Affairs, (n.d): 8).

2.5. Court of Justice of the European Union

The Court is the highest legal body of the EU. The Court of Justice of the EU, which is the judicial institution of the European Union. It comprises 3 courts: the Court of Justice, the General Court, and the Civil Service Tribunal. The main purpose of the Court is to ensure that the law is interpreted and valid in the same way in all EU countries. The Court consists of one judge from each member state, and the General Court consists of 27 judges, including at least one judge from each member state. Court deliberations are confidential, and decisions are taken by majority vote. The Court of Justice hears certain cases arising from EU Law. These include to ensure that member states and EU institutions abide by EU law. It is also the final decision-making body in resolving cases heard in national courts (T.R. Directorate for EU Affairs, (n.d.): 12-13 ff.). The Court of Justice is a single-level and final judicial body; **the judgment is final, binding on the parties to a case and without appeal.** It is not possible for a national court, which is called to implement the decision of the Court of Justice, to discuss the validity of **this decision** (Manisalı, 2000: 53-60). Therefore, the structure of the EU Court of Justice has brought about the problem of transfer of sovereignty. According to Aras (2015: 6), “*There is the principle of the primacy of European Union*“ and the principle of primacy has been developed over time by the jurisprudence of the Court of Justice and the principle in question, which is one of the principles of EU law, has been preserved as a fact that has existed since the beginning of integration. According to this principle, in case of a conflict between EU law and national law, EU Law will prevail. This is a general tendency that emphasizes not a hierarchical hegemony over national law, but the precedence of EU law as a solution method. However, in the process, based on a principle in the Treaty of Lisbon, the EU, whose political and economic integration was strengthened, wanted to expand it to the legal field as well. (Aras, 2015: 24). Although this situation never gives EU law complete primacy over nation-state law and does not open an unlimited field, the binding and limited primacy of union law over the countries that voluntarily become members of a union cannot be considered as “non-existent” (Bektaş, 2022: 849).

Moreover, according to Özlük and Doğan (2010: 140), EU member states, which joined the union with the will of their people, specifically stated in their constitutions that they transferred sovereignty after the Maastricht Treaty dated February 7, 1992:

“The articles regarding sovereignty in the countries that made these changes are as follows: Article 11 of the Italian Constitution: “Italy agrees on condition of reciprocity with other States, to the limitations of sovereignty that may be necessary to a world order ensuring peace and justice among the Nations.” Article 24 of the German Constitution: “The Federation may delegate sovereign rights to interstate institutions.” Article 25 of the Belgian Constitution: “The exercise of certain powers may be left to international law institutions by an agreement or law.” Luxembourg Constitution Article 49: “Legislative, executive and judicial powers may be delegated to

international organizations.” Article 92 of the Dutch Constitution: “Legislative, executive and judicial powers may be transferred to international public organizations by an agreement”, Article 28 of the Greek Constitution: “The powers of national institutions stipulated in the constitution may be transferred to international organizations by an international agreement.”⁷⁸ As can be seen in these examples, member states, especially after the Maastricht Treaty, made/had to make arrangements in their constitutions that could be called the transfer or sharing of sovereignty.”

As a result, the transfer of legal and political sovereignty is an indisputable reality of EU membership. Apart from this, as mentioned above, the EU has also other institutions and bodies such as the European Court of Auditors and the European Central Bank (Manisalı, 2000: 53-60; Manisalı, 1996: 26-32; Manisalı, 2002b: 49-54).

3. Türkiye's Eu Accession Process

In the aftermath of the Second World War, in the face of the alleged threat from Russia, Türkiye preferred to take part in the Western Bloc and took part in many European institutions established in Western Europe. Türkiye has been included within the scope of Marshall Aids since 1947, and joined NATO in the early 1950s (Zürcher, 2022: 244, 271 vd.). Having thus entered very close cooperation with West, Türkiye, heard that Greece would apply to join the Union, which was then known as the EEC, and applied for membership on July 9, 1959, within the framework of Article 238 of the Treaty of Rome (Özer, 2009: 91). The negotiations that started between the parties with this application resulted in the signature of the Agreement Creating an Association between the Community and Türkiye on 12 September 1963 and entered into force on 1 December 1964 (T.R. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Directorate for EU Affairs [EU] 10.03.2023). According to this agreement, known as the Ankara Agreement, Türkiye could become a member of the EEC according to the examination report to be prepared at the end of three stages (Aygün, 2006: 68). The decisions taken for these three stages were as follows:

- 1. Preparatory stage:** In this stage, which would last five years, the EEC would give a loan of 175 million dollars to Türkiye.
- 2. Transitional stage:** In this stage, which was expected to last twelve years, Türkiye would bring its customs duty rates into conformity with the EEC countries. At the end of the stage, Turkish workforce would be given the right to free movement in Europe.
- 3. Final stage:** During this five-year period, the developments will be examined and reported by the EEC. The report would be discussed and determined by the authorized bodies.

According to nationalist writers such as Manisalı and Aygün, promises were not kept by the EEC, the preparatory stage was extended for four years, and only about half of the promised loan was given. At the end of the transition stage, it was understood that the right to free movement was a sham. During the last stage, it was understood that EEC countries tended to extend this period as well, so Türkiye applied for full membership to the Union on April 14, 1987, during the Özal period. But as expected, the response given on February 10, 1990, was negative. According to nationalist writers, although Türkiye fulfilled all its obligations, it was not completely ready to become a member of the Community in terms of the EEC (Aygün, 2006: 68-69; Manisalı, 1996: 40-42; Aydoğan, 2002: 153). Or the EEC was using this as an excuse not to include Türkiye in the community. Contrary to the point of view of nationalist writers, there are also those who claim that Türkiye applied for membership with



a pragmatic approach and acted early, without waiting for the completion of the stage stipulated in the Ankara Agreement (T.R. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Directorate for EU Affairs, 10.03.2023; Akçay, 2016: 52). Therefore, Türkiye had not yet fulfilled all its obligations and had just managed to transition to civilian administration after a military coup. In this state, immediate acceptance into the EEC was out of the question. However, its close neighbour Greece managed to take important steps in terms of democratization immediately after being freed from the ruling of 1974 military junta. Türkiye had requested to join the EEC before making this breakthrough. The main goal was to catch up with Greece. Of course, Greece's accession into the EEC could cause great harm to Türkiye in economic, commercial, and political matters. Especially on issues such as Aegean territorial waters, continental shelf, air shelf, Cyprus, and minorities. Therefore, Türkiye's accession request was essential. However, the EEC had just accepted membership applications of two relatively poor countries, Spain and Portugal. This meant that it would not be possible to accept a country as a member whose economy was weak for another ten years. (Erhan and Arat: 2010: 88-92). Of course, besides all this, the issue of Türkiye's acceptance to the union was a very sensitive issue due to its unique characteristics.

Despite this, Türkiye continued its determined stance on joining European Union in the following period and established the Customs Union with the Partnership Decision No. 1/95 in Brussels on March 6, 1995 (Gürsoy, 2022: 19). According to some nationalist writers, Türkiye, which unilaterally transferred its foreign trade policy and all related practices to the EU with this decision, did not get what it expected from the Luxembourg and Helsinki summits held later (Merdanoğlu, 2006: 67). For example, according to Karluk, the EU aims to keep Türkiye in its sphere of influence within the framework of the Customs Union relationship, but not to include it in the union (Karluk and Tonus, 1999: 357). In the following period, Türkiye was granted only candidate member status at the 1999 Helsinki Summit. The Accession Partnership Document prepared by the EU after Helsinki and the National Program prepared by Ankara in 2001 were documents that further strengthened Türkiye's unilateral dependence. At Copenhagen Summit held in December 2002, EU countries decided to start membership negotiations with Türkiye without delay if the Copenhagen Criteria were met. In response, Ankara has made important legal and institutional changes in line with European demands and standards since 2002. Eight legislative packages were approved by the Parliament, State Security Courts (DGM), the state of emergency (OHAL) and the death penalty were abolished, thought criminals were amnestied and minority languages were given freedom. The EU Commission accepted on 6 October 2004 that Türkiye adequately fulfilled the Copenhagen Political Criteria. EU decided to start membership negotiations with Türkiye on 3 October 2005 at the summit held in Brussels on 17 December 2004. On October 3, 2005, negotiations began on the condition that they were open-ended and the screening proces* was started (Baykal and Arat, 2010: 351; Yanık, 2005: 110; Aydoğan, 2002: 166; Manisalı, 2002b: 92, 138).

4. Theory and Practice of Kemalism

The term Kemalism first became official with the following statement made at the Fourth General Congress of the Republican People's Party held on May 9, 1935: *"The main lines of our thoughts, covering not only a few years but also the future, are written here in a collective form. "All these principles that our party follows are the principles of "Kemalism"."* (Tekinalp, 2004: 37 vd.). Kemalism, as a concept, expresses the political and social views and political practice of Mustafa Kemal

Atatürk, the founder of the Republic of Türkiye . According to general acceptance, Atatürk is a historical politician who for the first time in world history rebelled against imperialism and carried out Turkish War of Independence. This action, which Ghazi initiated and successfully completed, was a model for all exploited nations living under the yoke of imperialism. Therefore, Kemalism, in a certain sense, involves rebelling against imperialism and making a war of national independence. İlhan explained the situation as follows in his work titled “Which Atatürk”:

“...The world socialist movement described the Anatolian Revolution as an anti-imperialist revolution and not only described it as an anti-imperialist revolution, but also supported it in every aspect in its fight against imperialism. We should neither forget nor let anyone forget this fundamental feature of the Association for Defence of National Rights (Müdafaa-i Hukuk) doctrine... We must support Kemal Pasha's anti-imperialist thought platform and action” (İlhan, 2008: 38).

Elsewhere in the same work, he also claimed that Atatürk's anti-imperialist struggle, that is, his doctrine of Association for Defence of National Rights, was the first example for all oppressed nations, and that Atatürk's photographs were found in the pockets of the Algerian mujahideen who fought the war of independence against France. According to İlhan, Atatürk is an anti-imperialist revolutionary leader who set an example for the liberation wars of oppressed nations (İlhan, 2008: 341, 392). Indeed, if we evaluate the concept of Kemalism in the context of the doctrine of Association for Defence of National Rights and Mustafa Kemal's theory and revolutionary practice, it can be said that since he was the leader of the modernism period, he had acceptances on universal truths and expressed these acceptances clearly. For example, as someone who experienced the military defeats and economic bankruptcy of the Ottoman Empire and Ottoman Public Debt Administration (Duyûnu Umumiye) processes, he was always wary of the “world capitalists” and the Western countries that he thought were under their control. He was definitely against the monopolization of the capitalist-imperialist system, which dragged the Ottomans into debt, in the new Türkiye. He did not refrain from voicing his opinions. For example, his statements regarding the Deportation of Armenians were that the great powers were acting in line with the interests of the world capitalists: *“The so-called Armenian issue, which is intended to be resolved according to the economic interests of the world capitalists rather than the real interests of the Armenian nation , has been resolved in the most correct way with the Treaty of Kars” (Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri I, 2006: 248).*

In another speech, he said the following:

*“Gentlemen! Populism is a professional practice that wants to establish its order and law. Gentlemen! In order to reserve this right and to ensure our independence, we **are people who follow a profession that deems it permissible to fight against imperialism, which wants to destroy us, and against capitalism, which wants to swallow us.** Accordingly, with these and such encouragement and explanations, we clearly see that the basis on which our government relies is a principle based on sociology! But what should we do, it doesn't look like democracy, it doesn't look like socialism, it doesn't look like anything! Gentlemen, we should be proud of not looking like something! Because we look like ourselves.” (Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri I, 2006: 248).*

Moreover, the following words also belong to Atatürk:



“...It has added a poisonous and caustic liquid to the development in Türkiye and its people. By being under the influence of this, the minds of the nation, and most of all the administrators, have been completely corrupted. Now, in order to improve the situation, to come to life, to be human, certain mentalities have emerged, such as taking advice from Europe, carrying out all affairs in accordance with Europe's ambitions, and taking all lessons from Europe. But which nation can rise with the advice and plans of foreigners? History has not recorded such an event...” (İlhan, 2008: 12)

When we consider his words and consider Atatürk's revolutionary and national struggle practice, it is understood that he advocates a structure and administration that is anti-imperialist, fully independent and based on popular sovereignty. In a sense, it can be said that Kemalism is a set of principles expressed in the six arrows of the Republican People's Party. Thus, Revolutionism, Populism, Nationalism, Secularism, Statism and Republicanism are accepted as indispensable features of Kemalism. Mustafa Kemal's discourse and practice were also in this direction. The main axis and motivation of the theory and practice in question is that it is anti-imperialist and completely independent: *“The Government of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye, whose sole purpose is to save the life and future of its people, is of the opinion that it will achieve its goal by saving its people from the domination and oppression of imperialism and capitalism and making them the true owners of the administration and sovereignty of the country.”* (Aydemir, 1999: 323; Kızılçelik, 2003: 400)

5. European Union and Kemalism

In this section, EU structure, its criteria, and Türkiye -EU relations will be evaluated from the perspective of Kemalist principles. As stated above, one of the most basic criteria of the EU is the transfer of sovereignty. Although Türkiye tried to pave the way for EC membership in the early 1980s by hastily adding the phrase *“The provisions of agreements stipulating membership in organizations with international powers are reserved”* to the end of the 1961 Constitution phrase *“Sovereignty unconditionally belongs to the Turkish nation”* (Erhan ve Arat, 2010: 87), the EU is a supranational structure that does not fit the phrase “international”, according to Özlük and Doğan. Therefore, there is no such thing as a transfer of sovereignty to the EU, with that phrase in the Turkish Constitution (Özlük and Doğan, 2010: 139). Despite this, making the change envisaged by Özlük and Doğan and transferring sovereignty to the EU neither complies with Atatürk's theory and practice, nor with the Kemalist understanding of “sovereignty belongs unconditionally to the nation”. In addition, as is known from his statements that although Atatürk was against imperialism and world capitalists, he was not an enemy of foreign capital. At the Izmir Economic Congress in 1923, he explained this situation as follows:

“Gentlemen, while thinking and speaking in the field of economics, do not think that we are enemies of foreign capital. No, our country is big. We need to work hard, and we need capital. Therefore, we are always ready to provide the necessary guarantee to foreign capital, provided that they comply with our laws. It is desirable that foreign capital should join our labor and fixed wealth and produce beneficial results for us and for them; but not like before. Indeed, foreign capital had an exceptional position in the country in the past, and particularly after the Tanzimat period. And in a scientific sense, it can be said that the state and the government have done nothing but act as the gendarmerie of foreign capital. After now, like every civilized state and nation, the new Türkiye can't consent to

this; won't let this be a captive country” (Atatürk'ün Bütün Eserleri (Atatürk's All Works), volume 15, 2005: 145).

The Customs Union, in addition to some positive gains, has caused serious losses and a foreign trade deficit, according to Özdemir and AYTEKİN. Undoubtedly, independent states can pursue some paths of economic integration to gain more benefits from foreign trade or to increase the development level. However, only if you are an EU member country, a structure such as Customs Union positively affects your economy. Otherwise, there will be a one-sided dependency relationship that Mustafa Kemal would never accept. Just like the Balta Limanı Commercial Treaty in 1838, which liquidated the traditional industry of the Ottoman Empire. As is known, although the treaty in question provided many benefits to the British state, it irreversibly collapsed Ottoman domestic production (EŞİYOK, 2010: 93, 97). KOCAMAZ also argues that as a result of Türkiye not being accepted into the EU, even though more than twenty years have passed since the Customs Union, and as the nature of international trade has changed and become globalized in this process, Türkiye has suffered serious damage from commercial agreements made with third parties, further exacerbating its problems. (KOCAMAZ, 2022: 251-252). Moreover, Mustafa Kemal's sensitivity towards independence in economic matters is very evident from his above-mentioned words. He does not adopt economic approaches that would put the country under unilateral responsibility and difficulty, on the contrary, he positions himself directly against them:

“But gentlemen, we say that there is this principle for complete independence, there is a law for national sovereignty, and today we state that we are the factors and winners of a great victory. At this point, we have to repeat together a very certain truth. Such big, sacred, and lofty goals cannot be achieved with principles and laws on paper alone, or with ambitions and desires alone. The only power to ensure its full realization is the true, strongest fundamental economy. No matter how great the political and military victories are, if they cannot be crowned with economic victories, the resulting victories cannot be durable. It will go out in a short time.” (Atatürk'ün Bütün Eserleri 2005: 144)

Therefore, as Erhan mentioned, the Customs Union, which may have led to some economic gains in its early periods, is at a point behind the “new generation trade agreements” required by the changing and globalizing world economic system, when considered together with Türkiye 's not being admitted to the Union in the twenty-year period. The EU continues not to benefit Türkiye from these agreements, which it has benefited from, and to victimize Türkiye through the Customs Union conditions accepted under the conditions of 1996 (Erhan, 01.05.2016, Türkiye Newspaper). And this certainly contradicts the Kemalist ideology's notion of economic independence and national sovereignty. According to Özdemir and AYTEKİN, the biggest damage to Türkiye from the Customs Union, which was entered into without being an EU member, results from the fact that the EU does not include Türkiye in the free trade agreements it has made with third countries. To eliminate this situation, Türkiye had to communicate and make some special agreements unilaterally with the countries with which the EU has made an agreement (Özdemir and AYTEKİN, 2016: 55-56.) Another troubling issue is that Türkiye suffers serious economic damage due to the EU's application of a common customs tariff in trade with third countries (Şanlı, 2016: 125). For instance, the following words of Mustafa Kemal directly about the dependence on customs and foreign trade are very interesting for understanding the difference between the Customs Union and the Kemalist approach:



“A friend of ours just said, this percentage of something is put into customs. Whereas there is a law stating that this or that item will not enter, another law is being made to overturn it. Gentlemen, I can agree with my friend that the country’s wealth should not be spent unnecessarily. This is ensured by imposing customs duties on goods entering the country from abroad. Therefore, if the state is not free in this matter, if it is not effective on the goods coming from abroad and if it is not free to impose customs duties, can this issue be considered different from the spirit of capitulation? Of course, not... Our interlocutors are still trying to overpower us on such issues.” (Atatürk’ün Bütün Eserleri, Volume: 15: 85)

In addition, from the perspective of the Kemalist founding cadre, who emphasized “National Sovereignty” in all congresses held since the Amasya Circular, a situation such as transfer of political sovereignty or authority is unacceptable, even though it is accepted as a necessity of the changing world. Moreover, as discussed above, the fact that the EU judiciary is above national law is completely opposite to the Kemalist perspective. As evidence of this, Mustafa Kemal’s following words are sufficient: *“They want to impose judicial capitulations on us under the name of mixed courts. Being deprived of the right to judiciary in the country **cannot be reconciled with full independence.**” (Atatürk’ün Bütün Eserleri, Volume: 15: 86).*

In the final analysis, the following statements made by Mustafa Kemal in the Nutuk (Speech) clearly outline the Kemalist perspective:

“Complete Independence is the fundamental spirit of the duty we undertake today. This duty has been undertaken towards the entire nation and history. While undertaking this task, we certainly thought a lot about its practicality. But the opinion and belief we have gained at the end is that we can succeed in this. We are people who started like this. Because of the mistakes made by our predecessors, our nation had lost its independence Everything that has made Türkiye seem flawed in the world of civilization until now has always arisen from this mistake and following this mistake. As a result of following this mistake, the country and the nation may be stripped of their dignity and ability to live. We are a nation that wants to live, with dignity and honor. We cannot tolerate being deprived of these characteristics because of following to a mistake. Today, all members of the nation, whether scholar or ignorant, without exception, perhaps without fully understanding the difficulties they are in, gathered around only one point today and decided to shed their blood until the end. That point is to ensure and maintain our full independence. When we say full independence, it of course means full independence and full freedom in political, financial, economic, judicial, military, cultural and similar matters. In any of these, the deprivation of independence means the deprivation of all independence of the nation and the country in the real sense. We do not believe that we will achieve peace and tranquility without ensuring this.” (Speech v.II, 1969: 623)

Therefore, it is a reality that almost all of the nation-states that continue to exist within the global capitalist system are in an interdependence relationship at different levels in economic and political fields. However, if we look closely, despite this situation, which was also valid for its period, Kemalist perspective has always tried to keep the “full independence” phenomenon alive in all areas. In this context, it can be said that accession to the EU, the Customs Union, and similar supranational formations, although result of independent will, ultimately restricts the economic, legal, and political sovereignty of nation-states. Therefore,

* Emphasis belongs to author.

it falls far from the Kemalist perspective and when Kemalism practice is studied in this context, it is determined that it is not an acceptable political path.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, there are serious differences between the first half of the twentieth century, when Kemalism dominated in practice and today's world. Significant developments and changes have occurred in all areas such as technology, communication, transportation, military technology, global economy, international relations and so on. For this reason, evaluating and comparing today's issue of accession to the European Union with the phenomenon of Kemalism in the first half of the twentieth century presents various difficulties. However, if Kemalism is accepted not as an ideology frozen in the past, but as a dynamic thought system that can also encompass the period after itself, it may become more rational to analyze today's international processes in the context of Kemalism. Moreover, as it is known, Mustafa Kemal did not leave behind “any dogma or stereotyped ideas”. Therefore, Kemalism is not static, but has a dialectical structure that can renew itself according to the age and developments. However, like every system of thought, Kemalism has its own unique basic features. And it is not possible to give up on them. The most important of these is the phenomenon of “complete independence”.

The historical period we are going through is certainly a period in which globalization and supranational structures take a more active role in every area. In this period, when the sovereignty of nation-states began to take shape according to global economic realities and the closed, introverted, and cumbersome nation-state systems of the Atatürk period evolved into a state approach that was integrated into the global economy, controlling, and regulating, it is perhaps not possible to say that a complete independent structure could still be established. But this is not the subject of the article. The subject of the article is, in spite of all this information, to evaluate Türkiye's EU process from a Kemalist perspective, even in terms of the Kemalist understanding of “full independence”. Because when looked closely, it can be observed that Kemalist principles are still determining in Turkish politics, or at least they directly determine political discourse and policies. As a matter of fact, it is the intellectual determinant of one of the sides of the double fracture in society and politics. A certain majority of the society seems united around Mustafa Kemal's theory and practice. In this context, examining the EU process and structure in terms of Kemalist values is an acceptable approach in Türkiye today.

As for the question of the article, the structure of the EU is incompatible with the Kemalist thought system in many respects, provided that the current global conditions mentioned above are valid. This includes important factors such as the transfer of sovereignty, the establishment of a law above national law and the emergence of economic dependency relations. Kemalist approach is directly opposed to such sovereignty transfer policies that disable the nation's will. Therefore, it does not seem possible to reconcile the principle of “full independence”, which Kemalism accepts as indispensable regardless of conditions and time, with the integration policies of the twenty-first century. Kemalism is certainly not a static thought system. It can adapt itself to the needs of every age, or at least it claims to do so. However, it does not seem possible for nations to comply with the discourse of “full independence” in international integration processes in which nations transfer their sovereignty based on consent at the point of decision-making in political, economic, military,



legal, health and many other areas. In Article 21/e of the EU Constitution, it is stated that “*To encourage the integration of all countries into the world economy, including through the progressive abolition of restrictions on international trade.*” (Treaty on European Union and Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, 2011: 15). This statement means the integration of all nation-states, including Türkiye, into global capitalism. However, as can be understood from Mustafa Kemal's words above, Atatürk's understanding of economy is protectionist against monopoly capitalism and does not accept foreign investment unlimitedly. Hence, it does not seem possible for Kemalism to reconcile with a formation like the EU, where a liberal global economic structure is intended to be established. Consequently, regardless of the EU structure or the elements open to criticism and opposition of all supranational integration processes that mean the transfer of sovereignty of national rights, the following determination should be made on the very axis of the EU-Kemalism comparison: Kemalism and its understanding of “full independence” are closed to the EU structure, the Customs Union, and all kinds of supranational integrations that mean the transfer of sovereignty brought about by the twentieth century. Except for the possibility of establishing a different integration model for the nearby geography, perhaps pioneered by Türkiye.

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