

Right-Wing Populist Discourse in the European Parliament on Turkish Foreign Policy

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ABSTRACT *Right-wing populism is on the rise all over the world and has led to profound effects and changes in the international system. The European continent, which is identified with democracy and human rights, also sees its share of this trend. Today, right-wing populist parties and actors are gaining strength in many EU countries and come to the fore as a serious political focus. The European Parliament (EP), as an example of direct democracy, has become one of the most visible institutions facing this shift. In this article, the discourses of right-wing populist parliamentarians in the EP toward Türkiye are focused on through a social constructivist perspective. The 2009-2014 and 2014-2019 parliamentary periods are analyzed comparatively to present which discursive strategies MEPs used in their statements about Türkiye and what kind of Türkiye representation they constructed in the EP. The article benefits from critical discourse analysis studies and aims to contribute to the literature on the attitudes of right-wing populist groups on Türkiye.*

Keywords: Right-Wing, Populism, European Parliament, Türkiye, Discourse Analysis

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Introduction

The rising right-wing populist movements in the European continent continue to become more and more controversial. To cite a few, gathering the right-wing populist parties in Italy, Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni carried the right-wing populist idea to power after many years. Likewise, a right-wing populist party has become the main opposition in Sweden, which is known as the stronghold of social democracy. In France, it became a tradition for Marine Le Pen, who inherited the flag from her father, to run in the presidential elections. The fact that previous American President Donald J. Trump's supporters stormed the Congress building after the elections and that a far-right group in Germany recently attempted a coup has revealed how serious the issue of right-wing populism can actually be in terms of the existence of democratic institutions. Although studies on both right-wing populist actors and their foreign policy discourses have increased recently, it can be argued that the number of these studies is still quite insufficient. This deficiency becomes much more concrete when it comes to such discourses against Türkiye.

Among the European studies, it is observed that studies related to Türkiye have been done sufficiently. It should be noted at this point that a large number have been put forward, especially regarding Türkiye's EU membership. Studies on the perceived image of Türkiye in the EU in the 2000s were written on the subject of "Europeanization." In this context, issues such as the Europeanization of foreign policy,¹ democracy, and the rule of law² or the transformation of civil-military relations³ have come to the fore.

However, studies dealing with discourses and debates on Türkiye in the European Parliament (EP) are limited. Parliaments are one of the most important platforms on which political identity is constructed through discourse. In addition, since the parliament is the place where right-wing populist representatives feel most confident, these discourses are also quite assertive and controversial, if not deliberate. In the parliament, elected representatives "try to get other representatives to consent or dissuade" on political issues, and to do this, they apply "debating techniques, maneuvers, methods of persuasion, and reasoning strategies."⁴ Since the analysis of these involves the examination of a large amount of data, researchers are not keen to approach this field often.

Düzgit, in her study titled "Constructions of European Identity: Debates and Discourses on Turkey and the EU" published in 2012, revealed how the European identity is discursively reproduced through Türkiye, which is the "other" of Europe, from a constructivist perspective.⁵ Indeed, the role of the perception of Turks in history in the formation of "European identity" is an established fact that has been the subject of several academic studies.⁶

In this context, using constructivist tools, Ulusoy argues this issue in the following lines:

It was the rest of Europe that shaped their ‘European’ identity in contrast to the Ottomans, which they perceived as the empire of Turks. They also mostly considered the Turks as not being European, but rather being in Europe. In other words, it was the ‘Muslim Turks’, in their minds considered as ‘the other’, against which the rest of Europe of predominantly Christian faith, constructed their ‘European’ identity as being ‘the self’. This was due to the socio-physiological lenses, through which they saw and perceived the Ottoman Turks and later modern Turkey. It is hard to deny the existence of these lenses today, too, even if such a socio-physiological mindset is never spelt out.⁷

Besides this, Düzgit’s article titled “European Parliament ‘Doing’ Europe: Unraveling the Right-wing Culturalist Discourse on Turkey’s Accession to the EU” analyzed the “cultural identity” debates on Türkiye in the EP.⁸ Düzgit’s studies are very significant in terms of revealing the representation of Türkiye in the EP and focusing on right-wing populist parties. In addition to Düzgit, Ermihan’s study is also instructive in terms of analyzing the speeches in the EP.⁹ This study explains the EU’s identity-based approaches to Türkiye in the period between 2013 and 2016, with Wodak’s critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach. The study examines 18 parliamentary sessions and has an important place in analyzing the discourses of parliamentarians in the EP regarding Türkiye.

In addition to Ermihan, there are many studies examining the perceptions and discourses about Türkiye in the EP after 2002.¹⁰ The common feature of all these studies is that the positive atmosphere between Türkiye and the EU after 2002 had a positive effect on Türkiye’s image and perception in the EP. Kılıç’s study, one of the most recent, examined the debates in the EP about Türkiye’s “privileged partnership.”¹¹ In addition, the studies of Baldwin and Widgrén,¹² Braghiroli,¹³ and Canan-Sokullu¹⁴ show that the debates in the EP regarding Türkiye’s EU membership have had a conflicting effect on voting behavior and dynamics regarding Türkiye.

Finally, attention should be paid to the works of Çakmak and İşbaşıaran, and Güler. Çakmak and İşbaşıaran examined how the terrorist attacks in Türkiye and Europe were discussed and handled by the parliamentarians during the 8th parliament term covering the years 2014-2019.¹⁵ In the study, the discourses in the sessions regarding terrorism were examined and the attitudes of polit-

In the right-wing populist discourse, all kinds of distinctions and differences within the public are ignored and the community is depicted as a homogeneous whole

The right-wing populist groups in the EP have achieved significant growth and development in the last 40 years

ical groups were determined. Güler, who has done one of the comprehensive studies on the discourses of right-wing populist groups in the EP, has also revealed how right-wing populist groups construct discursive opposition to immigration in the EP. Güler examined right-wing populist discourses from the perspective of the CDA and revealed how

immigration was constructed as an “economic threat,” “security threat,” and “cultural threat.”¹⁶

Among all these studies, this article has emerged to examine the discourses and attitudes of right-wing populist groups in the EP toward foreign policy issues. Since the presence of broad foreign policy issues and developments necessitates the limitation of research, Turkish foreign policy will be the main discursive theme for discourse analysis. This choice is because, in the preliminary research, it was seen that the political discourses of right-wing populist groups about Türkiye were constructed with quite different references. While these groups put forward a “negative” representation of many issues regarding Türkiye, they tried to reshape and construct the EU’s approach to Türkiye. In this context, an analysis will be made on which representations and discourses the right-wing populist groups’ images of “Türkiye” are formed, and what features and characteristics are attributed to Türkiye with the discourses referenced in the EP sessions.

The attitudes of the right-wing populist groups in the EP toward Türkiye will be examined with the method of CDA. In this context, the discourse analysis approaches of Ruth Wodak, who came to the forefront with her studies on right-wing populist discourse, as well as researchers such as Norman Fairclough and Teun van Dijk will be utilized. Ruth Wodak’s discourse historical approach (DHA) is significant due to the fact that it places a special emphasis on the discursive construction of “us and them,” in other words, the self-other dichotomy, which is widely used by right-wing populist parties, and identity construction, which is seen as the fundamental element of “identity and difference” discourses and will form the basic analytical framework of this study.

In the study, the comparative focus will be on the 7th and 8th parliamentary periods covering the years 2009-2014 and 2014-2019. Particularly due to the effect of the 2008 economic crisis, right-wing populist parties started to see high vote rates and increased their representation and visibility at both national and supranational levels in the EU. In addition, problems began to increase in the relations between Türkiye and the EU during these periods, and this situation made Türkiye the subject of fierce debates in the EP.

Right-Wing Populism as a Concept

Today, there are many definitions and conceptualizations of right-wing populist parties. Cas Mudde, who came to the forefront with his studies on right-wing populist parties, states that there are 26 different definitions¹⁷ in the literature and 58 different features that come to the fore in these definitions.¹⁸ This situation brings with it the necessity of defining the concept clearly and drawing its framework in the studies to be carried out. These parties come from a right-wing tradition, and for many, despite stemming from a fascist past, they transformed themselves in many issues. Although their understanding of “populism” is not anti-democratic, they position themselves as anti-liberalists because they are against minority rights, pluralism, and the rule of law.¹⁹

There is still no agreed definition of whether right-wing populism is an ideology, a philosophy, a particular media phenomenon, or a political style. Many studies have been carried out on all of these concepts. Rydgren says that the concept of right-wing populism is obsolete and instead uses the definition of “ethnic nationalist party with populist elements.” Wodak also conducted an analytical discussion on the concept and tried to define these movements.²⁰ Müller states that populists are anti-elite and draws attention to their opposition to pluralism.²¹ In this way, Müller states that the parties reflect the spirit of the people, not the general will, and emphasizes that they position themselves as “representatives of the true identity, not of larger number.”²²

At this point, it is important to thicken the line between the concept of “right-wing populism” and the concept of “far right.” The concept of “right-wing” refers to a political ideology or political attitude. In general, it advocates traditional or conservative values, limited government intervention, and free market principles. It generally supports a market economy, low taxes, and little government intervention in the economy. However, the terms “extreme right” or “far right” refer to political ideologies or positions that are further to the right of the right-wing spectrum and often have more extreme or radical views.²³ Extreme right individuals and parties defend nationalism, localism, and authoritarianism and preserve xenophobic and racist tendencies. These parties generally reject liberal democratic values and institutions. Some far-right groups even give the green light to ideologies such as “fascism,” “white supremacism” or “neo-Nazism.”

In addition to these definitions, it is seen that the concept of the extreme right is also used to explain “ultra-nationalist, reactionary views, fundamentalist, racist or xenophobic” political attitudes.²⁴ It is seen that these parties are described as “far right” in some studies because they “interpret traditional views with a populist approach” and turn them into extreme ideas.²⁵

The right-wing populist parliamentarians, who exhibited a fragmented image in the previous period, gathered under one roof and became an influential political group during the 8th parliamentary term

Right-wing populism, on the other hand, is a political ideology that combines the above-mentioned right-wing attitudes with populist rhetoric and strategies. It is characterized by prioritizing addressing the concerns, grievances, and aspirations of the “people,” particularly over the elite or establishment. Right-wing populist movements and parties often try to exist by responding to economic, cultural, and political changes to gain support and political influence. It is seen that they advocate basic political values such as anti-elitism, emphasis on nationalism and identity, populist rhetoric, anti-globalization, authoritarianism, and economic protectionism.²⁶

To sum up, it should be noted that Wodak approaches the concept of right-wing populism from a historical perspective, a viewpoint shared by other researchers. Wodak traced the historical traces of populism and stated that the word came from the Latin origin “populus” and was transferred to English as “people.” For this reason, Wodak states that populism depicts people as a whole. This situation creates opposition to concepts such as elitism, aristocracy, and plutocracy, according to Wodak, because these concepts emphasize the dominant ideology of a small, privileged, certain selected group over the whole. For this reason, Wodak interprets the concept from a historical perspective in terms of methodological integrity. Due to this historical definition, Wodak does not consider populism as popular sovereignty or the rule of the majority but accepts the representation of the actor speaking on behalf of the majority. Due to that, in the right-wing populist discourse, all kinds of distinctions and differences within the public are ignored and the community is depicted as a homogeneous whole.

Right-wing Populist Groups in the European Parliament

The right-wing populist groups in the EP have achieved significant growth and development in the last 40 years. The researchers studying the past of the right-wing populist parties concluded that the years between 1979-1999 saw “growth and consolidation”; between 2000-2014, “populism has been accepted as a new normal” for the right-wing populist parties.²⁷ Especially after 2019, it has been regarded as “a change in paradigm.”²⁸ This situation resulted in right-wing parties becoming serious challengers against mainstream parties.

Between 2009 and 2014, right-wing populist parliamentary groups coalesced around the Union for Europe of the Nations (UEN), the Europe of Freedom



and Democracy (EFD), and the Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD) party groups. Between 2014 and 2019, the leading group representing right-wing populist parties, the Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF), will be examined, and the parliamentary members of that group's speech will be focused on. It is observed that the right-wing populist parliamentarians, who exhibited a fragmented image in the previous period, gathered under one roof and became an influential political group during the 8th parliamentary term.

Union for Europe of the Nations (UEN)

The Union for Europe of the Nations (UEN) was a political group that included right-wing political parties that existed between 1999 and 2009 in the EP. The key point for the UEN is not to be a party with “Euroscepticism” but to emerge as a respectable, right-wing, and non-federalist alternative to the European People’s Party (EPP). Because of these goals, the party’s constitution hesitated to publish any Eurosceptic messages.²⁹

The aforementioned right-wing populist parties generally supported national sovereignty, preserving cultural values, and stricter migrant policies. Generally, they are opposed to more attachment. However, although they were unwilling to, they positioned themselves as Eurosceptics, supporting an inter-governmental approach. In the 2009 EP elections, the UEN lost significant ground. In 2009, most of the parties left and joined other political groups. As a result, the UEN was denounced. The members who left the UEN joined the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) group.

The European Parliament in Strasbourg, France has repeatedly published reports which have over time negatively impacted the relations between Türkiye and the European Union.

MUSTAFA YALÇIN / AA

Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD)

Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD) was a right-wing populist group that functioned between 2009 and 2014. The EFD group appeared after the 2009 elections in the EP, in which Euroscepticism and nationalist parties had gained momentum. The EFD group's main aims were defending national sovereignty rights, limiting the power of the European Union, and promoting Euroscepticism. Parties and parliamentarians within the group generally opposed EU integration, and they criticized EU institutions.³⁰ In these terms, they called for states to make more decisions. Although the 2014 EP elections resulted in a “big bang” for right-wing populists, the EFD group was affected negatively by the vote. Later on, the EFD was annulled because of changes in the structures of the member parties.

Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD)

Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD) was a group formed by right-wing populist parties and functioned between 2014 and 2019. Right-wing populist parties and Eurosceptics established it to defend and establish a sovereign Europe. It needs to be stressed that the EFDD was formed after the 2014 EP elections, in which right-wing populist parties gained a serious amount of representation and an overall increase in votes.

The EFDD tried to create subjectivity in the EP by criticizing the European Union's policies, institutions, and things that have been understood as democratic accountability. In this way, the EFDD tried to spread the Eurosceptics' position by sharing it.³¹ Furthermore, the EFDD supported principles like national sovereignty, direct democracy, and preventing EU integration. After the 2019 EP elections, the EFDD group faced the same fate as other right-wing populist parties. Because of the change in member parties' situation after the elections and relationships with other political groups, the EFDD ceased to exist.

Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF)

The Europe of Nations and Freedoms (ENF) was a political group formed by right-wing populist parties in the EP from 2015 to 2019. It brought together right-wing populist and Eurosceptic parties with similar views on national sovereignty, immigration, and opposition to EU integration.³² The group was founded in June 2015 and it continued its activities during the same parliamentary period with EFDD. The National Rally party from France, led by Marine Le Pen, was the locomotive party of the group. Other right-wing populist parties of the group included the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ), the Northern League in Italy (Lega Nord), and the Freedom Party of the Netherlands (PVV).

Like the other political parties, the ENF group also supported national sovereignty, stricter migration policies, and Euroscepticism. The ENF also high-

lighted critics of the European Union, its intuitions, and policies. Furthermore, concerns about migration and globalization's effect on national identity and social adaptation have been raised.

It can be observed that the parliamentarians belonging to all these party groups actively participate in the discussions about Türkiye. During the 7th parliament period covering the years between 2009 and 2014, Türkiye was the subject of debate in 410 sessions, and 29 special sessions were explicitly held for Türkiye. During the 8th parliament period between 2014 and 2019, it was observed that Türkiye was discussed in 371 sessions, and 54 special sessions related to Türkiye were held. Furthermore, during the 8th parliamentary term, which comprised the years 2014-2019, it was observed that the discourses and discussions about Türkiye increased significantly in numbers. In this context, a data set of 37,000 words related to Türkiye was scanned in the first period, while a data set of 75,000 words was examined in the second session. In light of this information, it can be understood that Türkiye became a much more debated country during the 8th parliament period between 2014 and 2019.

Studies on the discourses of right-wing parties in the literature show that the culture of immigrants and essentialist versions of the religion of Islam are used as a tool by the actors

Analyzing Right-Wing Populist Discourse

All CDA researchers view texts and discourses as forms of social practice.³³ Therefore, discourses are seen as social practices that both construct social practices and are constructed by them. Especially prominent CDA researchers such as Fairclough, Wodak, and van Dijk accept discourse as a form of social action and interaction.³⁴ In foreign policy, discourses that are analyzed are considered as a whole “speech act.” A speech act is the act of speaking in a form that gets someone else to act, in short.

In fact, as argued by Ulusoy:

Discourses are speech acts that are of particular importance in two aspects: First, they are the reflection of the identity in foreign policy. Discourses written or spoken of the state officials and institutions are the products and thus reflections of the identity of the state in foreign policy. Second, such speech acts also help understand the contents of the identity. It is because such discourses written or spoken by state officials and organs in return do directly contribute to the shaping of the identity that makes them use such texts and speeches.³⁵

Right-wing populist parties emphasize the belief in the common discourse of the “past” to “protect their country,” which they describe as the “fatherland”

The most remarkable point in Wodak’s definition of the concept of discourse is that it has a historical perspective. Wodak states that discourse means everything “from a historical base, a place of memory (*lieu de memoire*) to a policy, a political strategy, a narrative, a text, a speech, a conversation on the subject.”³⁶

Fairclough defines discourse as a social practice that includes power and power struggles.³⁷ Although there is a wide variety of approaches in CDA studies, Fairclough and Wodak consider the use of combinations of various analytical approaches very important for uncovering the “discursive strategies.”³⁸ This article aims to use various analytical approaches together, similar to the approach of Fairclough and Wodak.

Before analyzing the discourses of right-wing populist party groups regarding Türkiye, it is of academic value to discuss determinants regarding the discourse analysis of right-wing populism. Studies on the discourses of right-wing parties in the literature show that the culture of immigrants and essentialist versions of the religion of Islam are used as a tool by the actors. It is known that right-wing populist leaders prefer such instrumentalizing to legitimize their exclusionary and discriminatory policies. In addition, these parties purport to show that they position themselves as “anti-establishment” and the target of “anti-white racism” and “political correctness.”

Right-wing populist rhetoric constructs the representation of “positive self, negative other” by subjecting the world to a simple dichotomous division between “good and evil,” “us and them,” and “inside and outsiders.”³⁹ When creating common enemies, they usually make “categorical distinctions” and “categorical generalizations.” These common strategies, on the other hand, make it possible to portray outsiders and others as “threats,” “different,” and “deviant.”⁴⁰

Right-wing populist parties emphasize the belief in the common discourse of the “past” to “protect their country,” which they describe as the “fatherland.” In this context, they often commemorate their ancestors who used to be “heroic, just, and fighting against evil” in their discourses. In this way, “revisionist histories” based on the narrative of glorious pasts are constructed by right-wing populist parties on the one hand, and through this, legitimacy is sought for their policies on the other.

In this context, recent studies on right-wing populist discourses have focused on the “use of collective memory and nostalgia” to legitimize the ideologies and political attitudes of these parties.⁴¹ Researchers note that right-wing populist leaders consciously focus on moments of heroic victory for the nation. By

doing this, they imply that their nation is currently in a similar war and present themselves as people who want to lead the nation like wartime leaders. With this narrative, they have the opportunity to legitimize and rationalize their harsh attitudes toward immigrants, minorities, and all considered foreign, all of which constitute the other of their perceived self.

In addition to these, “scapegoating” and “building conspiracy theories” are among the discursive strategies used by right-wing populist parties.⁴² The studies reveal how the opposing forces that do not adopt the ideology of the right-wing populist parties are coded as “traitors” trying to destroy their own rights and how they are turned into internal enemies. Other studies, such as those by Goodman and Johnson,⁴³ the Rooyackers and Verkuyten,⁴⁴ and Wood and Finlay,⁴⁵ reveal how right-wing populist politicians have essentially freed themselves from being racist and fascist by labeling domestic political elites as those who betrayed their roots. Right-wing populist politicians present their discourse as the means of “freedom of expression” through these discursive strategies and characterize investigations and complaints against them as “obstruction of freedom of expression.”

Many studies are focusing on the “denial of racism” strategy, which is frequently adopted by right-wing populist politicians.⁴⁶ This discursive strategy includes a “disclaimer of responsibility.” This allows for a generally “positive self” and thus the expression of socially unacceptable views. (I am not racist, but...) Van Dijk has also introduced “types of rejection” that are particularly useful as general defense or justification strategies.⁴⁷

Ruth Wodak states that right-wing populist parties have formed their discourses in an “ambiguous and coded structure” to avoid being subject to sanctions due to their discriminatory discourses.⁴⁸ Because it is well known that concepts such as “discrimination,” “prejudice,” and “exclusion” have negative connotations. For this reason, Wodak underlines that these parties prefer pragmatic discourse tools such as “insinuation,” “implicature,” “inference,” and “assumptions.”⁴⁹ Wodak also states that the failure to analyze racist ideologies in the surveys is related to this ambiguity and cryptic structure. According to the researchers, in the narratives of right-wing populist actors, past and future, reality and fiction are intertwined and blended. This situation is preferred to “learn lessons from the past” and to create a situation of “calculated ambivalence.”⁵⁰

Turkish Foreign Policy in the Right-Wing Populist Discourse

7th Parliament Term (2009-2014)

In this parliamentary period, it is seen that right-wing populist parliamentarians criticized Turkish foreign policy quite harshly, which stemmed from their

Rhetorical tactics such as selective emphasis, citation, direct citations, ethical appeal, identity construction, mobilization, and messaging are used to influence the EP and the public about Türkiye’s purported geopolitical ambitions

biased approaches and prejudices. In particular, they defined Turkish foreign policy with accusatory expressions such as “anti-European,” “anti-Western,” “Islamist,” and “occupation.” When we look at the speeches in general terms, their defamatory nature is evident when referring to the rhetoric of radical Islamism, the Cyprus issue, Turkish-Palestinian relations, or Turkish policies toward Iran and Afghanistan, in addition to their repeated stereotypes of “neo-Ottomanism.”

The following charts consist of the excerpts quoted from the selected speeches of some right-wing populist MEPs on Türkiye in the said period indicative of the above-mentioned approaches:

Table 1: General Patterns of Turkish Foreign Policy

(i) “Turkey is increasingly pursuing an anti-European and an anti-Western foreign policy. Under the leadership of Mr. Erdoğan and President Gül, Turkey is becoming increasingly more Islamist in nature. Turkey still refuses to recognise all the present Member States of the European Union and to honour the obligations it is required to fulfill under the framework of the customs union. Turkey is still continuing its occupation of one part of the territory of one of the EU Member States. And I have not even mentioned the structural and persistent problem of Turkey’s lack of respect for freedom of expression yet. Just now, Mr. Bildt said that he rejects the idea of a closed Europe. Well, as far as I know, none of us here are in favour of the idea of a closed Europe, but we do have some members here, and I am one of them, who are in favour of the idea of a European Europe. To borrow the words of Herman van Rompuy, president-designate of the European Council: Turkey is not part of Europe and never will be!” (Philip Claeys – Vlaams Belang) (November 25, 2009)⁵¹

(ii) “Mr. President, I do not overlook the fact that Turkey is a large country which, however, apart from the internal social problems noted in the report, acts – in my opinion – in a contradictory manner in its foreign policy.

“Thus, while the Turkish Government is trying to present itself as moderate, the armed forces of the country appear to be aggressive both towards Greece, constantly violating Greek airspace in the Aegean, and constantly harassing Frontex. It should be noted that, despite the fact that Greece and Turkey are NATO countries, and so are allies, Turkey is threatening Greece with a “casus belli” in terms of extending its territorial waters and by refusing to recognise the state of Cyprus, which is a member of the European Union.

“Finally, the Turkish Government also appears to be unable at the moment to safeguard popular sovereignty in the country and is planning a new type of Ottoman commonwealth, as was clear from the meeting in Sarajevo at the beginning of November attended by Minister Davutoğlu. I also find strange the moves by the Turkish Government in terms of its

overtures to Iran, which conflict with the accepted views of the international community and the European Union.

“Moreover, we should not overlook the fact that, in contravention of the roadmap, Turkey is allowing and, perhaps, encouraging the movement of illegal immigrants through its territory to the countries of the European Union and is not complying with its obligations to grant docking and landing rights to Cypriot ships and aircraft.” (Nikolaos Salavrakos – EFD) (February 10, 2010)⁵²

(iii) “Mr. President, the book by the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ahmet Davutoglu, entitled ‘Strategic Depth,’ has recently appeared in Greek translation. In this book, Turkey’s cohesive geopolitical doctrine appears to be that of a local, regional superpower with interests from the Adriatic to China, with particular emphasis on Cyprus, the Balkans and the Aegean.

“A special chapter is devoted to Cyprus, on page 274 of this book, in which its geostrategic importance is highlighted, regardless of the human element of the inhabitants and their nationality and religion. At the same time, there is a clear expansionist allusion to the Greek island of Rhodes.

“It says in this strategy manual – and I quote – that, like the USA which, although its population does not extend towards Cuba and the other islands in the Caribbean, it has a direct interest in them, so too, Turkey is obliged from a strategic point of view to have an interest in Cyprus beyond the human factor.

“The trend towards acquiring former Ottoman territories which the book talks about is an indication of violence. There can be no violence towards the European Union. A message needs to be sent to Turkey.” (Nikolaos Salavrakos – EFD) (July 5, 2010)⁵³

In the first example, the above-mentioned parliamentarian seeks to employ an emotional tone to create a negative perception of Türkiye’s policies. Statements such as “anti-European,” “anti-Western,” “increasingly Islamist in nature” and “occupation” carry strong negative connotations aimed at funneling an emotional defamatory reaction in the public. The parliamentarian uses the words “I” and “We” to identify himself with a group that supports the idea of a “European Europe.” This strategy aims to reinforce his personal testimony and a sense of authenticity and unity. In short, to shape perceptions about Türkiye’s foreign policy, to apply authority to increase confidence, and to build a common point of view with like-minded people, “personal testimony” was used, and emotional language was preferred. In addition, he uses “ranking,” “direct assertion” and “comparisons” to present a coherent argument.

In the second example, the speech of the said parliamentarian uses definition and positioning, selective emphasis, negative evaluation and alliances, and ethical norms to construct a critical narrative about Turkish foreign policy. In particular, the perceived “contradictions” as alleged by him in Türkiye’s actions are emphasized, and “possible violations of international norms” are claimed.

The metaphor of the “Trojan horse” aims to present Türkiye’s potential membership as a “hidden danger” by resorting to historical connotations and analogies

In the third example, the multi-dimensional foreign policy of Türkiye is portrayed as expansionist while referring to a book by the Turkish foreign minister of the time. A call to the EU to solidify the “European” self is made in contrast to Türkiye by stating that expansionism is related to the former Ottoman lands. Rhetorical

tactics such as selective emphasis, citation, direct citations, ethical appeal, identity construction, mobilization, and messaging are used to influence the EP and the public about Türkiye’s purported geopolitical ambitions.

Table 2: Accusations of Radical Islamism

(i) “My party, Lega Nord, has always been against Turkey’s becoming part of Europe because it represents a potential Trojan horse of radical Islamism in our continent.” (Mara Bizzotto – EFD) (September 27, 2011)⁵⁴

(ii) “Mr. President, over the last year, Turkey’s multifaceted foreign policy has caused confusion both within the international community and among the secular section of Turkish society. Where is Turkey heading? Is it heading towards a multicultural Europe or towards a pan-Islamic state?”

“May I briefly remind the House of its political conduct towards Iran, its unacceptable diplomatic language against Israel, the dispute with Egypt on the Gaza borders and the Turkish Government’s recent decision to abolish entry visas for 7 Arabic countries. As we know, many of them harbour extremist Islamic associations whose members can now easily enter Europe and the West. The issue of the abolition of visas, in particular, has outraged the secular state in Turkey.”

“If we introduce new sanctions against Iran, Turkey’s stand in the UN Security Council will be a starting point for clarifying the future of modern Turkey, at which point we shall speak differently about Turkey in this Chamber.” (Niki Tzavela – EFD) (February 10, 2010)⁵⁵

The first example accuses Türkiye of radical Islamism and seeks to create a critical narrative against Türkiye’s EU membership. Discursive strategies such as identity construction, opposition, causal attribution, metaphor, emotional language, and fear and security are used in relation to Turkish foreign policy. The speech portrays Türkiye as a potential threat and source of radical Islamism in Europe. The metaphor of the “Trojan horse” aims to present Türkiye’s potential membership as a “hidden danger” by resorting to historical connotations and analogies.

In the second example, the speech uses “binary oppositions,” “selective emphasis,” “negative evaluations,” references to secularism, and rhetorical questions

in an attempt to create a critical narrative about Turkish foreign policy. In the speech, Türkiye is positioned as facing choices between different identities, and the “potential contradictions in its actions” are underlined. “Is Türkiye heading for a multicultural Europe or a pan-Islamic state?”: This dual framing aims to construct two opposing identities for Türkiye. In the speech, examples of Turkish foreign policy such as the attitude toward Iran, the diplomatic language toward Israel, and the disagreements with Egypt are mentioned. In this way, it tries to portray Türkiye’s actions as problematic and potentially “contradictory to the interests of Europe and the West.”

Table 3: Cyprus Issue

(i) *“Mr. President, I share the concerns and views expressed by previous speakers. However, there is one particular aspect that has, in fact, been given far too little attention in this report. This is paragraph 7, which concerns the condemnation of the way in which the Turkish authorities are behaving in Northern Cyprus, which, according to all international rules, is unlawfully occupied by Turkey –by Turkish troops– and therefore by a country that is both formally and, in reality, negotiating its accession to the EU.*

“We are seeing how the Greek-Cypriot inhabitants who want to return to their churches, monasteries and sacred buildings in Northern Cyprus are being hampered when they want to come back, how they are being prevented from entering and simply restoring their churches and how they are being prevented from coming back and reclaiming the property that is rightfully theirs.

“What we are actually witnessing in Northern Cyprus is the violent discrimination against, and suppression of, Christians, with the direct support of an EU candidate country, namely Turkey.” (Morten Messerschmidt – EFD) (January 20, 2011)⁵⁶

The said speech on Türkiye’s policy regarding the Cyprus issue seeks to present a moral appeal by framing and condemning the Turkish authorities’ behavior in Cyprus as an “unlawful occupation” and a “violation of international rules.” By associating the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) with Türkiye’s actions and EU accession negotiations, the parliamentarian purports a link between Türkiye’s said behavior and its desire to join the EU. This connotation adds a geopolitical dimension to the discourse. Greek Cypriots in the TRNC are portrayed as victims and allegedly prevented from reclaiming their property and sacred buildings. In addition, a religious dimension is added to the rhetoric with a Christian emphasis. Rhetorical strategies such as common concerns, selective emphasis, ethical appeal, geopolitical connotations, victimization, Christian identity, and action are used to enforce persuasiveness.

Table 4: Relations with Iran

(i) *“Finally, a strict bringing into line of relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran with transatlantic policy on Tehran and its controversial nuclear programme. Turkey must spell*

out where it stands on the increasingly urgent issue of Tehran's nuclear programme. As a NATO member and EU candidate country, Turkey must nail its colours to the mast. It must make a clear choice." (Bastiaan Belder – EFD) (February 10, 2010)⁵⁷

(ii) "Mr. President, last week, I had meetings with various politicians from Arab states, namely the Emirates, Egypt and Jordan. I should like to convey their concern about Iran's nuclear programme.

"I met Israelis who are extremely concerned, and their main concern is the support which Turkey is currently giving Iran. They asked what the European Union's official position was on support by Prime Minister Erdoğan to the Tehran administration and about the statements by Mr. Erdoğan that Iran's nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes.

"I have to admit that I did not know what our official position is on Turkey's statements and behaviour in terms of Iran's nuclear programme. The progress report says one thing and Mr. Erdoğan says another." (Niki Tzavela – EFD (December 14, 2009)⁵⁸

(iii) "Mr. President, Turkey's strategic importance to transatlantic relations is obvious. In light of this, I am very curious to hear the Council's opinion on the new 'Red Book' of the Turkish National Security Council. Logically, this new edition follows the strategy of the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs.

"My first question to the Council, with the forthcoming transatlantic summit in mind, is as follows: Does the Council share the fear that current Turkish foreign policy is playing into the hands of revisionist actors in the region – principally the Islamic Republic of Iran – and is thus actually undermining stability in the Middle East?

"My second question is whether, indeed, the Council intends to raise the subject of the Red Book at the transatlantic summit, in view of Turkey's position as being crucial to the EU as a candidate country and also crucial as a NATO partner?" (Bastiaan Belder – EFD) (November 10, 2010)⁵⁹

The first speech of the right-wing populist parliamentarian on Türkiye-Iran relations begins with an emphasis on "concern." It is stated that Türkiye should align its stance on Iran's nuclear program with its transatlantic policy. Using the concept of an "increasingly urgent problem," it is argued that the situation requires urgent action and clarity. By emphasizing Türkiye's relations with the EU and NATO, it tries to make an implicit threat vis-à-vis Türkiye's transatlantic identity. In addition, the metaphor of "nail its colors to the mast" is used to demand from Türkiye to make a clear and decisive choice. This metaphor evokes an image of commitment and determination. While blaming Türkiye for Iran, it is seen that discursive strategies such as emphasis, causal attribution, identity construction, and metaphor are used.

In the second example, the parliamentarian refers to various politicians from Arab states and Israel to increase the effects of the concerns that she has built about Türkiye's support for Iran. The speech also raises questions about the EU's official position on Türkiye's statements and behavior regarding Iran's nu-



(R-L) Leaders of the far-right parties in France, Germany, and Netherlands attended the congress held in Germany by the Europe of Nations and group, which brings together far-right parties in European countries on January 21, 2017. AYHAN ŞİMŞEK / AA

clear program. In this way, it implies that there is no consistency in the EU's stance on the issue.

The third example while acknowledging Türkiye's strategic importance, reflects its selective emphasis on Iranian relations, questions of rhetoric, and how it resorts to "action" and "identity construction" to construct a narrative about Turkish foreign policy. The speech raises questions about the consequences of Türkiye's actions. On the other hand, it positions Türkiye as an important player whose decisions may have wider implications for regional stability and transatlantic relations.

Table 5: Relations with Israel and Palestinian Policy

(i) "Turkey does not therefore wish to come into line with Western democratic standards; it has chosen a pathway of re-Islamification, which will lead it ever further away from accession. A country that aims to take a leading role in the Arab-Muslim world with an aggressive foreign policy towards the West and Israel is a country that demonstrates for itself the reasons why my group has long opposed those who would like to see Turkey become a Member State." (Mara Bizzotto – EFD) (March 9, 2011)⁶⁰

(ii) "Mr. Erdoğan's external policy is marked by the weakening of relations with the West in general and with Israel in particular. Thus, Ankara ceased its military cooperation with Israel, while at the same time Turkey significantly increased its military presence in the Mediterranean. Trade relations with Israel have ceased and Mr. Erdoğan is threatening to take further measures. This aggressive attitude at the expense of Israel is intended to help

Ankara to establish its dominance in the region.” (Franz Obermayr – NI/ENF) (September 14, 2011)⁶¹

The first example criticizes deteriorating relations with Israel, through which the strategies of contrast and opposition, selective emphasis on foreign policy, identity construction, causal attribution, and group consensus were used to create a critical yet biased narrative about Türkiye’s policies in that regard. The speech also highlights “perceived deviations from Western democratic standards” and cites Türkiye’s actions as grounds for opposing EU membership.

In the second speech, “The weakening of relations with the West and Israel” in Turkish foreign policy is given as an example, and purporting certain allegations, he aims to contribute to an identity constructed against the Turkish president. In addition, Türkiye’s cutting off military cooperation with Israel and increasing its military presence in the Mediterranean are portrayed as intentional with a hidden agenda of the president. To characterize Türkiye’s actions against Israel, an emotional language is used, accompanied by concepts such as “aggressive attitude” and “domination in the region.” This emotional language is intended to evoke a sense of hostility and greed.

Table 6: Accusation of “Neo-Ottomanism”

(i) “Turkey violates the sovereignty of Bulgaria, using its large Muslim minority to put pressure on our national policy and pursue a neo-Ottoman policy and strategy. It is an official state policy and envisions the former territories of the Ottoman Empire becoming economically, politically and spiritually dependent on Turkey and Islam.” (Slavi Binev – EFD) (March 11, 2014)⁶²

In this example, the speech begins with heavy accusations against Türkiye with the allegation that it “violates Bulgaria’s sovereignty.” By describing Türkiye’s actions as a “neo-Ottoman policy and strategy,” an identity is being constructed regarding Türkiye. Slavi Binev associates Türkiye’s policies with trying to make the former Ottoman lands dependent on Türkiye and Islam. In particular, the historical emphasis is aimed at influencing the opinions about Türkiye. It is also seen that rhetorical strategies such as negative evaluation, selective emphasis, identity construction, and calls for national sovereignty are used.

8th Parliament Term (2014-2019)

In this parliamentary period, it is seen that right-wing populist parliamentarians continued to harshly criticize Turkish foreign policy with accusatory rhetoric similar to the previous period. In terms of foreign policy issues, it is seen

that topics such as counter-terrorism, Syria policy, ISIS, relations with Russia, the refugee problem, and the Cyprus issue come to the fore.

Table 7: Counter-Terrorism

(i) *“We also want to recall the territorial, neo-imperialist ambitions towards Aleppo, Mosul, Syrian Kurdistan, the intention to question decades-old treaties, the will to deny the right to self-determination of the brave Kurds of Rojava, to intervene with the operation “Euphrates Shield” to fight their advance, rather than to face Daesh?” (Fabio Massimo Castaldo – EFDD) (November 22, 2016)⁶³*

(ii) *“Turkey invades Syria in violation of international law in order to establish stability there and to protect the population with the Euphrates Shield campaign. It is absolutely madness if you ignore it just because it is a NATO partner of Germany. Obviously, there is freedom of fools here. Nowadays one obviously forgets that Turkey has been doing good business with ISIS for years” (Franz Obermayr – NI/ENF) (October 5, 2016)⁶⁴*

(iii) *“Madam President, if we are serious about peace in the Middle East we must control and limit Turkish actions in Iraq and also in Syria. Their presence complicates the situation in Mosul and raises serious questions about their possible aspirations in the Sinjar region. Yesterday the Turkish Foreign Minister stated that Turkey may attack Kurdish troops in Iraq if it felt it to be in the national interest, before accusing the Iraqi Government of tying itself to a terrorist organisation, ignoring, of course, how Kurdish forces are at the forefront of the fight against the Islamic State.” (James Carver – EFDD) (October 26, 2016)⁶⁵*

Focusing on Aleppo, Mosul, and the Northern part of Syria, the speech begins with a selective emphasis on Türkiye’s regional and so-called “neo-imperialist” ambitions. It is implied that Türkiye is guiding its actions with a desire for regional control and dominance. The rhetoric accuses Türkiye of interfering via the Euphrates Shield Operation against the advance of Rojava’s Kurds, implying that Türkiye’s policies are impeding the so-called “Kurdish sovereignty.” Comparing Türkiye’s intervention “against the Kurds” and its fight against ISIS, the statement implies that there is an inconsistency or contradiction in Türkiye’s policies.

In the second example, the speech claims that Türkiye’s intervention in Syria is “contrary to international law.” A subjective assessment is made of Türkiye’s intervention by using the phrase “absolutely insane” and arguing that although Türkiye is Germany’s NATO partner, this behavior should not be overlooked. It is implied that the intervention is “unjust” and should not be “ignored” because of political alliances. In the speech, Türkiye is accused of doing business with ISIS, implying a connection between Türkiye and the terrorist organization. An emotional rhetoric is used, accompanied by phrases such as “absolutely insane” and “freedom of fools” to further accentuate the negative portrayal.

In the third example, the speech, which begins with criticism of Türkiye's actions in Iraq and Syria, argues that controlling and limiting Türkiye is necessary for peace in the Middle East. Türkiye is framed as potentially "destabilizing and aggressive" in the region. Rhetoric is used, using phrases such as "complicates the situation" and "raises serious questions" to evoke strong emotional reactions and increase the dose of criticism. The identity constructed for Türkiye frames Türkiye's actions as "potentially harmful to regional stability and peace."

Table 8: Syria Policy and ISIS Accusations

(i) "...Turkey is neither politically nor militarily, and certainly not in terms of religion, a desirable partner in the Syrian peace process. The fight against the Kurdish independence movement was extended to Syrian territory months ago with the help of Turkish militias who move freely in the border area. In violation of international law, Turkey began bombarding Syrian territory in mid-February." (Franz Obermayr – NI/ENF) (March 8, 2016)⁶⁶

(ii) "...the Turkish army is bombing the Kurds in Syria – I remind you that the Kurds are Daesh and Al-Qaeda's fiercest adversaries – Turkey has shot a Russian plane, it is participating in the smuggling of Daesh oil – which you refuse to face; and finally, it is destabilized by multiple attacks on its soil, caused by Mr. Erdoğan's major domestic and foreign policy mistakes. Is this the country that you want to integrate into Europe?" (Marine Le Pen – ENF) (March 9, 2016)⁶⁷

(iii) "Madam President, it is difficult to understand Turkey's foreign policy strategy, bearing in mind how they initially stood by, preventing Kobane's inhabitants from either escaping or protecting themselves, before grudgingly allowing Kurdish intervention. Turkey's latest rationale seems to indicate that by attacking Islamic State they may somehow make the West more tolerant of their own disgraceful behaviour towards the Kurds." (James Carver – EFDD (October 7, 2015)⁶⁸

(iv) "...Not only, in terms of "values," Turkey is far from meeting European requirements, particularly in terms of freedom of expression or respect for pluralism; but still, it's more than troubled role in the Syrian crisis can make us wonder about the possibility of continuing to consider Turkey as an ally in the fight against terrorism." (Dominique Bilde – ENF) (November 24, 2016)⁶⁹

(v) "Furthermore, it is clear that Turkey is playing a very high and risky game in its foreign and security policy. In their eagerness to relive old Ottoman superpower ambitions, they have plunged into the deadly intrigues of the Middle East. Turkey has intervened in the conflict in Syria, and many even claim - justified or not - that Turkey is playing under the table with murderous groups such as al-Nusra and ISIS. To top it all off, Turkey has succeeded in pushing for extremely favorable agreements with the EU on the migrant issue." (Kristina Winberg – EFDD (April 13, 2016)⁷⁰

In the first example, the speech selectively singles out Türkiye's role in Syria by suggesting that Türkiye is "not a suitable partner" politically, militarily, or religiously. Türkiye's counter-terrorism measures against the Syrian branches of the PKK terrorist organization are presented as fights against the so-called Kurdish independence movement. Rhetorical tactics such as selective empha-

sis, ethical evaluation, emotional language, and identity construction are used in the speech. It even refers to international law to construct a critical narrative about Türkiye's role in the Syrian peace process.

In the second example, Marine Le Pen selectively pinpoints Türkiye's specific actions in Syria, aiming at the negative aspects of Türkiye's policies in this regard. In this context, the parliamentarian accuses Türkiye of several "wrongdoings" in her presentation. It is also observed that emotional rhetoric is used by using phrases such as "the most violent enemies," "destabilizing with multiple attacks" and "major domestic and foreign policy mistakes."

In the third example, the speech frames Türkiye's actions as morally objectionable, by accusing Türkiye of preventing the inhabitants of Kobane from escaping or defending themselves during the ISIS siege. It implies that Türkiye's policies are "harming the Kurds." In the speech, Türkiye is portrayed as "a country with a questionable foreign policy strategy, characterized by inaction and opportunism" regarding the Kurds in Kobane.

The fourth speech, in which Türkiye is accused of playing a problematic role in the Syrian crisis, implied that Türkiye's actions are questionable and may have negative consequences. An attempt is made to create doubts about Türkiye being seen as an ally in the fight against terrorism, which suggests a reassessment of Türkiye's role in the fight against terrorism. Emotional language is used, using phrases such as "far from meeting" and "more than just a problematic role" to evoke strong emotional reactions and highlight the negative portrayal of Türkiye. In general terms, the speech frames Türkiye as a "country with values incompatible with European requirements" and as a potentially "unreliable ally" in the fight against terrorism.

In this example, the speech presents an accusation against Türkiye claiming its measures for national security are "former Ottoman superpower ambitions." It places Türkiye's foreign and security policy within a framework driven by its historical aspirations for "power and domination." It also makes a biased assessment by referring to Türkiye's Syria policy and implying ties to terrorist groups such as al-Nusra and ISIS. This assessment asserts that Türkiye's actions may be morally questionable. The parliamentarian describes Türkiye's involvement in conflicts in the Middle East as "deadly intrigues."

Looking at the speeches in both periods, it is seen that right-wing populist actors use emotionally defamatory language regarding Türkiye and Turkish foreign policy. To create this emotionally charged rhetoric, strong words, expressions, and metaphors are used

Table 9: Relations with the Russian Federation

(i) *“Mr. President, there are many ways to cooperate with Turkey. This is about Turkey’s accession to the European Union. We absolutely do not want that. Cooperate with Turkey, yes, trade with Turkey. But is Turkey a reliable military partner? Turkey has also already bought S400 weapon systems from Russia. And that is our NATO member, our NATO partner. I would say: Turkey is so unreliable that you should not do business with it.” (Marcel de Graaff – ENF) (October 24, 2017)⁷¹*

In the speech, Türkiye is heavily criticized for purchasing S-400 weapon systems from Russia. It purports that this action harms Türkiye’s role as a NATO member and is contrary to NATO interests. Emotional language is again constructed by using phrases such as “unreliable military partner” and “do not do business with him.” An identity is being constructed for Türkiye that it is an unreliable military partner and unsuitable for EU membership. Rhetorical strategies such as selective emphasis, ethical evaluation, emotional language, accusations of purchasing S-400 weapon systems, and identity construction are used in the speech.

Table 10: Refugee Issue

(i) *“Turkey, as expected, took advantage of this opportunity and began blackmailing the European Union and asking for more money than the three billion that it has been approved to receive. You have to realize that Turkey is not a credible interlocutor, it is not fulfilling its obligations and it is taking every opportunity to promote its national interests.” (George Epitideios – NI) (February 2, 2016)⁷²*

(ii) *“We have no protection at our external borders, and more than a million immigrants clearly demonstrate this. Now this migration of peoples is to be stopped with Turkey. Turkey is demanding five billion, in addition to the 750 million already paid each year for so-called pre-accession aid.*

“This is bazaar, this is pure blackmail, and I fear that Turkey will continue to trample on fundamental rights, continue to arrest journalists, continue to campaign against the Kurds and Europe will dance on the nose.” (Franz Obermayr – NI/ENF) (February 2, 2016)⁷³

In the first example, the speech, where Türkiye is accused of taking advantage of the refugee crisis and acting opportunistically, alleges that Türkiye’s behavior is morally problematic and “blackmailing.” This assessment frames Türkiye’s actions as “manipulative and unreliable.” It implies that Türkiye is using the refugee issue to manipulate the current situation for its own benefit. Expressions such as “blackmail” and “not a reliable interlocutor” are used to increase emotionality in the speech.

In the second speech, it is seen that a negative identity for Türkiye is also being built. This identity is being constructed for Türkiye as an actor who acts “im-

morally,” “demands money” as part of a “bazaar,” and “disregards fundamental rights and the rights of journalists and Kurds.” The speech selectively emphasizes the issue of immigration and the lack of protection at external borders, focusing on a significant number of migrants. Evaluating Türkiye’s additional funding requests and behavior from an ethical point of view, it characterizes Türkiye as a “merchandised” and “complete blackmail” actor. This assessment frames Türkiye’s actions as “manipulative and immoral.”

Table 11: Cyprus Issue

(i) “Turkey has not acted in compliance with its obligations under the Law of the Sea Treaties and has openly violated the exclusive economic zone of the Republic of Cyprus. Such behavior does not prove in favor of a candidate country for accession to the European Union, which has a duty to follow a foreign policy consistent with that of the Union itself. We demand that the sovereignty of the Republic of Cyprus be respected.” (Fabio Massimo Castaldo – EFDD) (November 13, 2014)⁷⁴

(ii) “Turkey understands only the fist and the determination. The European Union must make it clear that as long as Turkey continues to threaten Greece and Cyprus, as long as it does not recognize the entity of the Republic of Cyprus, as long as it does not withdraw the occupying troops from Cyprus and as long as it does not stop the flow of illegal immigrants to Greece, will not receive funding and accession procedures will be suspended indefinitely. This is how Turkey should be treated if we want to solve the problem it hears in the name of Turkey, unless you are afraid that Mr. Erdoğan will accuse you of following Nazi methods.” (George Epitideios – NI) (July 5, 2017)⁷⁵

(iii) “Not only is Turkey violating the sovereign rights of the Republic of Cyprus, but it is also endangering the exploration of the Aphrodite field and the construction of a billion-dollar LNG terminal on the Vassilikos coast - both projects that are the highest priority for the Cypriot government and can contribute to it to increase the security of energy supply in the European Union” (Barbara Kappel – NI) (November 13, 2014)⁷⁶

The first speech draws attention to Türkiye’s actions in the Eastern Mediterranean. The parliamentarian claims that Türkiye does not comply with its obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and that there are so-called violations of the exclusive economic zone of the Greek Cypriot administration. He concludes in a biased manner that Türkiye’s actions are “incompatible with the standards and requirements necessary for EU membership.” In the speech, an image is again being constructed for Türkiye, as an actor who does not fulfill its obligations under international agreements. In addition, the speech aims to raise doubts about Türkiye’s EU candidacy.

In the second speech, attention is drawn to Türkiye’s behavior and actions. In this context, especially its policies toward Greece and the Greek Cypriot administration, its non-recognition of the Greek Cypriot administration, the existence of its troops in the TRNC, and its “failure to stop the flow of illegal immigrants”

While there were criticisms that “historical power and domination aspirations” shape Turkish foreign policy, the accusations against Turkish foreign policy as being “neo-Ottoman” have also been increasingly deployed in both periods

to Greece are mentioned. Türkiye’s actions are framed as “aggressive and unacceptable.” The parliamentarian uses emotional rhetoric, using phrases such as “understands only the fist and the determination” and “occupying troops” to evoke strong emotional reactions and reinforce the negative portrayal of Türkiye.

In the third speech, it is implied that Türkiye’s actions had negative effects on the energy security and economic development of the Greek Cypriot administration. It is claimed that Türkiye’s policies

“endanger the sovereignty of another actor” and the moral dimension of the actions is opened to discussion. In the speech, Barbara Kappel especially brings up the potential negative impact of Türkiye’s actions on energy exploration and infrastructure projects on the island of Cyprus.

Conclusion

When we examine the discourses of right-wing populist groups concerning Turkish foreign policy in broad terms, they clearly employ highly critical language and make efforts to influence EU policies. Looking at the speeches in both periods, it is seen that right-wing populist actors use emotionally defamatory language regarding Türkiye and Turkish foreign policy. To create this emotionally charged rhetoric, strong words, expressions, and metaphors are used. In both parliamentary periods, it is seen that such rhetoric is repeatedly used in combination with historical quotations or moral emphases to influence the public.

Another overlapping theme in the two periods was the claims that “Türkiye broke away from the West.” While accusations in the 7th parliamentary term emphasized that Türkiye had moved away from the Western camp with steps such as supporting Iran, similar accusations were made in the 8th parliament over topics such as Syria policy, the fight against terrorism, and immigration. While the Cyprus problem was one of the leading topics where Turkish foreign policy was criticized in both periods, it is seen that Türkiye’s policies on Cyprus were criticized especially in the second period in the context of maritime sovereignty, natural gas, and exclusive economic zones.

In both periods, it is seen that they tried to connect the deterioration in Türkiye-Israel relations to the allegation of “the Islamization of Türkiye,” based on the claim that anti-Semitism was spreading in Türkiye. Unrealistic accusations were

made, such as “opening religious schools (*imam-hatip*), not restoring churches, and targeting Christian students.” In this way, an argument is presented that the reason for the deterioration of relations between Türkiye and Israel is caused by the alleged transformation in Türkiye’s domestic policy rather than the actions of Israel against the Palestinians. Even though relations with Israel came to the fore much less during the 8th parliamentary period, it was seen that various parliamentarians continued their similar criticisms from time to time.

Finally, it should be noted that while there were criticisms that “historical power and domination aspirations” shape Turkish foreign policy, the accusations against Turkish foreign policy as being “neo-Ottoman” have also been increasingly deployed in both periods. This rhetoric claims that Türkiye is “moving away from its founding values” in foreign policy and is “implementing an Islamist agenda.”

To conclude, one can argue with confidence that the critical discourse analysis and the social constructivist approach provide good insights into the negative policies of the right-wing populist politicians targeting Türkiye in general and of those in the European Parliament, in particular. The selected two periods in the said parliament attest to this fact. The aforementioned examples of the excerpts quoted from the speeches of those parliamentarians are in fact self-explanatory on the stance of the right-wing politics in the European Parliament. All of the examples confirm the tactics of the politicians that are meant to contribute to an anti-Türkiye stance and to juxtapose it as the “other” of the EU countries. Albeit not a subject of this study, it is still observed that the said stance of the right-wing populist politicians in the EP toward Türkiye continues to reign, as it is not purely political, but also, linked to a process of identification constructed via ideologies consisting of several aspects, varying from history to culture. ■

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