

Western Linkage vs. Illiberalism: De-democratization in Hungary and Turkey

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Abstract

Regime change literature assumes that western linkage; the density of ties to the West in a certain country has been one of the main driving forces behind the third wave of democratization (Levitsky and Way 2010). However, many countries with diverse ties to the west de-democratized in the last decade. Focusing on Hungary and Turkey between 2010-2018, this thesis attempts to solve this puzzle. The thesis argues that the external influences of democratization are not given; incumbents can neutralize both direct and indirect influences of western linkage. Through examination of Hungarian and Turkish cases, the thesis finds that : (1) Incumbents could neutralize direct influences of democratization by decreasing their linkages to the west and increasing their ties to autocratic powers (2) They could neutralize indirect influences through personalized political parties and creation of a minimal winning coalition where the former neutralizes the political elite and the latter neutralizes the economic elite. The analysis is based on testing Levitsky and Way's (2010) claims on how western linkage provides shapes and incentivizes interests that lead to democratization. Overall, the study shows that theories of democratization are insufficient to explain evident democratic backsliding. Therefore, scholars should come up with new conceptualizations and theories to explain de-democratization

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Introduction

Can theories of democratization also explain de-democratization? The regime change literature assumes that Western linkage, the density of ties to the West in a certain country, has been one of the main driving force of the third wave of democratization (Levitsky and Way 2010). Based on single case studies, comparative and theoretical analysis, various scholarly work acknowledged that different international-structural factors and external influences are important to understand domestic political regime outcomes (Kopstein and Reilly 2000; H. Yilmaz 2002; Selim 2015; Gahramanova 2013). However, in the last decade, many countries with high ties to the West experienced de-democratization, erosion of democratic institution, or a direct challenge to democracy by illiberal incumbents.

The examples include European Union (EU) member countries such as Poland where the rule of law and the separation of power has been under threat since 2015 (Freedom House 2019.), Czech Republic where pragmatic incumbents attacked liberal dimension of democracy, Hungary which moved towards competitive authoritarianism (Bozóki and Hegedűs 2018) as well among the EU candidate countries such as Turkey which became a competitive authoritarian regime in 2013 (Esen and Gumuscu 2016) and Serbia where the incumbent party deteriorated civil and political rights (Freedom House 2019). . In this context, the following puzzle rises: How did countries with high ties to the West de-democratize, in spite of existing democratic incentives provided by western linkage? This thesis aims to provide an empirical answer to puzzle relying on existing debates about how structural factors and agency can influence each other, and to what extent domestic policy choices, co-optation, and sidelining mechanism can neutralize the structural factors, regarding regime change.

The regime change literature acknowledges the role of international influences in democratization, particularly in the third wave. According to Kopstein and Reilly (2000) “geographical proximity” to the west, particularly to Berlin or Vienna, which led to the diffusion of norms, resource and institutions was an important factor in the post-communist transformation to democracy and market economy.

Comparing Turkey, Portugal, and Spain in post second world war era, Yilmaz (2002) argues that democratization of these cases was related to incumbents calculation of the difference between “external cost of repression” and “internal cost of toleration” where the former increased due to globalization. Scholars have also put the role of EU as an external democratizing actor: Schimmelfennig and Scholtz (2008) argue that EU conditionality, particularly the promise of EU membership to a neighboring country, push those countries to make reforms which lead to the establishment of democratic institutions. Going one step further, Levitz and Pop-Eleches (2009) focus on Central and Eastern Europe and advocate that once countries join to the EU, greater dependence on EU market avoids democratic backsliding, in spite of lack of conditionality. Moreover, scholars also have shown that external influences western democratizing pressure was not limited to geographically proximate countries: Selim (2015) shows that Egypt’s integration to western capitalism made the country more vulnerable to western pressure, empowered the pro-democracy movement and civil society in the country, which lead to democratization. Overall, scholars considered International-external influences as an important factor in democratization and democratic consolidation in the last decades but none have attempted to solve the puzzling question of how countries with high ties to the west have de-democratized.

To provide an answer to the puzzle, this thesis analyzes Hungary under Hungarian Civic Union (FIDESZ) rule and Turkey under the Justice and Development Party (AKP) between 2010-2018 from a comparative perspective. Both countries have diverse ties to the West, Hungary being a member of the EU and NATO, Turkey being a candidate to the EU and member of NATO since 1952. Nonetheless, Both countries experienced de-democratization in the last decade (V-Dem 2018). In the Hungarian case, incumbent party FIDESZ ruled by Viktor Orban, managed to make diffuses of democracy “constitutionally entrenched” (Bogaards 2018, 1491) despite EU’s efforts to address and intervene in Hungary’s backsliding (Mudde and Jenne 2012, 150). Turkey, under incumbent party AKP ruled by Erdoğan, experienced a “democratic breakdown” (Sommer 2016) and moved towards competitive authoritarianism starting in the 2010s (Esen and Gumuscu 2016), in spite of the external pressure EU, although European commission was addressing the backsliding trend (European Commission 2015). What did enable Orban and Erdoğan to de-democratize Hungary and Turkey in spite of both countries diverse ties to the West? What are the similarities and differences in both cases? In this thesis, I try to answer these questions with the intention of finding results for a broader audience.

Focusing on the Hungarian and Turkish cases, this thesis argues that international and structural mechanisms of democratization are not given, both the direct and indirect external influences can be manipulated by rational autocrats. As I try to illustrate through similarities in Hungary and Turkey, gatekeeping strategies of elites, lack of intraparty democracy, and state-business relations shaped by personalized political parties are the mechanism that could explain de-democratization in the high western linkage context. While I use gatekeeping strategies explain decreases in the western linkage, I suggest intraparty dynamics and state-

business relations explain neutralization of domestic actors who are motivated to keep democratic institutions and practices, due to their interests at western norms and institutions.

As I present, gatekeeping and centralization mechanisms occurs in both similar and different ways in Turkish and Hungarian cases. I attempt to show that incumbents use gatekeeping strategies to decrease direct democratization influences of western linkage whereas they use personalization of incumbent parties to neutralize indirect influences of western linkage by minimizing intraparty democracy and creating a loyal business clientele. I argue that Hungary and Turkey use increasing ties with autocratic countries and decreasing civil society linkages to the west by pressuring International non-governmental organization's (INGO's) as gatekeeping strategies. Moreover, incumbents in Hungary also use nationalization of the economy as a gatekeeping strategy, whereas as outside to EU, Turkey use de-Europeanization decrease its ties to the west. In both cases, personalization of incumbent parties neutralizes the possibility of reform attempts of the political elite and creates minimal economic elites, oligarchs, who do not seek to materialize western linkage driven democratization attempts, since their winning position depends on their relations with the political leader. Nonetheless, there are differences in Hungarian and Turkish cases regarding democracy-seeking activities of the domestically powerful elite.

To provide the theoretical framework of the thesis, I extensively discuss Levitsky and Way (2010)'s work on competitive authoritarianism and democratization. The reason why Levitsky and Way's work is chosen is that they manage to aggregate the international dimension of democratization into two concepts: Western Linkage and Western Leverage where the former refers to diversity of social economic governmental ties to the west and later refers to the vulnerability of a country direct democratization pressure by western powers

(Ibid.40-45). After discussing Levitsky and Way's approach, I explain the insufficiencies of their theory in explaining de-democratization by using a wider literature of authoritarianism and hybrid regimes. I try to come up with a theoretical framework to show how the mechanism Levitsky and Way suggest to explain democratization could be manipulated by incumbents to pave the way for de-democratization.

This thesis aims to contribute to the regime change literature in three different ways. Firstly, the main aim of the thesis is to show that theories which might explain democratization fail to explain de-democratization and therefore, scholars should come up with new theories to explain de-democratization. Secondly, the study aims to show that although structural-international dimensions can be determined when it comes to regime change, these structures are not necessarily given; rather, they can be manipulated by rational autocrats. Thus, I try to show that even in the analysis of structural dimensions of democratization, the role of the agency should not be undermined. Thirdly the study aims to show that if the international dimension of the regime change is indirect, states organizational power and co-optation mechanism is likely to be more crucial to understand the political regime, as indirect international influences can be neutralized through domestic adjustments.

The structure of the thesis is the following: In Chapter one, I discuss the existing empirical and theoretical studies about the external dimension of democratization to create the theoretical framework of the thesis. The framework will be mainly based on Levistky and Way (2010) by showing the strengths and weaknesses of their theory. Additionally, relying on the literature on hybrid regimes, I provide different mechanism's why Levitsky and Way's structural approach is insufficient to explain current political regimes. In the Second Chapter, I explain the puzzle, discuss the selection of cases, explain the methodology and research design. In the third chapter, I make my empirical analysis by tracing the processes of Turkey

and Hungary separately, to explain patterns of de-democratization in the context of high ties to the West. In the fourth and last chapter, I make my conclusion by summarizing the main findings, discussing the similarities and differences in the cases and showing the limitations of the thesis for creating a further research agenda.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework: Linkage, Leverage, democratization, and de-democratization

Since this study aims to challenge the borders of claims of Levitsky and Way (2010) in the contemporary context, it is essential to extensively elaborate concepts they propose and theory that they presume to explain democratization. Levitsky and Way's analysis focuses on 35 competitive authoritarian (C.A) regimes between 1990-2008. They define C.A regimes as a type of hybrid regime where democratic institutions exist, but the "playing field" where the competition occurs between the incumbents and opposition is heavily skewed in favor of the incumbent (Ibid., 5). They argue that in these regimes, elections are competitive but usually not free and fair, civil liberties exist in the public sphere but are always suppressed and violated (pp.7-9). To explain the regime change in those regimes they propose three concepts including linkage, leverage, and states organizational power and measure all three with categorical variables consisting of "low" "medium" and "high. Levitsky and Way define western linkage as the density of social, economic governmental, cultural ties and density of flows of goods and services to the West, particularly to the U.S and EU, of a certain country (p.43). Their analysis of the sample indicates that wherever the western linkage was high, the country democratized in exception for the case of Albania (p.341). It is important to emphasize that high western linkage occurs as a result of the diversity of the linkages; if the linkages are only intergovernmental or economic, the total western linkage is likely to be medium or low which means that democratization will not likely to occur. Their definition of western leverage is subject states' vulnerability to democratization pressure from the western countries, which is related to subject states vis-a-vis bargaining power with the West and possible effects of sanctions on domestic context. (.40-41) Accordingly, where western

leverage is high, sustaining autocratic regimes is costly as the state will be vulnerable to democratizing pressures. However, unlike linkage which they argue as enough in itself to democratize, effects of leverage alone are by snatches; its effects without linkage is ineffective and limited to electoral pressure (Ibid., p.42). The last variable they suggest to explain the regime change and durability in C.A regimes is stated organizational power, which consists of states coercive capacity and incumbent parties strength. The former refers to how much the state is capable of using “low-intensity coercions” such as defamation laws and control of media and “high-intensity coercion such as direct use of violence whereas the latter refers to how parties functions as an instrument to mediate elite conflict and keep society checked(54-64). They suggest that the combination of these two apparatus are crucial to the understanding the ability of opposition groups to challenge the incumbents and capacity of the incumbent to sustain autocracy all other things being equal (67). However, they argue that no matter how durable is the states organizational power, high linkages to the west would likely to lead democratization as domestic mechanisms of coercion will be difficult to sustain in the context of direct or indirect western, EU and USA, pressure

Lastly, it is also important to explain why the theory expects western linkage to lead democratization. This would enable us to understand whether these incentives are still applicable or to understand why they do not function in the same way as it did in the period Levitsky and Way analyze. According to Levitsky and Way, There are three main reasons why western linkage led to democratization. Firstly, high western linkage makes government abuse costly and increases incentives for Western Powers to take action (p.45). Accordingly, extensive coverage of the events in the subject country, high flows of good and information increases the international reverberations and makes western Powers interest at stake, which makes them likely to take action against the government abuse (pp.45-46). Secondly, high

western linkage creates democratic constituencies whose interest will be directly linked to western institutions actors. Therefore, if the linkage is extensive, domestic actors will demand to keep the ties with the western governments and investors. For that reason, abusing national and international norms will be hard and costly for the autocrats in high western linkage C.A regimes (p.49) The third factor is that high western linkage will reshape the power and resource dynamic between the autocrat and dissident groups in favor of the latter (p.49). Levitsky and Way suggest that if ties to the west are dense, opposition groups will have more resources to level the playing field against autocrats, it would be hard for the autocrats to suppress them, will increase the domestic support for opposition groups as they will be able to represent themselves through western linkage domestic institutions and media (pp.48-49). Lastly, the high western linkage may give incentives to reformers within the incumbent party to make a change (p.50)

There are two possible scenarios for the incentives mentioned above in the context of backsliding democracies. Firstly, it is possible that in the contemporary complex interdependence where the incumbent autocrats have leverage against the EU or US, these incentives will not matter as the leverage that incumbents have will allow them to abuse the state institutions without triggering any actions from the west or national groups supported by them. Secondly, it is possible that although these incentives still exist, the domestic concentration of power might give tools to autocrats manipulate and neutralize the direct and indirect pressures coming from external sources.

Levitsky and Way's theory aims to explain the regime change in C.A regimes. In this study, I focus on their framework on ask: What about the other way around? Does western linkage means explain the survival of democracies? As this study tries to illustrate, western linkage fails to explain de-democratization if the incumbents manage to neutralize its

democratization effects through formal international mechanisms as well as formal and informal domestic organizational mechanisms. To be able to operationalize ineffectiveness of western linkage in de-democratization, I will illustrate an alternative theoretical framework to Levitsky and Way's theory to understand how western linkage could be neutralized.

For this study, I rely on the main critiques of Levitsky and Way's theory; "gatekeeper elites" theory provided by Tolstrup. Unlike Levitsky and Way who argues that sources of the western linkage is structural and rooted in historical and geographical factors (Levitsky and Way 2010, 44), Tolstrup (2014, 2013) argues that the elite in C.A regimes is not passive subjects to western linkage (2013, 718). Rather, they tend to have gatekeeping strategies to downgrade or upgrade the intensity of ties to the west or with the "black knights," autocratic countries who externally legitimizes other autocratic regimes, based on their strategic calculations. (720.) According to Tolstrup gatekeeping strategies can be exercised mainly by the incumbent elite but also the economic elite whose businesses thus profits will be located either in the west or the black knight and the opposition elite who might seek to increase the ties with the opposite of who the incumbents work with (720-721). Focusing on Belarus and Ukraine, he argues that the question where the interest of the incumbent elite located was crucial to understanding the regime durability and regime change. Although he acknowledges that gatekeeping strategies can be limited due to leverage mechanisms that black knights or western power have (721), the elite in the country will shape the policies and institutions to upgrade and downgrade the linkages. In this study, the gatekeeping hypothesis will be analyzed in the context of high western linkage to show that additional to Tolstrup's findings which focused on medium linkage cases where it is easier for autocrats to manipulate the structures (Levitsky and Way 2014, 154), gatekeeping strategies can be effective in high

linkage cases both to create an “authoritarian equilibrium” (Kelemen 2017) but also to decrease the effects of political conditionality put by western Powers.

Secondly, I argue that states organizational power, especially the establishment of personalized and centralized political parties, is crucial to understand de-democratization in the high linkage context. Levitsky and Way claim that the domestic dimension of their analysis is centered on the balance of power between the incumbent and opposition groups (Levistky and Way 2010, 54). I argue that centralization of organizational power may reshape the power balance between incumbent and opposition elite even in the high linkage cases depending on the western leverage. If the external pressures are an indirect domestic resource and power-sharing strategies could neutralize the effects of western linkage, although mechanisms mentioned by Levitsky and Way occur. Thus, once the relationship is set in the equilibrium, once they are no constraints in the form of external pressure but only domestically embedded external constraints, domestic factors will be more likely to be determinant. In other words, the organizational power might provide space for stability; which can be a maneuvering tool when it comes to backsliding.

However, it is essential to note that in the case of backsliding, party strength tends to be more important than states security apparatus since the use of coercion will be more costly as opposed to creating institutions of co-optation to provide legitimacy (Gerschewski 2013, 25). As the hybrid regime literature suggest, parties can be a source of co-optation, patronage, and a vehicle for centralization (Kopecký and Spirova 2011; Gerschewski 2013). This becomes more evident if we think of the autocrats such as Fujimori in Peru and Yeltsin in Russia whose fall from power was partial because any party organization did not back them. This co-optation might be led to the occupation of the mechanism of direct and indirect pressure from the west by the autocrats and their loyalists. Moreover, parties can strengthen backsliding by

creating the necessary framework for state capture as personal ties and hierarchy can become the determinant of who wins and who loses in the economic activity through rent-seeking (Aligica and Tarko 2014). If these resources and institutions are key for the survival of democratic politics, party state capture, which might create a loyalist political clientele (Innes 2014, 89) can prevent any democratizing incentives, coming from both western linkage and its indirect effects. In other words, parties can become the determinant of the “winning coalition” (Mesquita et al. 2005) which might take control of diffusion mechanisms, if the necessary hierarchical structure is established since the leadership will determine the winners and losers.

In brief, I suggest two mechanisms to explain de-democratization in the context of high western linkage: Gatekeeping strategies, co-optation mechanisms through centralized political parties. In the empirical analysis, I will trace the processes based on these two mechanisms and analyze how applicable they are to the selected cases.

Chapter 2: Explaining the Hungarian and the Turkish

Puzzle

2.1 The puzzle in brief

The problem examined in the thesis is countries with diverse ties to the West de-democratizing, in spite of existing democratic incentives. What makes this puzzling is the fact that any theory which explains democratization should explain de-democratization if the explanatory variables for the existence of democracy are still there. Following Bogaards (2018) I use the term de-democratization instead of “democratic recession” (Diamond 2015) or “democratic backsliding” (Bermeo 2016) to be able to analyze it as a process opposed to democratization; as a gradual decline of democratic institutions and practices.

2.2 Case Selection

The selected cases for this study is Hungary and Turkey between 2010-2018. In spite of the existence of intensity of ties to the west, both countries backslid as a result of rational autocrats rigging domestic and international constraints. Hungary is a member of the EU, therefore can be considered the west itself to a certain extent. Although Hungary was considered as a democracy by any standards in 2010 (A. Bozóki and Simon 2010), it became a “partially free” country by 2018, according to Freedom House (2019). Scholars consider that the current regime in Hungary is not democratic: Bogaards (2018) considers Hungary as a “diffusively defective democracy” claiming that different dimensions of democracy including elections, liberalism, and constitutions are undermined. Bozoki and Hegedus (2018) argue that Hungary is an “externally constraint hybrid regime” since the EU membership puts

constraints and limitations to Hungarian regime but still, it is a country in the “grey zone” between democracy and autocracy (Carothers 2002, 6). Turkey is an outsider to the EU but has been in the accession process, which meant conditionality, which is one popular “push” factor (Schimmelfennig, Engert, and Knobel 2003).

Additionally, Turkish case of democratization since the mid 20th century has been argued to driven by its relations with the U.S, NATO and Europe (Yilmaz 2002) However, already fragile democratic institutions in Turkey constantly eroded since 2010. According to Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) dataset, Turkey became an electoral autocracy in 2013 (Coppedge et al. 2018). Since then democratic institutions gradually declined, and Turkey became a consolidated competitive authoritarian regime (Castaldo 2018) Therefore, as will be elaborated more while tracing the processes, in both cases external governmental ties and its diffuses exists in the country, but de-democratization occurred. Relying on the empirical bases of the puzzle, I will shortly indicate the research question and the hypothesis in the following section.

2.3 The research question and hypothesis

Based on the theoretical discussion and discussion of the cases above, this research aims to answer the following question: 1) **How do autocrats in Hungary and Turkey manage to neutralize the western linkage-based incentives for democratization?** Here I hypothesize that gatekeeping strategies of the incumbent elites, personalization of organizational power particularly through ruling parties as a tool of co-optation and discipline lead to neutralization of both direct and indirect democratization incentives of western linkage.

2.4 Research Design and Methodology

In this study, I use both a comparative case study and process-tracing. The reason for using the former is to understand how similar and different strategies autocrats imply in the given contexts which will enable us to come up generalizable claims. The reason for using the latter is to test competing theories, and explain the causal relationship between the specified, isolated independent variables (Collier 2011) mentioned above, and the dependent variable.

Before tracing the processes, the study starts by replicating Levitsky and Way's (2010, 365–80) measurements for linkage, leverage, and organizational power. For leverage and organizational power, I directly replicate Levitsky and Way's measurements. Because of limited data and contemporary irrelevance of some operationalizations in Levitsky and Way's work, I analyze sources of the linkage both quantitatively and qualitatively but do not assign quantitative scores to linkage. Then the processes will be separately traced in the cases of Hungary and Turkey, based on explanatory variables I suggested. In this study, I try to contrast each explanation with incentives Levitsky and Way suggest to explain why linkage will lead to democratization: international reverberation, the emergence of democratic co and structure of power and resources between the incumbents and dissidents

The measurement of the dependent variable, de-democratization in the context of western linkage, is based on contrast and compatibility between findings for each argument and mechanisms Levitsky and Way's (2010, 45–50) suggest for why western linkage is likely to lead to democratization. Therefore, to demonstrate how Levitsky and Way's mechanism fails in the selected cases, I contrast my explanations with the theoretical implications of those mechanisms.

Measurement of the first independent variable, gatekeeping strategies of elites is based on the retracement of two things: Firstly, I will analyze the increases and decreases in the

quantitative indicators of different sources of western linkage, again based on appendix provided by Levitsky and Way, for each year which is traced (2010-2018). Also, strategies of both Orban and Erdoğan s regarding decreasing ties with the west will be analyzed. Secondly, change/increase of linkages with the “black knights” (Hufbauer et al. 2007), particularly with Gulf States, Russia, and China will be analyzed to see if there has been an increase of linkages with non-western Powers.

The second independent variable, personalization, and centralization of organizational power through party politics is analyzed through media reports, analysis of rent-seeking activities through international corruption agencies and analysis of how intra-party politics in both cases have changed over time, relying on secondary sources. Additionally, relying on online available data, I calculate crony business groups in both countries to explain how important is the personal and party ties and who are the members of the minimal winning coalition.

Having explained the puzzle, cases, research design and hypothesis, I proceed to the empirical analysis in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Empirical Analysis

3.1 Hungary: High Linkage, Low Leverage, and De-democratization

The Hungarian case under Viktor Orban is a case of de-democratization in the high western linkage context. Both quantitative and qualitative indicators suggest that Hungary gradually de-democratized since Viktor Orban's FIDESZ came to power: According to the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI), Hungary was a consolidating democracy until 2010 with a democracy score of 9.25/10 (BTI 2010). However, after right-wing populist party FIDESZ took power in 2010, quality of democracy gradually declined, and BTI coded Hungary as a defective democracy with a score of 7.15/10. (BTI 2018) Qualitative assessment of Freedom House reports on Hungary during the period suggest that using its supermajority in the parliament, FIDESZ gradually created an uneven playing field by first creating agencies to control media, then packing the judiciary, changing the constitution and directly attacking civil liberties (Freedom House 2012; 2018). As of 2019 Freedom House considers Hungary as a “partly free” country (Freedom House 2019). Moreover. In an op-ed written in 2019, Levitsky and Way, argue that Orban pushed the country towards C.A by controlling the news coverage through cronies and packing the referees (Levitsky and Way 2019). Empirical evidence can be multiplied, but one thing is clear: Hungary de-democratized between 2010-2018 under FIDESZ rule. What makes it relevant is that Hungary is an EU member state with diverse ties to other European countries.

Between 2010 and 2018, Linkage to the west was **high** in Hungary. Hungary is a member of the European common market, 81 % of its exports are to EU countries, and 78% of its imports comes from EU countries (World Bank 2019). According to the estimate of the portfolio.hu (2019) around 600.000 than Hungarian citizens lives and works in other

European Union countries. As Hungary is a member of EU, parties and public institutions are connected with and obliged to European Union regulation.

Leverage is **low**. Firstly, Hungary is a high-income economy (World Bank, 2019). Additionally, Hungarian governments competing for interest with the EU over the refugee crisis allows the government to show the issue as a sovereignty matter which leads EU to be skeptical to make any pressure. Organizational power was **medium**. The state has the monopoly to use of force and exercises basic administration properly (BTI 2018). However, there is no evidence for a large-scale tool of suppression in 2011. The party strength was **medium**. FIDESZ was active nationwide but did not have grassroots activities or did not occupy the public sphere by 2011. It has been part of the electoral politics since the very first election in 1990. Overall Party was strong but did not have any hegemony over society yet.

In general, none of the criteria for I analyze for build-up of a hybrid regime existed in the Hungarian case: Ties to the west were dense, and Hungary was an EU member, state did not have big security apparatus to suppress or manipulate the society, the party was electorally strong but did not have any significant grassroots activity. Except for the low leverage-structural factors supported democracy. Nonetheless, Orban governments rational backsliding strategies which will be discussed below, lead to a country to be competitive authoritarian regimes.

3.1.1 Gatekeeping: Variety of Strategies

In the period analyzed, gatekeeping occurs in three ways in the Hungarian case: a) Nationalization of certain economic sectors which decreases economic linkages b) attempts to increase governmental and economic ties with autocratic Powers to decrease the effects of intergovernmental western linkage c) suppressing and attacking western and western funded

non governmental organizations and private institutions which decreases civil society linkage. It could be observed that all of these gatekeeping strategies, either neutralized or decreased the democratization effects of western linkage and sometimes was even an integrated part of de-democratization.

Since FIDESZ came to power in 2010, one of the main gatekeeping strategies the government exercised has been the nationalization of certain economic sectors which were mostly owned by foreign investors and companies. Some of these include the banking industry of 80% which was controlled by investors from other EU countries in 2009 (Scheiring, 2018, 32) which then was decreased to 50% by strategies of Orban government (Voszka 2018), monopolization of tobacco industry which gave the monopoly of tobacco retail to Continental tobacco company owned by FIDESZ oligarch Janos Santa who planned the bill for the monopoly law in his computer according to investigation of one opposition MP (Laki 2015), and nationalization in the energy sector which was directly aimed to worsen the power of foreign-owned energy companies (Levegő Munkacsoport 2015, 4) . According to V-Dem's calculation aggregate state's ownership of the economy increased 118% in the Orban era (V-Dem 2018.). From a comparative perspective, Hungary had the highest amount of State-owned enterprises (SOE'S) as of 2016 among OECD companies (OECD 2018).

What makes this relevant for the political regime is the fact that this strategy was not meant to be a crisis management mechanisms unlike in other post-2008 EU member countries rather they were part of the government's new "strategic capitalism" (Öniş and Kutlay 2017) aiming to change the ownership structure by giving strategic sectors to domestic hands in Orban's words (Voszka 2018, 1291–99) . Particularly, keeping the capital under control true

state-owned enterprises and “crony owned enterprises” (COE’s) (Nova 2017) has been exercised as a gatekeeping strategy through nationalization.

Political effects of Orbans' strategic capitalism was twofold: Firstly decreasing foreign and mainly the western capitalist’s interests at stake itself gave Orban more power to make deeper arrangements in the economy and paved the way for economic centralization: Prior to nationalization, previous governments had to make structural reform deals with the IMF and EU due to fiscal instability. Moreover, by changing the dynamics in the economy, Orban was able to decrease IMF and EU pressure over economic reforms, including the tax and trade policy. Secondly a nationalization of certain economic sectors enabled the government to re-privatize them and turn to COE’S based on personal clientele relations: Considering the empirical evidence that Hungarian capitalist are divided into two groups consisting of international market-oriented entrepreneurs and domestic market-oriented oligarchs, (Magyar 2016, 77) nationalization clearly enables Orban government to use economic restructuring as a gatekeeping strategy by replacing internationalist Hungarian capitalist interest with the right-wing oligarchs. According to Levitsky and Way (2010 47-48), one of the main ways western linkages led to democratization was deriving from the fact that national capitalist interests were indispensable from regional and international actors. In the Hungarian cases this realignment, whose starting point was nationalization leaves no space for such reforms. For example, restructuring of the tobacco industry was a clear move to take the stakes from western investors and give the monopoly to a close oligarch. In short, Orban led autarkic crony capitalism functioned as an economic gatekeeping strategy which neutralizes the western linkage led initiative of business groups to seek any democratic reform or to make any pressure and decreases EU’s economic linkage and leverage.

Second gatekeeping strategy Orban government has been exercising is its attempts to increase economic, political, and social ties with autocratic Powers under the rhetoric and policies of “Eastern Opening.” This has not occurred in the form of “external legitimation” (Jackson 2010) but rather in the form and with the aim of decreasing Hungary dependency to fellow EU member states to increase the “autocratic freedom” (Magyar 2016, 278; Buzogány 2017) In a speech in 2010, Orban declared that Hungary is winding under Western Flag although eastern wind is blowing in the economy and after the speech the government ([Hungarytoday_2018](#)). Starting from that point, the government sought to increase its ties to the eastern countries, mainly the autocratic ones, including China, Russia, and Azerbaijan. Economically, although a considerable amount of Foreign direct investments and financial investments in Hungary relies on western Powers, post-2010 Orban regime has been encouraging the eastern economic powers to increase their presence in the Hungarian economy. This particularly holds for China and Russia. As Jacoby and Korkut (2016, 510–11) states, the Hungarian government encouraged Chinese investors to buy government bonds to decrease the effects of the sovereign debt crisis. There have been considerable financial loans from China between 2010-2015 including 300 million loans for general financing of Hungarian state electricity company ([Reuters_2018](#)) and 100 million loans to Hungarian Exim Bank to finance the China investment in Hungary ([Orange_files.hu_2014](#)).

Moreover, seeking for Chinese loans was aimed to avoid any IMF or EU involvement in particular issues (Jacoby and Korkut 2016, 512). This economic ties also brought about an increase in the political ties: Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated support for Belt and Road Project and declared their support for Chinese activity in South China sea (Matura 2017, 79). It can be observed that the Hungarian government has been attempting to increase the linkages with the Chinese black knights. However, Hungarian overall trade

volume with China decreased since 2010 which is a sign that Government attempted to decrease its dependence on the west by increasing its ties to the west but could not achieve what has been aimed.

Orban governments politically driven attempts to increase ties with Russia had economic and political aspects as well as social consequences. Economically, the government signed the ever most significant investment (12 billion €) since it came to power, with Russian state-owned company Rosatom which agreed to install new reactors to paks nuclear plant in Hungary ([Heinrich Böll Stiftung 2017](#)). It is important to highlight that the government engaged in this agreement without making any public bid (Ibid.). Although state officials declared that such policies must not be considered as Hungary is turning towards Russia ([CNN 2018](#)), since Hungary's economic ties with Russia increased Hungary engaged with more pro-Russian polity in international relations: Many state officials including Prime minister, economy minister and foreign minister declared that EU sanctions against Russia is against the European and Hungarian interest and puts Hungary in jeopardy ([France24 2018](#)). Hungary's support to Russia at the governmental level had social consequences: After the eight years of Orban rule positive public opinion against Russia increased from 41% to 48% whereas perception on western allies including U.S Germany and France has declined ([Krekó, 2019](#)).

In terms of Levitsky and Way's approach "Eastern opening" policy of Hungary can be considered as attempts to decreasing western leverage and linkage by increasing economic and political ties with the Black knights. Thus, Hungary opening to China can be considered as an alternative to complete EU hegemony over its territory and to decrease EU's already existing minimally leverage to be materialized. Moreover, although overall Hungarian trade

with east declined, companies owned by FIDESZ oligarchs have been the primary beneficiaries of the increasing diversity in economic ties (Magyar 2016, 272)

Another important gatekeeping strategy Orban government has been exercising since 2010 is its constant attack on NGO'S with international funding and INGO's. The first part of this issue is related with the funds coming from western circles including individual European states and individual philanthropists: In August 2014 Pro-Government papers attacked on NGO's Receiving Norway Grants with the claim that they are working for the interest of foreign Powers in August 2013 (Hungarian Helsinki, Committee 2017). From that point, NGO'S getting Norway grants faced with direct pressures including criminal procedures, raid to their offices, and suspension of their licenses (Hungarian Helsinki Committee 2017, 2-8). Nonetheless, the government's attack on foreign funds to NGO'S was not limited to Norway Grants: Government adopted a law in June 2017 that required NGO's receiving more than 72.000.000 Hungarian Forints to register as supported from abroad which requires them to give detailed reports of from where and whom the report comes from (*Reuters* 2018). The government declared the reasoning as avoiding foreign interest groups to use NGO'S as a tool to seek their self- interest's (Council of Europe" 2018). Many NGO' including Hungarian Helsinki committee claimed that they are already transparent and finds the law as nothing but stigmatization. (Hungarian Helsinki Committee 2017) . Lastly, legal defamation laws on NGO'S which working on migration has been introduced by the Hungarian Parliament, which made both INGO'S and NGO's vulnerable to government's selective financial punishments (Freedom House 2019.). Introduction of these-called "Stop Soros" package, with the claim that George Soros, a Hungarian-origin American liberal philanthropist is trying to let migrants invade the country, sought to put 25% tax on NGO's who are working with migrants (Euobserver 2018.). This decision led the Open society foundation, created by George Soros,

to close its operations in Hungary (The Open Society Foundations 2019.) While these were happening government have been making constant propaganda against western NGO'S: Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy Zoltan Kovacs argued in several op-ed's that EU taxpayers money should not be spent for NGO's who are trying to justify illegal migration and lobby for it (Kovacs 2018). The government's pressure on Western linked domestic institutions were not limited to just NGO's but also included private institutions connected to west : Government's pressure on a Western-funded and owned educational institution accredited in the U.S, Central European University, which was created by George Soros, forced the university out of Hungary as a result of "lex CEU" which is a law that was directly aimed to cancel CEU's license (Spike 2017).

The examples can be continued, but one appears to be clear: In Levitsky and Way's terminology, Civil society and information linkages were constantly attacked and decreased by the government between 2010-2018. According to Levitsky and Way (2006, 396), civil society linkages both bring about domestically driven democracy pressure as institutions with ties to the western funds and organizations can work in the public sphere with strong untouchable resources and increase the cost of international reverberation as the lobby groups, and flows of information increases the cost of government abuse. In this sense, governments, "success" at gatekeeping in the civil society level weakened the linkage mechanisms that Levitsky and Way propose.

3.1.2 A party for the leader and clients

Centralization of the incumbent party FIDESZ enhances de-democratization and weakens the effects of western linkage in two ways: a) Lack of Intraparty democracy

combined with role of personal networks leaves no space for elite reform at the political level

b) Personalized and centralized party structure enables for party state capture and provides space for necessary patronage network which enables the government to have its winning coalition in the crucial positions.

As indicated in the previous sections, Hungary is a case of High linkage and low leverage. In terms of Levitsky and Way's theory, this would require the democratization pressure to be domestically driven and indirect (Levitsky and Way 2010, 53) instead of direct pressure from the European Union. For such conditions, domestic political and interest groups consisting of ruling party members, high-level bureaucrats, as well as economic entrepreneurs and business, should be motivated to pressure the government for democratic reforms actively. In the original work of Levitsky and Way, there are only two cases of high linkage including Mexico and Taiwan where reformists attitudes caused democratization in the former technocrats of an incumbent party (Levitsky and Way 2010, 154-161) and combination of elite reformism and business groups' pressure in the latter (Ibid. 313-316). In the Hungarian case, none of these groups appears to seek for such reform or pressure of those who seek are insignificant as a country is de-democratizing. I argue this is related to the fact that the ruling party and government is structured in a very personalized way which leaves no room for party elite to seek reforms and creates the minimal winning coalition through personal relations.

3.1.2.1 FIDESZ: Hungarian Orban Union?

One significant reason why there are not any reform attempts by technocrats within the ruling party FIDESZ is related to how charismatic leadership and personal relations shape the intraparty politics. Since the transition in the region, among the center-right parties in Central and Eastern Europe FIDESZ have had the most personalized- hierarchical party structure

(Enyedi and Linek 2008, 468) and scholars estimated that it is the least intra-democratic party in the region (von dem Berge and Obert 2018, 657). Since the party is established in 1988, it has been led by Viktor Orbán and lacked pluralistic internal structures (Enyedi 2016, 214). It was centralized in a way that Orbán was able to change the party from a liberal to nationalist-populist party through the '90s (Enyedi 2005). The faction who opposed this shift had nothing to do but resign (Lendvai 2018, 20). Orbán's personalized rule within FIDESZ lies both on the historical development of the party and institutional factors: During the roundtable talks in 1989, Orbán represented the most radical views in some sessions (Bozóki 2002, 29), he was considered as the most charismatic leading figure within FIDESZ (Ibid., 81) and was considered as "extremely radical" (Ibid.100) which paved the way centralization of his leadership.

Regarding personal ties, leading figures in the party such as László Kövér who is now speaker of the national assembly, János Ader the president of the country, are Orbán's close friends from his university years (Lendvai 2018, 2) and they did not attempt to challenge his leadership since then. Furthermore, some party regulations give a clear monopoly to Orbán regarding the intra-party decision: Orbán has the power to appoint presidents of district organizations which enables him to determine all parliamentary candidates (Enyedi and Linek 2008, 469). Moreover, Orbán loyalists are not just party members but also some of them are in critical bureaucratic positions: For example, Budget council which was reformed by Orbán government are filled with Orbán loyalists who will be in power until 2020.

As I tried to describe above, Viktor Orbán strongly influenced the political decision made by FIDESZ since 1988. This is related with both Orbán's historical unquestioned leadership, his ability to appoint personal loyalist to critical positions in the party and bureaucracy and formal structure of the party. Therefore, it is no surprise that any intraparty

factions did not challenge Orban's leadership within 30 years: Viktor Orban lead FIDESZ since its establishments, he decides on rules and rulers accordingly. Since FIDESZ has been ruling the country since 2010, this personalization has inevitable implications for the governance. In Magyar's words (2016, 71) Fidesz rule brought about a "mafia state" where loyalty to the leader, "the godfather" and "family," the hierarchy of the party, is at the center of the rule of the game. In such a context, western linkage, which is expected to trigger the ruling elite to seek political reforms, does not bring about any change in political actor's interests since the godfather, Viktor Orban, determines their fate.

3.1.2.2 Orban's winning coalition: The oligarchs

In the Hungarian case, the reason why there are not any significant pressure by business groups is derives from the fact that post-2010 regime successfully "adopted" the existing right-wing oligarchs and created new ones whose success are embedded to their relation to the ruling party and "the poligarch" (Magyar 2016, 74), Viktor Orban. As Schering (2017., 23) shows, Hungarian economic elite are divided into two groups consisting of left-wing economic elite who gained their wealth after the rapid privatization and in the socialist and liberal government's rule, whose interest is embedded in the international market; right-wing elite whose economic output is mainly located in the domestic market. Considering that Hungarian politics are understood as a zero-sum game by the mainstream political parties due to left-right polarization in the party system (Enyedi 2016, 213) this structure leaves the capitalist who is aligned with the opposition party out of important lobby areas.

Given this polarized structure, with the rise of the Orban regime, the right-wing economic elite became the only winners: Oligarchs emerged after 2010, gained their achievements mainly through uncompetitive public tenders (Toth and Hajdu 2018.). Based on the reports of Hungarian investigate journalism websites, I have created a table of Orban

oligarchs (See Table 1) with reasons why I code them as an oligarch. Looking at the data, the following observation can be made: There are two types of winners consisting of “adopted oligarchs” (Magyar 2016, 78) who already gained considerable wealth in pre-2010 era and Orban’s frontmen’s, emerging oligarchs, who made most of their wealth thanks to their ties to Viktor Orban. Examples for the former include people like Gabor Szeles who was already one of the wealthiest right-wing oligarchs (Ibid. 78) latter include people like Lorinc Meszaros who was from the same village with PM Orban (Financial Times 2018.), Istvan Tiborcz who is son in law of Orban (The Orange Files” 2018.).

The evidence suggests that FIDESZ’s success in capturing the state apparatus created an economic structure similar to the intra-party hierarchy of FIDESZ by letting Orban decide whom to include/exclude in the winning coalition. There are only very few oligarch’s, which implies that Orban managed to create the narrowest winning coalition (Mesquita et al. 2005, 26).

Importance of the leader-oligarch hierarchy could be understood better if one looks at how a winner became a loser: Lajos Simicska, who has been one of the main economic brains and oligarchs in FIDESZ’ successful establishment, started to become a loser. After the second victory of FIDESZ in 2014, Simicska became a direct target of Orban because of his influence power which derives from his stooges in the public offices and his ownership of the media empire (Magyar 2016, 83-84). People who were close to him removed from public offices such as Laszlone Nemeth and his media empire got bought up by smaller Orban oligarch’s (Ibid.). As a result of Simicska influence considerably decreased: According to influence barometer (Befolyás-barométer) of napi.hu, Simicska was the 3rd most influential person in Hungary in 2014 but he gradually decreased to 32nd as of 2018 (napi.hu 2018.). Example of Simicska clearly illustrates how Orban can re-structure the winning coalition.

In terms of Levitsky and Way's theory, oligarchs, or the small winning coalition has two implications. Firstly, business groups or important economic actors, domestic actors were dominantly limited to oligarchs who owned sectors targeting domestic market and domestic constituencies. In this sense, Orban had enough winner's who had no incentives to target him. Secondly, most of the important oligarch's gained their wealth thanks to their ties to Orban, and those who became losers lost their position only because of the personal conflict with Orban.

Table 1

<i>Oligarch's Name</i>	<i>Business Activities</i>	<i>Why coded as an oligarch?</i>
<u>Lőrinc Mészáros</u>	Media, tourism, agriculture, manufacturing, construction, water supply and sewerage, real estate, electricity supplies, transportation. Sports	It is acknowledged that Meszaros, who is a close friend of Orban from his childhood, increased his wealth through non-competitive public tenders, re-privatization of public enterprises and direct support from state funds (Buckley and Byrne 2017; Zsuzsanna 2017; Theorangefiles 2016).
<i>István Garancsi</i>	Sports Club, Telecommunication, Advertising, Construction, manufacturing of chemical products	Businesses owned by Garancsi did not just benefit from low competition in public biddings and support of funds (Orange files.hu 2018), but also irregularities regarding production processes of his companies are neglected by Hungarian public agencies (Direkt36 2017).
<i>István Tiborcz,</i>	Energy, Lightning, Real Estate,	As the EU anti-fraud Office reported, Tiborcz companies won public biddings with serious irregularities(András 2018)
<i>Gábor Szentgyörgyi</i>	IT and office products	Despite sending the most expensive bids, Szentgyörgyi's companies won many contracts thanks to his connection with FIDESZ circles and design of the procurement processes in a way that only his company was considered as eligible (András 2019).

<i>János Santa</i>	Tobacco industry	Studies identify that laws that re-structured the tobacco industry which turned tobacco market into a monopoly, was designed in computers owned Santa's company, and Santa was consulted constantly during the legislation process(Scheiring, 2017.; Ligeti et al., 2017.)
<i>Zsolt Nyerges</i>	Manufacturing equipment, agriculture, construction, advertisement	State funds support Nyerges 'companies with the government's admitted support (Atlatszo.Hu" 2012). Expert analysis suggests that his companies started to own some of the most important real estates in Budapest without spending a single penny (Balogh 2012).
<i>Andy Vajna</i>	Media, casinos, film industry	Investigations suggest that Vajna created his casino empire government concessions without any public tenders and created his media empire through loans of state-owned banks (Theorangefiles.com 2016). Vajna died in January 2019.
<i>Gyözö Orban Jr.</i>	Technical equipment and machinery, manufacturing, construction, mining	Companies owned by Gyözö Orban Jr. who is the younger brother of Viktor Orban were heavily favored in the dissemination processes of EU funds which are controlled by the Prime Minister's Office (Theorangefiles.com 2016.)
<i>Gábor Széles</i>	Real Estate, transportation, electronics	Although Széles gained most of his wealth before Orban's return to power in 2010, he has been a strong FIDESZ supporter since the early 1990s (Theorangefiles.com 2013). Lately, his bus company, Ikarus, benefited considerably from the restructuring of the transportation manufacturing industry (Hungarianfreepress.com 2016).
<i>Árpád Habony</i>	Media, Real estate, Sports	Habony doubled revenues his media empire through advertisements of Orban allies and governmental agencies as well as a considerably profitable contract with public institutions (Theorangefiles.com 2016)
<i>Sándor Csányi</i>	Banking, Sports, Agriculture	Although Csányi's wealth goes back to the transition period, he has been an escort oligarch to the Hungarian regime with his silence(Magyar 2016, 80). Moreover, he became the president of the Hungarian Football Association, and his bank OTP

gave huge loans to Orban oligarch like Meszaros (BBeacn, 2016).

3.2 Turkey: Medium Leverage, High Linkage, and De-democratization

Turkey is another case de-democratization in the context of high linkage, although the density of ties to the west is more limited than of Hungary. Similar to Hungary, both qualitative and quantitative indicators reveal the de-democratization process: According to V-Dem, the quality of democracy in Turkey gradually declined since 2008 whereas 2007 was the highest score in country's history (0.56). Turkey's democracy score was 0.46 in 2010 and became 0.14 as of 2018, one of the most significant decline globally (V-Dem, 2019). Freedom House reports on Turkey suggest that beginning in 2002 AKP rule made significant reforms increasing the quality of democracy by increasing the civil and political rights of disadvantaged groups and decreasing the role of the military in Turkey (Freedom House, 2012). Nonetheless, starting from 2012 AKP government began to take hard measures against both political civil rights, suppressing peaceful protest brutally, jailing journalist on unjustified grounds and manipulating elections (Freedom House, 2015). On their analysis of Turkey, Esen and Gumuscu (2016) follow Levitsky and Way's theoretical framework by focusing on the change of civil liberties, elections, and the "playing field." They argue that Turkey can be considered as a C.A regime since the post-2013 era, particularly after the "Gezi" protests with AKP packing the independent electoral organizations with loyalists, controlling the media through cronies, politicizing the state institutions in favor of AKP. Moreover, measures taken by AKP government after the failed coup attempt of 15 June 2016 consolidate Turkish C.A regime as Erdogan was able to purge dissident and opponents in

bureaucracy by securitizing them (Esen and Gumuscu 2017, 69), with allegations of connections to Fethullan Gulen, who was claimed to be behind the coup.

Linkage is **high** in the Turkish case. Turkey is a NATO member since 1952, connecting it to transatlantic alliance not just militarily but also politically as NATO claims to promote democratic values ([NATO 2019](#)). Turkey applied to EU (European Economic Community at the time) membership in 1987, officially became a candidate in 1999 ([Ayrupa.info 2016](#)) and made considerable reforms especially before 2005 (Aydın-Düzgit and Kaliber 2016, 3) in different policy areas such as rule of law and civil society which lead to increase of linkages at the societal and governmental level. Moreover, since 1995, Turkey is part of EU custom's union, and the EU is the biggest trade partner of Turkey, by far ([European Union 2016](#)). Moreover, 5.5 million Turkish citizens are living EU, and 300 thousand lives in the U.S ([BBC News Türkçe 2019](#); [mfa.gov.tr 2019](#)). Turkey is also geographically neighboring the EU.

Leverage is **medium**. Turkey is a medium size economy (World Bank, 2019). EU accession process itself increases the vulnerability of government abuse in Turkey. Nevertheless, Turkish-EU relations became more transactional particularly after Syrian refugee crisis, since Turkey acts “gatekeeper” of EU (Okuy and Zaragoza-Cristiani 2016, 55) as Turkey has 3.6 million Syrian refugees ([Özdemir 2019](#)). Organizational power was **high** in Turkey as of 2011. The party strength was **high**. AKP monopolized states coercive capacity between 2008 and 2011 with the trials of Ergenekon and Balyoz which allowed the government to purge traditional secular bureaucracy in Turkey (I. Yilmaz and Bashirov 2018, 1816). Moreover, AKP's ideology is rooted in political Islam as most its founding leaders as well as a considerable amount of voters comes from the Islamist Welfare Party of the 1990s

(Rabasa and Larrabee 2008, 39) although it claims to be a conservative democratic party (Ibid. 49)

Overall, Turkish democracy was more fragile than of Hungary, in terms of domestic power relations and external constraints were slightly more limited. Nonetheless, Turkey's geographical proximity to the EU, its alliance with U.S and EU accession process results with diverse and intense ties to the west, which suggest structural factors were in favor of democracy in Turkey. Nonetheless, Turkey has been experiencing de-democratization since 2010 and became a consolidated competitive authoritarian regime.

3.2.1 Gatekeeping: A necessary precaution?

It is possible to talk about three critical gatekeeping strategies in the Turkish case a) De-Europeanization of institutions and practices which decreased the intergovernmental ties to EU b) Increasing economic, governmental social, strategic ties with autocratic countries, particularly Gulf states and Russia c) Decreasing civil society and societal linkages to the Western countries.

One key gatekeeping strategy in Turkey has been de-Europeanization¹ which indicated reversing the reforms for EU accession process, disintegration from EU norms which resulted in a decrease of intergovernmental ties to the EU, weakened EU conditionality in the domestic policy-making, and uneven the playing field. AKP government which came to power in 2002, has prioritized joining EU through the 2000s as was indicated in the first party

¹ Following Buller and Gamble (2002, 17)'s definition of Europeanisation, I define de-europeanisation as reversing transformation of domestic implications of european governance.

manifesto of 2002 and 2007 elections (“AKP Seçim Bildirgesi 2002”). Scholars have argued that AKP’S eagerness for Europeanisation was a pragmatic strategy of survival (Çavdar 2006, 472; Avcı 2011, 410; Ökten 2017) as pro-EU agenda enabled AKP to align with Kurds, centre-left liberals and moderate Islamist groups at the time, against the traditional secular bureaucracy and military in Turkey (I. Yilmaz and Bashirov 2018, 1816).

Nonetheless, this pragmatism benefitted Turkish democracy and society considerably; AKP government engaged in Europeanisation policies until 2005 in many areas (Aydın-Düzgit and Kaliber 2016, 6) such as creating regulatory agencies and independent institutions as part of EU accession process (Ozel 2013, 746), enhancing free market competition and increasing quality of democracy in line with Copenhagen criteria’s (Börzel and Soyaltın, 2017., 6),... Between 2005 and 2010 AKP government’s Europeanisation polity slowed down and it engaged in “selective Europeanisation” by limiting the Europeanisation to civil-military relations and minority rights empowerment which still made Turkish democracy more inclusionary (Yilmaz 2016, 90). Nonetheless, as Öniş and Kutlay (2017, 15) argue, with the third victory electoral victory in 2011, AKP started to consolidate its power and began to centralize Turkish state by attacking checks and balances which paved the way for de-Europeanisation, as AKP did not need a coalition with liberals to survive. This shift could be observed in governments rhetoric, policy, and action: In 2012, Foreign Minister Davutoglu said in Italy that “Turkey is not Europe, although it prefers to stay close to the EU” (Haberler.com 2012) With claims of European People’s Party (EPP) treating AKP unfair, AKP left EPP in which he had an observatory status and joined eurosceptic European Conservatives and Reformists (Karluk 2014). The government started to reverse the Europeanisation reforms it implemented in the EU accession process: The government attacked the independence of courts with the allegations of the existence of “parallel state

within Turkey” (Saatçioğlu 2016, 139). As Turkish policy shifted from Europeanisation and the government continued to take anti-democratic reforms, EU’s Turkey progress reports declared more concern regarding the freedom of expression, independence of the judiciary, and fairness of elections in Turkey (EU Commission, 2016, 7). In September 2010 European Parliament voted to suspend 70 million Euro funds that Turkey received as part of IPA program. (Sputnik n.d.)

Overall, empirical evidence suggests that Turkey shifted from Europeanisation to de-Europeanisation which changed government’s focus and decreased the intergovernmental ties between EU and Turkey, as Europeanisation drive was reversed, and EU’s support for Turkey’s integration declined. As Tolstrup argues, the incumbent’s commitment to certain international norms is a sign of intergovernmental linkage as it indicates countries orientation (Tolstrup 2013, 723). Therefore in terms of Levitsky and Way’s theory, AKP governments pragmatic shift decreased the effects of intergovernmental linkages as it decreased EU institutions incentives to keep considering Turkey for candidacy.

Another gatekeeping strategy AKP government exercised is its successful attempts to increase its ties with the powerful autocratic countries, particularly Russia and Gulf countries. It is important to note that the AKP government has increased its ties with those countries diversely. As the government shifted from Europeanisation to de-Europeanisation, it sought alternative international Powers for the legitimization of the political regime. At the Intergovernmental level, the Turkish government started to question its commitment to the western alliance: In November 2016, President Erdoğan made the following statement in an interview *“Some may criticize me, but I express my opinion. For example, I have said ‘why shouldn’t Turkey be in the Shanghai 5?’* arguing that the EU is not everything, Turkey can join the Shanghai co-operation and he discussed this idea with Russian President Vladimir

Putin (HurriyetDailynews 2016). Turkish shift to Eurasia was even strengthened when Russia and Turkey made a deal about Turkish purchase of S-400 missiles in September 2017 (“Türkiye ve Rusya S-400 Füze Anlaşmasını İmzaladı” 2017). One month later, after a crisis in a NATO military exercise, Economically, Turkey’s trade with autocratic powers considerably increased since 2010: Between 2010 and 2018 Turkey’s imports from the United Arab Emirates doubled from 0.7 % to 1.4 % and imports from Russia became 24.4 % from 14.7, getting Turkish-Russian trade to an unprecedentedly high level (TurkStat 2019x). Moreover, FDI inflows from Gulf countries to Turkey considerably increased by 36% between 2014 and 2018, as there has been a decrease in companies created by European countries by 30% percent (Uzmanpara Milliyet’ 2017.) As Turkey got closer to Russia, this approachment also had technocratic implications: Starting from 2015, the Russian government started to give undergraduate scholarship’s in Russia for Turkish students.

Turkey’s opening to autocratic powers had significant implications for the political regime. The government was able to find alternatives to Europeanisation policy by diversifying its linkages to autocratic powers. In this sense, as AKP pursued a Europeanisation strategy to legitimize its political agenda and consolidation (Börzel and Soyaltin, 2017, 7), intensifying linkages to autocratic powers helped Erdogan to consolidate his regime both by decreasing EU leverage by finding alternative sources of supports and finding grounds for external legitimation. Governments shift also enabled them to get the support of Eurasians groups in Turkey, including pro-Russian Patriotic Party whose leader declared their support for Erdogan against the transatlantic alliance (Odatv 2017). Moreover, In terms of Levitsky and Way’s theory, all components of linkages including social economic and intergovernmental were more diversified with autocratic powers than before which is an important source of maneuver in the western linkage context (Tolstrup 2014, 129). Thus,

Turkish democratic backsliding cannot be separated from its shift towards the Gulf and Eurasian autocratic powers, as its democratization was rooted in its ties to the EU and the U.S.

Third gatekeeping strategy Erdogan government was its attempts to securitize and attack INGO's and foreign media operating in Turkey. Similar to that of Hungary, the AKP government started to attempt to decrease civil society linkages and societal linkages to the west in various ways. Firstly, starting with the aftermath of nationwide Gezi Park protest in 2013, Erdoğan started to securitize both domestic and international pressure groups by stigmatizing them as "external powers" (dış mihraklar) and "interest lobby" (Faiz lobisi) claiming that foreign powers were involved in the Gezi Park protest to keep interest rates high and destabilize Turkey ([DW 2013](#)). One group which was attacked were the International Journalist's: At the 31st of March 2014, 1st anniversary of Gezi Park protest CNN International's Turkey correspondent Ivan Watson was put to jail and had to flee the country. In the aftermath, many foreign journalists declared in an interview that government officials behavior towards them became more offensive since the Gezi Protests. ([Diken 2014](#)). Nonetheless, 2016 was the peak of governments attack on the international journalist as 6 different journalists, all coming from western news agencies, were expelled from the country with the accusation of security threats ([BBC 2017](#)). In March 2019 reporters Without Borders declared that the Turkish government has been hampering international journalists to work freely, particularly over license issues ([RSF 2019](#))... Besides the international journalist, the government also securitized and attacked international organizations in the last years: the First one was the Open society foundations. Osman Kavala, who was one of the founding figures of open society foundations Turkey and a trustee of the foundation, was put in custody in September 2017, with the claim that he was the main financier of Gezi Protests (BBC 2018). Aftermath, some of the other trustees of the open society was also put in custody as part of the

investigation. As a result, Open Society foundations declared that they would move their operations out of Turkey. (Ibid.). Another INGO who was directly attacked was Amnesty International. The police raided Amnesty's meeting in Princess Island of Istanbul in July 2017, and 10 activities, some of whom were not Turkish citizens, were put in custody and 6 of them were found guilty with allegations of spying (2017).

The evidence on the pressure on international civil and information networks in Turkey suggest that the government has engaged in gatekeeping strategies which lead to a decrease in the western linkage, as the government was successful in neutralizing and forcing out these networks out of the country. In terms of Levitsky and Way's theory, information linkages both increases the cost of government abuse as they keep the playing field even by monitoring the political developments (Levitsky and Way 2010, 45) and empowering resources of domestic groups(48). However, in line with Tolstrup's theoretical framework, these networks are not given and governments are able to decrease this linkage, as the Turkish case shows. Moreover, the Turkish case also suggests that direct attack on INGO'S also enabled the government to domesticate both NGO'S and INGO's as they become insecure.

3.2.2 Erdoğan's AKP: Hierarchy and Cronyism

Similar to Hungary centralization of party politics feeds de-democratization in high linkage context in two ways a) Personalization of party through informal and formal networks leaves those who attempt to make reforms within the party as powerless b) Centralization of power enables AKP to create a clientele whose power depends on their loyalty to regime and who has no incentives in the regional or international norms. Moreover, it helps the domesticate the "dissident elite".

3.2.3 AKP: From Quasi Pluralism to the rise of “Chief”

AKP was established in 2001 by the reformist group within Virtue Party (FP) which adopted pro-Islamist anti -secularist anti -NATO the Islamist national Outlook ideology (Waldman and Caliskan 2017, 66). This reformist groups who were led by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan who then become the prime minister and president of country and leader of AKP, Abdullah Gül who served as president between 2007-2014, and Bülent Arınç, split from FP and established a new “conservative democratic party” (Akdogan 2004). The new party claimed to base its foundations on intraparty democracy but in reality, the ruling structure was dominated by the small amount of elite committed to Erdoğan’s leadership (Tepe 2005, 73–74). Nonetheless, until 2011, this embedded hierarchical structure was combined with quasi pluralism: AKP’s Pro-EU and anti-establishment agenda particularly regarding tutelary activities of the classical secular elite and militaries involvement in politics enabled the party to gather different groups whose interest layed on liberalization and democratization (Bashirov and Lancaster 2018, 1217). As a result, different factions of Turkish political elite was recruited in AKP and supported the party, liberals and moderate Islamist communities, particularly the Gülen community, and moderate nationalists were essential supporters of AKP thanks to their support to Europeanisation de-militarization agenda (Özbudun 2006, 546). As AKP used democratization and Europeanisation agenda pragmatically, these groups continued to support AKP through the 2000s (Öniş 2009, 24–27). However, as AKP won three consecutive parliamentary elections and became a predominant party (Gumuscu 2013; Esen 2012.; Çarkoğlu 2012) Erdoğan became the unquestioned leader of the movement (Öniş and Kutlay 2017, 15). This strengthened by personalization of the public campaigns: Pro-government media started to call Erdoğan as “Reis” (Chief), symbolizing his paternalistic leadership (Selçuk 2016, 576). Moreover, after 2011, realizing that he does not need the

support of liberal, intelligentsia or the moderate Islamist, Erdoğan publicly advocated for a more majoritarian and plebiscitarian understanding of democracy (Özbudun 2014, 157) Thus both in terms of recruited party elite and voter base, many groups were eliminated between 2010-2018, signifying the end of AKP's role in moderation in Turkish political system (Bashirov and Lancaster 2018). This had implications for the regime outcome as those who were able to use the indirect influence of Turkey's western alliance was eliminated.

Splits have started with liberals most of whom the refused their intellectual support from AKP after the Gezi Park protests. The second one was the Gulenists, who tried to use state institutions such as courts to challenge Erdoğan's power but was successfully securitized by Erdogan himself (Akkoyunlu and Öktem 2016, 515). Since these two groups never reached to the hierarchy of AKP'S power structure, there is no needed to discuss them broadly. More important split in terms of our theory was the split within the officially powerful AKP elite. As AKP government increased its autocratic tendencies and as Erdoganization of AKP was observed by high ranking members reformist voices started to be heard by the high ranking party members who were lead by two different individuals, Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, who was a professor of Political Science and Abdullah Gül, president of the country between (2007-2014) who was an PhD in economist studied in the Exeter University and participated in education leadership programs in the U.S. Their reform seeking activities started to become evident in 2014.

The first split within AKP's leadership started between Abdullah Gül and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Abdullah Gül was known for his moderate tone (Shafak 2014.). His presidential term would come to en and in August 2014 and he said in an interview that his intention is to return to party when his term comes to end (T24 2014.). Nonetheless, AKP central committee lead by Erdoğan decided to move the Congress to from 28th August, the day Gül's

presidential term would come to end, to 27th, which was a sign that Erdoğan prevented any challenge to his leadership by Abdullah Gül (Onuş 2014). Thus Abdullah Gül failed to return to the party. Aftermath, through 2015 and 2016, Abdullah Gül criticized governments policies: In public speeches, he criticized end of reformism that AKP used to have (140journos 2016), argued there is need for rapprochement with EU and US and declared that he is against the shift from parliamentarism to “Turkish style Presidentialism” (Sakallı 2017) . . . Gül’s criticism reached to peak when the presidential decree regarding the punishment of individuals who found to be affiliated with the 15th of July failed coup was declared. According to Gül the decree was “worrying in terms of rule of law” and was “ambiguous” (Hürriyet 2017). As Gül’s criticism towards the regime increased, Erdoğan directly started to criticize him and pro-government media started to scribe him. In 30th of December 2017, Erdogan said “Shame on you!” without disclosing his name while referring to Gül’s criticism’s towards the government (Sozcu 2017) Nonetheless, between 2010-2018, also at the time of writing this thesis, Abdullah gül failed to mobilize the elite within the party and pro government media outlets was able to discreted him in the eyes of AKP voters.

The second change attempt was done by Ahmet Davutoğlu who was PM between 2014-2015. Davutoğlu was selected to be PM directly with Erdoğan’s decision. Nevertheless, seeing the organizational opportunity and understanding fragility of the regime he started to mobilize his governmental power to seek to change Erdogan leadership. He tried to implement reforms which would put threat to Erdogan loyalists such as the transparency reform that required each party branch leader to declare property, took different positions over freedom of speech issues with Erdogan such as regarding trials on journalist and argued that journalist in jail should be released with respect to freedom of speech and rule of law . After the 7 June elections where AKP lost the majority, Davutoğlu attempted to create a

coalition with opposition parties whereas Erdoğan declared his intention for re-elections. The informal war between Erdoğan and Davutoğlu came to an end on 1st of May when a WordPress document named “pelikan brief” with an anonymous writer, believed to be a journalist personally close to Erdoğan. The pelikan brief was an attempt to scold Davutoğlu, blaming him for aligning with western powers against the “chief” and the nation (Pelikandosyası 2016). Davutoğlu met with Erdoğan at the presidential palace on 4th of May and called the party for an extraordinary congress on 6th of May, saying that “he had to resign” (Cumhuriyet 2016)

Overall, increasing personalization of AKP, failure of attempts of Gül and Davutoğlu suggest that recruitment cycle of the political elite and sidelining of the elite who are able to mobilize benefits of western linkage are crucial in the de-democratization process of Turkey. Levitsky and Way suggest that one reason why western linkage is likely to lead to democratization is powerful domestic leaders likely to develop good relations with the west, thus try to avoid their country to move away from the west (Levitsky and Way 2014, 152-153). In the Turkish case, two powerful domestic political elite with close ties to the west, one being the former PM and the other one being the former president attempted to make these reforms showing their eagerness to re-democratize and re-integrate Turkey to Europe. Nonetheless, the use of informal networks of dehumanization and personal leadership contributed to the survival of Erdoğan's rule. Here it is important to note that although both Davutoğlu and Gül's aim was to capture the leadership rather than making normatively sound democratic reforms, their activities suggest that they used the language of democracy and emphasize universal values, which would bring both national and international legitimacy. However, sidetracking of Gül and Davutoğlu led to an unprecedented consolidation of power as no other people than Erdoğan loyalists were left in the crucial

positions. This was possible thanks to Erdoğan's control over media, his charismatic leadership and use of informal networks as in the Pelikan brief example.

3.2.4 Aligning with the domestic elite and domestication of the liberal elite

Another important source of de-democratization in the context of western linkage was Erdoğan's restructuring state-business relations in Turkey., Erdoğan was able to use the structural conditions in Turkish economy to create minimal winners whose interests did not lay on international market and democracy but rather on the survival of the regime. These groups were mainly directed through personal ties. Additionally, Erdoğan domesticated the pro-western, globalist economic elite of turkey through the use of state apparatus.

Quite similar to Hungary, Turkish business groups were polarized in two different camps consisting of pro-democracy and pro-cultural globalization, liberal economic elite circled around the Turkish Industry and Business Association (TÜSİAD) and Islamist, conservative capitalists which started rise after the 1990s, circled around Independent Industrialis's and Business Association (MÜSİAD) (Keyman and Koyuncu 2005, 113–20). Expectedly, AKP government's favored the latter and had tensions with former over rule of law and liberal values, particularly after the 2010s (Savaşkan and Buğra, 2014., 211–20). Additional to favoring later, AKP also has created its own rich business groups and integrated them into the MÜSİAD circles.

AKP has been in power since 2002, it managed to create a minimalist winning coalition among business groups, using both the party and state apparatus as a means of rewards. This winners both derive from their direct ties to Erdoğan and his family but also to their ties to the local branches of the ruling party. Relying on investigative journalist's, newspaper websites and international monitoring agencies, I have created a table of pro-AKP oligarchs (Table 2), including industries they are active and the reason why I code them as crony. I have found 7

groups&families& holdings who are part of AKP'S minimal winning coalition. It is remarkable that all 7 groups are active in the construction and energy sector. This is in line with existing research which argues that public procurement and privatization in energy, construction, and infrastructure sectors are the main mechanisms that AKP created a loyal business class (Esen and Gumuscu 2018, 354; Gürakar and Bircan 2016). Therefore one strategy that government has exercised is empowering a loyal class whose interest lies on domestic projects and who survives thanks to AKP-led crony capitalism. It is important to note that although most of these groups did not belong to MÜSİAD circles, they have started to participate in MÜSİAD forums after the 2010s (Ekonomijansı.com 2013). Another remarkable note is that all of the groups had direct personal relations with Erdoğan, showing that personalization of party politics was reflected in the business groups.

Nonetheless, in the Turkish case change in the state-business relations was not limited to the creation of loyal oligarchs. AKP also strengthened the power of Small and medium enterprises within MÜSİAD circles, most of whom were located in Anatolia (Pamuk 2008, 271–72). In this sense, AKP attempted to relocate the industry in Turkey, in favor of Anatolian capital against the secular-liberal, Istanbul elite (Buğra and Savaşkan 2012). Moreover, the rise of Anatolian capital was strengthened by the use of local public institutions: As Gürakar (2016, 100–101) demonstrates between 2004 and 2011, 70% municipal contracts were given to MÜSİAD and AKP affiliated enterprises, mostly through uncompetitive bids. Overall, AKP was able to align with a group of capitalist whose interest mostly laid on the domestic market, due to their geographical location.

While AKP successfully managed to create cronies and Anatolian capital, it also managed to neutralize liberal capitalists. These business groups, who were mainly member of TÜSİAD, sought further integration with Europe and its norms through years ([TÜSİAD](http://TUSIAD)

2003; “TÜSİAD 2014.; Savaşkan and Buğra, 2014., 218). Although the environment of fear the government created limited the criticism that these groups had against the regime, (Somer 2016, 494), there is evidence of the revolt of the elite which was faced with a direct response from the government. For example, during the Gezi Park protests of 2013, Ali Koç, a member of TÜSİAD and member of countries one of the richest family, opened the doors of his divan hotel in Taksim to the peaceful protestors. In the following days, tax agencies visited three companies owned by Koç holding, important bids that Koç group has won immediately got canceled (Odatv 2013). After that date, Koç group has not put any criticism against the government. Another example is the case of Aydın Doğan, owner of the Doğan media group which broadcasted TV’s and published newspapers with dissident tendencies (Bucak 2018). The tension between Doğan and Erdoğan has never stopped through the AKP years, and Doğan faced with several defamation laws including a tax penalty of 3 billion dollars in 2009 (Esen and Gumuscu 2018, 359). This war came to end when Aydın Doğan decided to sell its media empire to Demirören Holding, a pro-government holding as shown in the table, which was a sign that Doğan accepted Erdoğan’s victory.

In terms of regime outcome, restructuring of state-business relations had several implications. Firstly Erdoğan was able to create a depended, domestic-oriented loyal business class, whose interest was not related to further integration, unlike the expectation of Levitsky and Way in the high linkage cases (2010, 47) but was strengthened through domestic economic output, mainly through uncompetitive bids in energy, construction, and infrastructure sectors. Secondly, by using party networks and governmental power, AKP was able to relocate the industry, enabling empowerment of local conservative business circles. Thirdly, those liberal business groups whose interests were related to further integration with the west were sidelined and domesticated. The third factor was possible thanks to the creation

of a new loyal rich class, as the liberal circles were the only dominant economic actors before AKP consolidate its power. Overall, rational use of personal ties, governmental apparatus, and party networks neutralized the democratizing effects of western linkage, with respect to business groups.

Table 2

<i>Group & Holding</i>	<i>Sector & Economic Activity</i>	<i>Why coded as pro-AKP?</i>
<i>Kalyon Group</i>	Construction, infrastructure, Media	Kalyon group is owned by Kalyoncu family, whose personal ties with Erdoğan derives from the early 1990s (Diken 2014). During the Erdoğan era, the group won most of the road construction projects of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality with uncompetitive tenders (Diken 2014), which is ruled by AKP since 2002. In exchange of promise of easy public tenders the group Turkuvuaz media which has 49 different TV's, newspapers and radio's in 2013 (Media Ownership Monitor 2019)
<i>Çalık Holding</i>	Energy, Construction, Mining, Telecommunications, Textile,	The holding whose general manager was Erdoğan's son in law until 2013 is owned by Ahmet Çalık who is known as one of the closest Businessman to Erdoğan (Sözcü 2013). The holding won uncompetitive construction and energy bids in the AKP era and increased its profits

<i>Sancak Family</i>	Energy, Health, Agriculture, Construction and Real Estate, Logistics, Automobile, Bus, Tanks	<p>unprecedentedly. (Uğur 2016).</p> <p>During the AKP era, different companies owned by Sancak family, who are from the same town as Erdoğan's wife, won many public bids and bought important state-owned enterprises. Ethem Sancak, a member of the AKP, who said he "fell in love once he saw Erdoğan" (T24 2015) bought commercial and military vehicle-producing company BMC for 751 million ₺ while even the land of BMC worth 1.5 million ₺</p>
<i>Cengiz Holding</i>	Construction, Energy, Mining	<p>The holding is. owned by Mehmet Cengiz who is from the same town with Erdoğan and known to have close relations with him (Evrensel 2012). According to investigations of Journalist, Cengiz Holding got unprecedented support from state funds and earned more than 15 crucial public tenders without facing any competition (Toker 2017, 2013.)</p>
<i>Kolin Group</i>	Construction, Energy, Mining, Tourism, Port and Shipyard management	<p>Kolin Group had doubled its profits since 2010 (from 418 billion to 867 billion \$), as it managed to show its loyalty to Erdoğan regime (Sendika.org 2014) The group participated in crucial public-private partnership projects, although it offers</p>

		lower prices than other competitors (Uğur 2016; Toker 2018).
<i>Demirören Holding</i>	Energy, Tourism, Media, Construction, Heavy Metal	Demirören Holding owns some of the most read media outlets in Turkey which are all pro-government. Additionally, In March 2018, Demirören holding bought dissident Doğan media holding with state funds (Bucak 2018). In a revealed phone call between the founder of Demirören Holding and Erdoğan, the founder apologizes and cries for a news article, after Erdoğan says the article was a “disgrace” (Sözcü 2014)
<i>Limak Group</i>	Construction, Infrastructure, Energy	Limak holding gained some of the most important construction projects in AKP era, such as the construction of the 3 rd airport in Istanbul (Referans)According to WordBank data, Limak holding is ranked top 10 on highest public bidding wins worldwide (Euronews” 2018)

Table 2

Chapter 4: Conclusion

This thesis attempted to identify the mechanisms enabled countries to de-democratization in the high western linkage context. Focusing on Levitsky and Way's democratization theory based on western linkage and leverage, main aim of the thesis was to analyze how countries with high ties to west de-democratize I showed through empirical analysis of two high linkage cases, incumbents are not passive subjects to democratizing mechanisms of western linkage rather, they are able to manipulate both direct and indirect external democratization pressures.

Analyzing Turkey and Hungary, I came up two mechanisms to explain de-democratization in high western linkage cases: Gatekeeping strategies and centralization of organizational power through personalization of incumbent parties. The former enable incumbents to decrease their ties to the west and increase their ties to the black knights, which could neutralize and decrease direct effects of western linkage and leverage. Using Tolstrup's gatekeeper elites theory, I showed incumbents are able to create a variety of international linkages to shape political regimes by changing their leverage and linkage dynamics to the west. As I explored in the thesis, the latter implies two things: Firstly it enables incumbents to pack the ruling party with loyalists and therefore able them to sidetrack the reformists. Secondly, it enables incumbents to create minimal winning coalition based on personal loyalty. Due to their personal ties to incumbency, these economic elite have no incentives in seeking any democratization activities. All of these mechanisms leads to neutralization of western linkage as gatekeeping decreases international reverberation and cost of government

abuse; Personalization of political parties neutralizes the indirect, domestically driven effects of western linkage.

I showed with the analysis of Hungarian case that in spite being EU member, Orban government was able to engage in gatekeeping strategies. Nationalization of the economy enabled Orban to decrease the presence of EU Powers in the Hungarian economy and financial market, decreasing economic linkages as well as EU's leverage and linkage in Hungary. Moreover, in spite of being in the league of democracies, the government systematically increased its ties to Russia and China and even stand against the EU over the EU's approach to Russia. Lastly, the government clearly weakened civil society ties to the west by cutting the funds from the west through legislative means and pressuring INGO's. This developments decreased the western linkages and neutralized directly the democratization pressure of western linkage by decreasing the international reverberations, presence of western information networks and Hungary's dependency on the EU.

I argued that institutionalization of FIDESZ since the transition to democracy, was based on Orban's personal leadership and people who were directly connected to him were recruited in the party cadre. For this reason, there were not any significant attempts by the political elite to prevent de-democratization and stay in EU norms since 2010, unlike other high linkage low leverage cases in Levitsky and Way's original work where political elites reformist attitudes were crucial in the democratization process. Moreover, the personalized institutionalization of FIDESZ, combined with the polarized structure of Hungarian economic elite enabled Orban to create a minimal coalition of winners, change the winners whenever members of the coalition got stronger and rule out the liberal economic elite whose interest lies on international norms. In this context, there was neither space nor willingness by business groups to pressure the government for democratization. Overall, the Hungarian case

shows that it is not only the EU's decreasing leverage that enables EU countries to de-democratize but also how member countries are able to decrease the density of its linkages to the EU.

The Turkish case has shown that an EU candidate country, a NATO member could decrease and neutralize linkages to the west, once it shifts from its commitments to Europe. I argued that Since 2010, the Turkish government had a set of gatekeeping strategies which completed each other. Firstly the government's Europeanisation pragmatism came to end in after the third consecutive parliamentary elections victory in 2011 elections and it shifted to de-Europeanisation, decreased the intergovernmental linkages to the EU, by shifting its program from integrating European governance, which paved the way for de-democratization. Secondly and relatedly, Turkey diversified its economic, intergovernmental, social ties to autocratic Powers, particularly with Russia and Gulf states. This gave Turkey more leverage over the EU and provided "external legitimation" to the political regime. As a last gatekeeping strategy highlighted in this thesis, Turkey successfully decreased civil society and information linkages with the west by forcing international journalist's out of the country and attacking INGO's by harsh means, including putting members of western origin civil society groups members to jail.

Regarding the indirect influences of western linkage in Turkey, I draw attention to change in intraparty dynamics of AKP and related sources of cronyism. Gradual Erdoğanization of AKP since 2002, triggered reformist attempt within the party since 2014. The political elite who were close to western norms and tried to keep Turkey close to western institutions attempted to take AKP back to democratization reforms. Nonetheless, personalized – hierarchical leadership of Erdoğan used both the formal mechanism of the party as well as informal networks through loyalists to sidetrack the reformist elite. In this

sense, Erdoğanization of AKP neutralized western linkages effect on shaping the interest of the political elite for democratic behavior. Same personalization enabled Erdoğan to create a minimal winning coalition through crony holdings who mainly engages in construction and energy business. Additional to personalization, use of party -conservative business groups relations on local public biddings, relocation of industry from liberal capitalist dominated Istanbul to conservative capitalist dominated Anatolia was another strategy of patronage in Turkey. This two mechanism enabled AKP to create a business class whose profits lays on their relations to AKP, not to further integration with the west or its norms. However, Erdoğan also domesticated the historically powerful liberal elite of Turkey through the use of state apparatus. Combination of polarized elite structure, with a minimal winning coalition, neutralized the possibility of business groups to be motivated for democratic behavior.

Overall, we can find both similarities and differences in Turkish and Hungarian cases regarding our research question. Firstly it is remarkable that in both cases incumbents used gatekeeping and personalization to overcome western linkage. This suggests that both of these mechanisms could be a pattern of incumbents to fight with direct and indirect international pressure for regime change. Nonetheless, a variety of gatekeeping and personalization strategies could be observed, as Turkey is a relative outsider to the EU and Hungary is a member (Öniş and Kutlay 2017, 22).

Erdoğan regime was able to directly shift from EU to autocratic countries, which had substantive implications for political regime. Nonetheless, as Hungary is a member of the EU, its “Eastern Opening” policy was limited and nationalization was the most effective gatekeeping effective strategy in terms of political regime. Another key difference is that there were no significant attempts by FIDESZ political elite to keep closer to EU norms and democratic governance whereas in Turkey two leading party elite attempted to re-europeanize

Turkey. It is possible to argue that the difference comes from the starting point of the parties; Orban dominated FIDESZ since 1988 whereas AKP included several interest groups from the very beginning. Another difference is AKP elite had a clear advantage to seek reform since Turkey was clearly de-Europeanizing whereas FIDESZ is integrated into EU institutions (Batory 2016, 299). Lastly, it is notable that both Orban and Erdoğan neutralized economic elite thanks to the politically polarized structure of the business groups.

In the line of findings, this study contributed to regime change literature in several ways. Firstly, in line with Bogaards's (2018) analysis of Merkel's (2004), the theory of defective democracy focusing on Levitsky and Way's theory of competitive authoritarianism and democratization, I showed that theories which explains democratization are insufficient to explain de-democratization. Therefore, scholars should come up with new theories to explain de-democratization trends and highlight new concepts. Secondly, the thesis showed that, in contrast to Levitsky and Way's claim (2014, 154), gatekeeping strategies are also effective in shaping political regime outcomes, in high linkage cases. Therefore, the large extent of linkage to the western institutions in a county does not mean that the linkages cannot be decreased. Thirdly this study has claimed that domestic sources of power-sharing and autonomy of actors are essential to explain to what extent structural- international incentives of democratization could be domestically mobilized by the political and economic elite. Thus, I suggest that while analyzing indirect influences of western linkage, scholars should also control for incumbents organizational power to predict regime outcomes.

Nonetheless, this study has limitations. The study focused on two mechanisms of neutralization of western linkage, including gatekeeping and personalization- centralization of incumbent parties. Further studies should explore more mechanisms that enable high western linkage cases to de-democratize. Moreover, this study did not focus on why people in high

western linkage cases vote for parties with autocratic tendencies, which is to some extent in contradiction with Levitsky and Way's theory (2010, 47). Further studies also should identify whether international diffusion of norms and information, geographical proximity are able to shape voters in a pro-democratic way. Another limitation is that this thesis focused on two cases where western leverage was low and medium. Therefore, to explore the general applicability of the model I provide, further analysis should include countries with not just diverse ties to the west but also with high vulnerability to Western Powers. Last but not least, I mainly focused on the EU as the "West". Further studies should also analyze whether mechanism I provide are applicable o countries with high linkages to the US.

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