



ORIGINAL PAPER

Online Citizens' (De)legitimation of Turkey's EU Membership

Camelia-Mihaela Cmeciu*

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to analyze the EU and non-EU citizens' communication strategies of (de)legitimizing Turkey as a EU member. To achieve this goal, this study will use the content analysis of 110 comments made by citizens on the *Debating Europe Schools in France* strand on the *Debating Europe* platform. Designed to increase citizens' online participation into EU issues, the *Debating Europe* platform, launched in 2011, may be associated with a transnational communicative space because it facilitates a dialogue between policy-makers and (EU) citizens. Using QDA miner and WordStat, as computer assisted qualitative data analysis softwares, we will interpret the policy-makers' and citizens' comments taking into account three types of codes: (de)legitimation participants, (de)legitimation recipients, (de)legitimation communication strategies. The findings of this study were the following: a salience of debate participants who delegitimized Turkey and EU institutions; a dominance of the delegitimation strategy of 'blame shifting' attributed more to the EU than to Turkey; the use of keywords which have a bias meaning depending on the type of communication strategy with which they cluster together.

Keywords: *European Union, Turkey, members, recipients, communication strategies*

* Associate Professor, PhD, University of Bucharest, Faculty of Journalism and Communication Studies, Email: camelia.cmeciu@fjsc.ro

Introduction

In 2005 the *Action plan to improve communicating Europe by the Commission* highlighted three main weaknesses of the communication between citizens and the EU: continuous fragmentation of communication; messages reflecting political priorities but not necessarily linked to citizens' interests, needs and preoccupations; inadequate implementation. These weak points were the starting point of a new approach to earn people's interest and trust. Since "communication is more than information" (p. 2), the Commission's approach has focused on listening, communicating and connecting with citizens by "going local" (pp. 3-4). This subsidiarity by going local may coincide with Thomas Risse's definition of the public sphere: "(...) we can speak of a European public sphere, if and when people speak about the same issues at the same time using the same criteria of relevance and are mutually aware of each other's viewpoints" (Risse, 2003: 3).

Online platforms are one media outlet through which this new type of European public sphere may be accomplished because of their "inherently democratic and decentralized architecture" (Barton, 2005: 177). The question that remains is whether these EU online platforms may help in constructing the "imagined community of Europeans" (Kevin, 2003). M. Karlsson (2010: 132) considers that the *Futurum* discussion forum "has marked the shift by the European authorities from a rhetorical commitment to a more participative governance". The quantitative and qualitative analyses (Karlsson, 2010) showed the following aspects: the debate discussants belonged to a small range of countries, a diversity of languages was noticed despite the dominance of English, the issues on policies are highly politically and ideologically loaded, the debates among citizens might reduce the democratic deficit in terms of the nature of the discourse. Although these aspects may be considered as advantages, R. Wodak and S. Wright's discourse analysis (2006) of the *Futurum* highlighted the absence of policy-makers, a fact which, in their opinion may actually exacerbate the deficit and make us question the so-called interaction between EU officials and citizens. Launched in 2011, the *Debating Europe* platform (www.debatingeurope.eu) has four types of partners: founding partners (Friends of Europe (a leading European think-tank) and Europe's World), strategic partners (Google, Open Society Foundations), knowledge partners (Gateway House, EU center in Singapore), and community partners (European Students' Union, Citizens for Europe, European Movement International etc.) (debatingeurope.eu, 2015). Its main aim has been "to encourage a genuine conversation between Europe's politicians and the citizens they serve" (debatingeurope.eu, 2015). The working principles of this EU platform (debatingeurope.eu, 2015) are the following: EU citizens may leave comments under a debate or even suggest a new debate on a topic that has to do with Europe, the platform managers arrange interviews with policymakers and experts across Europe and then they publish the reactions to citizens' comments and promote them through social media.

Turkey's EU membership is a debate which has stirred vivid comments. The number of comments generated by (non)EU citizens shows that the online subsidiarity that the *Debating Europe* platform focuses on, has been functioning especially when the topic to be debated raises opinion diversity due to a controversial issue. Since citizens are considered active prosumers of information, I will label them as (de)legitimizers of an issue. The main objectives of this study are: a. to determine the salience of (de)legitimation

participants and communication strategies of (de)legitimizing Turkish EU membership; b. to identify the types of clusters created among the debate participants, recipients and communication strategies; c. to determine the main keywords associated with the (de)legitimation of Turkey's EU membership.

The Media Discourse on the EU Enlargement – The Case of Turkey

Islam, the problems with Cyprus or the genocide in Armenia are just three examples which may set Turkey as the Other within the context of a common European identity, emphasizing the polarization 'us' versus 'them'. Agnes I. Schneeberger (2009: 84) claims that Turkey's accession to the EU has a crystallizing effect since it reveals "perceptions of European identity by framing Turkey as being distinct from being European". Michael Minkenberg et al. (2012) consider that no other case of the EU enlargement has caused so much contention and has involved so much complexity as the prospective membership of Turkey in the EU. This complexity has ranged from security issues to concerns regarding economic costs and benefits, geopolitical and cultural issues and religious factors.

T. Koenig et al. (2006: 151) consider that the 2004 decision made by the European Council of Ministers and Turkey about the accession discussion in 2005 "may be seen in the future as a key moment in the early development of a reborn Europe as a more cosmopolitan society and less of a fortress". One important type of research about the EU enlargement consists in the comparative analysis of the media discourse about the member states' accession to the EU. In the article *Media Framings of the Issue of Turkish Accession to the EU: A European or National Process?*, the authors identify the ways in which four frames had been used in newspapers from Turkey, Slovenia, Germany, France, the UK, and the USA. The four frames analysed by T. Koenig et al. (2006) were: nationalism, economic, clash of civilizations and liberal multiculturalism. The findings of this study were the following: a. The nationalist framings were exclusively dominant in Turkish newspapers. These frames mainly focused on the special conditions for Turkish membership which relied on a privileged partnership between Turkey and the EU rather than on full memberships; b. The economic framing had a negative valence in German and French newspapers, Turkey being perceived as a financial burden for the EU. The positive valence of this framing could be found in the Turkish press and the benefits associated with Turkey's membership focused on financial support, credits, increased competitiveness of Turkish agriculture and the service sector, increase capital investments, or development of tourism; c. The clash of civilization framings was high in all EU member states under analysis, one significant exception being Turkey and it was clearly dominant in Germany, France and Slovenia. The ethno-nationalist aspect of this framing was visible and the media argued that Europe should be associated with white people and Christianity, thus Turkey and Islam being perceived as incompatible with Europe; d. The liberal multiculturalism focused on the right to difference. Mostly used in newspapers from the UK, the US and Turkey, these frames emphasized the tolerance of cultural differences and referred to them as "minor cultural differences set against a shared background of political values" (Koenig et al., 2006: 168).

This study clearly shows that although the topic of discussion was the same, one important criterion for the existence of a European public sphere was not fulfilled. As T. Koenig et al. (2006) highlight in their comparative analysis of the media discourse on Turkish EU membership, the existence of shared structure of meaning could not be found in the institutionally separate national public spheres.

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Agnes I. Schneeberger (2009)'s quantitative content analysis of the British newspapers focused on different topical aspects associated with Turkey and on their evaluation in relation to Turkey's position towards Europe. The author included a comparative analysis of how British print media (*The Times* and *The Guardian*) represented Turkey throughout 2002-2007. The study included two object variables: topical aspects and sources of similarity or distance. The analysis of the 2002-2007 media narratives showed that the most dominant topical aspects discussed in connection with EU-Turkey relations were Turkey's political stability at that time (before and after national elections in 2002 and 2007), Turkey's respect for human and civic rights, Turkey's EU membership, Turkish-Cypriote relations, Turkey's minority rights, Turkey's demography and Muslim population, followed by Turkey's strategic location and military power and Turkey's economic development. A comparison between newspapers showed that the topical aspect of Turkey's respect for human and civic rights and of Turkey's EU membership featured more dominantly in *The Guardian* than in *The Times*. A comparison of time periods showed that these two issues became more important points of discussion in 2007 after the official start of EU accession negotiations in 2005.

Another important aspect of Agnes I. Schneeberger's study was the issue of the proximity to Islamic political movements which was frequently used as a source of difference in EU-Turkey relations. Other sources of difference which were salient in Schneeberger's analysis (2009) of the British media were: secular democracy, human rights, religion, negotiations over Cyprus, culture, geographic location and economic performance. Commitment to reforms was the most frequently used source of similarity in the EU-Turkey relations. Overall, this study highlighted that although the British press provides an "inclusive interpretation of European identity, it continues to portray Turkey in connection with persistent exclusivist perceptions" (Schneeberger, 2009: 83). Whereas the two studies presented above show how the international press framed the issue of Turkey's EU membership, C.H. de Vrees et al.'s experimental study (2011) investigates the effects of news framing on support for membership of Turkey in the EU. Starting from the fact that news framing may exert a strong influence on public opinion, the authors consider that linking media content analysis and public opinion data in the case of Turkey is interesting for three reasons: a) the blending of economic, political/geostrategic dimensions with cultural aspects; b) the impact of news frames upon a particular aspect of European integration; c) the importance of public support for indirect expression of legitimacy and for national referendums. The content analysis of Dutch national news media revealed the following salience of frames: cultural threats, security benefits, economic threats, security threats and economic benefits. This analysis shows that frames are positively (benefits) and negatively (threats) valences and that negative frames were relatively more prominent than positive frames (de Vrees et al., 2011: 186). The study also highlighted that valences news frames matter directly and the experimental test demonstrated that the impact of negative framing is greater than that of positive framing and that the change in public approval of Turkish EU membership is contingent on the elites' and the media's coverage of the issue closely related to individual characteristics.

This diverse structure of meaning associated with a controversial issue as it is Turkey's EU membership is even more visible on the *Debating Europe* platform where citizens and policy-makers may express their opinions on various topics.

Communication Strategies of (De)legitimation

Teun A. van Dijk (2000: 255) considers that legitimation “is related to the speech act of defending oneself, in that one of its appropriateness conditions is often that the speaker is providing good reasons, grounds or acceptable motivations for past or present action that has been or could be criticized by others.” As a counterpart, delegitimation challenges the very existence or identity of the other group, downplaying its social position and/or practices (van Dijk, 2000: 258-259). Thus defending oneself and accusing the other are the two main discursive practices that (de)legitimation implies. Unlike van Dijk (2000: 256) who considers that legitimation is “a discourse that justifies the ‘official’ actions in terms of the rights and duties, politically, socially or legally associated with a role or position”, in this study I will not associate power-holders to institutions, but rather to citizens who constitute the new power-holders through an online empowerment.

The integrated model of online (de)legitimation* will include three main categories: members (belonging to a micro-group or macro-group): the debate participants (citizens/ officials) who (de)legitimize the issue debated and the actors related to the respective issue; recipients: the actors (EU or MS institutions, citizens etc.) which/who are (de)legitimized; communication strategies: *legitimation strategies* (credit claiming, credit granting, requesting others to perform certain actions in the future) and *delegitimation strategies* (admitting mistakes, blame shifting, requesting others to stop from performing certain actions). These communication strategies are adapted from the five basic discursive legitimation strategies identified by Moritz Sommer et al. (2014): credit claiming (self-attribution of success, directed towards the speaker), credit granting (attribution of success to others), admitting mistakes (self-attribution of failure), blame shifting (attribution of failure to others) and requesting (request attribution to others).

The present study on the discursive analysis of Turkey’s EU membership addresses the following research questions: RQ1: What was the salience of (de)legitimizers and communication strategies of (de)legitimation? RQ2: How do (de)legitimizers, (de)legitimation recipients and communication strategies cluster together? RQ3: What keywords are associated with the communication strategies of (de)legitimizing Turkish EU membership?

Methodology

This study will employ a content analysis of the comments generated by the debate participants on the *Debate Europe Schools France* thread. Launched on January 30, 2014, this debate was initiated by the students from the Lycée Montchapet, France. The question addressed to a member of the European Parliament was the following: “Do you think Turkey should join the EU?” The MEP who answered the question was Traian Ungureanu, a Romanian MEP with the Centre-Right. Out of the 133 comments to the French students’ questions, 110 comments addressed this controversial issue of Turkey’s EU membership.

We transcribed the debate and the comments and imported them into QDA miner, a qualitative data analysis tool. The QDA miner codes facilitated the comparison across the codes of legitimation (L) and delegitimation (DL). The cluster analysis provided an insight into the codes co-occurrences for this issue. Using Wordstat 7.0.13., a computer-program-assisted text analysis based on a text mining program, a correspondence analysis

* This model was developed in Cmeciu, Manolache, (2016 forthcoming).

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was employed to identify the relationship between keywords and the (de)legitimation communication strategies.

We structured the codebook on three main categories:

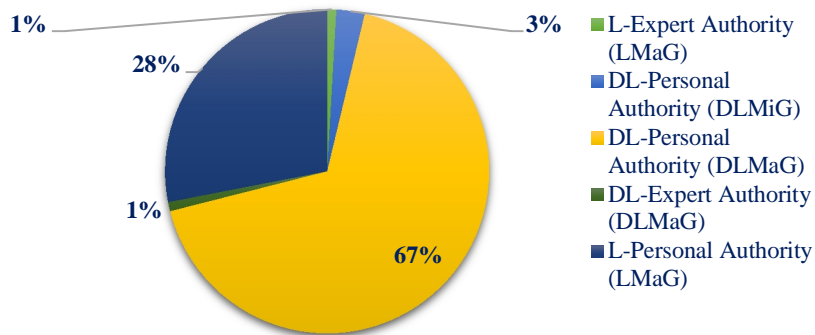
- the code *members* was structured on three codes: L/DL micro-group (MiG - participants who are directly affected by the topic debated; in our case, the Turks or other countries which have interacted with Turks); L/DL macro-group (MaG - participants who are EU citizens). Each of these groups was structured into four types of authority: personal authority (participants who tell their own experience related to the topic debated); expert authority (participants who are experts in the topic debated upon); role model authority (participants who are a role model in the MS or EU country); impersonal authority (participants who mention rules, laws to (de)legitimize the topic).
- the code *recipients* was structured on five codes: Lr/DLr EU institutions (a EU institution is (de)legitimated); Lr/DLr macro-group (a EU country or organizations from a EU country are (de)legitimated); Lr/DLr micro-group (a community - Turkey is (de)legitimated); Lr/DLr individual (a debate participant is (de)legitimated).
- the code *communication strategies* was structured on three codes for legitimation and delegitimation: L-credit claiming (Ls1 - participants attribute success to themselves, as part of the micro-group/Turkey - MiG, macro-group - MaG, or EU institutions); L-credit granting (Ls2 - participants attribute success to others - to another micro-group, macro-group or EU institutions); L-requesting others (Ls3 - participants urges other actors to perform a certain action. These actors belong to a micro-group, macro-group or EU institution); DL-admitting mistakes (DLs1 - participants attribute failures to themselves, as part of the micro-group/ Turkey, macro-group or EU institutions); DL-blame shifting (DLs2 - participants attribute failures to others - to another micro-group, macro-group or EU institutions); DL-requesting others (DLs3 - participants urges other actors to stop a certain action. These actors belong to a micro-group, macro-group or EU institution).

Salience of (De)legitimation Members and Communication Strategies

The analysis of the coding frequency of L-members (legitimation members) and D-members (delegitimation members) shows a salience of delegitimizers (RQ1). Figure 1 shows the distribution of (de)legitimizers. As observed, DL-Personal Authority (DLMaG) outscores (67%) all the other types of debate participants who legitimated or delegitimated the Turkish EU membership. This code refers to users expressing their opinions (personal authority) as delegitimizing citizens belonging to a member state. Two important aspects should be highlighted:

- a. Traian Ungureanu (MEP), as an expert authority, positioned himself both as a legitimator and as a delegitimator of this issue. A thorough explanation of Ungureanu's twofold position will be explained in the cluster analysis.
- b. Although the percentage is not high, delegitimizers as personal authorities belonging to micro-groups (DL-Personal Authority (MiG)) are a category that is present in this debate. They refer to those debate participants who explicitly mention their country of origin and who argue about the cultural differences between Turkey and Bulgaria, for example.

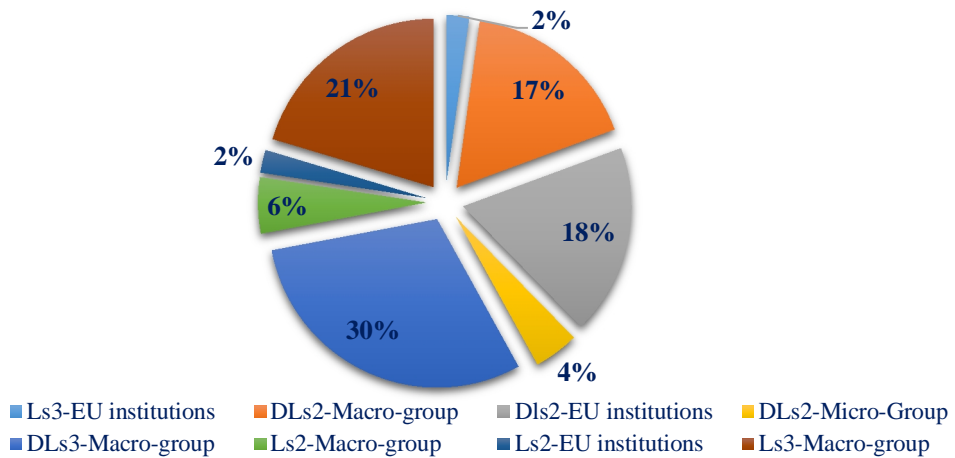
Figure 1. (De)legitimation members – Turkish EU membership



Source: Author’s own compilation

Figure 2 shows the most frequently used (de)legitimation communication strategies (RQ1). As observed, the delegitimation (DL) strategies (70%) outscored the legitimation (L) strategies (30%). The top four communication strategies used by the debate participants were: a) the delegitimation strategy of requesting a certain action from a macro-group (DLs3-Macro-Group) – 31%; b) the legitimation strategy of requesting a certain action for a macro-group (Ls3-Macro-Group) – 21%; c) the delegitimation strategy of blame shifting on EU institutions (DLs2-EU institutions) – 18%; d) the delegitimation strategy of blame shifting on a macro-group (DLs2-Macro-Group) – 17%. In most cases, the macro-group was associated with Turkey since the debate participants who commented belonged to a member state. When delegitimated, Turkey was requested not to join the EU for political or cultural reasons. When legitimated, Turkey was requested either to join the EU for economic reasons or to think twice before becoming a EU member.

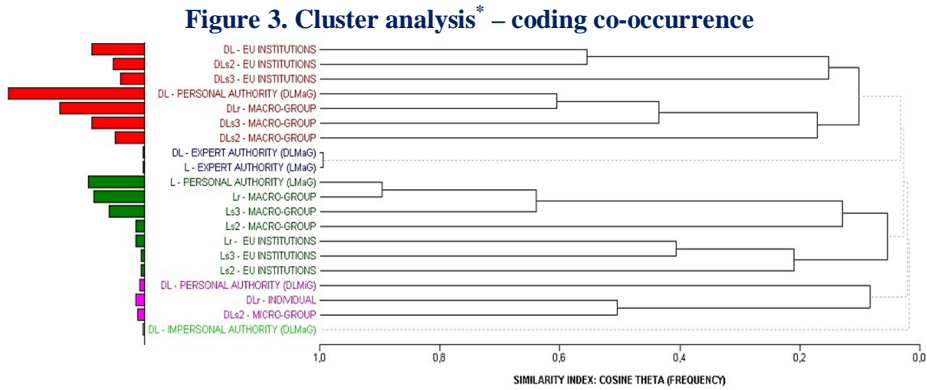
Figure 2. (De)legitimation communication strategies – Turkish EU membership



Source: Author’s own compilation

(De)legitimation Members, Recipients and Communication Strategies – Cluster Analysis

Figure 3 is the dendrogram obtained for the coding co-occurrence of (de)legitimation members, recipients and communication strategies.



Source: Author's own compilation

The following clusters were formed:

- *DL-Personal Authority (DLMaG) – DLr-Macro-Group – DLs3-Macro-Group – DLs2-Macro-Group – DL-EU institutions – DLs2 – EU institutions – DLs3-EU institutions.* As observed, this cluster had the most frequently used codes. The debate participants (*DL-Personal Authority*) delegitimated Turkey's possible EU membership (*DLr-Macro-Group*). Some delegitimators have three main requests from Turkey (*DLs3-Macro-Group*): withdrawal from Cyprus (Natam Simonian), making serious changes regarding the Kurdish problem or respecting the human rights and freedom of the press (Pavlos Vasileiadis). These demands are closely linked to the 'blame shifting' strategy (*DLs2-Macro-Group*). Turkey is blamed by the debate participants for not having recognized the Armenian genocide (Natam Simonian), for Erdogan's ruling measures (Tsvetanka Boeva), for being terrorists (Selem Juakali Mwangalaba) or for not being culturally European (Dominik Gora). Another delegitimation recipient in this cluster is the EU. Some debate participants shift the blame on the EU for "not working properly" (Aelxandros) and request the EU "to solve its own problems than talk about new members" (Catalin Vasile). This double 'blame shifting' strategy is also used by Traian Ungureanu, a Romanian MEP with the Centre-Right, who was invited to answer a French pupil's question regarding the Turkey's EU membership. The MEP considers, on the one hand, that Turkey has gone through new internal problems which are not speeding up the process and on the other hand, that the EU has launched an 'endless debate' about the Turkey's membership 30 years ago.

- *L-Personal Authority (LMaG) – Lr-Macro-Group – Ls3-Macro-Group – Ls2-Macro-Group – Lr-EU institutions – Ls3-EU institutions – Ls2-EU institutions.* The debate participants (*L-Personal Authority*) legitimated Turkey (*Lr-Macro-Group*) as a future EU member. Some participants provided the 'credit granting' strategy (*Ls2-Macro-*

* The conditions for the dendrogram were the following: for *clustering* – occurrence (Windows of n paragraphs – nb of paragraphs - 5), index (Cosine theta); for *multidimensional scaling options* – tolerance – 0,000001, maximum iterations – 500.

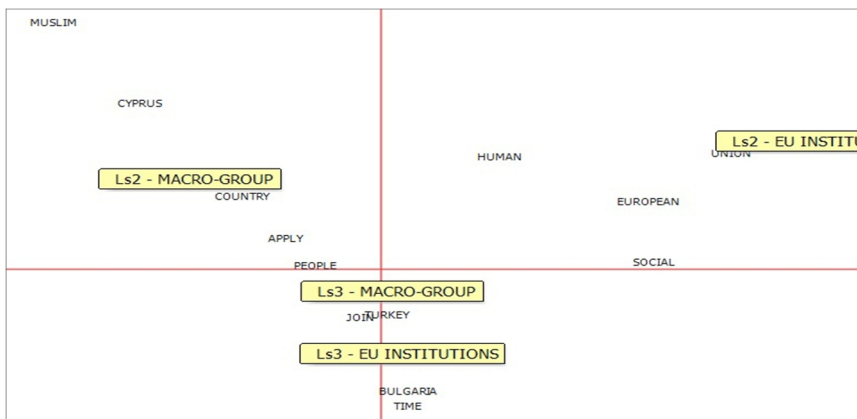
Group), thus attributing qualities to Turkey which may trigger an economic benefit for the EU – Goksun Birgul). Some other participants used the ‘requesting others’ strategy, implicitly urging Turkey to think twice before joining the EU (Karel van Isacker). The presence of the EU as a legitimization recipient may be explained in terms of the mutual political and economic gains associated with the Turkish EU membership. Besides the economic benefit mentioned above, some debate participants consider that this membership will turn the EU or Turkey into a leader of the Asian Union (Fuat Aslan).

- *DLe-Individual – DLs2-Micro-Group – DL-Personal Authority (DLMiG)*. This instance of coding co-occurrence refers to a disagreement among debate participants, where one participant delegitimizes another participant (DLr-Individual). For example, it is the case of the comment exchange between Firat Güllü (a member of the Turkish micro-group) who accuses Ana Georgieva (a Bulgarian) for being racist.

Correspondence Analysis – Keywords and (De)Legitimation Communication Strategies

The correspondence analysis helped us in finding the relationship between keywords and legitimization communication strategies (Figure 4) and delegitimation communication strategies (Figure 5). The WordStat 7.0.13 conditions to find the frequency of keywords for (de)legitimation strategies were: case occurrence higher or equal to 3, a maximum of 300 items based on $TF*Idf$. The crosstab results for the two types of communication strategies are in the appendix of this study. In the cases to be analysed, 16 most frequently used keywords were associated with legitimization strategies, whereas 31 keywords were associated with delegitimation strategies (see the appendix). This discrepancy may be explained by a higher frequency of delegitimation strategies (see Figure 2). The correspondence plot allows us to make meaningful interpretation of the general locations of row points (keywords) and column points (legitimation and delegitimation strategies).

Figure 4. Correspondence analysis – Legitimation communication strategies*



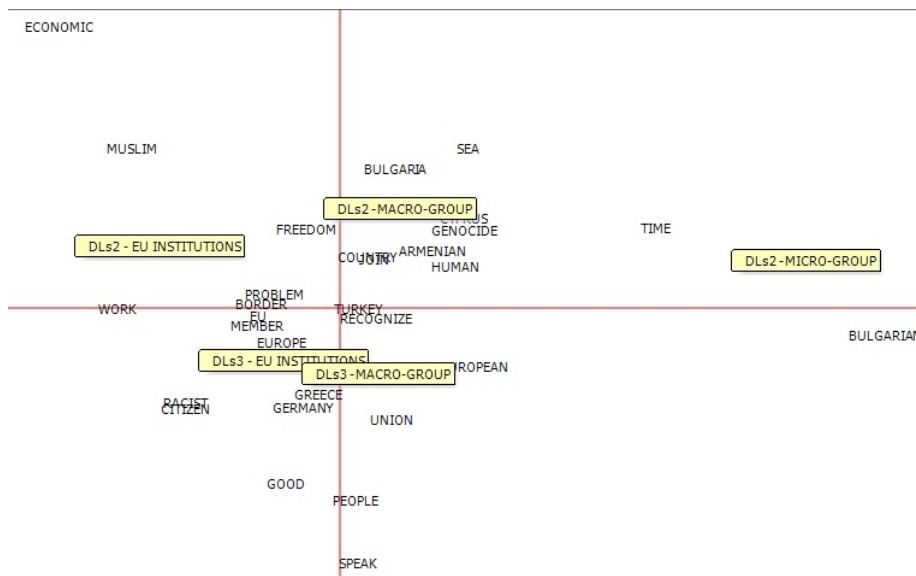
Source: Author’s own compilation

* In this study, the horizontal axis (dimension 1) accounted for 54.40% and the vertical axis (dimension 2) accounted for 33.15%.

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The horizontal dimension is characterized by the keyword “people” on the left and by “social” on the right and is determined by the Ls3-Macro-Group communication strategy (requesting a macro-group to act in a certain way). The “Ls2-EU institutions” strategy is closely located to the keywords “union” and “European”, which can be interpreted as granting credit to the EU for its desire to apply a unity among European countries, Turkey included. The keywords “Cyprus” and “Muslim” are more characteristic to the “Ls2-Macro-Group” since they are farther from the origin. Thus Turkey gets credit from some debate participants for “being the most open country among Muslim countries” (François) and it is thought to have done a favor to Cyprus (Alexandros). The presence of the keyword “Muslim” related to a legitimation strategy is consistent with the liberal multiculturalism frame, mentioned in the study of Koenig et al. (2006) or with the religious expression analysed by V. Mihalcea Chiper (2013) in her study. “Turkey”, “join”, “time” and “Bulgaria” are closely located to the two ‘requesting others’ legitimation strategies (Ls3-Macro-Group and Ls3-EU institutions). These keywords imply that the debate participants request Turkey to join the EU and they demand the EU to accept Turkey as a member state. “Bulgaria” is a keyword characteristic to Ls3-Macro-Group because this country is interpreted as a good partner of Turkey because of their historical past (Vassilena Stankova).

Figure 5. Correspondence analysis – Delegitimation communication strategies*



Source: Author's own compilation

The horizontal dimension seems to be largely determined by the keywords “work”, “border”, “problem”, “Turkey”, “recognized”. According to this correspondence

* In this study, the horizontal axis (dimension 1) accounted for 47.32% and the vertical axis (dimension 2) accounted for 25.26%.

plot, most keywords and delegitimation strategies are closely positioned around the zero point. The “DLs2-Micro-Group” is closely related to the keyword “Bulgarian”, which can be interpreted as a disagreement between a Bulgarian and a Turkish debate participant (see the last coding co-occurrence in the cluster analysis section). The position of ‘blaming shift’ delegitimation strategies (DLs2) and ‘requesting others’ delegitimation strategies (DLs3) on the correspondence plot clearly shows a polarized distribution of the reasons why Turkey should not join the EU and of the actions which should not be taken both by Turkey and the EU.

The “DLs2-Macro-Group” is clustering with “Cyprus”, “genocide”, “Armenian”, “human” or “freedom”. These keywords describe the failures that debate participants attribute to Turkey. It is interesting to observe that “Cyprus” is a keyword present both for legitimation and delegitimation strategies. But unlike the participants who legitimate Turkey for their action in Cyprus, there were a great number of debate participants who expressed their opinions against the Cyprus dispute. “Muslim” and “economic” are two keywords characteristic to the “DLs2-EU institutions” since they are farther from the origin on the correspondence plot. The EU is accused for caring about the economic disaster only that takes place inside the EU (Ahmet Furkan) and it is considered that a mere economic foundation is not a solid argument to build Europe (Panagiotis Salonikidis). Besides “Cyprus”, “Muslim” is another keyword used both for legitimation and delegitimation strategies. But whereas the legitimating participants used it to express a liberal multiculturalism frame, the delegitimating participants refer to what Koenig et al. (2006) identify as a clash of civilization frame. Some EU citizens consider that it would be weird to have a conservative Muslim nation as the most populous EU member (Christus Maior) or that Turkey is an Asian country with a Muslim fanatic religion (Mirko Marinov).

“Germany” and “Greece” are two keywords that are closely located near the delegitimation “requesting others” strategy (DLs3) whose recipients are Turkey as a macro-group and EU institutions. Whereas Turkey is asked to solve the frontier problems with Greece (Catalin Vasile), the EU is implicitly required not to destroy Turkey as it did with Greece, Bulgaria or Romania (Gina Stodinetchi). “Germany” is used in comparison to Turkey. Debate participants either mention that even Germany still has problems with neo nazi (Sunny Sany) and ask the German officials to solve this problem before talking about the Turkish problems or accuse Germany of implementing a political system where freedom of speech is not allowed (Marcel).

Conclusions

Online subsidiarity where citizens are the new power-holders through an online empowerment seems to be the key concept beyond the *Debating Europe* platform. Since the working principle beyond this platform is to facilitate a dialogue between policy-makers and citizens and since Turkish EU membership has been a controversial issue, one cannot speak of the existence of a shared structure of meaning, but rather of conflicted opinions. Starting from this implicit diversity of opinions regarding Turkey’s EU membership, I wanted to determine the salience of (de)legitimizers and of communication strategies used and the keywords associated with these strategies. The findings revealed the three aspects. The delegitimizers outscored the legitimizers and they positioned themselves as citizens belonging to member states and having a personal authority regarding this issue. The presence of delegitimizing debate participants belonging to a micro-group shows on the one hand, that citizens explicitly mentioned their country of origin, and on the other hand, that there was interaction between debate participants but

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mainly focused on disagreement. The distribution of communication strategies is consistent with the salience of (de)legitimizers. The delegitimation strategies outscored the legitimation strategies and they mainly focused on shifting the blame on the EU and on Turkey. This type of delegitimizing strategy could be explained in terms of the keywords used by the debate participants. The cluster analyses, crosstab results and the correspondence analyses showed that Turkey is blamed for its political actions in Cyprus, Greece or Armenia or for its ethno-nationalist beliefs whereas the EU is blamed for not allowing multiculturalism and for associating Turkey with a negative valence of the economic outcomes of a possible Turkish EU membership. At the same time, the legitimation strategies should not be ignored. Some debate participants emphasize either the independence dimension of a nationalist frame, arguing that it is better for Turkey not to join the EU or the positive valence of the economic consequences that Turkish EU membership may have upon the EU and other member states.

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Appendix

Crosstab results of legitimization communication strategies

	Ls2 - MACRO- GROUP	Ls2 - EU INSTITUTIONS	Ls3 - MACRO- GROUP	Ls3 - EU INSTITUTIONS
ASIA	2		2	
BULGARIA			3	1
COUNTRIES	3		3	
COUNTRY	3		4	
CYPRUS	3		1	
EU	6		17	3
EUROPE			6	
EUROPEAN		3	5	
GOOD	1		5	
HUMAN	1	1	2	
JOIN	1		5	1
JOINING	1		7	
MUSLIM	3			
PEOPLE	1		3	
RIGHTS	1	1	2	
SOCIAL		1	1	1
TURKEY	4	1	30	3
UNION		4	5	

Crosstab results of delegitimation communication strategies

	DLs2 - MACRO- GROUP	DLs2 - EU INSTITU- TIONS	DLs2 - MICRO- GROUP	DLs3 - MACRO- GROUP	DLs3 - EU INSTITU- TIONS
ARMENIAN	4			3	1
BORDER	1	1		1	1
BULGARIA	1	2	1		1
BULGARIAN			2	1	1
CITIZEN		1		1	1
COUNTRY	4	4	2	2	6
CYPRUS	7			5	
DEMOCRACY	1	1		2	1
ECONOMIC	1	3			
EU	6	7		8	7

Online Citizens' (De)legitimation of Turkey's EU Membership

EUROPE	1	4	1	3	5
EUROPEAN	1	1	1	4	1
FREEDOM	2	1		1	1
GENOCIDE	4			3	
GERMANY	1	1		3	2
GOOD		1		3	1
GREECE	1	1		3	1
HUMAN	2	1	1	1	2
JOIN	4	1		3	1
MEMBER	2	3		4	3
MUSLIM	2	4			2
PEOPLE	1			4	3
PROBLEM	3	3		4	3
RACIST		1		1	1
RECOGNIZE	2	1		4	
SEA	2			1	
SPEAK				2	1
TIME	2		1	2	
TURKEY	11	4		13	4
UNION	2			4	2
WORK		2		1	1

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