German Narratives, Strategies and Scenarios of EU-Turkey Relations 2002–2018: Towards a Unique Partnership – Yet to be defined

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1. Introduction

Since the beginning of institutionalised relations between the European Union (EU) and Turkey in 1959, Germany has been seen as a key actor with decisive influence on the course of EU-Turkey relations.[1] Particularly under Gerhard Schröder's chancellorship, there were repeated references to the German potential as a 'driver' in starting and accelerating accession negotiations to the EU. Today, more than 20 years after the European Council's decision to grant Turkey the status of an EU accession country and more than 15 years after the start of these negotiations in 2005, Turkey's accession to the EU seems to be a highly unlikely scenario, although negotiations have not officially been suspended or cancelled. In 2018, the then-EU Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes Hahn, even referred to the accession procedure as an obstacle to a new, realistic form of strategic cooperation.[2]

This study aims to trace Germany's position on EU-Turkey relations both at parliamentary and governmental level in order to identify dominant narratives, preferred strategies and possible scenarios for Germany as an influential EU Member State. Germany and Turkey share a long-standing, exceptional connection. Not only is Germany home to the largest number and greatest share of people with Turkish roots living in Western

1 Cf. Schröder, Mirja/ Tekin, Funda. Institutional Triangle EU-Turkey-Germany: Change and Continuity. In: Ebru Turhan (Ed.). German-Turkish Relations Revisited. The European Dimension, Domestic and Foreign Politics and Transnational Dynamics. Turkey and European Union Studies. Vol. 2. Baden-Baden, 2019, pp. 31–57.

2 Cf. EU-Kommissar für Ende der Beitrittsgespräche mit der Türkei. In: Welt-Online, 06.11.2018, https://www.welt.de/newsticker/dpa_nt/infoline_nt/brennpunkte_nt/article183339692/EU-Kommissar-fuer-Ende-der-Beitrittsgespraeche-mit-der-Tuerkei.html [22.12.2020].

European countries, but also one of Turkey's main trading partners.[3] Our analysis of parliamentary debates and governmental declarations dealing with Turkey between the years 2002 and 2018 seeks to document and reflect both the Federal Government's official attitude and the fight for political opinion leadership in the Bundestag. Particular attention will be paid to discontinuities in the course of debates: How did perceptions as well as narratives on Turkey change and in response to which events? Hence, which strategies of cooperation can be derived from the respective views articulated in the German Parliament (Bundestag) and to which scenarios of institutionalised relationship do they point?

The chapter follows a constructivist approach, assuming that social reality comprises perception and experience. Accordingly, objective knowledge is not relevant. Following this conceptual view, articulated perceptions or stories told by relevant actors shape the reality of relations. Hence, the interpretations by German parliamentary representatives on EU integration and Turkey's development are assessed as forming a relevant cornerstone in the EU's stance towards this third country. The following section delineates the key concepts narratives, strategies and scenarios and provides information on the operationalisation of the analysis. Section 3 traces the key narratives in five identified periods between 2002 and 2018 in view of discontinuities that have been identified within governmental declarations and parliamentary debates as well as milestones from EU-Turkey relations. Section 4 provides a conclusive assessment of the findings and an outlook on future scenarios of EU-Turkey relations.

2. *Narratives, Strategies, Scenarios*

2.1 Conceptual Definition and Delineation

Within the framework of this analysis, 'narratives' are defined as collective stories or interpretations by German political actors relating to the evolution, drivers and actors of EU-Turkey relations.[4] These stories are examined, firstly, by their expression and language such as 'explicit attribu-

3 Cf. Schröder/ Tekin, Institutional Triangle EU-Turkey-Germany, 2019, pp.35 f.

4 Cf. Özbey, Ece Ebru et al. Narratives of a Contested Relationship: Unravelling the Debates in the EU and Turkey. In: Beken Saatçioğlu/ Funda Tekin (Eds). Turkey and the European Union. Key Dynamics and Future Scenarios. Turkey and European Union Studies. Vol. 3. Baden-Baden, 2021, pp. 31–56.

tions' (for instance *friend* or *key partner*). Secondly, we look at their 'plot', meaning a range of topics relating to four dimensions: political, economic, geopolitical and identity/ societal. As the research conducted has shown, these dimensions present themselves to varying degrees depending on events and topics, reacting to actions by the respective other within our examined triangle of Germany, Turkey and the EU.

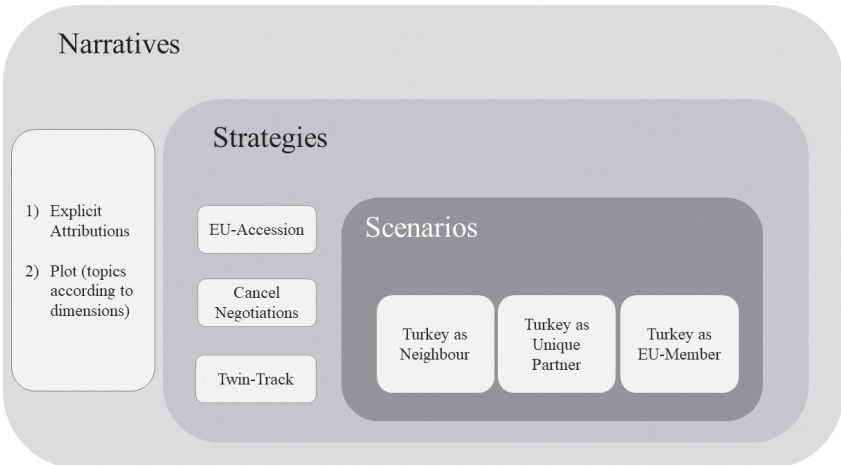
Thirdly, stories demand an analysis of their underlying aims, which finds expression in voiced strategies towards certain scenarios. By evaluating the findings on explicit attributions and plots, one can identify three different 'strategies' that representatives of the German Government and Parliament articulate: (1) continuing EU accession negotiations, (2) breaking-off accession negotiations (or respectively not even opening them for the years before 2005) and finally (3) a twin-track strategy, suggesting a continuation of negotiations, while at the same time introducing new forms of institutional cooperation between the EU and Turkey. It is crucial to add that although topics and arguments from the four dimensions applied are used to promote strategies, there is no direct link between them. For example, a political argument does not necessarily speak for membership, an identity-based argument does not necessarily speak for breaking off negotiations, and so on.

All these strategies are linked to the same question: What is the shape of future cooperation with Turkey and how can it be implemented? This means that the three strategies are pointing to different possible 'scenarios' of a more or less institutionalised relationship between the two actors, with: (1) EU membership as the most institutionalised form, (2) a Unique Partnership as a form of strategic cooperation which includes certain privileges for Turkey, or (3) a relationship with Turkey as a neighbouring country that is marginally institutionalised and geared to short-term cooperation in certain areas of interest.

As with dimensions, strategies are used to pursue different aims or scenarios. For example, a party can demand the cancellation of accession negotiations either to stop any form of institutional cooperation or build a Unique Partnership in the long run. Similarly, accession negotiations can be advocated either to accomplish eventual membership or recognise that for the time being no other strategy is available for EU-Turkey cooperation. Consequently, this chapter differentiates between 'strategy' and 'scenario' when analysing stories emanating from the Bundestag. While strategies represent the underlying aim of a certain narrative, scenarios serve as models for the potential shape of an EU-Turkey relationship in the future. These scenarios do not serve as descriptive but rather analytical

tools, mapping out variations of oversimplified realities that can serve as terms of reference for a scholarly assessment of future relations.[5]

Figure 2: The Concepts of Narratives, Strategies and Scenarios



Source: own compilation.

In considering German narratives on EU-Turkey relations, there are certain practical reasons that limit the explanatory power of our analysis which stem from the overall contexts within which this relationship is set. Firstly, on a domestic level the Bundestag as actor of interest is a heterogeneous sum of parties' and individuals' voices, which influences the course of German Government, but does not determine it. Secondly, on the EU level, despite its influential role within the EU discourse on Turkey, Germany cannot take decisions alone but as party to agreements reached by 27 Member States. Thirdly and finally, how EU-Turkey relations unfold also depends heavily on developments, strategies and narratives originating from within Turkey itself,[6] albeit the EU's position does not necessar-

5 Cf. Tekin, Funda. The Future of EU-Turkey Relations: Exploring the Dynamics of Relevant Scenarios. In: Beken Saatçioğlu/ Funda Tekin (Eds). Turkey and the European Union. Key Dynamics and Future Scenarios. Turkey and European Union Studies Vol. 3. Baden-Baden, 2021, pp. 11–27, pp. 20 f.

6 Cf. Özbey et.al. Narratives of a Contested Relationship: Unravelling the Debates in the EU and Turkey. FEUTURE Online Paper No. 28. Cologne, February 2019.

ily have to match that adopted by Turkey.[7] That being said, this study provides a detailed analysis of one influential voice within the complex EU-Turkey relationship and the fight for dominant political opinion that stands behind it.

2.2 *Operationalisation*

Our study analyses plenary protocols from all debates in the Bundestag dealing with Turkey as well as governmental declarations between 17 October 2002 and 31 December 2018. A combination of data from governmental and parliamentarian levels, facilitates insights into official discourse as well as less diplomatically formulated debates involving Members of Parliament, which are publicly available, but nevertheless take place away from the public eye. The analysis requires consideration of full legislative periods in the Bundestag. It starts with the 15th period that begins on 17 October 2002, which coincidentally includes the European Council's announcement in 2004 about the opening of accession negotiations with Turkey[8] and ends at the beginning of the 18th period in 2018. This time frame of 16 years corresponds to 493 debates and 25 declarations which were coded and evaluated using the data analysis software MAXQDA. Our analysis is based on a quantitative approach in which segments are allocated to topics and dimensions with the help of a code system which was constantly expanded parallel to the coding, so that all relevant terms and topics addressed could be considered. A quantitative matrix of the plot was drafted by analysing how often which topics were discussed in the Bundestag. This matrix hints at irregularities in the debates, such as quantitative peaks or lows of specific topics and terms that deserve reconsideration to explain the change of story. The quantitative analysis was completed by an in-depth qualitative examination of every coded segment referring to Turkey so as to provide further knowledge about how the Bundestag positioned itself on certain topics and events. This

7 Cf. Ibid; Schröder, Mirja /Wessels, Wolfgang. The Energy Geopolitics of Turkey – From Classical to Critical Reading. In: Mirja Schröder / Marc-Oliver Bettzüge / Wolfgang Wessels (Eds.): Turkey as an Energy Hub? Contributions on Turkey´s Role in EU Energy Supply. Turkey and European Union Studies. Vol. 1. Baden-Baden, 2017, pp. 27–48.

8 Cf. Council of the European Union. Copenhagen European Council 12 and 13 December 2002. Presidency Conclusions. 15917/02. Brussels, 29.01.2003, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/20906/73842.pdf [22.12.2020].

qualitative analysis fills the gaps resulting from our quantitative research and is illustrated in this chapter by use of literal quotations in support of quantitative observations.

3. Tracing German Narratives on EU-Turkey Relations

3.1 Parliamentary Debates on the Opening of Accession Negotiations 2002–2005: Sustainable European Perspective versus Privileged Partnership

At the 1999 European Council meeting in Helsinki, Turkey was officially granted candidate status for EU accession. Three years later at the European Council meeting in Copenhagen, the EU announced its decision to open accession negotiations in 2004. During these years, the possibility of EU accession was not only the exclusive topic of governmental declarations by Chancellor Gerhard Schröder in dealing with Turkey but also the most discussed issue within the thematic dispute on Turkey from a deeply polarised German Bundestag. While the coalition government of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Greens strongly supported Turkey's EU membership bid, the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) as second largest faction in the Bundestag and opposition leader was generally critical towards prospects of Turkish EU accession. Under the leadership of Chancellor Angela Merkel, the CDU/CSU introduced the concept of a 'Privileged Partnership' with Turkey as an alternative model for full membership. It was not further specified but intended to deepen economic and security relations. "When you are talking about Europe these days, I believe it is a mistake considering the accession of Turkey to the European Union. Drop it! It is not for the benefit of the European Union",[9] stated Angela Merkel in October 2002.[10] In addition to the candidate state's weak economic performance or its high inflation rate[11] this position related more substantially to questions of identity and values. As Michael Glos (CSU) stated in December 2002: "Turkey is neither economically nor politically ready for an EU-accession. We are convinced that Europe is based on a common cultural and religious heritage.

9 Deutscher Bundestag. Dr. Angela Merkel. Plenary Protocol 15/4. Berlin, 29.10.2002, p. 68.

10 All literal quotations come from the plenary minutes of the Bundestag debates and were translated into English by the authors.

11 Cf. Deutscher Bundestag. Michael Glos. Plenary Protocol 15/4. Berlin, 29.10.2002, p. 88.

Turkey does not belong to the European cultural circle".[12] His colleague Georg Nüßlein was even more explicit in the parliamentary debate of November 2003: "The Christian-Jewish heritage remains the main source of identity for the European community of values. That is one reason why I am against Turkey's full membership".[13]

Contrary to this cultural and value-based refusal, the SPD-green coalition under Chancellor Gerhard Schröder felt some responsibility to offer Turkey a membership perspective after 40 years of association within the framework of the economics-driven Ankara Agreement in 1963. As early as his governmental declaration of 3 December 1999, Schröder stated:

> "Europe also has a responsibility towards Turkey. We cannot repeatedly emphasise its strategic importance for Europe, place a heavy burden on it within the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), court it as an important regional power and commit it to European standards if we are not willing to offer a clear European perspective that goes beyond the existing Customs Union".[14]

He pursued the vision of a reconciliation process between non-fundamentalist Islam and European Enlightenment values.[15] Within this process, the governing parties were convinced that EU membership or at least the opening of accession negotiations could further enhance the reform process in Turkey. The Liberal Democratic Party (FDP) supported this view, observing that Turkey had clearly embarked upon a path of European values such as the rule of law, human dignity and democracy – a 'catch-up process' that was considered far more decisive than religion or geography and that had to be taken into consideration.[16] The key question was subsumed by the German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer in 2002: "Can secular modernisation succeed on the basis of democracy and the rule of law in Turkey as one of the largest Islamic states?"[17] If so, this was seen as the answer to the strategic security question covering the entire

12 Deutscher Bundestag. Michael Glos. Plenary Protocol 15/13. Berlin, 04.12.2002, p. 874.
13 Deutscher Bundestag. Dr. Georg Nüßlein. Plenary Protocol 15/72. Berlin, 06.11.2003, p. 6178.
14 Schröder, Gerhard. Governmental Declaration, 03.12.1999, p. 7062.
15 Cf. Schröder, Gerhard. Governmental Declaration, 30.04.2004, p. 9587.
16 Cf. Deutscher Bundestag. Dr. Werner Hoyer. Plenary Protocol 15/148. Berlin, 16.12.2004, p.13790.
17 Deutscher Bundestag. Joschka Fischer. Plenary Protocol 15/4. Berlin, 29.10.2002, p. 96.

region, especially in light of a European perception that the fight against international terrorism after 9/11 should concentrate mostly on the EU's Eastern external borders.[18] Despite Turkey's major contribution to the EU's future stability within the geopolitical dimension, the proponents of a Turkish EU membership advocated democratic reforms in line with the EU's Copenhagen Criteria to be necessary prerequisites for any form of cooperation. This was also confirmed by Angelica Schwall-Düren, deputy chairwoman of the SPD faction for European affairs in the Bundestag, who said: "The existence of a stable democracy as well as the protection of human and minority rights have absolute priority over geostrategic considerations".[19]

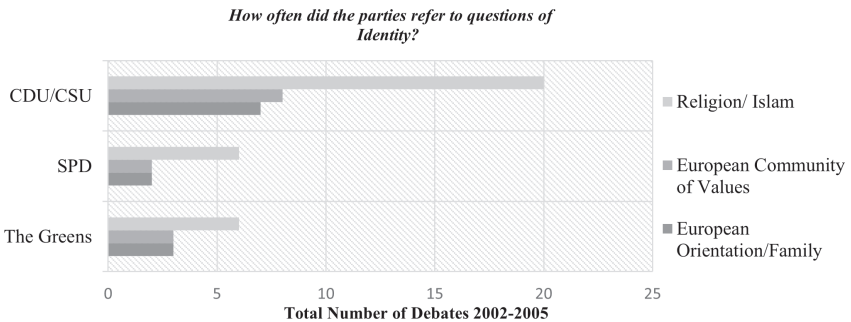
For the period of these years prior to the opening of accession negotiations, this political dimension was by far the most dominant in the Bundestag, largely due to the debate on Turkey's EU accession and its democratic standards. The geopolitical dimension including frequently mentioned topics such as 'Securityand Stability' and 'NATO' as well as the identity dimension, including the topics of 'Religion' along with 'European Values and Family', were at about equally important, constituting the thematic pools from which the parties derived their corresponding arguments. The SPD and Greens made use of the geostrategic argument in relation to Turkey's relevance for security and stability to advertise a scenario of EU membership. However, they subsumed this security gain under the political dimension. Only if Turkey implemented political reforms and succeeded in modernising could it guarantee a security advantage for the EU. In order to match the preferred scenario of full membership with a political diagnosis of the problem, they pursued the strategy of accession negotiations which would commit Turkey to reforms and European values. Even though the CDU/CSU shared the assessment of all governing parties that problems in the areas of democracy, human rights and the rule of law were dominant, they used a different identity-based narrative. As can be seen in Figure 3 below, issues about Turkish religion and belonging to the European family of values were raised more frequently by the CDU/CSU than any other party and were used to argue against the country's EU membership. Consequently, delegates spoke out against the

18 Cf. Deutscher Bundestag. Joschka Fischer. Plenary Protocol 15/13. Berlin, 04.12 2002, p. 922.

19 Deutscher Bundestag. Dr. Angelica Schwall-Düren. Plenary Protocol 15/16. Berlin, 19.12.2002, p.1193.

strategy of accession negotiations. Instead, from the outset they proposed a 'Privileged Partnership' that would meet the EU's geopolitical interests.

Figure 3: Identity Dimension by Party 2002–2005



Source: own compilation.

In 2004, the European Commission eventually recommended that accession negotiations should be opened, based on the opinion that Turkey fulfilled the political criteria sufficiently.[20] Negotiation talks started in October 2005, only one month after German parliamentary elections in which the CDU/CSU gained a narrow majority of the votes and entered into a grand coalition with the SPD under Chancellor Angela Merkel. In her very first governmental declaration on 30 November 2005, Merkel immediately addressed Turkey's candidacy by underlining that negotiations were being conducted with an open outcome that did not necessarily guarantee EU membership:

> "If the EU does not have the capacity to absorb a new member or if Turkey should not be in a position to meet all the obligations of membership, the country must be linked as closely as possible to European structures in a way that allows it to develop further its privileged relationship with the EU".[21]

This statement was fully in line with the CDU/CSU position but sent a radically different signal regarding Turkish membership than Schröder had sent previously and moreover lacked any commitment to offer a

20 Cf. Council of the European Union. Brussels European Council 16/ 17 December 2004, Presidency Conclusions. 16238/1/04 REV1. Brussels, 01.02.2005, http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-16238-2004-REV-1/en/pdf [22.12.2020].

21 Merkel, Angela. Governmental Declaration, 30.11.2005, p. 89.

medium-term European perspective. As the newly elected Chancellor, she stayed close to the EU's course and even adopted the official negotiating framework formulations.[22] She advocated the motto 'pacta sunt servanda' – agreements must be kept – but in the next sentence she quickly emphasised that this process of accession negotiations had to be observed with special attention.[23] Against the background of her statements as a CDU Member of Parliament in the Bundestag, it was no secret that she was taking over a project from her predecessor, which she very much doubted would end with a positive conclusion. Hence, whilst she followed the official government line on accession negotiations, she was by no means the driving force for eventual Turkish EU membership that Gerhard Schröder had been.

3.2. The Years After the Start of Accession Talks (2005–2012)

It was not just from a German perspective that the dynamics of accession lost momentum. Additionally, shortly after the start of accession negotiations in October 2005, the Turkish Parliament refused to ratify the Ankara protocol, which was an additional provision extending the Customs Union to ten new EU Member States including Cyprus.[24] After the EU had repeatedly announced that it would suspend accession negotiations if Turkey did not ratify the protocol by the end of 2006, the European Council decided in December 2006 to suspend eight negotiating chapters until that question had been resolved. The coalition government of CDU/CSU and SPD was again divided over this decision. While CDU/CSU delegates perceived this development as confirmation that it had been wrong to take up membership negotiations, SPD representatives supported this suspension but continued advocating the accession process. CDU delegate Ursula Heinen, for example, commented that the European Commission's progress report from September 2006 had "brought to light what many

22 Cf. Council of the European Union. Negotiating Framework. Enlargement – Accession Negotiations with Turkey: General EU Position. 12823/1/05 REV 1. Brussels, 12 October 2005, https://www.ab.gov.tr/files/AB_Iliskileri/Tur_En_Realitons/NegotiatingFrameowrk/Negotiating_Frameowrk_Full.pdf [22.12.2020].

23 Cf. Merkel, Angela. Governmental Declaration, 30.11.2005, p. 89.

24 The Ratification of the Ankara protocol would have meant the recognition of Cyprus, which Turkey refuses to do. The reasons go back to the Cyprus territorial conflict in the 1970s between Turkey and Greece.

feared would happen: the reform process in Turkey is stalling".[25] Chancellor Merkel, albeit more cautiously, also dealt in detail with the lack of reforms and noted in her governmental declaration of December 2006: "This is not a matter of triviality, but of the self-evident fact that accession candidates and EU Member States recognise each other politically and diplomatically".[26]

Foreign Minister and SPD delegate Frank-Walter Steinmeier in contrast replied to the question asked by the Greens on how the Government judged the Commission´s report:

> "On the one hand, in the further process one cannot ignore non-ratification of the Ankara Protocol and thus the non-opening of ports and airports on the Turkish side to Cypriot ships and aircraft. On the other hand, the Commission proposal states that it cannot be in the European interest to stop the process of Turkey's rapprochement with Europe and makes operational proposals on how to maintain this process at a lower level".[27]

In line with the SPD's support for continued membership negotiations, his party colleague Lale Akgün also supported the EU's procedure: "It is a sound decision that does justice to both sides, Turkey and the EU. […] But – and this is just as important – the negotiations must now be continued with the greatest care. Freezing must not become synonymous with a creeping end to the negotiations, even if some might wish to".[28] Hence, the SPD promoted explicitly maintaining the strategy of negotiations in order to preserve the aim of Turkish EU membership despite diplomatic conflict. The Greens supported this course optimistically. Renate Künast, the leader of the Greens faction in the Bundestag, also expressed confidence regarding the EU´s normative power: "I am sure of one thing: the European Union will succeed in exporting the rule of law even to Turkey".[29]

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25 Deutscher Bundestag. Ursula Heinen. Plenary Protocol 16/66. Berlin, 22.11.2006, p. 6578.
26 Merkel, Angela. Governmental Declaration, 14.12.2006, p. 7210.
27 Deutscher Bundestag. Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier. Plenary Protocol 16/70. Berlin, 30.11.2006, p. 6936.
28 Deutscher Bundestag. Dr. Lale Akgün. Plenary Protocol 16/73. Berlin, 14.12.2006, p. 7231.
29 Deutscher Bundestag. Renate Künast. Plenary Protocol 16/88. Berlin, 22.03.2007, p. 8845.

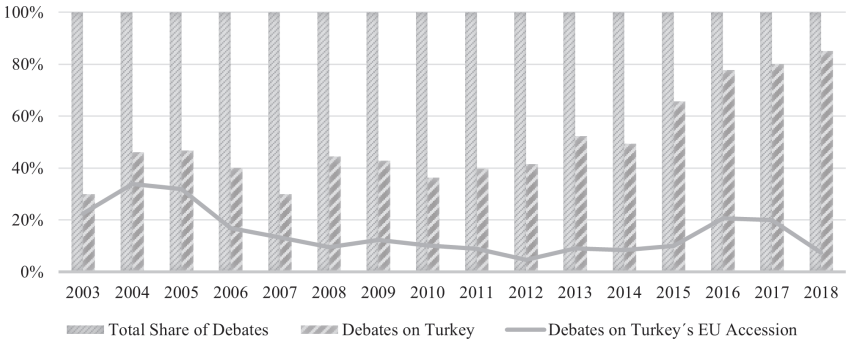
But over the years growing impatience has developed, especially amongst those who were critical of Turkey's accession from the very beginning. CDU delegate Gunther Krichbaum criticised recent efforts of the Turkish Government to limit press freedom and warned: "Turkey must return to the path of virtue".[30] In January 2010, his colleague Andreas Schockenhoff noted that Turkey had been refusing to apply the Ankara Protocol for more than three years, which raised the question of what Turkey had actually expected from the EU in the first place. He also called for preventive strategic thinking on what to do if negotiations came to a full stop.[31] This included a renewed reference to the 'Privileged Partnership', which the CDU/CSU had increasingly grown fond of but had stopped promoting explicitly. When a few months later, in September 2010, the majority of Turkish people in a referendum voted for constitutional amendments that aimed at bringing the Turkish Constitution into line with EU standards, only the Greens assessed this referendum as "Turkey's most serious step towards accession and reform in decades".[32] Neither the rest of the Bundestag nor the Government paid any particular attention to this issue. Whilst the SPD had been a great supporter of Turkey's EU membership under Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, its position was now weakened by the coalition partner CDU/CSU. As presented in Figure 4 below, even though the Bundestag continued to discuss Turkey and German-Turkish relations on a regular basis, the topic of EU accession seemed to be off the table. This coincides with an observation that the Bundestag's interest in Turkey's EU accession was generally declining. While in 2004, Turkey's membership bid was discussed in 22 out of 30 debates that were dealing with Turkey, it did not occur in more than eight debates per year between 2007 and 2013. General perception prevailed that it was now Turkey's call to advance its accession to the EU by continuing its reform procedure. While the strategy of accession negotiations was still officially being pursued, it had lost its drive and consequently the scenario of membership was temporarily side-tracked.

30 Deutscher Bundestag. Gunther Krichbaum. Plenary Protocol 16/211. Berlin, 19.03.2009, p. 22729.

31 Cf. Deutscher Bundestag. Dr. Andreas Schockenhoff. Plenary Protocol 17/15. Berlin, 20.01.2010, p. 1299.

32 Deutscher Bundestag. Kerstin Müller. Plenary Protocol 17/58. Berlin, 15.09.2010, p. 6085.

Figure 4: Comparison of Percentage Share of Debates on Turkey and Turkey's EU Accession 2003–2018



Source: own compilation.

This was also reflected at governmental level: Chancellor Angela Merkel mentioned Turkey only once during her governmental declarations between 2007 and 2013. The rare references to Turkey appeared in the context of her criticism of the difficult cooperation between NATO and European security policy in view of the unsolved Cyprus conflict in 2009.[33] This low point for EU-Turkey or German-Turkish relations is represented not only by a void within governmental declarations, but also by the general lack of discussion on the topic in the Bundestag. In March 2011, the Greens submitted a motion to "revive the EU accession negotiations"[34] without any effect. It was not discussed in the Bundestag, merely referred to the committees responsible and subsequently rejected by the coalition of CDU/CSU and FDP as well as the Left Party in the following October.

3.3 Positive Agenda 2012 and Gezi Protests 2013 – Test and Turning Point

After several years of a slow to temporarily faltering accession process, in May 2012 the EU Commission and the Turkish Ministry of European Affairs[35] launched the so-called Positive Agenda, a concept to bring "fresh

33 Cf. Merkel, Angela. Government Declaration, 26 April 2009, p. 23125.
34 Deutscher Bundestag. Claudia Roth. Plenary Protocol 17/96. Berlin, 17.03.2011, p. 11087.
35 The Ministry of European Affairs was a Ministry of the Turkish Government responsible for Turkey's European policy from 29 June 2011 to 8 July 2018,

dynamics into EU-relations"[36] by enhancing cooperation and promoting reforms in Turkey so as to establish a technical dialogue below the threshold of chapter openings. The aim was to facilitate progress in areas of common interest such as alignment with EU legislation, visa and migration, trade and energy together with counterterrorism. But even though this was the first joint step towards a Turkish membership bid since 2005, neither German governmental declarations nor parliamentary debates mentioned the Positive Agenda once. Furthermore, the overall topic 'EU-Membership and Accession' reached its absolute low regarding the frequency of mentioning in Bundestag debates for the years 2002 to 2018.

By contrast, the occurrence of nationwide Gezi protests in Turkey in 2013[37] was an extensively debated Bundestag topic, especially in light of the Turkish Government's resulting harsh treatment of demonstrators and participants, which was heavily criticised by the EU. For the majority of German Parliamentarians, who were already showing clear signs of exhaustion with regard to the accession process at that time, this was "probably the greatest test of the Turkish Government since Erdoğan's party took office",[38] as Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle put it. In his opinion, the Turkish Government sent the 'wrong signal to Europe' and had to prove to Europe and the world that it was indeed guided by the European principles to which it had previously committed.

Following the protests, both the CDU/CSU and FDP asked for an immediate parliamentary debate on the current situation in Turkey, in which delegates expressed their concerns regarding the Turkish Government's lack of compliance with democratic standards and their doubts regarding Turkey's future in the EU. At the same time, most Parliamentarians made a clear distinction between the Turkish Government and Turkish society, which conversely had demonstrated a strong understanding of democracy and freedom of expression. In order to support Turkish societal demands and commit the country's government to meeting them, SPD and Green

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before being incorporated into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 9 July 2018 with the start of the new legislature.

36 European Commission. Positive EU-Turkey agenda launched in Ankara. Press Release. MEMO/12/359. Brussels, 17.05.2021, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-12-359_en.htm [22.12.2020].

37 The Gezi protests started in Istanbul in May 2013, initially as a peaceful protest campaign against the urban development plan for the Gezi Park in the Taksim quarter. After the police had violently broken up the sit-in blockade, a nationwide wave of protest against the AKP government spread.

38 Deutscher Bundestag. Dr. Guido Westerwelle. Plenary Protocol 17/245. Berlin, 12.06.2013, p. 31173.

Party delegates spoke in favour of revitalising accession negotiations and 'opening new chapters', such as Chapter 23 on 'Justice and fundamental rights'. SPD delegate Johannes Kahrs even referred to the vibrant civil society which would result from accession negotiations, stating that the values demanded by the Turkish demonstrators were, to a large extent, reflected in the accession process. He underlined this argument by stating "it is important to say today that we do want the EU accession process to continue, that we call on Turkey to press ahead with it and that we also want the European states to press ahead with this process".[39] Nevertheless, he also emphasized that no one wanted Turkey as it was now to become a member of the EU.

This statement reflects the Bundestag's uncertainty vis-à-vis the turn of developments in Turkey and thus the future of EU-Turkey relations. On the one hand, delegates (even individual delegates from the CDU/CSU)[40] did not want to dash Turkish society's hopes of being part of the European community one day. On the other hand, doubts about the Turkish Government's will to advocate democracy was becoming stronger and more expressible. In this sense, 2013 marks the start of open and regular criticism of the Turkish Government by the entire Bundestag and thus an increasingly sceptical view on Turkey within the political dimension. At the same time, from this point onwards most members of the Bundestag clearly distinguished between the Turkish Government and civil society, increasingly supporting the Turkish people. The corresponding strategies for EU-Turkey relations varied depending on party affiliation. While proponents of Turkish EU membership from the SPD and Greens focused on the strategy of accession negotiations to commit Turkey to human rights standards, the CDU/CSU used the generally critical mood to argue once again in favour of suspending accession negotiations. In their view, the opening of additional negotiation chapters would represent a reward for Erdoğan's regime and signify a betrayal of the protestors. Thus, the setbacks in Turkey should be consistently sanctioned in order for the EU to remain credible.[41]

Regarding the Gezi protests and how to adjust the political course towards Turkey, the debate was at that time confined to the political

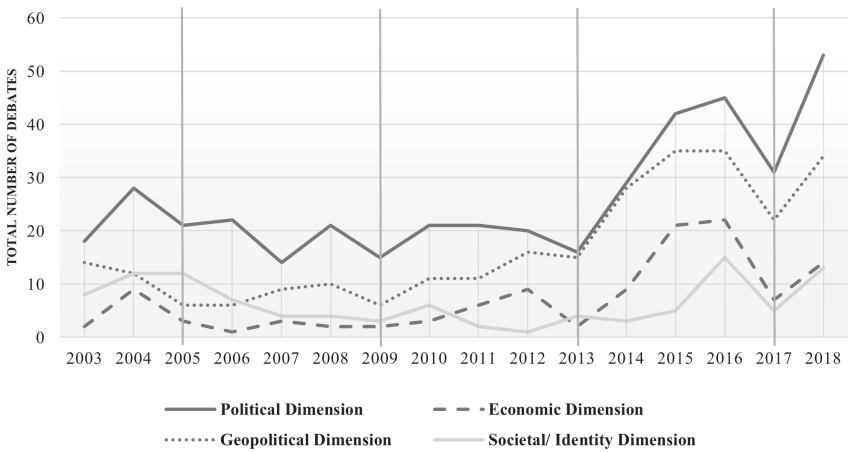
39 Deutscher Bundestag. Johannes Kahrs. Plenary Protocol 17/245. Berlin, 12.06.2013, p. 31174.

40 Cf. Deutscher Bundestag. Ruprecht Polenz. Plenary Protocol 17/245. Berlin, 12.06.2013, pp. 31174 f.

41 Cf. Deutscher Bundestag. Thomas Silberhorn. Plenary Protocol 17/245. Berlin, 12.06.2013, pp. 31180 f.

dimension. However, the Arab Spring, the Syrian civil war and the threat posed by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) brought the geopolitical dimension back to the fore (see Figure 5, below).

Figure 5: Dimensions in German Parliamentary Debates between 2003 and 2018



Source: own compilation.

This was primarily due to Turkey requesting patriot defence missiles from its NATO allies in 2012 so as to secure its border with neighbouring Syria. This topic was much debated in the Bundestag before Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle eventually pledged Germany's support. Thus, Turkey was increasingly perceived as a key partner in geostrategic and security terms.

3.4 A Peak in every Respect – Geostrategic Relevance and Political Crisis in 2015/2016

The geostrategic relevance that Turkey had continually gained since the destabilisation in the Middle East, became decisive for its relations with the EU in 2015 and 2016. The growing number of refugees from Syria posed a challenge to the EU's Common European Asylum System and created conflict between Member States regarding the distribution and limit to the number of refugees who could be accepted. In the context of this crisis, EU Heads of State or Government together with Turkey agreed on a Joint Action Plan in November 2015 to solve the migration issue, which included an EU

declaration to step up its political and financial engagement.[42] Furthermore, both sides agreed on re-energising Turkey's EU accession process by establishing more frequent and structured meetings as well as opening Chapter 17 of the accession process on further economic integration with Turkey.[43] In March 2016, the EU and Turkey also concluded the EU-Turkey statement on Migration with the aim to ending irregular migration via Turkey to the EU. This was to be achieved through a 1:1 mechanism, whereby for each illegal Syrian migrant returned from the EU back to Turkey, another was to be legally relocated to the EU. Furthermore, Turkey promised to take all necessary measures to prevent further irregular migration, whilst in return the European Council agreed to set up a Refugee Facility for Turkey equipped with a total of 6 billion euros before the end of 2018 for projects in the areas of health and education. Most importantly, the Council also reconfirmed its commitment to re-energise the accession process, upgrade the Customs Union and facilitate visa liberalisation for Turkish citizens by the end of June 2016, provided that "all benchmark criteria have been met".[44]

During these months between September 2015 and March 2016, the German Government published six declarations, all of which highlighted Turkey´s "key role"[45] in the context of growing security threats emanating from ISIS and the general destabilisation in the Middle East as well as the migration crisis. Chancellor Angela Merkel continually stressed that the migration issue was a global problem that needed to be dealt with on international and multilateral levels. In her statement of 16 December 2015, she commented on the EU-Turkey statement on migration:

> "It is in everyone's interest to reduce the number of people seeking refuge in Europe. That is in the interests of Germany, that is in the interests of Europe and that is also in the interests of the refugees themselves, so that they do not have to embark on a life-threatening journey across Europe. That is why, at the EU-Turkey Summit on 29

42 Cf. Reiners, Wulf/ Tekin, Funda. Taking Refuge in Leadership? Facilitators and Constraints of Germany's Influence in EU Migration Policy and EU-Turkey Affairs during the Refugee Crisis (2015–2016). In: *German Politics*, 2020, Vol. 29, Issue 1, pp. 115–130.

43 Cf. European Council. Meeting of the EU Heads of State or Government with Turkey, 29.11.2015, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-summit/2015/11/29/ [22.12.2020].

44 European Council. EU-Turkey statement, 18 March 2016. Press Release. Brussels, 18.03.2016, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18/eu-turkey-statement/, [22.12.2020].

45 Merkel, Angela. Governmental Declaration, 15.10.2015, p.12557.

> November [2015], we laid the foundations for a long-term migration partnership with Turkey".[46]

Thus she classified the statement as a result of mutual interests facilitating a form of long-term cooperation. In addition to this multilateral form of cooperation, Merkel addressed the topic of migration as a bilateral issue: As she explained in her declaration on 17 February 2016, the German Government had been pursuing three approaches in this regard by: (1) combatting the causes for flight, (2) protecting the EU's external border and (3) controlling refugee migration in police and technical cooperation with Turkey. She went on to say that: "We have agreed bilateral cooperation with Turkey in many areas. […] and I may say, by the way, that this bilateral cooperation is developing very well".[47]

Regarding the political dimension, one month before the EU-Turkey Statement on Migration was concluded in March 2018, Merkel acknowledged in front of the Bundestag that Turkey was expecting a revival of accession negotiations in return for cooperation on the refugee issue. In this regard, she assured that talks on the migration partnership also included a critical examination of areas such as journalistic freedom in Turkey, the Kurds and the Turkish youth.[48] The decisive factor would be whether and if so how a balance of interests could be achieved that corresponded to European values. The EU-Turkey Statement on Migration was essentially co-determined by the German Chancellor[49] and reveals for the first time a strategy defined in this chapter as 'twin-tracked'. By continuing or even revitalising accession negotiations, a parallel track of interest-based cooperation was initialised through the migration partnership. Thereby, the strategy of continued accession negotiations was not necessarily aimed at the medium-term scenario of EU accession, but served primarily to maintain an already existing, highly institutionalised form of relationship with Turkey.

Parts of the Bundestag, including the CDU/CSU as well as the Left Party, were highly critical of this so-called EU-Turkey migration deal. The Left Party denounced the agreement as a "dirty deal [with] Erdoğan, the godfather of terrorism",[50] through which the EU has made itself vulnerable to blackmail in its fundamental democratic values. Left Party delegates demanded the

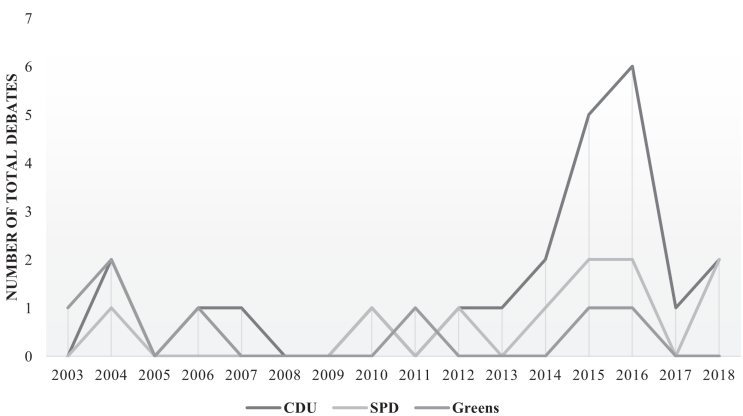
46 Merkel, Angela. Governmental Declaration, 16.12.2015, p.14283.
47 Merkel, Angela. Governmental Declaration, 17.02.2016, p.15133.
48 Cf. Ibid.
49 Cf. Reiners/ Tekin, Taking Refuge in Leadership?, 2020.
50 Cf. Deutscher Bundestag. Sevim Dağdelen. Plenary Protocol 18/160. Berlin, 16.03.2016, p. 15760.

cancellation of accession negotiations as well as any form of transactional cooperation based on mutual interests. CDU/CSU delegates seemed to be more convinced than ever that Turkey would never fully share EU values and should, therefore, no longer be offered the prospect of accession.[51] The question of the right strategy for EU-Turkey relations became more and more central in light of the migration issue. While CDU/CSU members were in favour of closer cooperation to manage refugee flows, their representatives in the Bundestag did not see accession negotiations as an appropriate strategy:

> "It is one thing to meet the Turks halfway, naturally always retaining the criteria that we have established, for example with regard to visa liberalisation. However, only one thing should not be put on the agenda, because it has no relevance in this regard, and that is the question of Turkey's accession to the European Union".[52]

This is consistent with the observation that in 2015 and 2016 the CDU/CSU described Turkey most often as a *strategic partner*, in comparison both to previous years and the other parties – a term that points away from EU accession and towards a Unique Partnership, as shown in Figure 6 below.

Figure 6: Turkey as a Strategic Partner – Explicit Attributions by Parties in the Bundestag 2003–2018



Source: own compliation.

51 Cf. Deutscher Bundestag. Dr. Johann Wadepuhl. Plenary Protocol 18/154. Berlin, 17.02.2016, p. 15182.

52 Deutscher Bundestag. Dr. Hans-Peter Friedrich. Plenary Protocol 18/130. Berlin, 15.10.2015, p.12572.

According to the SPD and Greens, the opposite was true. In January 2016, Dorothee Schlegel from the SPD, Committee for the Affairs of the European Union, recalled that the EU as well as Germany under SPD Chancellor Gerhard Schröder had originally sought Turkey's accession for reasons of foreign and security policy. These interests were now more urgent than ever, despite the tense relationship. She called for the accession process to be seen as an opportunity because "the instrument of accession negotiations, to remain in military jargon, is the EU's 'sharpest sword'. For it is the primacy of peacekeeping that counts".[53] The Greens delegate Cem Özdemir also regretted the German Government's lack of interest in Turkey since Merkel took office, which, in view of the democracy and human rights situations in Turkey, was now taking its revenge.[54]

As can be seen from these statements, the Bundestag agreed on the fact that Turkey was becoming geostrategically more relevant during these years and that cooperation was certainly worthwhile. However, the question of whether or not the accession process would be an appropriate framework remained controversial. This debate became even more contentious in the course of 2016, which in retrospect is often referred to as the crisis year for bilateral relations between Germany and Turkey. The so-called Böhmermann affair in April[55] was followed by the Armenia Resolution in June, in which, at the request of the CDU/CSU, SPD and the Greens parliamentary groups, the Bundestag commemorated the genocide of Armenians and other Christian minorities in 1915 and 1916. The Turkish Government reacted with strong displeasure, referring to the vote as "a disgrace to the reputation of this body",[56] and calling the Bundestag "ignorant and disrespectful".[57] In the same month, the Turkish Government issued a ban on visits by members of the German Bundestag to the

53 Deutscher Bundestag. Dr. Dorothee Schlegel. Plenary Protocol 18/149. Berlin, 14.01.2016, p. 14689.

54 Cf. Deutscher Bundestag. Cem Özdemir. Plenary Protocol 18/129. Berlin, 14.10.2015, p. 12535.

55 The Böhmermann affair describes a conflict between the German TV presenter Jan Böhmermann and the Turkish President Recep Erdoğan. In March 2016, Böhmermann had read a satirical poem on German television, for which Erdoğan prosecuted him.

56 Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Press Release regarding the Resolution by the Parliament of the Federal Republic of Germany of 2 June 2016 on the Events of 1915, No. 125, 02.06.2016, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-125_-2-june-2016_-press-release-regarding-the-resolution-by-the-parliament-of-the-federal-republic-of-germany-of-2-june-2016-on-the-events-of-1915.en.mfa [22.12.2020].

57 Ibid.

Turkish military airbase in Incirlik,[58] whereupon the Left Party demanded the immediate withdrawal of German troops. The other parties criticised the Turkish Government's actions, but nevertheless stressed the necessity of bilateral military cooperation within NATO, which was fundamental for Germany. This illustrates perfectly the Bundestag's dilemma between geostrategic relevance and political conflict in its relations with Turkey at that point.

The relations between the two states were already strained when in July 2016 the Turkish military attempted a coup, which ultimately failed. In response, Erdoğan's government declared a state of emergency, under which it arrested tens of thousands of people and dismissed them from their offices suspecting them of being affiliated with the Gülen movement that was made responsible for the attempted coup. The German Government commented neither on the coup attempt itself nor on Turkey's action through its governmental declaration. Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier made a statement in the Bundestag on 7 September 2016 – immediately after the parliamentary summer recess – in which he expressed his regret that the Turkish Government had accused Germany of not taking the failed coup attempt seriously, even considering it to have been staged. However, he also pointed out that not every critical demand from the German side regarding constitutional standards should be regarded as arrogance. Finally, he advocated a controversial, direct exchange with the Turkish side:

> "It is not up to us to decide whether Turkey is important or unimportant. [...] Turkey is a key country – not only because of the 2.5 million refugees in Turkey, and not only because there is a refugee agreement with Turkey. [...] That is why I strongly advise us to be critical where it is necessary, but not to pretend that relations with Turkey can in any way be avoided because of the critical points".[59]

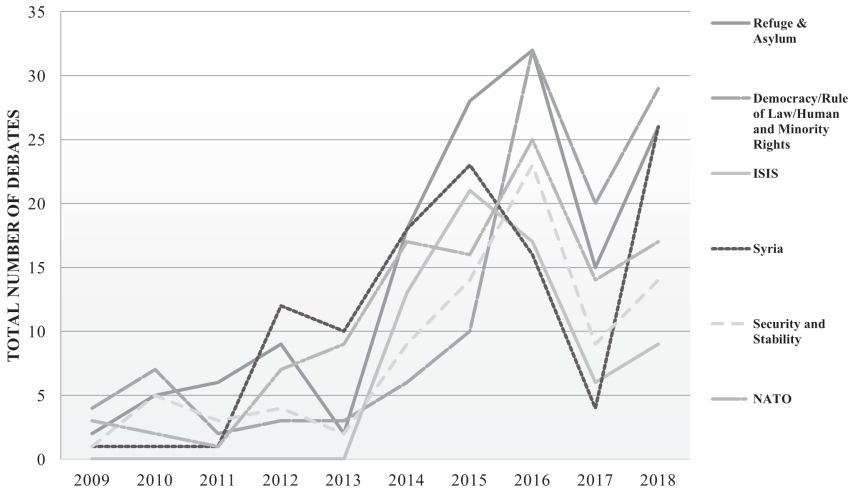
Still, in the Bundestag the critical points were much debated, with reference to the Turkish Government's crackdown on persons who allegedly were part of the failed coup attempt. During 2016, the most discussed topics in addition to refuge and asylum were democratic standards, the

58 The Turkish Government had banned German members of the Bundestag from visiting the Turkish base Incirlik.

59 Deutscher Bundestag. Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier. Plenary Protocol 18/186. Berlin, 07.09.2016, p. 18451.

rule of law as well as human and minority rights. All of them belong to the political dimension, which consequently peaked in that year (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Topics and Keywords in German Parliamentary Debates 2009–2018[60]



Source: own compilation.

CDU/CSU delegates Norbert Röttgen and Alois Karl perceaived Erdoğan's actions in the aftermath of the coup attempt as a way of distancing Turkey from Europe.[61] Thomas Oppermann from the SPD warned "if tens of thousands of civil servants, teachers and judges are arrested, who clearly have nothing to do with the coup, then this is an attack on the rule of law. We must not remain silent about this, ladies and gentlemen".[62] When Erdoğan announced shortly afterwards that he wanted to reintroduce the death penalty, the Bundestag set up a debate on the current situation in Turkey and defined this a red line for Germany to demand the accession

60 The chart shows a selection of the most frequently discussed topics in the Bundestag from 2012.

61 Cf. Deutscher Bundestag. Dr. Norbert Röttgen, Alois Karl. Plenary Protocol 18/186. Berlin, 07.09.2016, p. 18461, p. 18466.

62 Deutscher Bundestag. Thomas Oppermann. Plenary Protocol 18/186. Berlin, 07.09.2016, p. 18423.

talks to end with immediate effect.[63] Within a year's time, this was the second time since the start of accession negotiations in 2005 that the entire Bundestag had not only reached agreement on the Turkish situation, but more importantly on a common strategy for EU-Turkey relations.[64] Delegates equated a reintroduction of the death penalty with a rejection of the EU and its values. Michelle Müntefering (SPD), for example, observed that Turkey seemed increasingly turning away from its orientation towards the West and the course of modern civilization by stating

> "Turkey's revised policy and the changes made by President Erdoğan himself are now closing this door to Europe. We will continue to cooperate. We will continue to be neighbours, but at the same time something will change between our countries".[65]

Gunther Krichbaum stated "indeed, a country that introduces the death penalty and thus clearly wants to turn its back on EU values no longer has a place in Europe".[66] Even the Greens who had always been in favour of a Turkish EU Membership expressed doubts.[67] Foreign Minister Steinmeier noted

> "all the storms, all the turbulences, which Turkey experiences, point in my eyes quite clearly to one thing in the end, namely that Turkey stands at a crossroads. It is about the direction of the country: either towards Europe or away from Europe, towards a constituted democracy or away from it".[68]

As can be seen in these similar statements from different parties, the majority of the Bundestag seemed to identify Turkey as moving ever further away from Europe and the EU. This analysis reveals a change in narrative,

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63 The same conclusion was reached by the Members of the European Parliament and the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, see also: https://www.euractiv.com/section/justice-home-affairs/news/juncker-death-penalty-in-turkey-would-mean-end-to-eu-accession-talks/.

64 The first time was the Armenia Resolution in June of the same year.

65 Deutscher Bundestag. Michelle Müntefering. Plenary Protocol 18/199. Berlin, 10.11.2016, p. 19812.

66 Deutscher Bundestag. Gunther Krichbaum. Plenary Protocol 18/199. Berlin, 10.11.2016, p. 19810.

67 Cf. Deutscher Bundestag. Claudia Roth. Plenary Protocol 18/199. Berlin, 10.11.2016, p. 19808; Deutscher Bundestag. Tabea Rößner. Plenary Protocol 18/202, Berlin, 23.11.2016, p. 20196.

68 Deutscher Bundestag. Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier. Plenary Protocol 18/199. Berlin, 10.11.2016, p. 19803.

mentioned more or less explicitly by all the parties in the Bundestag. Political unpredictability and continuing tension were at this point translated into the identity dimension, in other words questions of belonging to and orientation towards Europe and the EU. While parliamentarians were committed to supporting Turkish civil society again, they also made the Turkish Government and its president personally responsible for creating distance between the EU and its Member States on the one side and Turkey on the other.

3.5 Still at the Crossroads? Developments after 2016

The year 2017 continued right where the year 2016 had left off. Bilateral tensions increased with the arrests in Istanbul of German-Turkish journalists Deniz Yücel and Meşale Tolu during February and April respectively, followed by human rights activist Peter Steudtner in July of the same year. Furthermore, in spring Turkish President Erdoğan accused the German Government of applying Nazi methods, after several German cities had banned Turkish politicians of the *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP)* from campaigning for the Turkish constitutional referendum. Chancellor Angela Merkel immediately responded by stating in front of the Bundestag "the comparisons between the Federal Republic of Germany and National Socialism must cease. They are not worthy of the close ties and relations between Germany and Turkey and our two peoples – politically, socially, as NATO partners and economically".[69] She called the statements "sad and depressing" and gave reassurances that she would continue to address fundamental issues regarding freedom of the press and freedom of expression. Despite the common European-Turkish interests and the "complicated but diverse connections" between Germany and Turkey she also noted "profound differences between the EU and Turkey as well as Germany and Turkey".[70] The Bundestag debate was initiated by President Norbert Lammert, who himself clarified some points and was applauded by the whole House: The meassage was that those who suspected Germany of using Nazi methods while its authorities and elected representatives were acting within the framework of the German constitutional order essentially disqualified themselves. In Germany, freedom of the press and freedom of expression were guaranteed – a partner country was expected

69 Angela Merkel, Governmental Declaration, 09.03.2017, p. 22066.
70 Ibid.

to guarantee the same rights that its representatives claimed in Germany. Finally, he emphasised once again what delegates had been addressing for months, namely that Turkey was developing into an autocratic state which was moving further and further away from Europe, its convictions and democratic standards.[71]

In April 2017, Turkey held a referendum on the Turkish constitution that included comprehensive changes towards a presidential system. When the amendments were adopted with a narrow majority by Turkish society, this also became an issue for debate in the Bundestag. Merkel expressed her concern about how the vote was conducted after Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) reports of irregularities. With recent events in mind, she stated

> "there is no doubt that developments over the past week have put a heavy strain on both German-Turkish and European-Turkish relations. [...] A final turning away of Turkey from Europe, but also – and I say this with caution – of Europe from Turkey would be neither in the German nor in the European interest".[72]

The coalition partner SPD also called for prudence. "I think Erdoğan himself must assume responsibility ahead of his people", said Thomas Oppermann in April 2017. "It's not we who slam the European door shut to Turkey, it is Erdoğan alone who is systematically leading his country away from the EU and European values".[73] But the grand coalition's attempt to keep a low profile regarding the future of accession negotiations proved difficult shortly before the upcoming Bundestag elections in September 2017. SPD Chancellor candidate Martin Schulz sent a strong signal during a publicly broadcasted TV debate with Angela Merkel when he made clear that EU accession talks with Turkey would end under his chancellorship.[74] This statement was atypical for an SPD delegate in view of the party's consistently supportive stance and came somewhat as a surprise for most of his colleagues – Merkel included. Nevertheless, the statement hinted at what was being discussed increasingly and in parts directly demanded in the Bundestag. There seemed to be little hope left for a political turnaround in

71 Deutscher Bundestag. Nobert Lammert. Plenary Protocol 18/221. Berlin, 09.03.2017, p. 22063.
72 Angela Merkel, Governmental Declaration 27.04.2017, p. 23180.
73 Deutscher Bundestag. Thomas Oppermann. Plenary Protocol 18/231. Berlin, 27.04.2017, p. 23186.
74 Cf. Bellinghausen, Yves. Schulz überrascht SPD mit hartem Türkei-Kurs. In: FAZ Online 04.09.2017.

Turkey after so much strain had been inflicted on bilateral and EU-Turkey relations.

In January 2018, Turkey launched its military offensive 'Operation Olive Branch' against Kurdish militias in the Syrian town of Afrin, whereupon the Bundestag once again appeared united in its condemnation of the attack as being contrary to international law. Chancellor Angela Merkel unreservedly condemned the operation as "unacceptable"[75] in her March governmental declaration and subjected the relationship with Germany's "European neighbour and NATO partner"[76] to a general examination by contrasting the geopolitical and economic with the political dimension:

> "We have a lot in common with Turkey: over three million people in our country have Turkish roots, our economies are closely linked; we stand together in the fight against terrorism; we work together reliably on migration. But in the recent past, the relationship between our two countries has been under the greatest strain, not only because of what is happening in Afrin, but also consider the arrests of Deniz Yücel, Peter Steudtner,[77] Meşale Tolu and others".[78]

The Left Party demanded an immediate parliamentary debate on 1 February 2018 to discuss Turkey's approach to Afrin, whilst also considering German arms exports. Within this debate, delegates of the grand coalition expressed repeated concerns that Turkey might turn its back not only on the EU but also on NATO and thus the West as a whole. Consequently, it was stressed that even if EU accession was currently out of question for the vast majority of representatives in the Bundestag, military or political isolation should be avoided.[79] This statement summarises the Bundestag's position well and supports once again the twin-track strategy, through which accession negotiations should be maintained in order to keep Turkey as an important partner in geostrategic and economic terms. How to approach relations with Turkey in the future was again the topic of parliamentary debate in September 2018 during Erdoğan's state visit to Germany. In sev-

75 Angela Merkel, Governmental Declaration, 21.03.2018, p. 1813.
76 Ibid.
77 The German human rights activist Peter Steudtner was arrested in Turkey at the beginning of July 2017.
78 Angela Merkel, Governmental Declaration, 21.03.2018, p. 1820.
79 Cf. Deutscher Bundestag. Dr. Frank Steffel. Plenary Protocol 19/11. Berlin, 01.02.2018, p. 873.

eral motions[80] delegates argued about 'Operation Olive Branch', erosion of the rule of law in Turkey and the reception for President Erdoğan himself. "The task is to reassess relations between Germany, the EU and Turkey in a changed environment",[81] stated CDU delegate Andreas Nick. Nevertheless, EU accession negotiations were still considered to be the most institutionalised form of cooperation with Turkey. Thus, even though the future scenario for EU membership was no longer feasible, conversely pushing Turkey out of all formats was not the preferred option, at least for the ruling grand coalition.[82]

4. Conclusions

During the years before negotiations started, the Bundestag was divided on whether or not Turkey should join the EU. Two narratives dominated at that time. The first, as promoted by the CDU/CSU, is identity-based in claiming that Turkey does not belong to the European family. This narrative referred to topics such as religion and cultural heritage, implying an assumption that even if Turkey implemented reforms within the political dimension, it would never fit into the European community. Hence, party members were opposed to the strategy of opening accession negotiations and entering into the scenario of potential EU membership. Instead, from the outset they pursued the concept of a 'Privileged Partnership', which pointed in the direction of a Unique Partnership as the future scenario for EU-Turkey relations. The second dominant narrative was presented by the governing SPD and the Greens coalition who introduced the idea of Turkey as a geostrategic asset in their advocating the opening of accession negotiations and the future scenario of EU membership. The Government under Chancellor Gerhard Schröder hoped that the strategy of accession negotiations would bind a geostrategic partner in the long term, whilst at the same time reforming and modernising it accordingly within the political dimension. However, with the German parliamentary elections in 2005 and Merkel's assumption of office as Chancellor, the mood turned.

80 The Bundestag never debated more on Turkey than during the years 2017 and 2018. In around 80 percent of all the parliamentary debates Turkey was an issue – compared to around 30 percent in 2003.

81 Deutscher Bundestag. Dr. Andreas Nick. Plenary Protocol 19/52. Berlin, 27.09.2018, p. 5419.

82 Cf. Deutscher Bundestag. Dr. Nils Schmid. Plenary Protocol 19/52. Berlin, 27.09.2018, p. 5427.

Without supporting the scenario of Turkey's EU accession herself, she assumed responsibility for a long-term negotiation process according to the motto 'pacta sunt servanda'.

Since Turkey became an official EU candidate in 1999 and the EU announced that it would decide on the opening of accession negotiations in 2004, the Bundestag had debated extensively the future of EU-Turkey relations. All actions, statements and interests were evaluated against the background of possible EU accession and Turkey was measured against the benchmark of a future EU member. The scenario of Turkey as only a neighbouring country without a much institutionalised form of cooperation was never a debated issue in the Bundestag. Over the years, though, the German perception of Turkey and EU/German-Turkish relations changed significantly und thus also respective dominant narratives, strategies and future scenarios.

A loss of momentum on the German side coincided with diplomatic conflict between Europe and Turkey over the Ankara Protocol at the end of 2005, with further division between the parties in regard to Turkey's EU accession. CDU/CSU delegates seized the conflict as an opportunity to repeat their doubts on Turkey's ability to reform based in the identity narrative. As a precaution, they called for the development of a new strategy in case accession negotiations failed. The SPD and the Greens remained positive about continuing the strategy of accession negotiations aimed at realising EU membership. Relying on the narrative of Turkey as a geostrategic asset, they tended to reinforce the reform process whenever the relationship faced political difficulties – true to the motto: 'Now more than ever'. However, due to the Bundestag's new composition, the voices in support of Turkey's future as EU member became more silent and hence the topic was relegated into the background of parliamentary debates. Thus, even though most Bundestag representatives did not outspokenly oppose either the strategy of accession negotiations or the scenario of EU membership, the topic had temporarily lost its urgency whilst the Bundestag seemed to await developments in Turkey.

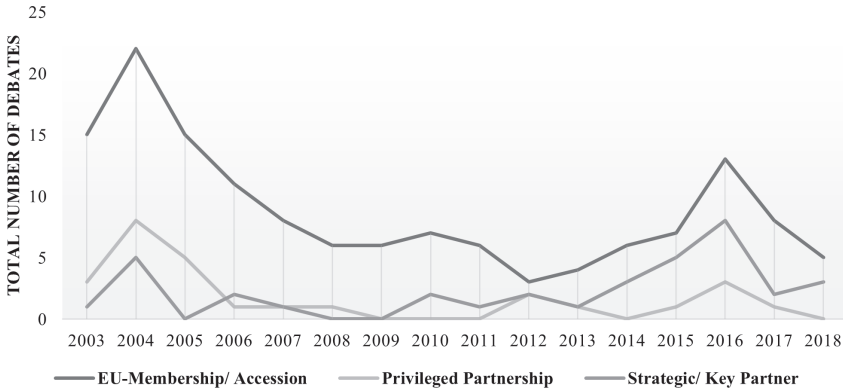
In 2012, the EU and Turkey tried to revitalise the accession dynamic by launching the Positive Agenda, but with no impact. Instead, it was replaced by an increasingly critical stance within the political dimension, triggered by the Gezi protests in Turkey in 2013. The Bundestag distinguished explicitly between the Turkish Government, which it openly criticised as being undemocratic, and civil society, who on the contrary had expressed a strong will for democracy and needed to be supported. The year 2013 can thus be considered a turning point regarding the Bundestag's confidence in the Turkish Government's democratic will. It can

be summarised under a narrative of increasing political unpredictability, that all parties referred to. In addition to the already weakened scenario of EU accession, the dominance of this narrative had the effect of also turning the strategy of accession negotiations into a point of contention. CDU/CSU members outspokenly demanded the cancellation of negotiations, referring to it as a reward for the Turkish Government's approach in its betrayal of the Turkish society. The SPD and Greens in contrast again insisted on the geostrategic relevance of Turkey which was possibly increasing in light of the Arab Spring, the Syrian civil war and the ISIS. In their view this implied a necessity to continue negotiations in order to bring back an important partner to a democratic negotiating basis with the help of available funds.

The Joint Action Plan and EU-Turkey Statement on Migration in exchange for a revitalisation of accession negotiations in 2015 and 2016 had a decisive influence on the dominant narratives and their direction of thrust. While Government and Bundestag agreed on the fact that Turkey had a key role within the geopolitical dimension and migration issue, the parties were divided on whether or not the strategy of accession negotiations was still the most appropriate means of winning Turkey over to forms of transactional cooperation. CDU/CSU delegates added to their repertoire the narrative of Turkey as a geostrategic asset, referring more than any other party to a *strategic partner*. But unlike the SPD, they used the narrative to promote the cancellation of accession negotiations. They were in favour of closer cooperation in migration terms, but out of geopolitical concerns did not want to compromise in the area of EU accession. The SPD, by contrast, stuck to their same narrative to promote the continuation of accession negotiations, as they had previously in the early 2000 years, so as to link Turkey institutionally to the EU.

The twin-track strategy, introduced by Chancellor Merkel, was increasingly discussed though not explicitly named in this context. At this point, the future scenario of EU-Turkey relations stood in the shadow of strategic debates on how to keep a geopolitically important partner. For most parliamentarians, membership no longer seemed feasible and was increasingly side-lined by the demand for alternative formats of cooperation, subsumed under the term *Unique Partnership* for the purposes of this chapter. In Figure 8 below, this development is shown in a quantitative manner: The topic, namely the thematic code 'EU accession', has been compared to the explicit attributions *Strategic* or *Key Partner* and *Privileged Partner* used for Turkey within debates.

Figure 8: Contrasting Thematic Issues and Explicit Attributions: EU-Accession vs. Strategic Partnership 2003–2018



Source: own compilation.

Compared to 2004, one can observe an approximation of the terms by their use in the Bundestag for the years from 2013 with an increasing tendency for using the attribution s*trategic partner* during 2018 and a decreasing tendency for the use of 'EU accession'. While the Bundestag was still divided on the strategic issue, the different parties' narratives converged not only within the geopolitical dimension but also in political and identity terms during the course of 2016, which marks the year of bilateral crisis. At the end of that year, all parties noted that Turkey was moving away from the EU and its values and was now at a crossroads, facing a move towards or away from democracy. This observation not only hints at the dominance of political unpredictability again, but also the return of an identity-based narrative. This time, the Bundestag did not use this narrative to give a character description of Turkey, as the CDU/CSU had done around 2004, but rather to describe a process of alienation and distancing from Europe and the EU. Consequently, parliamentarians agreed not only on Turkey's geostrategic asset but also on the narrative of a fundamental change in Turkey and in EU-Turkey relations that somehow had to be translated into an institutional reality.

Numerous incidents in 2017 and 2018 indicated that Turkey did not change its course away from the EU. The Bundestag agreed in various debates on autocratic developments within the Turkish political system and profound differences between Germany and Turkey, as well as between the EU and Turkey. Thus, the narrative concerning Turkey's political unpredictability as well as its alienation from the EU continued to be dominant and temporarily became even more dominant than the narrative referring to

Turkey as a geostrategic asset in Bundestag debates. This is supported by the Bundestag's three unanimous votes on Turkey regarding the Armenia resolution, the demand to end accession negotiations if Turkey should reintroduce the death penalty and the condemnation of the 'Operation Olive Branch' in Afrin. With regard to the future of EU-Turkey relations, the Government and Bundestag began to weigh Turkey's role in the political and identity dimension on the one hand against the geopolitical and economic dimension on the other. For a majority of members of the Bundestag, including those representing governing parties, the main challenge at that point was to keep institutionalised relations alive in order not to isolate an important partner, but at the same time to reassess relations in a changed environment. This frequently expressed concern points again, increasingly clearly towards the twin-track strategy and an as yet not defined form of Unique Partnership as a future scenario for EU-Turkey relations.

In summary, it can be observed that regarding Turkey and its relationship with the EU the Bundestag used three main narratives relating to the political, geopolitical and identity dimensions. The economic dimension, although referred to regularly, was not operationalised in the same way as the other dimensions in developing an argument so as to pursue a specific strategy and scenario. During the years around and after the start of accession negotiations, the identity-based narrative and the narrative of Turkey's geostrategic asset were most dominant in the debate between CDU/CSU on the one side and SPD and the Greens on the other. During 2012 and 2013 two specific narratives began to dominate: The idea of Turkey as a geostrategic asset gathered momentum due to a changing security environment coupled with increasing political unpredictability in view of Turkey. The Gezi Park protests and how the Turkish Government and state actors handled it mark the respective turning point. Moreover, these narratives were now used by most Bundestag representatives, regardless of party affiliation and the strategy of EU accession negotiations had a different aim. This means that after 2013 this strategy did not aim at facilitating Turkey's accession to the EU but rather realigning a geostrategically important partner to the EU. With the migration crisis in 2015, the narrative of Turkey as a geostrategic asset once again gained importance but was soon accompanied by the narrative of political unpredictability and the perception of Turkey alienating itself from Europe. This had the consequence that the governing parties in particular agreed on the twin-track strategy, which was intended to continue accession negotiations in order not to isolate Turkey, while at the same time reconsidering the future of institutionalised EU-Turkey relations.