Discursive constructions of the EU in Turkey's EU accession negotiations

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The article will argue that neither the conditionality approach nor the clash-of-civilization thesis can explain the puzzles of Turkey's EU accession negotiations, in particular the changing positions of the German and Turkish government. It will suggest the model of 'loosely coupled two-level games', in which government parties on both sides mainly act with a view to the domestic political arena. Second, the shift in supporting arguments also reveals that the adoption and shifts in different (ethical-political, pragmatic and normative) conceptions of European integration follows the rational-choice perspective of parties in government. The most important heads of governments have also been the leaders of parties with a confessional background (albeit at different stages of secularization): the Turkish AKP and the German CDU. The oscillating positions and discourses of both parties can better be explained by changes in the respective domestic strategies than by the interaction at the international level.

Turkey-EU relations have become a salient case study for intercultural co-operation at the level of nation states. In fact, the Turkish bid for EU membership put the EU's intercultural relations at a test. Would Turkey accept the universal norms claimed by a (in particular from a Turkish point of view) Christian-dominated European Union in order to accede? And would a Christian-dominated but secularized European Union accept a Muslim-dominated Turkey if it complies with the universal norms (and economic preconditions) of EU Copenhagen criteria?

This empirical question touches upon a theoretical debate on conceptions of the European Union, its polity or self-understanding. It has become widely accepted to distinguish three conceptions: a pragmatic, problem-solving conception, an ethical-political conception relating to a value-based community and a moral conception based on universalist normative principles (Schmidt 2008; Minkenburg et al 2012). Moreover, it has repeatedly been argued that these conceptions are particularly relevant in laying the ground for previous (Sjursen 2008), and future EU enlargement (Ruiz and Torrebianca 2007) and in explaining the differences between British advocacy and German and French resistance towards Turkish membership (MacMillan 2013). This article will argue that we can only explain certain puzzles in the trajectory of Turkey-EU negotiations if we consider the domestic rationales in international negotiations and understand discursive constructions of the EU itself as subject to the strategic calculus of political parties in domestic politics.

The recent turn of Turkey-EU negotiations has created a puzzle many observers have registered with a bitter note: In 2005, when according to the unanimous judgments of all observers the Turkish AKP government had carried out seminal reforms to prepare for EU accession (Toprak 2005, Hale and Özbudun 2010; Turan 2015) two of the most influential heads of governments in the European Union, French President Sarkozy and German chancellor Merkel, declared that they would reject Turkey's membership *in principle* (Patton 2007). In contrast, in 2013, pushed by a German government still led by chancellor Merkel, the European Union decided a 're-energizing of Turkey's accession process'[1] (thus, even before the refugee crisis led to a more comprehensive agreement) and a new chapter was opened in November 2013 at a point of time when - again according to all observers – Turkey has been transformed into an authoritarian state (Özbudun 2014; Cinar and Sayin 2014; Önis 2014).

A comparison of the stance of the German and the Turkish government in Turkey's EU accession negotiations is particularly instructive for the clash of civilizations-thesis because in Turkey as well as in Germany, commonly taken as the most influential EU member state, former confessional parties have dominated the government. Some scholars have interpreted the religious reference as a point of similarity and pointed at a number of common policy positions (Hale 2005) and even regarded the AKP as a model of 'Muslim democracy' in analogy to Christian democracy (Nasr 2005). Other scholars have highlighted religion as the dividing line. For instance, Minkenberg et al (2012) conclude that 'many elites and public alike see religion as the major factor that decides about this sense of kinship' as the base for a shared identity in the European Union. There seems to be the 'interesting

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[1] http://www.dw.com/en/eu-and-turkey-open-fresh-chapter-in-accession-talks/a-18917506

paradox that in an increasingly secularized Europe' 'the boundaries of the continent are more and more defined in terms of religion' (Minkenberg et al. 2012: 135).

Moreover, a comparison of the positions of the Turkish AKP and the German CDU in 2005, at the height of Turkey's reforms, reveals a second puzzle which challenges a straightforward 'secularisation' approach. It was the AKP which was rather in the beginning of the process of secularization which was declaring EU accession its first priority and which was framing the attraction of the EU in universalist normative terms. In contrast, the German CDU, largely assumed to be thoroughly secularized, highlighted the difference between a Christian European Union and Turkey and went as far as to question universalistic norms as the decisive criteria (for EU accession), as laid down in the Copenhagen criteria, with reference to a cultural community (see below).

The conditionality-approach, the clash-of-civilisation thesis and constructivist approaches

Both the clash of civilization-thesis and the conditionality approach are at pains to explain these puzzles. The conditionality approach assumes that potential member states adopt the EU's 'standard of legitimacy' (Schimmelfennig 2001) in order to be able to accede to the EU. If anything, Turkey-EU negotiations provoked the opposite outcome. The negotiations produced a wide-spread conviction in the Turkish public that 'European powers do not consider Turkey to be worthy of membership because it does not belong to the Judeo-Christian civilization' (Ayoob 2014: 9).

Thus, the conditionality approach could at best account for the failure of conditionality in the Turkish case given the lack of a credible accession perspective. The Copenhagen criteria set the stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for an protection of minorities, the existence of a market economy and the ability to take on the obligations of membership as accession criteria. Moreover, it would have to concede that core member states have not lived up to the 'standard of legitimacy' (which declared EU accession as based on universalist moral norms and pragmatic integration and not on cultural or religious belonging) in the question of Turkish accession to the EU. However, even the rejection of the Turkish bid led to a drastic change in the mood of the Turkish public but the governing AKP continued for some time to enact reforms to comply with EU norms although the accession has been seriously put into question.

The clash of civilization-thesis could take the ultimate standstill in Turkey-EU negotiations as evidence for its prediction that in international negotiations ultimately the logic of civilizations would prevail. In fact, large parts of the Turkish public would agree that the rejection of Turkey's bid for EU membership proves Huntington's prediction right that 'a world of clashing civilisations is inevitably a world of double standard: People apply one standard to their kin countries and a different standard to others' (quoted in Ayoob 2012: 4).

However, the clash of civilization-thesis cannot account for the fact that the struggle about the respective positions towards intercultural cooperation has become a highly contested and divisive policy issue *within* EU member states and *within* Turkey. A number of contributions in the debate over the clash of civilizations-thesis have therefore called for examining the clash *within* civilizations, mostly referring to the clash between moderate and radical Muslims (Bellarami 2003). Even this assumption has been proved under-complex by

the Turkish case. Although Huntington's classification concedes that Turkey is in torn between the civilizations, counter-intuitively, political Islam (representative for what the clash of civilization-thesis would take as the Muslim part of Turkey) was for some time visibly enthusiastic about EU accession and engaged in many reforms to prepare for EU accession which were opposed by the Kemalist state elite and the major Kemalist social democratic opposition party (Gülmez 2008).

A constructivist approach offers a more differentiated picture as it distinguishes between different conceptions of the polity of the EU on the base of which Turkey's (as other) accessions is judged. These are neither determined by an alleged belonging to a particular civilization nor do necessarily have to confirm to the accession rules agreed at the European level. The pragmatic conception of the EU as problem-solving entity evaluates accession on the ground of a utility-based calculus. The ethical-political conception of the EU as a geographically delimited entity with a feeling of cultural cohesion asks about the coherence of cultural values and the 'goodnis of fit' (Börzel and Risse) with the existing transnational community. A moral conception of the EU as rights-based post-national union would allow for cultural pluralism judges accession on the ground of normative principles and considers the acceptance or diffusion of unversalist norms as criteria.

Moreover, the same distinction of evaluation criteria for EU accession is applicable to the perspective of candidate states. It is commonly assumed that candidate states decide on basis of economic prospects and this assumption is even the base of the conditionality literature (Schimmelfennig 2001). However, at least in the case of Turkey, the differences between a Christian-dominated EU and Muslim-oriented Turkey have to be taken into consideration. And in fact, ethical and normative arguments played a role in the Turkish debate.

However, this constructivist-discursive approach as such cannot account for changes in the perspective; it rather seems to refer to deeply entrenched attitudes towards the EU at the mass level (Ruiz and Toreblanca 2007). In the case of Turkey-EU negotiation, government parties of both EU member and candidate states changed their attitude towards intercultural cooperation in EU accession and the arguments put forward to justify the position reveal a significant shift in the conception or 'discursive construction' of the EU within a few years. Thus, this article aims to contribute to the debate by highlighting that conceptions of the EU themselves may be the result of a discursive construction - resulting from the arguments given to support or refuse Turkish accession to the European Union – and subject to the strategic calculus by government parties which address their domestic constituency.

Linking discursive constructions of the EU to a rational-choice perspective on two-level games

For the purpose of analysing changes in the attitudes of the governments in Turkey-EU negotiations, international negotiations will be conceptualized as two-level games. The notion of two-level games as developed by Putnam and Moravscik is based on the assumption that office-holders act in international negotiations with a view towards the international arena *and* the national arena of political competition (Putnam 1993; Moravscik 1993). The relation between the references to the domestic and international arena can take two forms: Office-holders can use the (reference to the) domestic arena in order to obtain

advantages in the international arena, in particular by pointing at domestic constraints in an international bargaining process. However, actors might also use the international arena as a means to impact on the domestic arena. 'International strategies can be employed to change the character of domestic constraints' (Moravscik 1993). In a similar way, the Europeanisation debate turned towards the analysis of the 'usage' (see Jacquot and Woll 2012) of European politics by national actors in the domestic context, to provide cognitive frames, legitimacy or external constraints (Dyson and Featherstone 1999).

Three framework conditions suggest that the domestic arena has even been the more important reference in the two-level game of Turkey's EU accession negotiations and the 'usage' of two-level politics for domestic purposes has been dominant. First, although official negotiations are delegated to the Commission, national governments in the EU make the final decision on accession and with the insertion of the criteria of the absorption capacity of the EU for the case of Turkey (and strongly resented by Turkey) another criteria is less dependent on the Commission's reports. Moreover, each member state can veto the opening of new chapters. Finally, even without any veto heads of important member states can influence the negotiations with the declaration of the 'personal' and 'current' positions. These declarations strongly impact on the expectations of the Turkish side without that any official position of the formal negotiator, the Commission, is voiced and heads of governments can be hold responsible by the Commission.

Moreover, negotiations stretch out over a period of time and decisions will be taken in an indeterminate future and are strongly politicized in the domestic realm. In fact, negotiations were strongly restricted by different vetos by France, Cyprus and the Commission itself (mainly due to the differences in the question of the divided Cyprus). Out of 35 chapters only 15 chapters were opened in 2005 and only one was preliminarily closed.

Therefore, the article will suggest a model of 'loosely-coupled two-level negotiations' where on both sides heads of government act predominantly as party leaders (which they are in the parliamentary systems of Turkey and Germany) with the domestic arena in mind. The qualification 'loosely coupled' implies that this is not to say that the (re-)action by the actor on the other side of the negotiation table is without any impact, however, it will be evaluated only in so far it impacts on the domestic calculus of the respective party. Parties' first concern is the prospect to be rewarded or punished at the next elections or (as will be shown) by the party base. Thus, this study will use party theory as the 'missing link' to explain why and how actors within intergovernmental negotiations (Putnam 1993; Moravcsik 1993) use different constructions of a regional integration project (see Sjursen 2008; Schmidt McMillan 2013) to support or reject intercultural cooperation. As norms can be conceived as not fully internalized and open for strategic use (see Schimmelfennig 2001) this case study strongly suggests that the same holds true for references to the self-understanding of Europeans.

This case study will limit itself to consider the Turkish AKP and the German CDU. The Turkish AKP has been leading single-party governments from 2002 on. The German government is regarded as the most important actor among EU member states, and CDU leader, Angela Merkel and the German CDU-CSU[2] has been in government from 2005 on

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[2] The CSU is the ‚sister party' of the CDU in Bavaria, united in the parliamentary party in the German Bundestag. In the following, the article will refer to the CDU, as the CSU has an even more sceptical position towards Turkey's EU accession.

(albeit leading different coalitions with the social democrats and the much smaller liberals respectively). The particular appealing aspect of this comparison is that we have to consider two parties which are based on a confessional background and the article will demonstrate that we can use generalizations about these parties. The above mentioned fact that, for some time, the AKP referred to universalist values and the CDU to communitarian values suggests that different position are not related to different stages of party development but to different strategical choices.

Confessional parties in (partly) secular societies and the challenge of intercultural integration

This section will explore the domestic conditions for confessional parties when they are involved in international negotiations over 'intercultural integration', i.e. the option of Turkey's accession to the EU. For this purpose, it will first characterize the main developments and challenges for parties which had started out as confessional parties.

Confessional parties started out with a sense of a cultural community strongly defined by a religious denomination. It is indicative that the core conflict between organized religion and the nascent nation state, given by Lipset and Rokkan (1965) as the cause of the state-church cleavage, was over education. Although confessional parties were founded independent from the Catholic church (Minkenberg 2012), they developed as mass integration parties to defend the Catholic belief and the Catholic Church. Altinordu has even argued that the 'causal chain' leading to the development of successful confessional parties in Germany and Turkey (the Centre Party in Germany and the predecessor parties of the AKP in Turkey) started with religious mobilization to reinforce religious belief and principles in an increasingly secularizing society (Altinordu 2010). Confessional parties developed ancillary organisations which ensured the close relation to the social milieu of their core electorate. Thus, even after the reconciliation with the German nation state, the 'clientele of the Centre Party was constituted of a heterogenous group held together by the shared Catholic faith' (Hornig 2013: 88)

However, in the further development of democracy, mass integration parties transformed into catch-all parties (Kirchheimer 1965). That is to say that parties increasingly attempted to appeal to many (if not all) social groups in society, linked to the most influential interest organisations and replaced ideological with pragmatic aims. As socialist or social democratic parties which had to realise that workers did not constitute a majority in any country of western Europe (Przeworksi 1986), confessional parties fell short to obtain a majority of votes under the condition of universal suffrage as: "the denominational nature gave such parties a fortress-type character seriously restricting their growth potential" (Kirchheimer 1966: 183)

Subsequently, catholic parties transformed into Christian democrats and aimed at appealing to a secular electorate by using economic rationales. In election campaigns, Christian values and religious references were soon effectively sidelined to the point of being absent. Spicka (2007) highlighted that the emphasis of the relation of the 'social market economy" 'to the creation of an organic Christian community' widely present in 1949 was discarded in the CDU's election campaigns in 1953 and 1957 and 'the party focused more upon newly gained opportunities for individualistic consumption, a sentiment personified by Economic Minister Ludwig Erhard and likely to attract undecided voters' (Spicka 2007: 211).

In contrast to economic liberal policies, CDU/CSU pursued pronounced traditionalist and re-religious-conservative policies in family and gender policies and made in the immediate postwar time confessional schools a major policy aim (Bösch 2001).

Although the merging of Catholic and Protestant political camps in the establishment of the CDU/CSU promoted a down-toning of religious issues, the religious core electorate persisted. Moreover, the transformation into catch-all parties has been a gradual and long-lasting process and trade union membership and religious orientation (Catholic affiliation and degree of religiosity) remained the best predictors for voting behaviour towards social and Christian democrats (Emmert et al 2001). Even in the elections 1998, 2002 and 2005 on average nearly 50 per cent of Catholics (49, 52 and 47 per cent respectively (Minkenberg 2010: 394) voted for the CDU/CSU. Thus, there is a continuing tension and trade-off between enlarging the electorate and keeping a close link to the core electorate and the party membership which is necessary for grassroot-mobilisation in election campaigns. Otherwise, catch-all parties risk "empty nets" (Allan 2008).

Thus, whereas the core religious cleavage was receding, there were even two counter-tendencies. First, the Catholic-protestant divide has shifted towards a religious-secular divide and more than 60 per cent of weekly church-goers (58, 65 and 60 per cent respectively) voted for CDU/CSU (Minkenberg 2010: 394, 397). Moreover, in Germany the increasing traditionalist-communtarianist backlash against the universalist cultural divide was in contrast to other EU states rather connected to an identification with the European Union (Bornschier 2010).

The establishment of the AKP constituted a transformation similar of the Catholic parties to Christian democratic parties. The parties of the National Order had mobilized on the base of religious values, and even the Welfare Party had during its short term in government (1996-97) called for the establishment of a Muslim Union. However, after the ousting of the Welfare Party, the AKP seemed to repeat the transformation into a Muslim democratic party with breath-taking velocity. In a similar vein to Catholic parties, the AKP relegated its religious appeal to the side-lines by describing itself as 'conservative' and subscribing to secularism. In fact, largely because of its commitment to EU accession, it was much more successful to establish a cross-class coalition than its social democratic-Kemalist counterpart, the CHP (Republican People's Party) (Önis 2006; 2012).

The core argument of this article is that the prospect of intercultural cooperation at the state level (be it EU enlargement or accession) confronts confessional parties with the trade-off between appealing to its core electorate and appealing to other parts of the electorate and influential interest organisations. These considerations lead to three hypotheses which relate both the position towards intercultural integration and the accompanying discourses to the parties' strategy.

H1: Changes in the parties' position are not the result of the interaction at the international level but of changes in domestic conditions.

H2: Confessional parties' position on intercultural cooperation depends on the parties' strategy. If a religious party aims to appeal to is core electorate it will reject intercultural co-operation If a religious party aims to strengthen its appeal beyond its core electorate it will opt for intercultural understanding.

H3: The form of argumentation depends on the above sketched strategy; a religious party will use an ethical-political and pragmatic discourse and conception of the EU to justify the rejection of intercultural cooperation; it will use universalist norms and conceptions of the EU and supporting pragmatic arguments to advocate intercultural cooperation.

This study will rather provide a plausibility probe for these hypotheses. However, its plausibility can be enhanced through intra-case and intertemporal comparisons. The next sections will analyse Turkey-EU negotiations and the changes in the parties' positions with regard to the above hypotheses**.**

The opening of Turkey-EU accession negotiations (t 0)

The year 1999 marked the beginning of an intense interaction between Turkey and the EU. Neither German Christian democrats nor the Turkish AKP had been involved in the decision of the European Union in 1999 to accept Turkey under certain conditions in 2005 (Schimmelfennig 2008). In fact, the decision to offer Turkey the concrete prospect of EU membership in 1999 marked a surprising U-turn in comparison to the rejection of the Turkish bid two years earlier. This u-turn has not been the result of the interaction between Turkey and the EU but of domestic changes in Greece and Germany which had previously put up the most ardent opposition (Schimmelfennig 2008: 8). In both countries, the newly elected social democratic government in Germany and a socialist in Greece supported Turkey's bid although, as Schimmelfennig pointed out, the political situation in Turkey had not substantially improved, the Commission's report stated that the 'situation concerning civil and political rights in Turkey has not evolved significantly' (Schimmelfennig 2008: 14).

However, once the decision was taken to accept Turkey as accession candidate, it had a huge impact on Turkey because it coincided with a severe economic crisis in 1999 to 2001. After the bailing-out of Turkish banks with the help of new IMF programmes, public debt soared to around 100 per cent of GDP, the currency devalued by almost 50 per cent in two months and the Turkish economy came near to collapse (Hale and Özbudun 2010:101). The grand coalition in Turkey SHP-ANAP and MHP reacted to the announcement of the opening of accession negotiations with significant reform packages – thus, confirming the conditionality hypothesis. However, these reforms did not save them from the electoral punishment of the 2002 elections in which all of them failed to pass the 10 per cent threshold for representation in parliament.

The subsequent political conflict in Turkey over EU accession negotiations demonstrates that the conception of states as unitary actors is under-complex. EU accession became a core element in the fierce competition between the AKP, heir of the Islamist Welfare Party, ousted by the Constitutional Court in 1997, and the Kemalist-social democratic CHP. Moreover, counter-intuitively it was the AKP which made EU accession its first priority whereas the Kemalist social democratic CHP (which replaced the DSP) took the opposite change of position towards a sceptical position.

The AKP's embracement of EU membership (t+1)

EU accession was embraced as the guiding device and first priority for the AKP government, as Gül and Erdogan emphasized when they toured European capitals immediately after the

AKP came to power in 2002 (Kirisci 2006: 44). The AKP pursued in its first years in government a viable reform agenda. The identification with EU norms was given expression by Prime Minister Erdogan's often quoted statement that the Copenhagen criteria would in fact 'be Ankara criteria' (Patton 2007: 339). The process of EU accession negotiations would 'bring universal standards and practices to all areas of daily life', as the then Minister of State, Ali Babacan, highlighted (Duran 2008: 87). Universal norms were given as prior to religious denomination when 'Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in a lecture on the Turkish model stated that "Turkey is the best example of how a nation that has embraced the faith of Islam can support democracy based on secularism and implement advanced democratic norms"' (Kilinc 2009: 67).

Cinar and Sayin, highly critical of the later authoritarian turn of the AKP, conclude: 'Erdogan went as far as defending the rights of homosexuals in the run up to 2002 election. Such an embracement of liberal-democratic discourse was unprecedented in Islamist politics in Turkey and elsewhere' (Cinar and Sayin 2014; 374). Iter Turan's judgement is widely shared: 'The first two terms of the AKP were characterized by expansion of democracy' (Turan 2015: 215).

However, the position of the AKP did not reflect the attitudes of its core electorate. Moreover, the stance towards EU accession has been one of the major innovations of the newly-found AKP in contrast to the position of the predecessor party, the Welfare Party. During the short term of the Welfare Party in government in 1996/7, the Welfare Party played to the tribunes of its core voters by announcing to work for a Muslim Union in contrast to the European Union (Toprak 2005). The core electorate of the AKP was the part of the population which was most divided with regard to EU accession, the approval rate was about 50 % in comparison to a general 75% approval rate (Carkoglu 2003).

There is a broad consensus among political scientist that the embracement of EU accession by the Islamist movement in general and the AKP in particular was part of a strategic re-orientation. The indictment of the Welfare Party in 1997 and its repercussions, the pressure on Islamic organizations in the following 'February, 28th process', were the crucial moment in which the movement had to realize that attacking the state elite was a dead end (Özbdun 2006). To put it in the words of long-time leader of the Islamic movement Necmettin Erbakan: 'We became pro-European because we do not want Turkey to back to the repressive regime' (quoted in Zaman 9 October 1997). The AKP drew on the EU to 'domesticate and force not only the state but also the anti-systemic actors to change their perceptions and strategies and to take on EU norms as the point of reference to create a new social contract in Turkey' (Yavuz, 2006, p. 3 quoted in MacMillan 2015).

Three reasons can be given for it (see Baudner 2012). First, it helped to gain legitimacy in the conflict with the Kemalist state elite which remained a threat to the existence of the AKP. Second, it was focal point for an electoral coalition beyond the classic electorate of the AKP comprising different parts of the population who for quite diverse reasons supported EU accession ranging from the economic elite to the Kurdish minority. Moreover, the approval rate was particularly high among supporters of the oppositional CHP and the part of the population with high education, typically alien to the AKP (Carkoglu 2003). Thus, in electoral terms it was a very promising strategy to reach out to other parts of the electorate. Third, it was a means to connect to the strongly Kemalist economic elite symbolized by the organization TÜSIAD which, however, had engaged in a vehement campaign for Turkey's EU membership.

Thus, the advocacy of EU accession was to some extent based on pragmatic economic concerns, reinforced by the seminal crisis of the Turkish economy 1999-2001. However, the most important and continuously emphasized point was that the AKP wanted Turkey to be a part of the EU depicted as a political union with the most advanced normative standards which could encompass different cultures. Thus, a normative conception of the EU was highlighted and an ethical-communitarianist rejected.

The CDU's response to Turkey's bid for EU membership (t+2)

Despite the significant progress of Turkey, i.e. the reforms of the AKP government, opposition against the negotiations mounted in the EU. The major reasons were the EU accession of the Greek part of Cyprus, the change of position within the conservative UPM of Jacques Chirac and the new grand coalition headed by Angela Merkel in Germany.

Moreover, there was a general resistance by the group of the European People's Party in the European Parliament which in 1997 framed the EU as a Christian community and categorically excluded the membership of a Muslim country (Schimmelfennig 2008: 7). Six Christian democratic heads of governments, led by Helmut Kohl, reiterated that Turkey does not have a place within the Christian-occidental civilization (Reuter 2000:51). After the decision for negotiations with Turkey in 1999, members of the CDU/CSU, at that point of time in the opposition in Germany, explicitly challenged the Copenhagen criteria. Michael Glos, who later became Minister of Finance, declared in an article in 2001 that

> 'we must expect them not only to meet the criteria laid down in Copenhagen, but also to integrate easily into the European cultural context. . . . precisely this capability is in doubt in the case of Turkey' (Yilmaz 2007:296).

Another member of the German parliament with a high-profile in foreign policies, Friedbert Pflüger declared in a speech in the German parliament in December 2014:

> 'A political union needs something like a we-feeling. This we-feeling is something more than a commitment to democracy and human rights. It has to do with a centuries-old shared history: Greek antiquity, Roman law, the conflict between the Pope and the German Kaiser in the Middle Ages, the Reformation, the Enlightenment, all these that give Europe its specific character' (Yilmaz 2007: 297).

After the elections of 2005, Angela Merkel became head of the German government and made her view public that she preferred a 'special relationship' to Turkey's accession. In contrast, her coalition partner, the SPD, asked to give Turkey 'a fair chance'. However, when the opening of negotiations with Turkey was decided in the EU Council on 3 October 2005, Merkel 'played according to the rules in spite of her domestic campaign against full membership for Turkey' (Schimmelfennig 2008:22). As the debate within the EU had to refer to the Copenhagen criteria decided on in 1993, the ethical arguments could not be used at the international level of EU negotiations.

The Christian democratic election manifesto stated that the CDU rejects the full membership because it does not comply with the preconditions for EU accession. Because of the size of the country and its economic structure, the EU would not be capable to absorb Turkey. However, the reference to the 'adoption capacity of the EU' opens up for a rejection of the Turkish bid even if it complies with all Copenhagen criteria. Moreover, numerous

statements by leading politicians defined the 'absorption capacity' of the EU rather in cultural, ethical-political than in economic terms. Baden-Wurttemberg's Minister President Günther Oettinger (CDU) voiced that Turkey's accession 'would be asking too much of the Occident („Abendland"), our cultural community' (Spiegel 08.10.2006). The reference to universalistic norms of human rights and religious freedom was rather reduced to a community- based outlook in the attention paid and concern over the extremely tiny Christian minority in Turkey (and in particular the fate of the Syrian-orthodox monastry Mor Gabriel), whereas for instance the problems of Alevis or Kurds were hardly mentioned.

It is indicative that Turkey's bid for EU membership became a core topic in the debate about the Basic Programme ('Grundsatzprogramm') of the CDU adopted on 3 December 2007. The Basic Program is meant to last about 20 years and serves as a self-description and has rather the function of contributing to the party identity than to be translated into proactive policies. Several regional sections of the CDU were pushing the CDU leadership towards a clear 'no' to Turkish EU accession in the new 'Grundsatzprogramm der CDU' and numerous local sections were urging Merkel to a clear commitment to the 'history and culture' of Europe. The 'grassroots mobilization' was described as 'reaching endemic proportions' (Sueddeutsche 17 May 2010). As a result, the draft was changed towards 'We consider a privileged partnership between the EU and Turkey the right solution' (Spiegel 29.11.2007). Moreover, ten local and regional party organisations filed resolutions to make the CDU leadership do 'everything possible to prevent an associate membership' (a stage to prepare for full membership) of the AKP to the EPP at the European level (FAZ 2.12. 2007)3.

How can we explain the role of Turkey's EU accession for the debate within the CDU – which was by no means near to decision-making because of the many chapters blocked by France, Cyprus and the European Union respectively? Why did it nevertheless play a major role and was even a major bone of contention in the preparation of the Basic Program of the CDU?

To understand the significance of the Turkey-question we have to consider the party development of the CDU. After Helmut Kohl lost the elections in 1998, Angela Merkel became head of the party in 2000. In 2005, Merkel became chancellor of a grand coalition, however, in the aftermath of a very disappointing performance in the elections and the CDU's 'worst showing since 1945' with a significant 'decline in CDU support among young, female, urban new middle class and eastern swing voters' (Clemens 2009: 130). From then on, Merkel took over a very moderate position and engaged in the modernization of the party, in particular by embracing the abolition of the conscription and the fast phasing out of nuclear power, once corner stones of the party programme if not identity of the CDU. Family minister von der Leyen even 'dismissed the answers and lifestyles of yesterday and agreed to triple publicly funded day-care slots' whilst 'conservative charged her with promoting a notion of the family and motherhood alien to many Union supporters' (Clemens 2009: 133) In fact, the often criticized 'social-democratization' of the CDU led to the election victory in 2009.

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[3] http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/europaeische-union/tuerkei-debatte-cdu-basis-will-haertere-gangart-1489125.html

However, as Frank Bösch, leading German political scientist on the CDU, commented in 2010, at the same time 'religion is an area on which is much more emphasized by Angela Merkel in comparison to the past' (Sueddeutsche 7 May 2010). One symbol was a visit to the Pope, with which Merkel, daughter of a Protestant vicar, tried to link to the Catholic base of the party. Moreover, Merkel emphasized the relation to religion and the 'religious conception of human beings' as the base of Christian democratic policy making. When she was representing the presidency of the EU, Angela Merkel said that 'the Judeo-Christian values sustain the EU' and that 'we are marked by this Judeo-Christian past' (Yilmaz 2007: 16). However, as Bösch highlighted, the Christian 'Menschenbild' can only be translated into policies 'in a limited set of topics such as Turkey, family politics and internal security' (Sueddeutsche 7 May 2010).

Tab. 2.: Survey of attitudes of CDU members in Germany

Agreement with the following statements	CDU members Eastern Germany	CDU members Western Germany
Women should quit their jobs to care about children	29	16
The state should guarantee a job to everybody	34	46
The state should guarantee a minimum pension; who wants more has to make individual arrangements	58	60
Gay couples should have the same rights as ordinary couples	15	18
Who wants to live in Germany, has to learn the German language	96	97
It would be good if Turkey would be accepted by the EU as soon as possible	8	8

Source: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung 2007: 36S

The argument that the rejection of the Turkish bid for EU membership remained one of the few issues which appealed to the traditional base of the CDU is further supported by a survey of the Konrad-Adenauer-foundation (see table 2). It reveals the importance of the community-dimension in the strong emphasis on language and the extremely low support for Turkey's EU membership. This topic is much less open to dissent than other issues; CDU members are even more open to gay marriages.

Changes in the AKP's strategy (t+2)

Merkel's and Sarkozy's statements had a huge and virtually immediate impact on the Turkish public. Support for EU membership dropped considerably from more than 75 to about 50 per cent in 2005. However, the rejection of the Turkish bid did not provoke the AKP government to drop its efforts for EU membership altogether although it slowed the tempo of reforms (Patton 2007). EU accession negotiations and its concomitant process of EU progress reports, decisions of the European Court of Human Rights and the European

council, were widely reported in Turkey and provided valuable support for the AKP's position. When the AKP faced the Constitutional Court's verdict in a closure case in 2008, the process was strongly criticized by EU officials and institutions such as the Council of Europe (see Baudner 2012). The AKP government continued to refer to EU norms as justification for the changes in the constitution submitted to a national referendum in 2011.

However, the pragmatic discourse, once supportive of EU accession, changed from 'Turkey needs the EU' to 'The EU needs Turkey'. In a speech in 2009, Minister for EU relations Bagıs argued that

> 'The EU is important for Turkey, but Turkey is much more important for the EU. Today, if we take into account the problems Europe encounters such as the fight against illegal migration, energy crisis, economic crisis, ageing labour force, climate change, the need for new markets, security, terror and the fight against drugs, Europe cannot attain success without Turkey's contribution. As we become aware of our power, they will also become aware of Turkey's power'.

In the same vein, Prime Minister Erdogan took the 'sick man' metaphor further by describing Europe's employment and social security sectors as being 'comatose', its economy as 'stagnant' and its population as 'near geriatric', in contrast to Turkey, which he dubs 'the Robust Man of Europe'.

Many observers have given the year 2011 as the decisive year for the shift in the AKP's positions (Önis 2014; Özbudun 2014; Cinar and Sayin 2014). The AKP's through successes in the national elections and the referendum on changes in the judicial system in 2011 and the Ergenekon investigations against the military's (alleged) involvement in coup preparations enhanced the power positions of the AKP government. Moreover, the Arab spring provided it with the prospect of playing a core role in the transformation processes in Arab societies and governments and fuelled a foreign policy rhetoric mixed with Ottoman and nationalist references. Moreover, authoritarian streaks started to show and, in 2012, Freedom House downscaled Turkey to 4 on civil rights (Özbudun 2014).

EU criticism of Turkey's policies was increasingly received with contempt. One leading AKP member threw the Progress Report 2012 on air in the dustbin (Önis 2014)., the AKP government voiced to have written "Turkey's own progress report when we saw the skewed nature of the text that was prepared by the EU" and Bagis stated that "Turkey was living he freest and most transparent atmosphere in history" Moreover, a new discourse on the 'New Turkey' combined religious with nationalist reference. Erdogan who strengthened his position as the uncontested party leader was increasingly relying on 'values' in public debates and justification of social and cultural policies. He referred to them as '"our national values" "historical values," "our civilization" and "values that our nation represents"' (Dagi 2012; quoted in Özbudun 2014: ??). Increasingly, Turkey was portrayed as a civilization in its own right quite stark distinct from the European with its own national values rooted in Turkish Ottoman History.

> The achievements of western civilisation in technology, culture, democracy, and
> human rights are irrefutable and universal . . . But we also have values beyond these,
> values with deep roots shaped by faith and morality . . . [Turkey] stands to combine
> the achievements of western modernity with 'authentic' Turco-Muslim values.
> (Erdoğan ile Bahc̦eli birlik mesajı verdi, 10 September 2010, cited in Fisher Onar,
> 2011, p. 469; Macmillan 2015: 116)

These values have increasingly been portrayed as different and superior to 'Western' unversalist norms. An example of the first is Minister President Davutoglu's statement that Turkish citizens would use their civil liberties 'within the constraints of a particular moral formation' (Seufert 2014: 3). An example for the latter in which Turkey's record on universalist norms is claimed to be superior to the 'EU community', can be found in Foreign Minister Cavusoglu's speech which has suggested that that tolerance is an inherent part of Turkish cultural heritage whereas Europe naturally tends towards intolerance, particularly in economic crisis (MacMillan 2016).

Moreover, the AKP did not only return to an ethical political conception of both Turkey and the EU It also explicitly engaged in a mission to revitalize these values and bring them into state institutions but also to all citizens, including the reluctant parts of Turkish society. Thus, Özbudun (2014) described it as the twofold aim of the AKP to raise a pious generation and to proceed with 'the ghettoization of the secular way of life'. Accordingly, a 'majority legislates a particular way of life and uses the state apparatus to impose its choice of morality, lifestyle and value system' (Özbudun 2014: 162).

The AKP's discourse has been described as 'a hotchpotch of Turkish nationalism, religious piety and enthusiasm for the pan-Islamism of Abdul Hamid II' (Seufert 2014). It served the AKP to unite its Islamic core electorate with the nationalist part of the electorate; both had in common that they felt unjustly rejected by the European Union. It allowed the AKP to draw on its Islamic roots and significantly change the underlying societal coalition discarding the liberal and strongly EU-oriented part of the population. In this regard, a statement by Aziz Babuscu, the powerful chairman of the İstanbul party organization, became widely quoted. In the bluntest manner, he said the party was parting ways with Turkey's liberals with whom the AKP had cooperated to dissolve the first republic:

> 'Those who were partners with us in one way or another during our ten-year period of government will not be partners with us during the next ten years. The future is a period of construction. The construction period will not be to their liking. .. (Cengiz 2013; Özbudun 2014).

Moreover, the military and state elite had lost its veto power and didn't need to be accommodated any more. Finally, increasing political intervention in economic policies also weakened the economic elite and raised a 'Muslim bourgeoisie'. All this contributed to the vision of the AKP to make the appeal to its core electorate a vision of society.

Changes in the CDU's strategy (t+3)

At the same time at which the AKP government started to reject EU progress reports, infringed the rule of law and to engage in an Islamic-nationalist discourse, there was a slow change of the CDU's position in the opposite direction. Most pointedly was the statement of EU commissioner Günther Öttinger in February 2013 that 'one day European heads of government would be on their knees to ask Turkey to become member of the European Union'.

After the EU Commission had launched in May 2012 the Positive Agenda with Turkey, Turkey froze relations with the European Union for the duration of Republic of Cyprus' rotating presidency from July to December 2012. The German government was active in a new initiative to restart Turkey-EU negotiations officially carried out by the EU Council in the talks between van Rompoy and Erdogan in May 2013, described as 'very satisfactory' by

Turkish Foreign minister Davutoglu (Sueddeutsche 29 May 2013). On 25 June 2013, chapter 21 (regional policy) was partially opened – with a delay caused by the handling of the Gezi protests.

The decision to start talks with the Turkish government in October 2013 and to fully open chapter 21 on 5 November 2013 was taken by EU ambassadors explicitly on German initiative. German Foreign Ministry Guido Westerwelle declared that the German government would support a re-vitalization of Turkey's EU accession negotiations as 'we have to pay attention to that there might be a day coming when Europe will have a greater interest in Turkey than Turkey in the EU' (Sueddeutsche 11. Mai 2013). Although it was the initiative of coalition partner, the FDP, they took up (even in the wording) changes in the position of the CDU were also manifest. They met the criticism of the CSU which wanted to introduce a referendum for the Turkish accession.

How can we explain the change in the position of the CDU – given the authoritarian turn of the AKP government? AKP policies indirectly impacted on the CDU's rational calculus in so far as the Turkish economic miracle had started to show. With economic growth of up to 10 per cent, Turkey became one of the fastest growing economies in the world. **Foreign Direct Investment**, limited to about 1.8 billion in 2002, reached in three consecutive years (2006-2008) an annual 20 billion. The economic development had a significant effect on business organizations in Germany and in particular on the position of the traditionally highly influential German export industry. A report in spring 2009 stated that 'if German entrepreneurs talk about Turkey, they get shiny eyes' (Merkur 14.4. 2009). The German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (*Deutsche Industrie- und Handelskammer*) considered Turkey's EU accession 'positive' as export oriented companies could reduce costs by 20-30 per cent. Anton Börner, President of the Federal Association of Resale and Export Trade (*Bundesverband des Deutschen Groß- und Aussenhandels*, BGA) expected 'a rise in growth and profit induced by EU accession Germany would over-proportionally benefit from' (Merkur 14.4. 2009). Therefore, the BGA regarded the 'Turkey's EU accession as desirable for economic and political reasons' (Schröder and Weßels 2010).

Although opinion about the ultimate accession of Turkey to the EU was still split among German business organizations, even more ambivalent ones advocated 'an emotion-free debate' about Turkey's accession negotiations and highlighted that Turkey would remain a growing market of strategic importance. On the eve of Merkel's visit to Turkey in March 2010, leading representatives of the German industry and trade pushed for a rapprochement between the EU and Germany and Turkey and emphasised the huge importance of Turkey (Handelsblatt 28.3.2010). 'As a market for German exports of 15 billion Euros it is more important than Japan' stated a top representative of the Federal Association of German Industry (*Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie*; BDI). The president of the Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry (*Deutscher Industrie- und Handelskammertag*, DIHK) declared that 'economically, Turkey already belongs to Europe' and another representative stated that 'Turkey should be able to accede as soon as it fulfils the preconditions' (Handelsblatt 28. 3. 2010).

There was a clear tendency within the CDU that economic arguments were going to trump communitarianist arguments, thus, replicating the strategy which constituted the postwar dominance of the CDU in Germany. However, in 2013 the CDU could avoid a too explicit position on the Commission's high-level meetings with the Turkish government and

the opening of a new chapter and leave it to, the FDP Foreign Minister, to openly push for reviving the accession negotiations with Turkey.

The rapprochement was put into danger when in 2014, Erdogan massively threatened the judiciary and oppositional media after the prosecutor's action taken against two ministers' sons in December 2013 and started the 'witch hunt' against the Gülen movement supporters in justice and state institutions. Herbert Reul stated that 'every day of the political development and every new statement by Minister President Erdogan confirms our certainty that a full membership in the EU is out of question'. The CSU demanded an immediate stop of the accession negotiations and in the run up to the elections of the European parliament the concept of a privileged partnership with Turkey has been discarded (Spiegel Online 1.April 2014).

Confessional parties' positions and discursive conceptions of the EU

To make sure, the article does not claim to explain the entire trajectory of Turkey-EU negotiations. However, the shifting positions of the German CDU and the Turkish AKP demonstrate that the character of these negotiations for two of the most important participants as 'loosely-coupled two-level games' in which negotiations have been clearly motivated by domestic concerns and conceptions of the EU were adapted accordingly.

The most important actors in Turkey-EU negotiations, German chancellor Merkel and Turkish Minister President and later President Erdogan, followed the party rationale of confessional parties which face the trade-off between the appeal to its core electorate with a wider appeal to other parts of the electorate and interest organizations. The trajectory of Turkey-EU negotiations confirms the above stated hypotheses pretty well, only the recent developments take the notion of 'loosely coupled two level games' even further as they have even demonstrated an additional tendency – negotiations which pursue entirely different policy objectives than intercultural integration, hence, in which the allegedly wanted outcome (accession) is not even one of the objectives pursued in the negotiations.

H1: Changes in the parties' position are not the result of the interaction at the international level but of changes in domestic conditions.

This hypothesis is confirmed in developments within Islamic parties in Turkey and Christian democrats in Germany. Islamic parties embraced EU accession and EU norms after the ousting of the Welfare Party even before the offer of EU membership negotiations in 1999. The later change in the position of the AKP towards the rejection of EU accession requirements was as well due to domestic conditions. The outspoken rejection by the heads of the German and the French government in 2005 had not changed the domestic conditions decisively. The AKP turned towards rejecting EU accession requirements by open contempt for EU progress reports (but still demanding accession) only years later when other domestic options were available which allowed the AKP to play to the core electorate (in a coalition with the nationalist part of the electorate).

Changes in the positions in Turkey-EU negotiations even contrasted with an opposite movement of the other side of the negotiations. The CDU rejected Turkey's accession when the AKP pursued far-reaching reforms towards EU membership in 2005. However, it shifted towards supporting negotiations when the AKP government turned towards authoritarian policies and open contempt for EU requirements. The rapprochement of the EU (strongly

promoted by the German government) and talks in mid-2013 did not prevent the Turkish government in December 2013 from engaging in most severe restrictions of press freedom and most obvious infringements of the Copenhagen criteria. This in turn did not stop the German government and the EU authorities from promising the opening of further chapters in 2015.

H2: If a (former) religious party aims to appeal to is core electorate it will reject intercultural understanding. If a religious party aims to strengthen its appeal beyond its core electorate it will opt for intercultural understanding.

The predecessor party of the AKP had advocated a Muslim Union and rejected intercultural cooperation. After its ascent to government, the AKP advocated EU accession with a view to the wider electorate and interest groups and in particular with a view to counter the constraints imposed by the military and the Kemalist state elite. The AKP turned back towards its Islamic roots after 2011 under the impression that the veto power of the military and state elite has vanished and mixing it with nationalist rhetoric would secure an electoral majority. The AKP's demand of the opening of new chapters in accession negotiations is only an apparent contradiction as the AKP has no intention to comply with the progress reports of the Commission. What the AKP currently looks for is an external legitimacy for the authoritarian transformation of the state in the name of an alleged set of Islamic values.

In contrast, the CDU's rejection of Turkey's accession was clearly motivated by its link to the core electorate and party membership. After having taken over government in 2005, the CDU had moved towards the medium voter in many questions such as the abolition of conscription and the swift end to nuclear power. Turkey's EU membership remained one of the few policy topics suited to reinforce the ties towards the party organization and the core electorate; moreover, there was strong pressure from the party base to insert the rejection into the Party's Basic Programme (which would have put the CDU into open contradiction to the EU agreements).

When the CDU changed its position towards Turkey's membership it was motivated by the strong support by German business organizations which made the CDU think twice about Turkey's accession and pragmatic discourse turned pro-accession.

H3: The form of the (pragmatic, normative or ethical-communitarianist) conception of the EU depends on the above sketched strategy

There are opposite changes in the conceptions of the EU in the discourses of the AKP and the CDU. For many years, the CDU strongly used pragmatic and communitarianist arguments against Turkey's EU membership. It insisted on a communitarianist or ethical-political conception of the EU and portrayed this historical community as more important than the normative order (as referenced by the Copenhagen criteria). In addition, pragmatic arguments were often hinting at communitarianist positions when the 'absorption capacity' (laid down in the agreement) was rather defined in cultural than in economic terms When the CDU changed its position and promoted the revitalization of Turkey-EU talks in 2013, the EU was portrayed as a pragmatic-instrumental union which might miss out on additional (economic) options Turkey could provide. However, the conception of the EU was not questioned but just discarded.

When the AKP advocated EU accession, it conceived the EU as a political project apt to unite different cultures and highlighted that Turkey's accession would promote an alliance of civilizations. Interestingly, Turkey's accession was not so much given an instrumentalist, pragmatic justification as a normative one, the accession to highest normative standards. However, when the AKP government changed its position towards EU accession, it portrayed Turkey and the EU as divided by ethical *and* normative principles, with the EU as a 'Christian Club' which also clamorous fails to live up to its principles whereas the New Turkey constitutes a community which has both its own universalist values and taken over universalist values but re-interpreted these, but enacts these in a superior way . Thus, it challenged the validity of the normative conception and self-understanding of the EU as well as it contrasted it with a different political-ethical conception of the proclaimed 'New Turkey'. Moreover, the construction of the 'New Turkey' in which normative and conceptions coincide, is stronger restricted to an Islamic outlook downplaying or side-lining a secular way of life.

To sum up, Turkey's EU accession negotiations are an impressive illustration for the model of 'loosely coupled two-level games' in which international negotiations serve as an extension of the 'playing field' for domestic politics. As stated in the beginning, there were several conditions for it such as the open time horizon and the limited accountability and responsibility of governments which had delegated negotiations to the Commission which in turn was entirely dependent on national governments. For these very reasons Turkey-EU negotiations came close to the ideal type of 'loosely coupled two-level games' suggested here as an alternative explanatory model for a specific type of international negotiations.

As to the subject of intercultural integration, the article has given the rationale of (former) confessional parties where party identity is linked to communitarian understanding. Is there a potential for generalization and what might be subject to further research? A similar point could possibly be made for the French UMP which has a pronounced secular identity which in a comparable way conflicts with a religious political movement such as the AKP. In fact, it also has shifted its position towards Turkey's accession and could link the appeal to its core secular voters with reaching out to Catholic voters. The model might be supplemented by an in-detail analysis of coalition-building around the core electorate. Another question for future research wold be whether the predominantly programmatic appeal of social democratic parties translates into normative justifications of (the acceptance or refusal of) intercultural integration.

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