Identity Representations in Narratives on EU-Turkey Relations

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1. Introduction

If the crux of relations[1] between the European Union (EU)[2] and Turkey could be defined in one term, it would be 'seesawing'. As we approach the 60th anniversary of institutional ties being launched with the so-called Ankara Agreement in 1963, both parties are still far from reaching a conclusion on how to (re-)structure their joint path. Given their geographical proximity, close economic relations, common political challenges along with cultural and historical linkages, though, they are tied by the need for some perspective in the not-too-distant future. That said, Turkey's EU membership, the professed end goal that has shaped this relationship for the last six decades, seems to be off the table, perhaps for good. Moreover, the last couple of years appear to have brought about an unprecedented escalation of tension and conflict on both sides, jeopardising whatever once existed in terms of cooperation. The latest controversies over Turkey's interventions in Syria and Libya, the refugee crisis on the land border with Greece together with disputes over maritime borders and gas exploration activities in the eastern Mediterranean are apt examples of this ongoing deterioration within an already strained relationship.

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1 This study draws strongly on the following publications by its authors and further co-authors working within the EU-funded FEUTURE project: Cf. Hauge, Hanna-Lisa et. al. Narratives of a Contested Relationship: Unravelling the Debates in the EU and Turkey. FEUTURE Online Paper No. 28. Cologne, February 2019; Özbey, Ebru Ece/ Hauge, Hanna-Lisa. Methodological Appendix for FEUTURE Online Paper No. 28 "Narratives of a Contested Relationship: Unravelling the Debates in the EU and Turkey". Cologne, February 2019; Özbey, Ebru Ece et. al. Narratives of a Contested Relationship: Identity Representations in the Narratives on the EU-Turkey Relations. FEUTURE Online Paper No. 32. Cologne, March 2019. All translations by Ebru Ece Özbey unless stated otherwise.

2 Although the institution in question is referred to as the 'European Union' throughout this chapter for ease of reading, it should be noted that it is specified as the 'European Economic Community' from 1957 to 1992 and the 'European Community' from 1992 to 2007.

Against such a background, this chapter looks at an essential, albeit under-researched, aspect of EU-Turkey relations by investigating identity representations in EU and Turkish narratives. At its heart, the very simple argument presented here is that narratives, acts of (political) storytelling, matter. They are critical: in transforming vague descriptions of social reality into meaningful, coherent interpretations; reconstituting the past by organising events in sequential order; contextualising agents' attitudes and behaviour; and unveiling clues about the projected futures.

Narratives are stories that are created and used by individuals, as well as collective units such as groups, parties, and nations, to interpret and intertwine disparate parts of reality. They are "the type of discourse composition that draws together diverse events, happenings, and actions of human lives into thematically unified goal-directed processes".[3] By orchestrating a particular series of actions, which would otherwise be viewed as discrete, "in a particular temporal order for a particular purpose",[4] narrators perform the essential function of producing common-sensical knowledge. Fundamental questions on social objects of inquiry such as 'What happened?', 'Who was involved?', 'How and why did it happen?', or 'Why does it matter?' find answers through narrations, which selectively weave events, characters and backgrounds into a plot with a meaningful continuum.[5]

Insofar as agents affect (directly or indirectly, partially or wholly) the sense-making of other agents by enacting their own stories, narratives hold a persuasive power and an essential role in constructing political behaviour. Such discourses contain explanatory adequacy and re-constitutive ability as analytical prisms through which actors: ponder their power, influence duties, responsibilities and interests; reproduce institutional reality; and interact with others. However, these discursive practices also matter independently in and of their own right. Our research takes up identity representations and narratives in line with this insight. Studying how Turkish and European actors construct and describe certain identities in their self-created 'story-worlds' can shed light on the underlying reasons

3 Polkinghorne, Donald E. Narrative Configuration in Qualitative Analysis. In: *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 1995, Vol. 8, No. 1, p. 5.

4 Griffin, Larry J. Narrative, Event-Structure Analysis, and Causal Interpretation in Historical Sociology. In: *The American Journal of Sociology*, 1993, Vol: 98, No. 5, p. 1097.

5 Cf. Shenhav, Shaul R. Political Narratives and Political Reality. In: *International Political Science Review/ Revue Internationale de Science Politique*, 2006, Vol. 27, No. 3, p. 251.

for this peculiar status quo within which the parties are and have valuable policy implications in crafting their joint pathway. That said, the salient traits in character descriptions, components of the given interactional roles, categorical properties residing in narrators' minds and the like can constitute a line of research which in itself has a promising future.

Political narratives are rooted in factual, real-life events as opposed to other (i.e., literary) stories that take place in an entirely fictitious time-space. Yet, these narratives are often imbued with fiction and should not be seen as mere reporting of the facts, but instead as "an artful blend of explanation and interpretation".[6] They are products of a particular perspective, the perspective of the narrator(s), and therefore involve critical assessments, moral judgments, taxonomies, and causal connections that cannot be proven or disproven. They do not faithfully represent 'reality', nor have they to be complete, coherent, or consistent with it. In fact, narratives can (intentionally or unintentionally) lack detail, leave some space for the audience's interpretation, or include juxtapositions of seemingly contradictory elements. As long as they resonate with listeners' perceptions and convince them to align with the storytellers, narratives are deemed persuasive and successful.[7]

This chapter starts from an assumption that political narratives emanate from the socio-political and socio-cultural contexts within which storytellers are embedded. They are the products of historical processes and interactions between agents, drawing strongly on memories from the past. Narrators, when creating their story-worlds, build shared representations from a repertoire of identities (Turkey, EU, United States, Russia, Cyprus, European Parliament and so on); characterise them in specific ways; establish them as members of certain groups (i.e., Eastern, Western, European, Muslim, Christian); and relate them to particular actions and reactions.[8] The traits that are salient in descriptions of these character representations, the clashes or alignments between these traits, their expression or manifestation in behaviour are all essential components of the story arc.

Put differently, identity constructions and perceptions of self and other(s) are important building blocks of narratives. Such constructions are not entirely creative and locally-managed processes, but rather informed

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6 Griffin, Narrative, Event-Structure Analysis, p. 1099.

7 Cf. Mayer, Frederick. Narrative Politics: Stories and Collective Action. New York, Oxford University Press, 2014.

8 Cf. De Fina, Anna. Group Identity, Narrative and Self-Representations. In: Anna De Fina/ Deborah Schiffrin/ Michael Bamberg (Eds.). Discourse and Identity. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 351–75.

by socially established resources and grounded in particular inventories of identities.[9] Similarly, as the narratives below show, mutual accounts of one another and the relationship itself by agents in Turkey and the EU establish the basis for the reasons of cooperation (or the lack thereof). They encompass expositions of existing settings and drivers of the relationship on different (i.e., national, bilateral, regional, or global) levels. They also propound imagined futures, which in the case of EU-Turkey relations can range from full membership, as the closest form of rapprochement, to total alienation.[10]

This chapter has a strong empirical basis as it draws its conclusions from a comprehensive narrative study conducted within the framework of an EU-funded project, 'The Future of EU-Turkey Relations: Mapping Dynamics and Testing Scenarios' (FEUTURE).[11] While the definition of narrative adopted here is tailored to the specific research design and questions raised by this study, it is at the same time based on the main approaches of narrative analysis, particularly as applied in the field of political science.[12] Accordingly, the term 'narrative' refers to "interpretations by political actors of the evolution, drivers, and actors, as well as the goal (or *finalité*) of the EU-Turkey relations".[13]

The abovementioned study has identified predominant narratives by political actors from both sides of the relationship and inquired about

9 Cf. Ibid, pp. 353–354.

10 Cf. Hauge et al., Narratives of a Contested Relationship, p.1.

11 Cf. Ibid; Cf. Özbey et al., Methodological Appendix, p.1.

12 Cf. Czarniawska, Barbara. Narratives in Social Science Research. London, 2004; Fischer, Frank/ Forester, John (Eds.). The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis. Durham, 1993; Hyvärinen, Matti. Analyzing Narratives and Story-Telling. In: Pertti Alasuutari, Leonard Bickman, Julia Brannen (Eds.). SAGE Handbook of Social Research Methods. Los Angeles, 2008, pp. 447–460; Jones, Michael/ Shanahan, Elizabeth/ McBeth, Mark (Eds.). The Science of Stories. Applications of the Narrative Policy Framework in Public Policy Analysis. Basingstoke, 2014; Kaplan, Thomas. The Narrative Structure of Policy Analysis. In: *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 1986, Vol. 5, No. 4, pp. 761–778; Kohler Riessman, Catherine (Ed.). Narrative Analysis. Qualitative Research Methods Series. Vol. 30, Newbury Park, 1993; Roe, Emery. Narrative Policy Analysis. Theory and Practice. Durham, 1994; Shenhav, Shaul. Political Narratives and Political Reality. In: *International Political Science Review*, 2006, Vol. 27, No. 3, pp. 245–262. See also for an overview of narrative approaches in political science Patterson, Molly/ Renwick Monroe, Kristen. Narrative in Political Science. In: *Annual Review of Political Science*, 1998, Vol. 1, pp. 315–331; Gadinger, Frank/ Jarzebski, Sebastian/ Yıldız, Taylan. Politische Narrative. Konzepte, Analysen, Forschungspraxis. Wiesbaden, 2014.

13 Hauge et al., Narratives of a Contested Relationship, p. 4.

their development comparatively over time. For this purpose, the authors coded a set of 282 official documents and statements from actors in Turkey and the EU from 1958 to 2017 by means of QDA software.[14] Because narratives do not necessarily emerge as complete stories in the documents analysed, the authors (re)constructed them by classifying individual constitutive elements and organising them into complete stories.[15] The findings of this study allowed the authors to trace the narratives that have shaped the political debate over time and pinpoint the commonalities as well as differences between them. This chapter, while based on the findings of the said study, takes up another aspect of the narratives in detail and focuses on the interplay of identity representations and character descriptions on the two sides of the relationship, again covering the period from 1958 to 2017.

The next section gives a brief historical overview and explains why identity constructions are particularly important when it comes to debates on EU-Turkey relations. The third section revisits Turkish and European narratives identified by the study, considering their relevance over time and elaborating on ways in which actors' accounts of each other are woven into these narratives. The last section concludes by summarising key results and implications both for the present and the future.

2. *A Love-Hate Relationship: The Role of Identity in Forming the EU-Turkey Partnership*

Academic literature dealing with identity, perceptions and discourse in EU-Turkey relations is already extensive.[16] This chapter aims to contribute

14 For Turkey, the data set included: speeches, presentations and statements by Presidents and Prime Ministers, official documents by the Ministries of EU Affairs and Foreign Affairs. For the EU, the data set included: European Parliament resolutions and selected debates, European Council conclusions and statements, European Commission reports and communications, as well as speeches by leaders of EU institutions.

15 Cf. Polkinghorne, Narrative Configuration, p. 15.

16 Cf. Aydın-Düzgit, Senem et al. Turkish and European Identity Constructions in the 1946–1999 Period. FEUTURE Online Paper No. 15. Cologne, March 2018; Aydın-Düzgit, Senem. Constructions of European Identity. Debates and Discourses on Turkey and the EU. Basingstoke, 2012; Çağatay-Tekin, Beyza. Representations and Othering in Discourse: The construction of Turkey in the EU context. Amsterdam and Philadelphia, 2010; Casanova, José. The Long, Difficult, and Tortuous Journey of Turkey into Europe and the Dilemmas of European Civilization. In: *Constellations*, 2006, Vol. 13, No. 2; Eralp, Atila/ Torun, Zerrin.

to ongoing scholarly debate on the numerous ups and downs during the six decades of relations on the basis of collective stories told by different actors in Turkey and Europe. It argues that understanding where current narratives originate and identifying their constituents – particularly representations of identity and mutual perceptions on one another – offers important insights into assimilating the relationship itself.

Official relations between the EU and Turkey started with Turkey's application to the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1959, less than two years after its establishment. Signed in 1963, the so-called Ankara Agreement envisaged Turkey's association and laid out three phases for the establishment of a Customs Union. Yet, from the outset, further hopes were linked to this agreement since, as stated by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it "aimed at securing Turkey's full membership in the EEC through the establishment […] of a Customs Union, which would serve as an instrument to bring about an integration between the EEC and Turkey".[17] Similarly, EU political figures at the time openly supported

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Perceptions and Europeanization in Turkey before the EU Candidacy. In: Ali Tekin, Aylin Güney (Eds.). The Europeanization of Turkey. London, 2015, pp. 14–30; Ergin, Melz. Otherness within Turkey, and between Turkey and Europe. In: Paul Gifford, Tessa Hauswedell (Eds.). Europe and Its Others. Essays on Interperception and Identity. Oxford, 2010; Lindgaard, Jakob/ Uygur Wessels, Ayça/ Stockholm Banke, Cecilie Felicia. Turkey in European Identity Politics: Key Drivers and Future Scenarios. FEUTURE Online Paper No. 19. Cologne, 2018; Macmillan, Catherine. Discourse, Identity and the Question of Turkish Accession to the EU. Through the Looking Glass. Farnham, 2013; Müftüler-Baç, Meltem/ Süleymanoğlu-Kürüm, Rahime. Deliberations in the Turkish Parliament: The External Perceptions of European Foreign Policy. In: *Journal of Language and Politics*, 2015, Vol. 14, No. 2, pp. 258–284; Müftüler-Baç, Meltem/ Taşkın, Evrim. Turkey's Accession to the European Union: Does Culture and Identity play a Role? In: *Ankara Review of European Studies,* 2007, Vol. 6, No.2, pp. 31–50; Nas, Çiğdem. Turkish Identity and the Perception of Europe. In: *Avrupa Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 2001, Vol. 9, No. 1, pp. 177–189; Rumelili, Bahar. Negotiating Europe: EU-Turkey Relations from an Identity Perspective. In: *Insight Turkey*, 2008, Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 97–110; Rumelili, Bahar. Turkey: Identity, Foreign Policy, and Socialization in a Post-Enlargement Europe. In: *Journal of European Integration*, 2011, Vol. 33, No. 2, pp. 235–249; Schneeberger, Agnes. Constructing European Identity through Mediated Difference: A Content Analysis of Turkey's EU Accession Process in the British Press. In: *Journal of Media and Communication*, 2009, Vol.1, pp. 83–102; Wimmel, Andreas. Beyond the Bosphorus? Comparing Public Discourses on Turkey's EU Application in the German, French and British Quality Press. In: *Journal of Language and Politics*, 2009, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 223–243.

17 Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. History of EU-Turkey Relations. 12.02.2020, https://www.ab.gov.tr/111en.html [23.10.2020].

Turkey's quest for future membership of the Community. Walter Hallstein, European Commission President when the Ankara Agreement was signed, expressed his hope that "[o]ne day the final step is to be taken: Turkey is to be a full member".[18]

Over time, many of the steps laid out in this agreement, together with some subsequent additions, have been realised, even though a few decades later than had been anticipated in the 1960s. A little over 30 years after the agreement's signature, Turkey eventually completed the progressive establishment of the Customs Union in 1996. Having applied for membership in 1987, Turkey became an accession candidate in 1999 and started accession negotiations in 2005. Hence, from a macro-historical perspective, one could argue that progress has been continual, albeit ponderous.

Conversely, at the same time, there has been a decline in faith and support for Turkey's EU membership both in Turkey[19] and the EU.[20] Data from Standard Eurobarometer surveys for the last two decades, for instance, suggest that the share of Turkish respondents who have a positive image of the EU has been showing a downward trend with fluctuations, which Şenyuva argues, is not arbitrary but responding to the political developments in Turkish-European relations.[21] Currently, the outlook is even gloomier because, as Tocci points out, "[n]ever has Turkey's European aspiration been so vacuous and the EU's distancing so acute".[22]

Overall, in regard to the present state of EU-Turkey relations, it would be safe to claim that despite the continual progress, phases of estrangement have largely superseded phases of rapprochement. But why does this relationship stand at a historic low despite the hard facts that arguably should motivate both parties to align with each other? Economically speaking, Turkey and the EU, linked by a functioning (although problematic) Customs Union, remain crucial trade partners. The mutual concerns and

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18 Hallstein, Walter. Address by Prof. Dr. Walter Hallstein, President of the Commission of the European Economic Community, on the occasion of the signature of the Association Agreement with Turkey. Ankara, 12.09.1963, http://aei.pitt.edu/14311/1/S77.pdf [23.10.2020].

19 Cf. Şenyuva, Özgehan. Turkish Public Opinion and the EU Membership: between Support and Mistrust. FEUTURE Online Paper No. 26. Cologne, October 2018; Şenyuva, Özgehan/ Çengel, Esra. Turkish Public Perceptions of Germany: Most Popular among the Unpopular. In this volume, p. 161-180.

20 Cf. Lindgaard, Jakob. EU Public Opinion on Turkish EU Membership: Trends and Drivers. FEUTURE Online Paper No. 25. Cologne, October 2018.

21 Cf. Şenyuva/ Çengel, Turkish Public Perceptions of Germany, 2022, p. 161-180.

22 Tocci, Nathalie. Beyond the storm in EU-Turkey relations. FEUTURE Voices No. 4. Cologne, January 2018.

interests of these neighbours in the face of regional and global turmoil are numerous and often pronounced. In geostrategic terms, partnerships and joint actions such as the EU-Turkey Statement and Action Plan (on migration) or the High-Level Energy Dialogue demonstrate the parties' clear intention for closer cooperation on an array of issues.

It is widely recognised that over the past few years the relationship has been particularly challenged due to various domestic developments in Turkey (more specifically, the constitutional changes establishing an executive presidential system, economic difficulties, cross-border operations in Syria and Libya and the crises with Greece over the Mediterranean gas reserves and Cyprus) as well as the EU (namely, the Brexit process, rising populism and radicalism). As expected, these arguably worrisome developments have heated already existing debates, not only on the future of the relationship but also on the fundamental question of whether or not Turkey could be considered an adequate candidate, let alone a European country. Such a discussion on Turkey's 'Europeanness' had already been particularly prevalent around the milestone decisions of 1999 (accession candidacy) and 2005 (start of accession negotiations). More recently, this issue has been addressed more frequently from both cultural and institutional aspects in the statements of certain party leaders, discussions at plenary sessions at national and European parliaments, as well as campaigns for referendums and elections.[23]

Needless to say, the term 'European' here is not interpreted in a strictly geographical sense. Turkey's eligibility to meet the geographic criteria, one could argue, was confirmed some thirty years ago when, unlike Morocco's

23 Some examples include the video released by Geert Wilders, a Dutch MEP and the leader of the Party for Freedom (Partij voor de Vrijheid, PVV), which addressed the Turkish citizens and stated "You are no Europeans and you will never be" (Wilders denounced over "Turkey, you are not welcome here". In: NL Times (video). 07.12.2015); The 'Leave' campaign rally, where UK Independence Party (UKIP) leader Nigel Farage warned of a "Turkish-dominated Europe" (Bennett Owen. There Will Be More Cologne-Style Sex Attacks If Turkey Joins The EU, Claims Nigel Farage. In: Huffington Post, 29.04.2016); The debates at the European Parliament on the resolutions of November 2016 (European Parliament. European Parliament resolution of 24 November 2016 on EU-Turkey relations. Resolution. P8_TA (2016)0450), 24.11.2016) and July 2017 (European Parliament. European Parliament resolution of 6 July 2017 on the 2016 Commission Report on Turkey. Resolution. P8_TA (2017)0306), 06.07.2017) which called on the Commission to initiate a temporary freeze on the ongoing accession negotiations with Turkey.

application, Turkey's application was not rejected.[24] Going further, one might argue that the underlying reason for these discussions persisting is that the "criteria [are] subject to political assessment",[25] as one briefing of the European Parliament contends. According to this argumentation, any decision on Turkey's place in the EU ought to be context-bound and rely on certain collective understanding and identity-building processes. It is the agents who exercise the practice of 'interpreting' or 'assessing' this question, ultimately resolving what 'Europeanness' stands for and whether or not Turkey can qualify as such. Through this resolution, all goals and visions for the relationship (be it full membership or something else) are settled both for now and the future, being reflected in how the relationship is narrated.

The ways in which actors perceive, interpret and respond to each other, of course, is not the only determinant for this relationship. One might even argue that it is not a determinant at all, but rather an outcome of concrete political processes and interactions between and around the parties. The position taken in this study lies between these two interpretations, suggesting that identity constructions (in the form of narratives) and the actual set of events are not only closely interlinked but also mutually constitutive of one another. Just as the actual set of events conditions narratives, so do narratives help to contemplate these events, by capturing some act of reality and shedding light on what has happened, which in turn recurrently impacts how the present is considered and parties behave. Narratives can also contain implications for the future, firstly by changing how we comprehend and act in the present and secondly by presenting story-like descriptions of the future.

If the end goal of EU-Turkey relations is achieving cooperation at the highest possible level (if not necessarily Turkey's joining the Union), then it is the condition precedent for parties not only to develop an understanding of each other's perceived realities but also reach agreement on the possible trajectories of action. This would require parties intersubjectively and continually to (re)define themselves in relation to each other while making practical and normative decisions. A complete consensus would not be obligatory, but there would still need to be concurrence over rele-

24 In 1987, Morocco lodged an application to become a Member of the Communities, but the application was rejected by the Council "on the grounds that Morocco was not a European State" (Council Decision of 1 October 1987, as cited in European Parliament Briefing No 23 "Legal Questions of Enlargement", www.europarl.europa.eu/enlargement/briefings/ 23a2_en.htm [23.10.2020]).

25 European Parliament, Briefing No 23.

vant problems, demands, dilemmas, conditions and the like in the face of many ambiguities posed by evolving situations.

It is acknowledged here that questions such as those about Turkey's 'Europeanness' are unlikely to be settled once and for all, because first and foremost collective identity constructions themselves have a dynamic nature; they are not static or fixed. Thus, any question of Turkish identity in relation to Europe, and vice versa, is bound to be answered differently by different actors at different times. These constructions are intrinsically bound to space and time. They change and transform in light of "the temporally connected, continuously interacting events of the past".[26] Furthermore, the processes of identity construction do not develop in distinct spheres. The formation of one's own identity is rather closely linked with the perception of a respective 'Other'. Or, as Browning argues, "it is only through emplotting ourselves in constitutive stories differentiating the self from others that we are able to attribute meaning to the social world and to construct a sense of our own identity and interests".[27] Nevertheless, we subscribe to the idea that glancing at these ever-changing, constantly interacting 'storification' processes is a worthwhile endeavour. The form and content of this will become clearer in the next section as it outlines the major narratives identified by the authors in the history of official political debates in Europe and Turkey, analysing their historical foundations with a focus on their underlying identity frames.

3. *Identity Perceptions and Representations in Turkish and European Narratives*

Here then is an overview of the dominant narratives that have surfaced since the beginning of institutionalised relations in 1959.[28] It summarises the main constituents of five Turkish narratives (*Westernisation*, *Europeanisation*, *Eurasianisation*, *Turkey as 'the Heir'*, *and Turkey as a 'Great Power'*) along with four European narratives (*Membership*, *Strategic Partner*, *Distant*

26 Hauge et al., Narratives of a Contested Relationship, p. 8.

27 Browning, Christopher S. Constructivism, Narrative and Foreign Policy Analysis. A Case Study of Finland. Bern/ Oxford, 2008, p. 11.

28 See for a more detailed analysis of the narratives as well as the methodological approach the FEUTURE Paper by Hauge et al. 2019, which is complemented by an elaborative appendix.

Neighbour and *Special Case/Candidate*).[29] It puts a focus on encapsulating and comparing the identity representations manifested in these narratives as well as their development over time.

3.1 Narratives in Turkey

One crucial point that should be underlined from the outset is that all five narratives identified on the Turkish side share the same goal, or *finalité*, which is membership. Turkey's accession to the EU appears as a consistent element across all narratives from the initiation of this relationship. However, the story structures (and the character representations) built around this goal are subject to five different rationales.

The *Westernisation* narrative considers Turkey as a crucial part of 'the West', a form of alliance that includes the EU along with some other Western actors. Fuelled by insecurity and anxiety stemming from the bipolarity and nuclear armament at the height of the Cold War, great emphasis is placed on the need for cooperation, primarily with NATO and the United States, but also with Europe-based institutions such as the Council of Europe and the EU. This narrative brings forward Turkey's democratic, secular, liberal side, underlining the country's geopolitical and geostrategic importance. It certainly deems the EU to be an important ally, albeit not necessarily valued above other westerners.

From a security perspective, for instance, former President Celal Bayar refers to NATO as "an especial creation, which was brought into being by nations that are determined to live freely" and asserts that "the role NATO plays in the reinforcement of [Turkey's] national security is great and exhilarating".[30] Regarding economic considerations, it is often stated that any foreign aid required for the country's growth could be obtained from "the international organisations of which Turkey is a member and

29 As the study focuses on the most influential narratives, it does not provide insights into the critical stances or counter-narratives that challenge the ones presented here. It does not provide information on, for instance, the views of the Islamist/ultra-nationalist parties or the critical Marxists or delve into their specific type of conservatism, support for a certain type of modernisation and scepticism towards Europeanization and Westernization processes.

30 Bayar, Celal. On Birinci Dönem İkinci Yasama Yılı Açış Konuşması, Speech, The Grand National Assembly of Turkey, Ankara, 01.11.1958. Original quote: "Hür yaşamaya azmetmiş milletlerin vücuda getirdikleri müstesna eser olan NATO'ya sadakatla bağlıyız. NATO'nun, millî emniyetimizin takviyesi bakımından oynadığı rol büyüktür, inşirah vericidir."

from friendly and allied countries in the sense of economic stability and Western democracy".[31]

Issues concerning cooperation or integration with the EU and Turkey's position in the Western bloc are often conflated in *Westernisation*. For Turkish actors, the desire to preserve this position to some extent makes permanent their aim of maintaining a relationship with the EU. Moreover, this narrative involves multiple linkages to a variety of actors and wide-ranging drivers focusing on political, economic and security aspects of relations rather than cultural, historical, or identity-related debates. While placing considerable emphasis on Turkey's 'Westernness', the narrative's target-oriented nature leaves little room for fluctuations arising from speculations or conjectures on Turkey's credentials for EU membership. Consequently, even at times of serious bilateral disputes, Turkish political actors' inclination to locate Turkey in the West, hence together with the EU, persists throughout the years.

The *Europeanisation* narrative, which starts to gain influence in the late 1980s but becomes especially dominant from the second half of the 1990s, strongly emphasises Turkey's 'rightful' place among European countries. The country is regarded as a natural part of continental Europe for palpable geographical and historical reasons; a modern, civilised state that to a certain extent is already integrated into the European economic and political system. According to this narrative, Turkey and the EU need each other for strategic as well as security-related reasons. During the Cold War, this need was mainly derived from the turbulent international environment, but since 1990, it has become more to do with economic and political opportunities offered by the new global order together with challenges that the parties ought to face together. According to Turkish actors, Turkey and the EU share a common destiny as well as joint interests and concerns across a broad spectrum of issues.

Even at the very beginning of relations in 1959, Turkish actors seemed eager to take part in any form or level of European integration, but this desire becomes stronger as the EU institutionalises, thereby gaining power and influence. In this context, extensive constitutional reforms that have been carried out by focusing on the country's political, legal, economic

31 İnönü, İsmet. 27. Cumhuriyet Hükümeti'nin (IX. İnönü Hükümeti) Programını Millet Meclisi Genel Kurulu'na Sunuş Konuşması. Speech. The Grand National Assembly of Turkey. Ankara, 02.07.1962. Original quote: "Bu suretle, iktisadi istikrar ve Batılı demokrasi anlayışı içinde, kalkınmamızın lüzumlu kıldığı dış yardım ihtiyacının, üyesi bulunduğumuz Milletlerarası teşekküller ile dost ve müttefik memleketlerden temin edebileceğine kaani bulunmaktayız".

and social systems throughout the years have reportedly been designed to be compatible with European institutional architecture. EU membership is asserted as being "a means, rather than an end, to bring the Turkish nation up to the level of contemporary civilisation it deserves".[32]

Europeanisation is the narrative that most explicitly promotes and supports Turkey's EU membership since it overwhelmingly centres upon the Union (rather than broader alliances such as the Western bloc). With its centuries-old, deep interactions and relations with countries throughout the continent, Turkey is claimed to be an indisputable member of the European family. As the EU postpones Turkey's membership and continually imposes new preconditions, in the eyes of Turkish actors, not only are the sincerity and objectivity of relations increasingly questioned, but the demand for equal treatment and transparency becomes more explicit. Nevertheless, Europeanisation remains central to Turkish narratives, with the goal of membership still being asserted by many actors as a key priority within the country's foreign policy.

The *Eurasianisation* narrative emerging immediately after the Soviet Union's collapse, pays significant attention to smaller, newly formed Eastern states, such as Belarus, Georgia, Armenia and the like. It leaves Turkey's one-sided foreign policy orientation toward the West aside and establishes Turkey as an influential regional power, a bridge between the West and the East. While acknowledging the state's self-evident connections to Europe, the central premise here presents Turkey as a key player with a strategic geopolitical position and a complex character that is compatible with both Western and Eastern values. Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit, serving four terms between 1974 and 2002, for instance, contended that Turkey is European "with its culture, history, and geography" but 'Europeanness' alone does not define Turkey since the country also belongs to "Central Asia, Middle East, Eastern Mediterranean, Black Sea, Balkans, and partly Africa".[33] In this narrative, Turkey is a guide, a successful model

32 Erdoğan, Recep Tayyip. Türkiye ve Avrupa Birliği Arasındaki İlişkiler Konusunda Genel Görüşme Hakkında Hükümet Adına Yaptığı Konuşma. Speech. The Grand National Assembly of Turkey. Ankara, 29.05.2003. Original quote "Biz, Avrupa Birliği'ne üyeliği, bir amaç olarak değil, Türk Halkını hak ettiği çağdaş uygarlık seviyesine ulaştırmak için bir araç olarak görüyoruz".

33 Ecevit, Bülent. 57. Cumhuriyet Hükümeti Programının Millet Meclisi Genel Kurulu'nda Yapılan Görüşmeleri Sırasında Yaptıkları Konuşma, Speech, The Grand National Assembly of Turkey, Ankara, 07.06.1999. Original quote: "Biz, kültürümüzle, tarihimizle, coğrafyamızla Avrupalıyız; ama sadece Avrupalılığa da sığmayız. Biz, aynı zamanda, bir Orta Asya ülkesiyiz, bir Ortadoğu ülkesiyiz, bir Doğu Akdeniz ülkesiyiz, bir Karadeniz ülkesiyiz, bir Balkanlar ülkesiyiz,

for the other countries in the region as it is a "great county that has understood the modern world with its established democratic tradition; its experience on the free-market economy application".[34]

In this context, Turkish identity is understood as a complex, multi-layered phenomenon (maybe more so than that of the EU). It is also considered adaptable and fluid as the country stands prepared to merge its historical heritage (through which it bears a resemblance to its Eastern neighbours) with modern competencies (through which it stands close to the EU). In this understanding, civilisation is nurtured by democratisation, liberalisation and securitisation. It is an accumulation of knowledge, which is not necessarily produced by the West (or Europe per se) but can be relayed from there to the East through Turkey. Assuming that the EU would seek political and economic links or even integration of a sort with Eurasian actors, this narrative not only sees Turkey as a role model for these countries through its ability to blend West and East, but also argues that Turkey's much-delayed membership to the EU is a first step for the European project's possible widening in the region.

The Turkey as 'the Heir' narrative essentially revolves around the supposed clash of Turkish and European identities as propounded by Europeans from time to time. As Turkey develops closer relations with Middle Eastern and Central Asian countries, becoming noticeably more conservative under AKP rule since 2002, references to Turkey's imperial legacy and alleged organic links to Turkic dynasties (starting from the Anatolian *beyliks* from the 11th century) seem to increase significantly. Following the waning of an EU membership perspective and the continuing impasse in accession negotiations, over time empathy and admiration give way to attitudinal ambivalence and scepticism.

While this narrative envisages Turkey as the grandiose heir and highlights the glory of former empires, it does not necessarily share the idea of conflicting Turkish and European identities. On the contrary, it often asserts that Turkey is European *because* of its past and accuses European

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kısmen Afrika ülkesiyiz ve bu kökenleri çok iyi bağdaştırabildiğimiz için de, Avrasyalaşma sürecinin anahtar ülkesi konumuna gelmiş bulunuyoruz".

34 Demirel, Süleyman. On Dokuzuncu Dönem Beşinci Yasama Yılı Açış Konuşması. Speech. The Grand National Assembly of Turkey. Ankara, 01.10.1995. Original quote: "Türkiye, köklü demokratik gelenekleriyle, serbest pazar ekonomisi uygulamasında edindiği birikimlerle, çağdaş dünyayı anlamış büyük bir devlet olarak, bu ülkeler için bir ışıktır, bir penceredir; bu ülkelere yön verme imkânına da en iyi şekilde sahiptir; bunların dünyayla bütünleşmeleri için ideal bir köprü konumundadır".

counterparts of exploiting the historical divergences among parties in creating arbitrary obstacles to oppose its joining the Union. Even though it promotes Turkey's greater engagement with countries that were once part of the Ottoman Empire, it still stresses Turkey's ultimate objective of full membership to the EU.

In this narrative, Turkey is visualised as heir not only to the formidable Ottoman Empire, but also the preceding Turkic empires. Thus, the narrative captures more than Neo-Ottomanism: It merges elements from both Balkanism and Turkism, underlining that the Ottoman Empire "in fact developed as a Balkan state in its founding period" and became a "multicultural, multinational, multi-religious European and Mediterranean power"[35] with Istanbul as the capital. Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, for instance, insists that "Turkey is not a guest but the host in Europe",[36] stating:

> "I do not go as far back as the Turkic states that were established in Europe in the 400s, 500s, 600s, 700s; the times before we honoured [Europe] with Islam. I simply refer to the times since our ancestors, Ottomans, expanded into the European continent in the 1350s, when I say we have been in existence in Europe with our country, our culture, and our civilisation for more than 650 years and we will continue to do so".[37]

In the *Turkey as 'the Heir'* narrative, one can identify a more profound claim that European actors bring up so-called identity-related differences, strategically using Turkey's past and thereby masking their own underlying reluctance for further integration. According to former Prime Minister

35 Demirel, Süleyman. Yirmi Birinci Dönem İkinci Yasama Yılı Açış Konuşması, Speech, The Grand National Assembly of Turkey, Ankara, 01.10.1999. Original quote: "Osmanlı Devleti, kuruluş döneminde esas itibariyle bir Balkan devleti olarak gelişmiştir ve İstanbul'un başkent olmasıyla birlikte, çok kültürlü, çok uluslu, çok dinli bir Avrupa ve Akdeniz gücü olarak tarih sahnesindeki yerini almıştır".

36 Erdoğan, Recep Tayyip. 30. Muhtarlar Toplantısında Yaptıkları Konuşma. Speech. Ankara, 01.12.2016. Original quote: "Biz Avrupa'da misafir değil, ev sahibiyiz".

37 Ibid. Original Quote: "Daha eskilere, İslamiyet'le şereflendirdiğimiz o günlerin öncesine, 400'lü, 500'lü, 600'lü, 700'lü yıllarda Avrupa'da kurulmuş olan Türk devletlerine kadar gitmiyorum. Ecdadımız Osmanlı'nın 1350'li yıllarda Avrupa kıtasına geçişinden itibaren ele alarak söylüyorum: 650 yılı aşkın süredir kesintisiz bir şekilde Avrupa'da devletimizle, kültürümüzle, medeniyetimizle varız, var olmaya devam edeceğiz".

Mesut Yılmaz, "the Turkey-phobia, which those who were sitting at the table have had since the very beginning"[38] is the main reason why Turkey was not accepted together with Eastern European applicants as a candidate state by the European Council Summit of Luxembourg in 1997. These allegations about the intentional, prevalent negative image of the Turkish state and nation in fact goes back a long way in the history of European-Turkish relations.[39]

In this narrative, Turkey is portrayed as an honourable but victimised party in the relationship. Even though it exerts itself to the utmost and keeps all of its promises, it cannot escape unfair, disrespectful and deceptive treatment by the EU. Despite everything, Turkish actors still expect the EU to make the right decision and pursue an objective, transparent, impartial policy towards Turkey. They maintain a forgiving, noble attitude whilst, unlike the previous narratives, at the same time offering assurances that Turkey will be just fine by itself if the EU fails to come through. In this respect, Turkish actors still hold membership as a goal, but only under certain conditions.

The *Turkey as a 'Great Power'* narrative, which emerged in the early 2000s and has gradually gained prominence since then, envisages Turkey as a powerful political and economic actor with a pivotal regional role that entails various strategic opportunities. It pictures Turkey and the EU as equals, asserting that accession negotiations should continue in a more transparent and impartial manner while concurrently criticising the EU for not showing the interest, respect and enthusiasm that Turkey deserves.

Hence, as Turkey grows stronger, the sense of cooperation and collaboration seemingly gives way to the notion of quid pro quo. In this narrative, Turkish actors dismiss thoughts of an asymmetrical relationship between Turkey and the EU. A free and powerful 'New Turkey' does not have to comply with the EU's rules, or desperately try to make room for itself among the existing members. It proclaims a capacity to wield influence and sit down at the table under equal terms. Instead of accepting what is offered, it is envisaged as having the means of negotiating and fighting for

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38 Yılmaz, Mesut. 1998 Mali Yılı Bütçe Kanunu Tasarısını Sunuş Konuşması. Speech. The Grand National Assembly of Turkey. Ankara, 25.12.1997. Original quote: "Lüksemburg zirvesinde ortaya konulan neticenin, bizi tatmin etmeyen o kararların müsebbibi, ne Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Devletidir ne de aziz milletimizdir. Bu kararların, bu neticenin tek müsebbibi, bir taraftan, o masanın etrafında oturan ülkelerden bazılarının, ezeli olarak taşıdıkları Türkiye fobisidir".

39 Cf. Aydın-Düzgit, Senem et. al. Turkish and European Identity Constructions in the 1815–1945 Period. FEUTURE Online Paper No. 4. Cologne, July 2017, p. 6.

what is fair. It is easy to spot this new vision during talks on the infamous Turkey-EU Agreement of 18 March 2016. Turkey's Chief Negotiator Ömer Çelik stated that Turkey's performance on the issue of migration prevented "one of the biggest crises to upset the geopolitical order and political map"[40] which is why, "visa liberalisation is not a gesture to Turkey but an outcome that should be reached as a requirement of the agreement that has already emerged".[41]

The *Turkey as a 'Great Power'* narrative comprises a seemingly ossified 'Us' versus 'Them' dichotomy, which is not inherently antagonistic. It initially serves to picture Turkey and the EU as two distinct sides with different bargaining positions and powers on a variety of issues. However, the rhetoric gradually becomes more aggressive and confrontational in light of a series of events that bring forward the parties' increasingly diverging and sometimes opposing interests.

Leaving aside the somewhat paradoxical coexistence of Turkey's fierce criticism and perpetual commitment towards the EU, this narrative successfully illustrates the time factor's relevance within EU-Turkey relations. When linked with changes within the structure of relations and drivers over time, tiredness from decades-long 'stalling' has resulted in a narrative unlike any other: *Turkey as a 'Great Power'* is the first to contain such a level of despair and anger. It is the only narrative within which Turkish actors "do not recognise"[42] or respect decisions reached by the European institutions. It is also alone in considering other international institutions, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, as alternatives to EU membership.[43] In that sense, this particular narrative arguably best demonstrates how a shift in the present dominant narrative might be critical in terms of resolving Turkey's future destiny with the EU and vice versa.

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40 Çelik, Ömer. Arguments Compiled Based on the Statements by the Minister for EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator Ömer Çelik. No: 4 Syrian Issue and Refugee Crisis. 2016, p. 5. Original quote: "Bu [Mülteci krizi] da jeopolitiği ve siyasi haritayı altüst edecek en büyük krizlerden bir tanesidir".

41 Ibid. Original quote: "Dolayısıyla vize serbestisi bize yapılacak bir jest değil, zaten ortaya çıkan anlaşmanın bir gereği olarak varılması gereken bir sonuçtur".

42 Erdoğan, Recep Tayyip. İSEDAK 32. Toplantısı Açılış Oturumunda Yaptıkları Konuşma. Speech. Istanbul, 23.11.2016, https://www.tccb.gov.tr/konusmalar/353/61109/isedak-32-toplantisi-acilis-oturumunda-yaptiklari-konusma [23.10.2020].

43 Cf. "Erdoğan: 'Şanghay Beşlisi içerisinde Türkiye niye olmasın?' diyorum". In: Spuknik News, 20.11.2016, https://tr.sputniknews.com/turkiye/201611201025892702-erdogan-ab-sanghay-beslisi/ [23.10.2020].

3.2 Narratives in the EU

As with Turkish narratives, those being propagated by EU institutions and actors have also changed, becoming more divergent over time. Whilst mutual perceptions have undergone transformation (to varying degrees), the same can be said about the number of competing perspectives and different goals formulated as part of the stories narrated. In the latter aspect, they differ from Turkish narratives outlined above, which all tend to share the formal goal of membership to the EU, or at least do not abandon this option altogether.

According to the *Membership* narrative, Turkey should become a member of the EU. There are different drivers that motivate this over time, such as geopolitical arguments stressing Turkey's importance for regional security or the emphasis that Turkey is an important trading partner. The prospect of contributing to democratisation in Turkey via the enlargement process is another regular element within this narrative, relating to an overall vision of the Union's mission in the international system (as expressed in Art. 21 in the Treaty on European Union).

Regarding underlying identity representations, this view places greater value on common features that Turkey shares with Europe, as prominently captured by the oft-quoted speech of first Commission President Walter Hallstein when the Ankara Agreement was signed in 1963. On that occasion, he stressed that "Turkey is a part of Europe",[44] arguing that in particular Kemal Atatürk's efforts to reform "every aspect of life" radically and strictly along "European lines" contributed to rendering the country more "European" and that this modernisation process was a characteristic that Turkey shared with Europe.[45] A resolution by the European Parliament from 1970 argued in a similar vein that the Association's key objective was "the full membership of Turkey in the Community".[46]

This kind of perception in placing Turkey's identity within the European 'family' has, though, only rarely been present in official statements from EU actors and institutions. This was mostly linked to the Ankara Agreement, but never emerged again as a dominant perception after

44 Hallstein, Address by Prof. Dr. Walter Hallstein, 1963.

45 Ibid.

46 European Parliament. "Entschliessung zu den vom Gemischen Parlamentarischen Ausschusses EWG-Türkei in Zusammenhang mit dem Fünften Jährlichen Tätigkeitsbericht des Assoziationsrates angenommenen Empfehlungen". Resolution, adopted on 8 July 1970. Amtsblatt der Europäischen Gemeinschaften Nr. C 101129. Brussels, 04.08.1970.

1970.[47] Indeed, this narrative had lost its impetus by the end of the 1970s, particularly after the military coup in Turkey on 12 September 1980. Thereafter, one can identify an increase in the number of conflictual elements within the discourse, as captured below by the *Distant Neighbour* narrative. At that time, Community institutions harshly criticised the human rights situation and military rule. In light of these developments, it comes as no surprise that official documents dropped any explicit mention of Turkish membership during the 1980s.

At the other end of the political discourse spectrum, the *Distant Neighbour* narrative perceives Turkey as an estranged and faraway, or even hostile neighbour, expressing a preference for keeping the country at arm's length. In regard to implications for the institutional side of relations, references to the freeze or suspension of relations and/or an abandoning the accession process represent the most drastic consequence or postulation-forming part of this narrative in its contemporary form. It can also imply a distancing from political tendencies and authoritarian trends, but is also often linked to emphasising the EU primarily as a community of values. In recent years, this narrative has gained in relevance and particularly so since the purges in Turkey after the coup attempt of 2016. Since then, EU actors have often argued that Turkey is moving "away in giant strides from Europe".[48]

From a perspective of identity and culture, this narrative tends to perceive Turkey more as 'the Other' and hence also as too different from 'Europe' to become an EU member. In this sense, Turkey is rather situated outside European 'borders'. Besides possible geographic arguments, representations also tend to refer to the differences in a cultural and religious sense, for example, by underlining an alleged Islamic character of Turkish society. Representations of Turkey as 'Other' also frequently bear orientalist features, as outlined by Eduard Said, or by adopting a patronising view of Turkey (and the Middle East) as less developed than EU countries.[49]

However, possibly the most constant element in EU institutions official rhetoric, which also forms part of different narratives, has been the emphasis on Turkey's high geostrategic relevance for Europe. This links to an understanding of Turkey as reflected by the *Strategic Partner* narrative. Arguments inherent in this narrative usually relate strongly to the security

47 Hauge et al., 2019, p. 33.

48 Juncker, Jean-Claude. President Jean-Claude Juncker's State of the Union Address 2017. SPEECH-17–3165. Brussels, 13.09.2017.

49 Said, Edward. Orientalism. New York, 1978.

dimension but also to Turkey's growing economic importance and the increasing trade relations, as well as to its role in the neighbourhood.

It goes without saying that the international context is also an influential factor for the relevance of this narrative. In many instances, Turkey's role as a partner of the 'West' and bulwark against expansion of the Soviet Union was acknowledged or even underlined by political elites. In concluding the association agreement with Turkey in 1963, the President of the Council of Ministers at the time, Joseph Luns, voiced the agreement's contemporary mutual interests and motives, by making this point: "For Turkey, this agreement effectively represents another proof that it is European in its nature. For our community, this agreement represents recognition of the prominent position that Turkey assumes today in the free world (…)".[50]

There are also numerous more recent instances in which this narrative can be identified. The EU-Turkey statement of November 2015 was an example of the *Strategic Partner* narrative's logic. It also exemplifies another facet of this narrative, namely that it can also include references to a (desired) form of the EU-Turkey relationship, which accordingly is framed as a partnership or strategic partnership. Although the EU-Turkey statement still included a formulation that the accession process should be revitalised, cooperation within the Joint Action Plan on migration management, as well as the visa liberalisation process, was in the foreground of this agreement.[51] Similarly, the March 2016 statement foresaw high-level meetings and summits as means of strengthening cooperation in the fields of migration, counter-terrorism, energy and business.[52] Recent EP resolutions also include elements that link to a form of strategic partnership. For example, in 2016 the EP supported "a structured, more frequent and open high-level political dialogue on key thematic issues of joint interest such as migration, counter-terrorism, energy, economy and trade".[53]

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50 European Parliament, "Assoziierung EWG-Türkei". Debate. Brussels, 28.11.1963.

51 Cf. Saatçioğlu, Beken. Turkey and the EU: Strategic Rapprochement in the Shadow of the Refugee Crisis. In: *E-International Relations*, 21.01.2016.

52 Cf. European Council. Meeting of Heads of State or Government with Turkey – EU-Turkey statement. Brussels, 29.11.2015, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/11/29/eu-turkey-meeting-statement/pdf [24.10.2020]; European Council. EU-Turkey statement. Press Release 144/16. Brussels, 18.03.2016, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18/eu-turkey-statement/pdf [24.10.2020].

53 European Parliament. European Parliament resolution of 14 April 2016 on the 2015 report on Turkey. Resolution. P8_TA(2016)0133. Brussels, 14.04.2016,

Despite the high level of conflict in diplomatic relations recently as well as harsh criticism and concerns voiced by EU institutions, representations of a perspective stressing Turkey's strategic importance for the EU are embedded in most of the statements, rendering it a dominant perception.

Another relevant narrative from recent decades is that depicting Turkey as a *Special Case (or Candidate)*. This argues that the country has specific characteristics, giving rise to remarks about its relatively large size, geography or economy, which prompt questions regarding the EU's absorption capacity. Also included here are issues to do with cultural or religious differences. This line of argumentation often raises concerns about Turkey's difficulties in fulfilling the Copenhagen Criteria and hence implementing the acquis, leading to an emphasis that its association and later candidacy are not only different but also more difficult than other cases. A central notion places emphasis on the 'open-ended' character of accession negotiations and an inability to guarantee their outcome. This was an expression used and repeated by all EU institutions when referring to the opening of accession negotiations.

With few representations in the European Community's official discourse during preparations for the Ankara Agreement about Turkey's economic situation creating cause for concern, this narrative did gain more relevance in the late 1980s. It was then 'institutionalised' at the European Council summit of 1997 in Luxembourg, during which the EU put forward a specific "European Strategy" for Turkey alone and also decided not to grant candidacy status to the country (unlike the policy for Eastern European applicant states).[54] A few days before this meeting, Commissioner van den Broek justified this strategy by saying that "[i]t is only natural that Turkey should pursue its own path towards integration with Europe given that its historical experience has been so different from that of the countries in the former communist bloc".[55] Elements of this narrative continue to be part of the EU's discourse, even following the opening of accession negotiations in 2005.

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https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2016-0133_EN.pdf [23.10.2020].

54 Cf. European Council. Luxembourg European Council (12 and 13 December 1997). Presidency Conclusions. Luxembourg, 13.12.1997, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/lux1_en.htm [23.10.2020].

55 Van den Broek, Hans. The Prospect for EU Enlargement. Conference organised by the International Press Institute "The future of Europe". SPEECH/97/264. Brussels, 27.11.1997.

Linked to this kind of narrative, in some instances there is a perception of Turkey as "liminal", which has manifested over time, thus "a partly-self, partly-other" position,[56] particularly dominant in the 1980s and 1990s[57] which coincides with the *Special Case* narrative. Consequently, it is worth explaining this dynamic in more detail. For instance, one could argue that Turkey's alleged liminal identity is related to different kinds of discourses.

On the one hand, there is argumentation that concludes from this distinct character that Turkey is not fit to be part of the EU. For example, Huntington defines Turkey as a torn country caught between Western and Eastern civilisations, which hence cannot become an EU member state.[58] Even at the time of the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923 and subsequent reforms undertaken by Atatürk, some actors were attesting to Turkey's "hybrid system comprising both Oriental and Western features".[59] This liminal status, as Rumelili has argued, can also contribute to a perceived threat, not least because it may induce a more pressing necessity to "clarify and articulate the differences between Turkey and Europe".[60]

Related to this perception, but rather interpreting Turkey's special character in a positive sense, there is on the other hand a common frame depicting the country as a bridge or gate between Europe and the Middle East.[61] In light of the so called 'Arab spring', but also before, political actors went even further and regularly stressed the role of Turkey as a model for the Islamic World, in successfully combining democracy and Islam. Modernisation and reform packages of the 1990s and early 2000s further supported this view that Turkey could act as a model and bridge to those countries in the Arab world which were seen as moving towards the principles of statehood, society and economy prevalent in democratic 'Western' states.

Our analysis of narratives presented over a sixty years period reveals that identity and mutual perceptions do indeed represent a defining fea-

56 Cf. Rumelili, Negotiating Europe, 2008.
57 Cf. Aydın-Düzgit et al., Turkish and European Identity Constructions in the 1946–1999 period, 2018, p. 20.
58 Cf. Huntington, Samuel P. Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order. New York, 1996, p. 146.
59 Aydın-Düzgit et al. Turkish and European Identity Constructions in the 1815–1945 Period. 2017, p. 10.
60 Rumelili, Bahar. Liminal identities and processes of domestication and subversion in International Relations. In: *Review of International Studies*, 2012, Vol. 38, p. 506.
61 Cf. Lindgaard et al., Turkey in European Identity Politics, 2018, p. 2.

ture of narratives in current and past debates on EU-Turkey relations. All documents analysed from both sides were generally rather of an official character and thus, especially in the case of EU institutions, the formulations adopted carried a more neutral tone. However, the speeches and statements by Turkish political leaders have at times been couched in less diplomatic language and hence often presented greater opportunities for conclusions on perceptions of self and the other, in this case the EU.

4. Conclusion: What about the Future?

Narratives, or collective stories told by political actors, carry many functions, such as: constructing social reality; generating and transmitting knowledge; discursive framing of events; providing context for storytellers' actions; and eliciting emotions and reactions among audiences. They comprise images and experiences from the past, inform and get informed by the dynamism and uncertainties of the present, and at times orient towards the future. Above all, they present descriptions of characters (with goals, beliefs, desires and expectations) as a dichotomy between the self and the other(s).

Similarly, and more specifically, narratives regarding EU-Turkey relations contain character representations, primarily to do with the EU and Turkey but also others, around which the story revolves. These representations neither exist independently nor are fixed in structure; they are renegotiated and reconstituted continually through intersubjective interactions. The character aspects that stand out in these representations or show salience over time and the conflicts or congruence between them can provide us with important clues about the current state and denouement of the actual relationships between storified characters.

This chapter has focused comparatively on these narratives from the perspective of political actors in Turkey and the EU, examining the historical roots and evolution of identity perceptions as well as characterisations. Since such narratives do not exist in a complete story form per se, it has relied on textual analyses of official documents collected and qualitatively coded separately for both sides of the relationship between 1958 and 2017. Ultimately, the chapter has concluded with several considerations on the present and possible future of this relationship, drawn from our reflections above on narratives and identity representations based upon a trans-historical perspective.

The ups and downs of the relations since Turkey's application for an association agreement with the ECC indicate that change itself is the key continuing feature. As we have shown here, this is also found to be true for

relationship narratives. Identity perceptions and character descriptions in both Turkish and European narratives, as with the relationship itself, seem to have changed and transformed over time since 1958. This inference aligns with conclusions drawn by Aydın-Düzgit et al., who go back further in the common history of Turkey and Europe and propound the fluidity of identity constructions as the most characterising feature in this relationship.[62] How actors view themselves and others has continued to change throughout history. As the circumstances and conditions that determine a relationship (for example, the international context and interactions with each other and third parties) have differed, so have inextricably linked political stories. Hence, it is quite likely that change itself will persist as a fixed and fundamental element in the perceptions of mutual identity and character descriptions in narratives.

Yet, this state of constant change as a dominant characteristic does not exclude patterns of continuity or the re-appearance of certain identity elements. The perceptions and considerations, which have either remained salient for a long time or resurfaced sporadically in discourses are also of major importance. We argue that such continual or cyclical elements form the key apparatus when reflecting on the relationship's possible future scenarios, in that they represent discursive constituents which transcend temporal identity boundaries. Since what has occurred consistently or frequently up to now is likely to be carried forward, this makes possible informed forecasting for the future.

As a quite striking result, mutual recognition of importance and significance is the most prominent example of such perpetuity. Actors in Turkey view the EU in a number of different ways: as a strong and normatively superior actor in its own right; as an influential member of larger partnerships; or as an equivalent partner to Turkey. In the same vein, European actors display complete ambivalence, sometimes embracing Turkey as one of their own but at other times portraying it as an alien and hence completely dissimilar to them. Yet, no matter what rhetoric is encountered, both parties constantly acknowledge and express the geopolitical and geostrategic importance to each other, which consequently determines the need for some level of dialogue and cooperation. As a result, mutual acknowledgment and emphasis on both sides of the relationship, along with the factor of change, stand out as possible dominant features of future narratives.

62 Cf. Aydın-Düzgit et al. Turkish and European Identity Constructions in the 1815–1945 Period, 2017, p. 16.

Finally, our empirical study confirms that conflict within and between Turkish and European narratives is not a new phenomenon, but rather a recurrence. The absence of conflict between reciprocal characterisations in these narratives is observed only for a limited time during the 1960s and 1970s. As outlined earlier, *Westernisation* and particularly *Europeanisation* narratives in Turkey found their corresponding 'counterpart' then in one of the European narratives, namely *Membership*. The two parties seemingly reached a consensus in terms of their expectations, demands and wishes from each other; hence they were able to envision a common identity that separates them from the others in the universe of extended relations. This allowed for a 'convergence' of narratives for a period, which was paralleled by statements describing Turkey as part of Europe – a notion that has been contested ever since.

Even though in the context of narratives conflict has been present for a long time, our study confirms that the level of animosity and rivalry has gradually increased to reach an unprecedented level, especially in the last few years. Turkish narratives, *Turkey as 'the Heir'* and *Turkey as a 'Great Power'*, which have emerged in the 2000s, have no equivalent on the European side. The ways in which Turkey, the EU and the relationship itself are described in these narratives are certainly not reciprocated in European stories. These two Turkish narratives are shaped, more by ambivalence and scepticism than sympathy and admiration towards Europe. Paradoxically, despite Turkish actors continuing to pursue their objective of EU membership, criticism directed towards the EU has increased substantially. Similarly, the *Distant Neighbour* narrative on the EU side, which has gained relevance more recently, reveals an increasingly conflict-laden tone, which goes hand in hand with a perception of Turkey moving away from the EU and thus from the values ascribed therein.

A vaguely articulated but deeply felt sense of Europeanness is a prominent facet of self-identity descriptions in all Turkish narratives. When this identity feature, which is obvious and indisputable in the eyes of actors in Turkey, is questioned or not recognised by the European actors, any underlying eagerness for cooperation and the ultimate goal of full integration become threatened. Recognition of Turkey's identity as European appears as a necessary condition for both the relationship and associated narratives to move beyond the current conflictual situation. While this is possible over time through mutual trust, dialogue and cooperation, a rapid and effective change in this perception on the EU side seems unlikely in the next couple of years. Hence, conflict (at some level) is identified as the third feature in predictions for narratives within the foreseeable future.