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Understanding the Role of Leadership Styles of Erdogan and Merkel in Sustainability of Turkey-European Union Relations: A Leadership Trait Analysis

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Abstract: This study aims to understand the role of the leadership styles of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and German Chancellor Angela Merkel in European Union-Turkey relations by conducting a Leadership Trait Analysis (LTA), which takes into account the leaders' personalities in foreign policy. The article makes use of the verbal records of the two leaders regarding the bilateral relations between their countries and the European Union. The results unveil that the two leaders' personal characteristics bear similarities to a considerable extent; i.e., both leaders are sceptical in inter-personal relations, discernibly intuitive, self-confident and so forth. The study suggests that those personal traits of the leaders which have occasionally outweighed crude rationality have been some of the important factors enabling the sustainability of relations between Turkey and the EU against all odds.

Keywords: leadership trait analysis; leadership style; leader; personal characteristics; Turkey-European Union relations; Angela Merkel; Recep Tayyip Erdogan; Turkey-Germany relations; authoritarianism

1. Introduction

The personal characteristics of strong political leaders are of paramount importance for sustaining dialogue, developing new ties, strengthening bilateral relations as well as reducing the tension between countries. In this respect, the current study examines the leadership styles of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and German Chancellor Angela Merkel by concentrating on the influences of their personality traits on Turkey–European Union (EU) relations. To this end, the study aims to analyse the political rhetoric of the leaders by identifying certain words, themes and concepts which are supposedly interlinked with their personal standings regarding the political process of Turkey's accession to the EU. Those personality traits constitute the essence of our individual-level content analysis of Turkish and German foreign policies within the wider context of Turkey–EU relations and we attempt to diagnose the impact of leadership styles of Erdogan and Merkel by employing the Margaret Hermann's Leadership Trait Analysis (LTA) technique, which is based on a machine-coded analysis of verbal records.

After highlighting the merits of the LTA technique for our purposes, this study looks at the historical context of Turkey–EU relations, particularly concentrating on the decisive role Germany played in steering the Union's strategies toward Ankara. It also examines the views elaborating the steadily enhancing role of leadership in bilateral relations over

the years. Finally, by performing an LTA, which presumes that a leader's personality is the combination of seven traits; i.e., belief in the ability to control events, need for power, conceptual complexity, self-confidence, distrust of others, task focus, and in-group bias, the study zooms in on the leadership profiles of Erdogan and Merkel to identify their role in Turkey–EU relations. The study concludes that the leadership styles of the involved leaders can be categorized rather into the Evangelistic and the Consultative, even though they frequently fail to insulate themselves from domestic and external influences. It is obvious that resemblances in their leadership styles seem to have kept the bilateral relations from developing into a faster track of partnership; however, a plethora of increasing intra-EU problems should be examined alongside leadership styles.

2. At-a-Distance Assessment of Political Leaders: Leadership Trait Analysis

The seven traits help the development of personality, which is underpinned by a persons reactions to constraining environmental factors and openness to information and advice; thereby leaving a discernible imprint on personal mindset and concomitantly, the foreign policy decisions of leaders [1] (p. 41). Surely, primarily institutional and other societal imperatives affect leaders' decisions, and a plethora of scholarly work elaborating this part of the issue is available; however, in cases where a leader's personality steadily replaces and outweighs the institutional ways of political decision making, in particular, the leader's cognitive and psychological traits are worthy of attention. Needless to say, the transition to a presidential system in Turkey has placed Erdogan at the fulcrum of foreign policy decision-making, thereby presumably substantiating an analysis based on leadership style. This section is allotted to the examination of the leadership styles of the Turkish and German leaders; i.e., Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Angela Merkel from 2005 through 2019. Both leaders, albeit with slightly different extents due to different political obstacles and facilities, were by and large the leading political figures determining their countries' external affairs. Both leaders befit what may be matched to the definition of strong leaders, particularly regarding their successes in motivating their constituencies and conducting personal diplomacy in international fora [2] (p. 162).

The LTA presumes that seven basic traits determine a leader's style and its influence on political processes: (a) Belief in the ability to control events (BACE), (b) Need for power (PWR), (c) Conceptual complexity (CC), (d) Self-confidence (SC), (e) Ingroup bias (IGB), (f) Distrust of others (DIS), (g) Task focus (TASK). Hermann [3] (p. 184) reveals that these seven traits provide information on how political leaders respond to constraints within the environment, process information, and what motivates them. The degree of belief in the ability to control events and aspiration for power indicate whether leaders tend to challenge or to respect the constraints of the system in which they act. High belief (BACE) and the need for power (PWR) demonstrate that leaders are predisposed to challenge the constraints. Leaders who are moderate in these traits move either toward challenging or respecting the constraints, depending on the context. These are the features of a skilful leader who can manoeuvre between these two dimensions and act according to the situation [3,4] (p. 368). Leaders whose self-confidence scores are higher than conceptual complexity tend to be closed, principled, and driven by causes. Low scores in conceptual complexity (CC) mean that leaders tend to see the world in black and white terms, make distinctions between "us" and "them" and they prefer like-minded advisors in their surroundings. High scores in task focus (TASK) mean that leaders are goal-oriented, while low scores denote that the leaders are relationship-oriented and focus on expectations and opinions of their environment [3] (p. 192). Leaders with high scores in Ingroup bias (IGB) are apt to see the world divided between 'us' and 'them' (friends and enemies) and they are prone to perceiving their group only in good aspects. Low scores point out that leaders categorize others as subject to conjuncture. Leaders with a higher score in Distrust of others (DIS) are more suspicious of others, particularly of their opponents or competitors and they are hypersensitive to criticism. A high DIS score along with a low IGB result indicates

that leaders constantly seek "taking advantage of opportunities and builds relationships while remaining vigilant" [3] (pp. 200–201).

3. Data and Method

LTA analysis provides a basis for at-a-distance content analysis when direct cooperation is impossible. The main benefit is that this analysis helps researchers study the images a leader displays in public and creates links between what is said and what is done. The analysis is quantitative and based on frequency counts in the leaders' interviews and utterances. The data are coded according to the previously established vocabulary of LTA. The coding process is conducted by the automatic Profiler Plus software [5]. The scores of each leader are compared to the scores of available reference groups of 214 leaders from around the world [3,4]. Through this comparison, one can determine whether a leader is low or high on a particular trait. The sample in this study consists of a total of 100 interviews, 50 for each leader, in the period of 2005–2019, when both leaders were in office. Each interview contains a response of no less than 100 words. The trait scores range from 0 to 1 per document. The interviews are taken from LexisNexis Academy Universe and ProQuest Databases (available in English). Even though most of the interviews targeted foreign policy actions, the aim was to analyse the leader's style by covering different types of interview settings and focusing on a variety of topics. Tables 1–4 contain the relational meanings of the traits. Based on statistical meanings, we determined the leaders' potential behaviours regarding the key conditions: response to constraints, response to information, and leader's motivation.

Table 1. Response to constraints [3] (p. 188).

Trait Interrelations for a Response to Constraints		
	Belief to Control Events	
Need for Power	Low	High
Low	Respects constraints; works within such parameters toward goals; compromise and consensus-building are important	Challenges constraints Challenges constraints but less successful because too direct and open in use of power; less able to read how to manipulate people and setting behind the scenes to acquire desired influence
High	Challenges constraints and more comfortable doing so in an indirect fashion—behind the scenes; good at being "power behind the throne" where can pull strings but are less accountable for the result.	Challenges constraints—skilful in both direct and indirect challenges

Table 2. Openness to information [3] (p. 194).

Trait Interrelations for Openness to Information	
Conceptual Complexity > Self-Confidence	Open
Self-Confidence > Conceptual Complexity	Closed
Conceptual Complexity and Self-Confidence Both High	Open
Conceptual Complexity and Self-Confidence Both Low	Closed

Table 3. Motivation assessment [3] (p. 198).

Assessing Motivation for Seeking Office	
Task Focus	Motivation
High	Problem
Moderate	Both Problem and Relationship Depending on the Context
Low	Relationship

Table 4. Motivation toward the world [3] (p. 200).

	Distrust of Others	
Ingroup Bias	Low	High
Low	The world is not a threatening place; conflicts are perceived as context-specific and reacted on a case-by-case basis; leaders recognize that their country, like many others, must deal with certain constraints that limit what one can do and call for the flexibility of response; moreover, there are certain international arenas where cooperation with others is both possible and feasible (Focus is on taking advantage of opportunities and building relationships)	The world is perceived as conflict-prone, but because other countries are viewed as having constraints on what they can do, some flexibility in response is possible; leaders, however, must vigilantly monitor developments in the international arena and prudently prepare to contain an adversary's actions while still pursuing their countries' interests (Focus is on taking advantage of opportunities and building relationships while remaining vigilant)
High	While the international system is essentially a zero-sum game, leaders view that it is bounded by a specified set of international norms; even so, adversaries are perceived as inherently threatening and confrontation is viewed to be ongoing as leaders work to limit the threat and enhance their countries' capabilities and relative status (Focus is on dealing with threats and solving problems even though some situations may appear to offer opportunities)	International politics is centred around a set of adversaries that are viewed as "evil" and intent on spreading their ideology or extending their power at the expense of others; leaders perceive that they have a moral imperative to confront these adversaries; as a result, they are likely to take risks and to engage in highly aggressive and assertive behaviour (Focus is on eliminating potential threats and problems)

4. Sustaining Turkey-EU Relations: From Preponderance of Norms to Leadership

Turkey applied to European Economic Communities (EEC) in 1959 to make an association agreement that would have made it the second country, after Greece. After its ill-fated appeal to the European Community (EC) in 1987, Ankara never ceased its engagement and consequently, in 1996, made the European Union (EU) concede the Customs Union Agreement. In 1999, Turkey acquired the status of a candidate country and eventually started accession negotiations with the Union in 2005, which have lasted up until today. Turkey has waited longer than any other candidate country for membership in the EU—although so far, no country with candidate status has been overturned by the Union. It is an undeniable fact that many serious political and economic factors such as the internal balance of the EU have played role in the prolongation of this process. Needless to say, Turkey' failure in fulfilling some conditions and standards should be added to these factors.

In addition, Turkey did not resemble those kin nations of Central and Eastern Europe, which had been left behind the Iron Curtain for a half-century before returning home. Many perceived Turkey as an outsider, a non-European nation with its controversial imperial and Islamic past. Sjursen [6] (pp. 495–505) revealed that kinship policy is based on the European presumptions that the involved nation necessarily has the following dispositions: its membership should provide the EU with economic and military benefits, the new member should be extending the European zone of democracy along with all its institutions and universal values of human rights. Sjursen [6] also cites Felipé Gonzalez's words *"we have morally to let them in"* as evidence for this policy.

In the same vein, Cordell and Wolff examined the two-dimensional kinship policies, which Germany very painstakingly pursued on the eve of the accession of Central and Eastern European countries. The first dimension concerned the German-speaking minori-

ties within the borders of these countries, whereas the second should be assessed within the larger context of the German diplomacy toward its east (so-called Ostpolitik) since the 1960s [7] (p. 290). Similarly, according to Bar and Mclaren, the insistence of Denmark and Sweden on the inclusion of Estonia and Latvia, Lithuania in the list of candidate states at the Luxembourg Summit of 1997 was a clear-cut manifestation of their deliberate kinship policies [8] (p. 22).

Notwithstanding that Turkey has never found a big European partner, which feels culturally or emotionally bounded with the Turkish nation—a dream factor, which would have accelerated its accession indeed—Germany has distinguished itself as a European benign power acting as facilitator and mediator in the favour of Turkey on many European platforms. For instance, a short while after the appeal of Turkey to EEC in 1959, a coup d'etat occurred in Turkey on 27 May 1960, which ended the negotiations on an association agreement. However, Germany sustained its relations and even two countries stroke a deal on labour recruitment in October 1961 that would provide Western Germany's recovering industry with a fresh labour force from Turkey. Furthermore, the German government persuaded the EEC countries to resume negotiations with Turkey for the association agreement, which was eventually signed in 1963 in Ankara. The labour agreement spurred an emigration wave from Turkey to Germany in the 1960s and the Turkish population in this country has increased to more than 2.5 million today thanks to some additional regulations such as the Additional Protocol in 1973 and asylum policies in the 1980s [9] (p. 209). Germany also played a pivotal role in the resumption of the Turkey-EEC Association Council meetings, which lasted until 1982 and restarted in 1986. Chancellor Gerhard Schröder also personally contributed to the efforts of Ankara to achieve candidate status from the EU in 1999.

Warm relations between the two countries are not solely the result of the presence of a large Turkish population in Germany; both countries fostered lucrative commercial relations as discerned from statistical records, which made them ultimately interdependent in economic terms. The bilateral trade volume between the two countries was recorded as 35.9 billion dollars in 2019 [10]. Germany has stood as the leading importer of Turkish goods (16.6 billion dollars in 2019) among the European countries, while Turkey has taken 15th place among the export markets for German products [11]. It is reported that there are currently more than seven thousand Turkish companies with German partners in Turkey and since the 1980s, the volume of German FDI has steadily increased by approximately 14.5 billion dollars [12].

Turkey seriously benefited from the facilitating policies of Germany, which incessantly continued during the 2000s. Full-membership negotiation started in 2005, yet they stalled for a very short while due to a crisis with the Republic of Cyprus, a member of the EU, when a Cyprus-flagged commercial ship entered the Turkish waters. Nicosia dragged the disagreement on the Turkish commitments in the Customs Union regarding free circulation of goods to substantiate its thesis that unless the Republic of Cyprus is recognized by Turkey, the accession process should not be progressed [13] (p. 611). The crisis paused the negotiations on the 14 titles. Furthermore, in early December 2016, the EU General Affairs and Foreign Relations Council decided to condition the opening of the eight pending chapters and closure of all others with the implementation of the Additional Protocol. Hence, as declared in the decision, Turkey was called to fulfil its commitments regarding the customs union, which extended to the member states including the Republic of Cyprus [14] (p. 2).

Accession negotiations, which made an unpromising start, went on with new problems in the second decade of the 2000s. Especially since 2013, the parties' intransigence has brought the accession process asunder and after the title of Financial and Budgetary Provisions in 2016, no new title could be opened. Although the European Parliament protested the Turkish side in many sessions and called the member states to suspend negotiations and launch EU sanctions against Turkey, the German Chancellor Angela Merkel particularly assumed a significant role in the appeasement of the tensions. However, the EU has grown more intransigent recently and the threat of sanctions has begun to go

beyond lip service in the halls of Brussels. On the other side, Turkey's EU prospects have been endangered more or less by the internal political developments underpinned by a new style of leadership under the Erdogan administration.

Currently, Turkey-EU relations have reached a nadir, which has never been observed since 2005, and the previously multidimensional bilateral relations have currently reduced to single-channel diplomacy dominated by the Turkish president on the Turkish end. Indeed, no politician in Turkey other than Erdogan has ever engaged with the EU and played such a decisive role in the ebbs and flows of the relations for so long. Görener and Ucal [4] (p. 375) suggested that Erdogan's tendency to personalize politics as well as his emotional and polarizing language has been a factor that has increasingly deviated Turkish foreign policy from an interest-based and principled operational basis. Interestingly, his remarks connecting security of the EU to Turkey's accession have proven true as the influx of migrants from the Middle East prompted serious reactions from xenophobic and radical groups in Europe, and even undermined democratic institutions in some member states by further strengthening right populist movements [15] (pp. 51–52). However, these days will be over soon for reasons ranging from some transformative impacts of Covid-19 on populist political groups, which will force them to retreat into their original shell, to the new administration in the White House, which will attempt to regroup and motivate the Atlantic community to cope with the growing Chinese peril. This will be a new period which will probably grow the pressure on the Erdogan administration to sustain the relations and beyond it, to redress the grievances of the EU.

At this point, as foreign policy behaviours of Chancellor Merkel and Prime Minister/President Erdogan are critical in that they are corollary of their personal characteristics, the study attempts to categorize them. It primarily concentrates on the decision-making methods of the involved leaders. According to Mintz, actors perceive decision making as a two-stage process; first, *"rejecting alternatives unacceptable to the policymaker on a critical dimension or dimensions"* then, *"selecting an alternative from the subset of remaining alternatives while maximizing benefits and minimizing risks"* [16] (p. 79). Hermann's LTA Technique is a convenient method to assess whether the two leaders act in accord with this approach and decide similarly under similar conditions. It is presumed that the findings regarding similarities and differences will provide us with some notable clues regarding how leaders managed the stormy relations between Turkey and the EU during their political tenure.

5. Findings

According to Hermann, leaders can be considered to have high or low traits when their score lies one standard deviation or more from the mean of relevant groups [3,4]. The results in Table 5 suggest that compared with reference group leaders, Recep Tayyip Erdogan's scores are average in need for power (PWR), self-confidence (SC), belief in the ability to control events (BACE), and conceptual complexity (CC), and low in other traits of task focus (TASK) and ingroup bias (IGB). However, his scores of distrust of others (DIS) are higher than those of the reference group. Angela Merkel's scores are average in the level of belief in the ability to control events (BACE) and need for power (PWR), conceptual complexity (CC), and task focus (TASK). Her self-confidence (SC) and distrust of others (DIS) are higher and her ingroup-bias (IGB) score is lower than the average reference.

As Table 5 shows, Merkel's self-confidence is higher than the average of reference. This means that the leader is satisfied with who she is and uses her sense of self-worth in the estimation of information. Erdogan's TASK score is lower than the reference group (lower than Merkel's score as well), which means that he is more relationship-oriented and wants to keep the morale and spirit of this audience at a high level. Such a leader is sensitive to what the people want and considers qualities such as loyalty and commitment as critical in constructing relations. The two leaders' BACE and PWR scores are averages that make us presume that they can go either toward challenging the situation or toward respecting constraints, depending on the context and situation. Their low score in IGB means that they are still interested in maintaining their group as separate entities and categorize others

according to the problem or context. Both leaders' scores are high in DIS comparing to the reference group. This implies that leaders are suspicious about the motives and actions of others, and this makes them hypersensitive to criticism. These leaders do things on their own and will demand loyalty from people in their environment [3] (p. 203).

The comparison of Erdogan and Merkel's LTA results shows that they differ slightly in the scores of task focus (TASK) and ingroup-bias (IGB), and significantly differ in the score of self-confidence (SC) and distrust of others (DIS). However, looking at the comparison chart we have created based on the results of the *t*-test both leaders' LTA scores, the two leaders share similar personality traits (Table 6).

Table 5. Comparison between Erdogan and Merkel's results and the reference group of 83 presidents and 214 political leaders.

LTA Characteristics	Political Leaders N = 214	Erdogan	Merkel
BACE (Belief in Ability to Control Events)	0.34 Low < 0.30 High > 0.38	0.35 (average)	0.35 (average)
PWR (Need for Power)	0.26 Low < 0.22 High > 0.30	0.26 (average)	0.26 (average)
SC (Self-Confidence)	0.36 Low < 0.27 High > 0.45	0.43 (average)	0.49 (high)
CC (Conceptual Complexity)	0.65 Low < 0.61 High > 0.69	0.61 (average)	0.61 (average)
TASK (Task Focus)	0.73 Low < 0.67 High > 0.79	0.60 (low)	0.65 (low)
IGB (Ingroup Bias)	0.51 Low < 0.44 High > 0.58	0.12 (low)	0.14 (low)
DIS (Distrust of Others)	0.01 Low < 0.01 High > 0.01	0.16 (high)	0.07 (high)

Table 6. Results of *t*-test on the comparison of Erdogan and Merkel's LTA scores.

Variables	Group	N	x̄	ss	*t*	*p*
BACE	Erdogan	50	0.353344	0.1441142	−0.068	0.946
	Merkel	50	0.354952	0.0839362		
PWR	Erdogan	50	0.618322	0.1271989	0.146	0.884
	Merkel	50	0.615004	0.0984966		
SC	Erdogan	50	0.439150	0.2316146	−1.190	0.237
	Merkel	50	0.491758	0.2098595		
CC	Erdogan	50	0.264294	0.1292299	0.049	0.961
	Merkel	50	0.263186	0.0952615		
TASK	Erdogan	50	0.607246	0.1660354	−1.536	0.128
	Merkel	50	0.653186	0.1310489		
IGB	Erdogan	50	0.125562	0.1528068	−0.860	0.393
	Merkel	50	0.146342	0.0766511		
DIS	Erdogan	50	0.169960	0.1395661	4.405	0.000 *
	Merkel	50	0.070734	0.0767510		

* There is a significant difference in Erdogan and Merkel's DIS scores. (*p* is significant at 0.01).

As explained above, Erdogan's high score in DIS implies that he is suspicious about the motives and actions of others. Thus, he perceives the world as conflict-prone "because other states are viewed as having constraints on what they can do" [3] (p. 200). This trait

reflects the tendency to suspect others' motives and actions. The content of this tendency helps us understand a leader's attitude toward the world. Leaders with a high DIS score like Erdogan are always cautious and sceptical of external factors. They mostly tend to see others as potential rivals to their own positions. Leaders with a high DIS score usually demand unconditional loyalty from the people around them and act with a narrow group of people they trust. Leaders with a high DIS score develop oversensitive reactions against criticism [4] (p. 368); [3,17]. His scores in self-confidence, ingroup bias, and task focus are lower than Merkel, which implies that he will act more carefully, depending on the context and the surrounding environment. This indicates that Erdogan is a more relationship-oriented leader than Angela Merkel.

Merkel's higher scores in self-confidence, in-group bias, and task focus indicate that she is more immune to incoming information and considers the international system as bounded by a special set of norms. This leader is problem-oriented and will work to downsize the threats and enhance the state's relative status. Finally, the two leaders seem closed to incoming information, and both are challenging and respecting the constraints according to the context and environment—a hint of recalcitrance that worked to the favour of sustaining the relations against all odds. In a broad comparison with the reference group of 214 leaders, they are both styled as relationship-focused (low TASK focus) leaders and thus can be profiled as Evangelist-Consultative leaders (Table 7).

Table 7. Leadership Style as a Function of Responsiveness to Constraints, Openness to Information, and Motivation [3] (p. 185).

Responsiveness to Constraints	Openness to Information	Motivation	
		Problem Focus	**Relationship Focus**
Challenges constraints	Closed	**Expansionistic** (Focus is on expanding one's power and influence)	**Evangelistic** (Focus is on persuading others to accept one's message and join one's cause)
Respect constraints	Closed	**Directive** (Focus is on personally guiding policy along paths consistent with one's views while still working within the norms and rules of one's position)	**Consultative** (Focus is on monitoring that important others will support, or not actively oppose, what one wants to do in a particular situation)

Leaders with a low task focus score focus on the expectations and views of their support bases when it comes to solving problems or making the necessary decisions. By considering the clues coming from their followers, they avoid the actions that are thought to be unrealizable by their voter bases [4] (p. 368). When Erdogan and Merkel's low TASK focus, IGB and high DIS scores are evaluated together, it can be inferred that the needs and demands of the voters are taken into account. These leaders are sensitive about maintaining the loyalty of their followers and keeping their morale high. Erdogan's low TASK score indicates that he will avoid taking the risk of alienating his support base in a decision-making and implementation process. Yavuz [17] (p. 134), who emphasized the 'Relationship Focus' trait of Erdogan, states that such leaders can be in a dilemma because of the risk of losing their support if they do not fulfil the demands of their bases. To clarify, although their personal traits are similar, the comparison of the two leaders' scores indicates that Merkel is more problem-oriented than Erdogan, and thus, her leadership style falls between Expansionist and Directive leader. Erdogan is found as a more relationship-oriented leader, and hence, his profile falls between the Evangelist and Consultative leadership style.

Then, what kind of connections can we make between the findings on personal characteristics of both leaders and their foreign policy behaviours? the average BACE trait of both leaders can be explained by the fact that two leaders remained in power for a very long period. Leaders, who are faced with diverse events against their power at government, concentrate on 'managing the emergent situations' rather than controlling the events. A similar finding was reached for the PWR trait. On common issues such as the Syrian refugee crisis, both leaders adopted the path of cooperation in order to minimize the adverse impacts of the crisis on the EU and especially on domestic politics, instead of adopting a challenging policy in the first place. According to the findings, Merkel being above the reference average in terms of self-confidence is the most striking data in the Table. On the other hand, it is predictable for Erdogan to have more cautious rhetoric in foreign policy, despite an opposite rhetoric regarding domestic affairs, as a leader who has more constraints and controls due to a relatively foreign-dependent economy. The average level of the CC trait of both leaders can be explained by the fact that their policies aimed at conservative voters force them on a more limited conceptual field in terms of rhetoric and language use.

On the other hand, the fact that Erdogan is a politician who is constantly focused on winning elections forces him to enter into alliances that will win elections instead of being task-oriented and to act between ideological camps. For this reason, his performance on TASK remained in the background compared to Merkel, who led the CDU, which as a political party has more concrete institutional characteristics. On the other hand, the findings by Kesgin [18] (p. 70), who applied a similar method (LTA), revealed that Erdogan's TASK score diverged in terms of domestic and foreign policy. This divergence corresponds to a high TASK focus score based on domestic interviews; however, in the international arena, it approves Erdogan's tendency to establish personal relationships and relationship-oriented behaviours through the low TASK focus score that became evident in his international interviews. While a similar situation is valid for EU policy, even if the relationship and dialogues with Merkel did not lead to progress for membership, they were effective in sustaining Turkey's dialogue process with the EU.

Moreover, very few politicians with party founder identities remain around Erdogan at present, which explains why Erdogan's DIS trait seems high. Again, in terms of DIS trait, Merkel also had troubles first in reconciling with many European leaders both in the Syrian crisis and in the 2008 financial crisis, and second in finding partners to trust. When low IGB and high DIS scores are evaluated together, this provides an idea about the capacity of leaders to turn advantages into opportunities. Both leaders exhibited many examples of this situation during their long periods of power. For example, Erdogan's "one-minute" intervention at the Davos Summit transformed him into a popular leader among the Arab streets for a while in "precious loneliness", while the loneliness he fell into after losing this popularity in the post-Arab Spring period led him to look for his own way out in authoritarianism. Interestingly, along this process where the hostile discourse has been on the rise, the foreign trade volume between Turkey and Israel has also increased by 50% from 2010 to 2015 [19] (p. 90). Based on the aforementioned findings and the links between LTAs and foreign policy behaviour, we can now discuss the course of bilateral relations and how they have been sustained in the following last section.

6. Discussion and Concluding Remarks: Sustaining Relations against All Odds

Erdogan and his ruling party have been uninterruptedly in power since 2002, having a longer tenure than Merkel who has been in charge since 2005. The bilateral relations between the two countries saw series of ebbs and flows and two leaders occasionally came at loggerheads with their European counterparts because of their stand particularly during the Syrian crisis, which unleashed an army of refugees to pile up at their own borders. Turkey also found itself in turmoil because of growing disagreements with its Euro-Atlantic partners during this period, which was inherited in the coup attempt in 2016 summer, the escalated crisis with the NATO upon Ankara's decision to purchase the

Russian S-400 air defence systems and the Syrian refugees using Turkey as a springboard for their final destinations in the EU countries. This disagreement aggravated with the recent crisis with the Eastern Mediterranean neighbours, primarily Greece and Cyprus, in the summer of 2020 on maritime boundaries and Economic Exclusive Zones following the discovery of rich hydrocarbon sources in the region. Despite increasingly chilly relations with the West, the recalcitrant Turkish leader found a respectively lenient and coolheaded Merkel spending a large effort to keep Ankara-EU relations from being taken off its hinges. Ostensibly leadership traits of the leaders as well as mutual economic and political benefits played a decisive role in keeping Turkey in the orbit of the EU. Hermann's LTA helps us figure out especially the first part of the story.

First, both leaders' BACE scores stand at the average level, which implies that even though they acknowledge external results, both leaders give priority to internal public opinion and try to protect their votes in emerging crises. During the Syrian refugee crisis, both Merkel and Erdogan primarily opted to ameliorate the domestic tensions and placed the dimension of the crisis involving European security in the second place in their agendas. Erdogan's strategy toward the EU during the refugee crisis also confirms his average score of BACE, which reveals his proneness to relation-focused interaction also. Thanks to these characteristics, despite the huge asymmetry in between, Erdogan managed to acquire an advantageous position, which enabled him to dictate his demands on the EU. His meetings with Merkel also unveiled his problem-solving oriented style; i.e., his preponderance to foster inter-personal relations to overcome institutional or normative constraints.

As frequently observed, Erdogan never attempted to conceal his pugnacious personality while addressing his European counterparts, yet, his recalcitrance seems inherited to large extent in his leadership profile rather than what he represents as a national leader. Yet the latter should not be underestimated; Erdogan's average self-confidence can be observed in his behaviour, his body language and of course the ways how to express his opinions to the other parties; a politician posing confident, strong as he stands as the representative of a rising power, which managed to the centuries-old gap in the symmetry with the West. Needless to say, domestic pressures and concerns of consolidating electoral constituency as well as thorny relations with the EU must have driven Erdogan to assume an attitude of a diehard leader.

As for the PWR trait, both leaders have shown an average performance. As the conservative right parties' heads, both leaders strive to consolidate their control on decision-making through ensuring loyalty among the party's rank and file as well as their constituencies. Both leaders have entrenched electoral support, which enables them to float their party and retain its leading position even in the face of serious political crises. As long as their electoral constituencies tend to identify the party with its leader and see their performances identical, they eschew embarking upon structural changes, which will reorganize the intra-party distribution of power to make it less leader-oriented. This tendency is also observed in the CC (Conceptual Complexity) scores of the leaders; they do not instigate new conceptual discourses unless they believe their potential to provide them with significant advantages such as snatching voters away from their rivals. Erdogan rather acts as the leader at the medium/low CC level, as pointed out by Hermann [3] (pp. 195–196), he is disposed of acting quickly, sometimes without sufficiently deliberating, in anticipation of swift positive returns. These traits seem to have furnished Turkey with some certain short-term gains in its relations with the EU, yet they have been harmful to a large extent in terms of the long-range policies, which are primarily destined to make the country a full member of the Union. His disposition to lean on issues on an ad-hoc basis has prevented him to be in tune with the EU's standard norm-oriented political processes and consequently to see the structural problems of Turkey through the European lenses. Under these circumstances, Turkey has continued to distance further itself from the EU with recent interlocking problems.

As for the SC score of Merkel, it is high and naturally reflects the level of self-confidence as the head of the leading economic and political power not only in the EU but

also on the global scale. Middelhoff, Schijvenaars and De Landtsheer [20], who analysed the effect of Merkel's personality traits on the EU-level performance by employing a different method, remarked that this self-confident plus reconciliatory character of Merkel helped her impress the interlocutors and gain their support to her policies in domestic and EU level platforms. On the other side, Erdogan, actually governing a state occupying a very critical geopolitical location, has suffered from a variety of problems with the EU, USA and Russia, and also from a declining economy. Consequently, he has faced a serious loss of image undermining his self-confidence in political fora forcing him to pursue a middle course with his interlocutors. The low TASK and IGB scores of both leaders can be explained with the second stage of the Poliheuristic Theory of Mintz. As the scores imply, both conservative leaders primarily observe the maintenance of the status quo and abstain from seeking a solution in extensive structural reorganizations; in other words, they act very painstakingly in keeping political risks to a minimum as trying to maximize their interests.

In this study, the only trait that both leaders have a high score in is DIS. Both Merkel and Erdogan are the leaders who govern their nations over a long period. Both leaders worked with a constantly changing army of staff and political partners along with their tenures. It can be extrapolated from the findings that both leaders preferred to act pragmatically and never cast their lots with specific partners and without hesitating they replace them with new ones when needed. The above-average score of distrust in Erdogan tells us that he acts painstaking in his engagements with the EU leaders including even Merkel. In addition, although he is keen on the benefits his country reaps from close relations with the EU, he has not hesitated in overtly expressing his distrust with the EU authorities on several platforms. He repeatedly underlined unfair treatment the EU meted out by reneging on its promise of full membership after kept Turkey waiting for years in front of its door. Hermann remarks that experiences and remindful actions feed distrust of leaders [3]; hence, it is not surprising that a leader like Erdogan, who has personally observed the drastic change in the attitudes of the EU for almost 20 years, has grown suspicious about the reliability of his European partners. On the other side, EU's reprimands and critiques, which at many points intersect with protests and warnings of the political opposition in Turkey must have given him the impression that the EU entirely loses its impartiality. This is one of the major reasons why a politically conservative leader, left alone in foreign policy, shifts towards an even more authoritarian administration model to sustain his power.

As a result, the last decade of Erdogan's long political tenure can be characterized by a deepening turmoil in the Turkey-EU relations with constant escalations and de-escalations, the latter thanks to the efforts of Merkel, and ad hoc rather than durable solutions to the disagreements. It can be extrapolated from the arguments above that similar leadership styles of Erdogan and Merkel have played a certain role in sustaining the EU-Turkey relations so far. However, they failed to place bilateral relations on a faster track of partnership and integration now that the EU has long been preoccupied with the financial crisis, and exhausting problems of deepening and enlargement; a political setting, which will probably drive the Turkish and German leaders to trust their intuitions to navigate in those dark waters.

Appendix A. List of Interviews from LexisNexis

A.1. Erdogan's Interviews

2ND ROUNDUP: EU membership would make Turkey model for Islamic world, say Erdogan. 3 September 2003, **Deutsche Presse-Agentur,** LexisNexis 12 May 2020.

A Conversation with Turkey's Prime Minister in Washington. 8 December 2009, **The Charlie Rose Show**, LexisNexis 12 May 2020.

An Interview with the Turkish Prime Minister. 13 April 2010, **CNN International CNN's AMANPOUR,** LexisNexis 12 May 2020.

Bush Meets with Turkey's Erdogan at White House; President pledges U.S. support for Turkish EU membership. 10 December 2002, **State Department,** LexisNexis 12 May 2020.

Bush/Blair Meeting; U.S. Milk Supply; GM Layoffs; Erdogan Interview. 7 June 2005, **CNN CNN WOLF BLITZER REPORTS,** LexisNexis 12 May 2020.

Conversation with Recep Tayyip Erdogan. 28 April 2014, **The Charlie Rose Show,** LexisNexis 12 May 2020.

Discussion With Prime Minister of Turkey. 14 September 2005, **The Charlie Rose Show,** LexisNexis 12 May 2020.

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Erdogan reveals Turkey is set to follow the UK's lead with a Brexit-like referendum on whether or not they should join the European Union. 25 March 2017, **MailOnline,** LexisNexis 12 May 2020.

Erdogan says he will not accept any delay of European Union entry Turkey's Membership. 6 October 2004, **Associated Press International,** LexisNexis 12 May 2020.

Erdogan: EU trying to compel Turkey to withdraw from accession process. 13 November 2016, **Press TV,** LexisNexis 12 May 2020.

Exclusive Interview with Recep Tayyip Erdogan. 7 September 2012, **CNN INTERNATIONAL CNN'S AMANPOUR,** LexisNexis 12 May 2020.

Interview with Recep Tayyip Erdogan. 24 November 2003, **CNN INTERNATIONAL INSIGHT,** LexisNexis 12 May 2020.

Interview with Recep Tayyip Erdogan; Interview with Ethar El- Katatney. 21 September 2011, **The Charlie Rose Show,** LexisNexis 12 May 2020.

Interview with the Turkish President; Carnage in Beirut After Multiple Suicide Bombings; Peshmerga Forces Look to Retake Sinjar; EU to Give Billions to Africa to Address Migrant Crisis; Combating Human Trafficking. Aired 3–4p ET. 12 November 2015, **CNN INTERNATIONAL WORLD RIGHT NOW WITH HALA GORANI,** LexisNexis 12 May 2020.

Interview with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. No Evidence Russia Plans Attacks Inside Syria; Britain Announces It Will Accept 20,000 Refugees Over Next Five Years; Recent Deaths No Deterrent For Migrants Desperate To Get To Europe; Stopping Price Tag Attack In Israel No East Task. Aired 11a–12p ET. 7 September 2015, **CNN INTERNATIONAL CONNECT THE WORLD,** LexisNexis 12 May 2020.

Interview with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan; Imagine a World. Aired 2–2:30p ET. 31 March 2016, **CNN INTERNATIONAL CNN'S AMANPOUR,** LexisNexis 11 May 2020.

Interview With Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan; Interview With Sergey Lavrov; Interview With Jose Manuel Barroso. 25 September 2011, **CNN FAREED ZAKARIA GPS,** LexisNexis 12 May 2020.

Interviews with Goodluck Jonathan, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and Kofi Annan. 18 April 2010, **CNN International CNN'S AMANPOUR,** LexisNexis 11 May 2020.

MONDAY INTERVIEW: RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN PRIME MINISTER OF TURKEY: TAKING PART IN THE EU WILL BRING HARMONY OF CIVILISATIONS—IT IS THE PROJECT OF THE CENTURY". 13 December 2004, **The Independent (London),** Lexis-Nexis, 12 May 2020.

Nation makes final call on Turkey's EU membership: Erdogan. 15 November 2016, **Press TV,** LexisNexis 12 May 2020.

Newsweek: Exclusive Interview: Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Prime Minister of Turkey. 22 March 2003, **PR Newswire,** LexisNexis 11 May 2020.

PRIME MINISTER OF THE UNITED KINGDOM TONY BLAIR HOLDS A NEWS CONFERENCE WITH TURKISH PRIME MINISTER RECEP ERDOGAN. 16 December 2006, **Congressional Quarterly,** LexisNexis 12 May 2020.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan discusses terrorism, relations with the US and membership in the European Union. 8 June 2005, **NPR All Things Considered,** LexisNexis 11 May 2020.

RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN, PRESIDENT OF TURKEY, IS INTERVIEWED ON CNN'S "AMANPOUR" REGARDING SYRIAN REFUGEES AND POLITICS, 31 March 2016, **Financial Markets Regulatory Wire,** LexisNexis 11 May 2020.

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Turkey's Erdogan rejects option of EU partnership, urges full membership. 4 February 2018, **Press TV,** LexisNexis 11 May 2020.

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Turkey's president Erdogan is 'tired' of sluggish European Union membership process and says the bloc has left his country 'waiting outside the door'. 6 January 2018, **MailOnline,** LexisNexis 12 May 2020.

TURKEY-EU: WE ASK FOR FULL MEMBERSHIP, SAYS ERDOGAN. 7 July 2009, **ANSAmed—English,** LexisNexis 12 May 2020.

Turkish PM tells Russian paper about economic successes, EU membership roadblocks. 23 November 2013, **BBC Monitoring Former Soviet Union,** LexisNexis 11 May 2020.

Turkish premier escalates criticism of Germany during visit to Berlin. 2 November 2011, **BBC Monitoring Europe**, LexisNexis 12 May 2020.

Turkish premier on fight against PKK, ties with USA, EU membership. 5 November 2007, **BBC Monitoring Europe,** LexisNexis 11 May 2020.

Turkish president interviewed ahead of Italy visit. 5 February 2018, **BBC Monitoring Europe,** LexisNexis 12 May 2020.

Turks wants to reach "contemporary standards of Europe"—premier. 11 April 2008, **BBC Monitoring Europe,** LexisNexis 12 May 2020.

A.2. Merkel's Interviews

ABC NEWS NOW/SPECIAL REPORT #2. 30 April 2007, LexisNexis 13 May 2020.

ABC NEWS NOW/SPECIAL REPORT #6. 4 January 2007, LexisNexis 13 May 2020.

Cameron To Meet EU Leaders In Brussels; EU Parliament To Hold Special Session; European Stocks Rise In Early Trade; Italian Prime Minister Says Brexit Could Be Great Opportunity; Italian PM Says Italy Will Ensure Its Banks Are Secure; Labour's Corbyn Faces No-Confidence Vote, Is Defiant Amid Cabinet Exodus; Merkel Says No Brexit Talks Until Article 50 Invoked, Says Close Ties To UK Will Continue; Merkel Says EU Must Learn Lessons From UK's Exit. Aired 4–5a ET. 28 June 2016, **CNN NEWSROOM,** LexisNexis 13 May 2020.

German CDU leader Merkel says wants to prevent grand coalition with SPD. 16 August 2005, **BBC Monitoring Europe,** LexisNexis 13 May 2020.

GERMAN CHANCELLOR ANGELA MERKEL DELIVERS REMARKS BEFORE A JOINT SESSION OF CONGRESS. 3 November 2009, **CQ Transcriptions,** LexisNexis 13 May 2020.

German chancellor answers readers' questions on Syria, EU issues. 10 September 2013, **BBC Monitoring Europe,** LexisNexis 13 May 2020.

German chancellor argues for rule of law dialogue, close contacts with China. 1 February 2012, **BBC Monitoring Europe**, LexisNexis 13 May 2020.

German chancellor defends "tough" measures. 7 July 2006, **BBC Monitoring Europe,** LexisNexis 13 May 2020.

German chancellor defends EU achievements, purpose. 23 March 2007, **BBC Monitoring Europe,** LexisNexis 13 May 2020.

German chancellor discusses USA trip, torture issue, Russian relations. 9 January 2006, **BBC Monitoring Europe,** LexisNexis 13 May 2020.

German Chancellor Gives Update On Coronavirus; World Economies Launch Giant Stimulus Package; E.U. Leaders Give Update On Coronavirus; E.U. To Close European Borders To Outside Travelers; S&P Global: Virus Has Led To Global Recession; IATA Asks Governments For Broad Tax Relief; U.S. Stocks Rally On Coronavirus Stimulus Plans. Aired 3–4p ET. 17 March 2020, **CNN INTERNATIONAL QUEST MEANS BUSINESS,** LexisNexis 13 May 2020.

German chancellor interviewed on Russia, Europe, trade agreement with USA. 9 December 2014, **BBC Monitoring Europe,** LexisNexis 13 May 2020.

German chancellor on domestic politics, Afghan mission, ties with France. 3 March 2008, **BBC Monitoring Europe,** LexisNexis 13 May 2020.

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German chancellor warns EU to focus on global competitiveness. 3 June 2013, **BBC Monitoring Europe,** LexisNexis 13 May 2020.

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Interview with the First Female Chancellor and the Most Powerful Woman in the World; Angela Merkel, German Chancellor, is Interviewed About Europe and America; Ron Howard's New Documentary About Luciano Pavarotti; Ron Howard, Director, "Pavarotti," is Interviewed About his New Documentary, "Pavarotti." Aired 1–2p ET. 28 May 2019, **CNN INTERNATIONAL CNN'S AMANPOUR,** LexisNexis 13 May 2020.

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Merkel Give First In-Depth U.S. Network Interview; Merkel Assesses Green Surge in European Elections; 11th Person Dies on Crowed Mount Everest; Theresa May, Best Option for UK is Leaving Eu with a Deal; U.S. President Wraps Up State Visit to Japan; 55 Inmates Killed in String of Prison Riots in Brazil; The Mission to Collect Evidence of Syrian's Alleged War Crimes; Interview, Stephen Rapp, Former Chief Prosecutions, International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, Evidence of Syrian War Crimes; Netanyahu Threatens Fresh Elections As Government Deadline Looms; Facebook Execs to Defy Canadian Subpoena. Aired 11a–12p ET. 28 May 2019, **CNN INTERNATIONAL CONNECT THE WORLD,** LexisNexis 13 May 2020.

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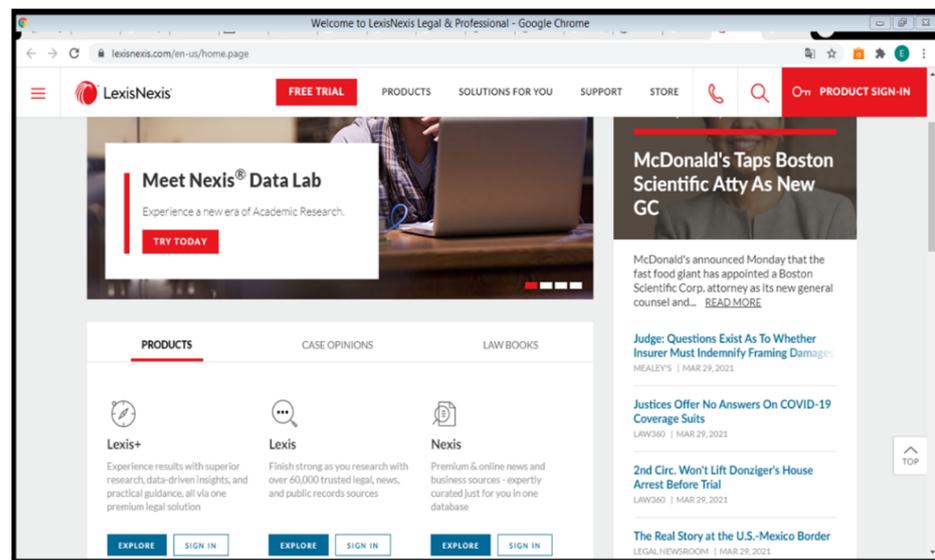
Appendix B.

Figure A1. Screenshot of the 'LexisNexis' Data Search Programme.

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