

THE IMAGE OF GERMANY IN TÜRKİYE

AN ANALYSIS OF THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE TURKISH MEDIA OVER THE LAST 20 YEARS

CEM DALAMAN

IPC
ISTANBUL POLICY CENTER
SABANCI UNIVERSITY
STIFTUNG MERCATOR INITIATIVE

THE IMAGE OF GERMANY IN TÜRKİYE

AN ANALYSIS OF THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE TURKISH MEDIA OVER THE LAST 20 YEARS

CEM DALAMAN

December 2023

Cem Dalaman is a 2022/23 Mercator-IPC Fellow at IPC.

The interpretations and conclusions made in this paper belong solely to the author and do not reflect IPC's official position.

About Istanbul Policy Center

Istanbul Policy Center (IPC) is a global policy research institution that specializes in key social and political issues ranging from democratization to climate change, transatlantic relations to conflict resolution and mediation. IPC organizes and conducts its research under three main clusters: the Istanbul Policy Center-Sabancı University-Stiftung Mercator Initiative, Democratization and Institutional Reform, and Conflict Resolution and Mediation. Since 2001, IPC has provided decision makers, opinion leaders, and other major stakeholders with objective analyses and innovative policy recommendations.
www.ipc.sabanciuniv.edu

About the Mercator-IPC Fellowship Program

The Mercator-IPC Fellowship Program is the cornerstone of the IPC-Sabancı University-Stiftung Mercator Initiative. The program aims to strengthen the academic, political, and social ties between Turkey and Germany, as well as Turkey and Europe, by facilitating excellent scientific research and hands-on policy work. It is based on the belief that in an increasingly globalized world, the acquisition of knowledge and an exchange of ideas and people are the preconditions for meeting the challenges of the 21st century.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROLOGUE AND INTRODUCTION 4

TASK AND APPROACH 5

STATE OF RESEARCH AND RESEARCH GAPS 6

THE CHOICE OF MEDIUM AND SELECTED NEWSPAPER SOURCES 7

SELECTION CRITERIA FOR ARTICLES 9

TOPICS AND REPORTING FORMATS 10

MOOD AND STEREOTYPES 13

DEVELOPMENT OF REPORTING ON GERMANY OVER TIME 15

A DUALISTIC PICTURE WITH STABLE AND FLEXIBLE DIMENSIONS 20

FACTORS THAT DETERMINE THE DISCOURSE 21

KEY FINDINGS 23

EPILOGUE 25

INTERVIEWS 26

APPENDIX 27

BIBLIOGRAPHY 31

PROLOGUE AND INTRODUCTION

"You can recognize a good journalist by the fact that he does not make himself common with a cause, not even a good cause; that he is always there, but never part of it," said my journalistic role model, the great television presenter and journalist Hans Joachim Friedrichs, in an interview in German newsmagazine *Der Spiegel*.[1]

This clever formulation delineates the task of journalists in a democracy: to describe social reality objectively and thus ensure the citizen's ability to exercise the freedom to make decisions. However, today, the fundamental democratic mandate of the media is in danger worldwide. Rulers' or political parties' increasing influence over the media is anything but a marginal phenomenon. This development has spread like wildfire worldwide in the first two decades of the 21st century. In many countries, right-wing and nationalist populism is seeing considerable success in deforming the media—and Türkiye seems to be following the same path. Politically dissenting voices are marginalized instead of being allowed to engage in democratic debate.

With the support of the Istanbul Policy Center (IPC) and the Mercator Foundation, I spent six months as a Mercator-IPC Fellow in Istanbul. As a journalist of many years standing and a political scientist with a PhD, I wanted to reflect on the media and its role in society and examine the image of Germany in the Turkish media over the last 20 years. My aim was to understand how the media influences perceptions and thus relations between the two countries. For me, the question also has a personal meaning. I carry two hearts in my chest, both in terms of the two languages I speak equally well and because of my background, socialization, life circumstances, and knowledge. Though a native of Istanbul, I have lived in Berlin for over forty years. As a journalist, I am familiar with the central social debates, political events, relevant decisions, and moods among the German population; I have been working for German public Radio (ARD) programs for more than 20 years. However, I have always remained personally connected to my birthplace and my family's home in Türkiye; simultaneously, as a journalist, I am concerned with the situation in the country. I have always been aware of the country's internal political difficulties. Dealing with both sides' respective images and prejudices has been part of my entire journalistic life. The present work represents an attempt to deepen my experience and knowledge with new insights garnered through the study that I was able to carry out throughout the duration of my fellowship.

1 H.J. Friedrichs, "Cool bleiben, nicht kalt," *Der Spiegel*, 13/1995, p. 112.

TASK AND APPROACH

For years, one can read many headlines in Turkish newspapers that portray Germany and its role in relations with Türkiye in a negative light, like in the following paragraph:

> Racist attacks and pressures against Turks in Germany are unceasing. Pressures on businessmen of Turkish origin through the finance ministry, refusal to hire Turks who admire Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and even refusal to rent a house elicit comments that Hitler's Germany has come to life again.[2]

This excerpt from an op-ed in a popular newspaper for a conservative audience integrates various stereotypes about Germany in Türkiye. Nevertheless, it is worth asking whether this kind of discursive representation of Germany can be found similarly in different newspapers and over other periods. Today, as relations have been in a state of crisis since the Gezi protests in 2013, the question arises as to whether the image of Germany in the press is uniform in all newspapers and how and why it has changed over time.

The project aims to understand and document the emergence of the image of Germany in the Turkish media and to decipher particular periods in bilateral relations as identified within Turkish newspapers. For this purpose, exemplary reports of Germany in Turkish newspapers over the last few years were analyzed, and interviews with political actors and media makers in Türkiye were conducted. To this end, this project took the following questions into consideration when formulating the research strategy for this report:

- Which structures, events, and political contexts were decisive in shaping this image?
- Did pro-government journalists or certain media contribute to the escalation of relations and provide ammunition for political actors?
- What other factors could have contributed to the image, particularly to adverse change?
- What patterns and stereotypes were used in the discussion about Germany in the Turkish media?
- How was former German Chancellor Angela Merkel perceived in the Turkish press? What was liked or not liked about her, and why?

The research accompanying this project is two-fold:

First, a detailed analysis of 528 articles that were published in 11 Turkish newspapers from 2005 to 2021 was conducted to obtain a quantitative perspective on the topics reported and the sentiment and stereotypes deployed in the Turkish media.

Second, a total of 35 interviews were conducted to deepen the results of the quantitative analysis in this study. The interview partners were a broad selection of journalists and political decision-makers who have a personal connection to Türkiye-Germany relations. Only five wanted to be named. The information from the remaining interview partners is considered only as background information.

2 Hakan Öztürk, "Merkel'in Almanya'sı baskı ve nefrette Hitleri solladı," *Yeni Akit*, July 25, 2017, p. 1.

STATE OF RESEARCH AND RESEARCH GAPS

The construction of media relations between Germany and Türkiye has been analyzed in several academic studies and journalistic accounts. However, there is a significant imbalance in favor of publications on the image of Türkiye in the German media and the use of Turkish media in Germany. The image of Germany in the Turkish media is relatively underrepresented.

Three studies, all of which focus on a period in time or deal with a concrete topic related to Germany-Türkiye relations (e.g., immigration), stand out for their comprehensive look into the subject of German-Turkish media relations:

Şeref Ateş's study *German-Turkish Relations in the Turkish Press* is a comprehensive work that deals with German-Turkish media relations from 1999 to 2009 through various case studies.[3]

Gökçe Yurdakul's study *Media, Migrants and Politics: Comparative Study of Media Representations of Immigrants in Australia and Germany*, published in 2020, is a comparative analysis of the representation of immigration and immigrants in the Turkish media.[4]

A third study, Irem Atasoy's "The Representation of Germany in the Turkish Press: A linguistic media discourse analysis using the Example of News about the visa practice for Turks in selected newspaper reports (*Die Darstellung Deutschlands in der türkischen Presse: Eine linguistische Mediendiskursanalyse am Beispiel der Nachrichten über Visumpraxis für Türken in ausgewählten Zeitungsnachrichten*)"[5] includes news reports published in Turkish daily *Hürriyet* between January 1 and March 31, 2011 that discuss the German visa regime for Türkiye. Among other topics, the text includes a discussion of the discourse on Germany in selected Turkish newspapers.

In recent years (largely in 2016/2017), various newspaper articles have dealt with the image of Germany in the Turkish media; in these articles, the situation of the Turkish press is also repeatedly scrutinized.[6]

The present work aims to update the research on this topic. In the existing studies, the media coverage of the political situation in the two countries, despite its central role in shaping public opinion, hardly receives any attention. This study aims to fill this gap. The discourse analysis aims to uncover the rules and patterns of interpretation in reporting on Germany in the Turkish media and explain which political, ideological, or economic interests lie behind them. Understanding which processes, actors, and systems influence or determine this is essential for the research process and interpreting the results.

3 Şeref Ateş, *German-Turkish relations in the Turkish press* (Würzburg, Germany: Königshausen & Neumann, 2011).

4 Gökçe Yurdakul, *Media, Migrants and Politics: Comparative Study of Media Representations of Immigrants in Australia and Germany* (Förderer: Berliner Universitätsallianz (BUA), 2021), https://www.bim.hu-berlin.de/de/pers/leitung/yurdakul/goekce.

5 Irem Atasoy, "Die Darstellung Deutschlands in der türkischen Presse: Eine linguistische Mediendiskursanalyse am Beispiel der Nachrichten über Visumpraxis für Türken in ausgewählten Zeitungsnachrichten," *Temeswarer Beiträge zur Germanistik* 17 (2020): 87–104.

6 For example: Yavuz Baydar, "Kein freies Wort mehr," *Die Tageszeitung*, May 21, 2021, www.taz.de/Medienlandschaft-in-der-Tuerkei/!5773898/; Ricarda Breyton, "Fehlen nur die Gaskammern. Die gibt es bald bestimmt auch," *Die Welt*, April 6, 2017, www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article163489575/Fehlen-nur-die-Gaskammern-Die-gibt-es-bald-bestimmt-auch.html.

THE CHOICE OF MEDIUM AND SELECTED NEWSPAPER SOURCES

Despite the competition among media sources, newspapers remain an integral part of the daily procurement and dissemination of information in Türkiye and are one of the most essential sources of media. Since the 2010s, the political influence in media outlets has spread into a new dimension—many media houses today belong to larger holding companies that are economically dependent on contracts influenced by the government. With this background, newspapers have taken on a unique role as a projection surface for the politicization of the media and as a mirror for prevailing ideologies.

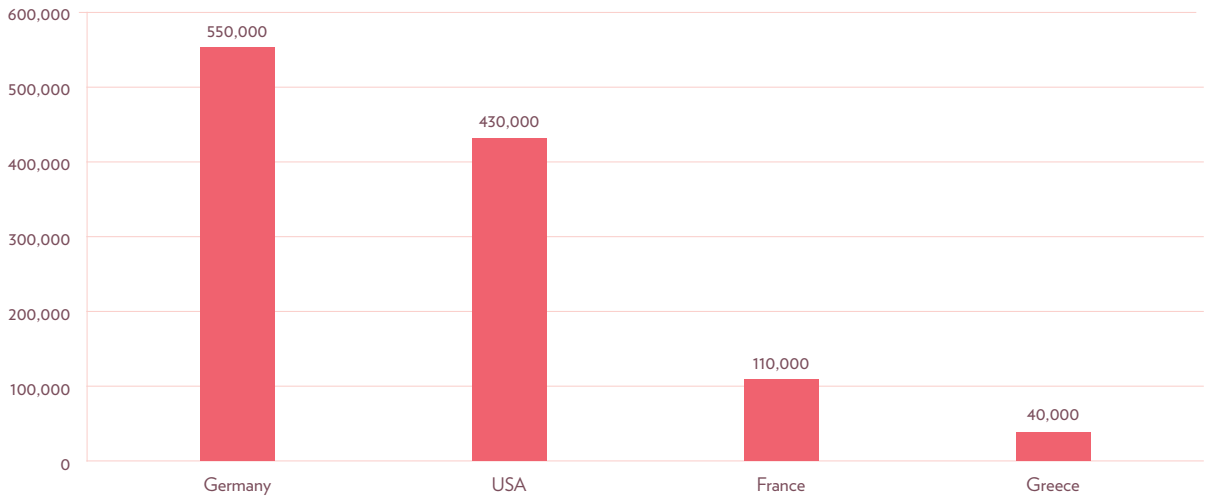
This study uses articles from the Turkish newspapers mentioned below that take up the topic of Germany-Türkiye relations in different ways, specified further later in this text. These newspapers position themselves in the immediate political context between the two countries and have influenced the Turkish population's perception of Germany and legitimized certain political articulations.

The specific focus on newspapers in this study is due to the fact that printed text can be analyzed more thoroughly and easily than television, which offers fewer archived and accessible sources. In the meantime, while other sources—e.g., television and social media—are nevertheless relevant, they are neglected in this study. These sources should be dealt with in a separate article.

Between 2005 and 2021, according to the data collected for this study, 40 Turkish newspapers published well over 550,000 reports, articles, and commentaries on Germany (e.g., political and economic current affairs, sports, fashion, etc.).

Interestingly, compared to the reporting on other countries that are considered to have important relationships with Türkiye (e.g., the United States, France, or Greece), the number of articles on Germany is far higher (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1: Country presence in overall reporting



As alluded to above, there were about 40 newspapers available for readers in Türkiye during the period in question. This number only includes newspapers distributed nationwide and not regional or local newspapers, or newspapers that describe themselves as minority newspapers such as the Armenian newspaper *Agos* or non-Turkish-language newspapers.

This study is based on articles from 11 Turkish newspapers between September 1, 2005 and December 31, 2021, i.e., parallel to the period of Angela Merkel's chancellorship. The newspapers used in this analysis are *Hürriyet, Sabah, Milliyet, Yeni Akit, Yeni Şafak, Güneş, Evrensel, Takvim, Birgün, Sözcü,* and *Cumhuriyet*. These newspapers are the only ones that have a completely (or at least sufficient for investigation in the sense that all articles could be accessed for textual analysis) accessible electronic archive of articles since 2005.

Another selection criterion was that these newspapers have a high circulation, are frequently read and quoted, and serve a broad readership with different interests and intellectual levels (circulation data is publicly available on the websites of the papers or in other published media data; frequent quotations are not measured but based on the author's experience of frequent readership and journalistic practice). Taken as a whole, they represent newspapers from a broad spectrum of political affiliations, from those that are generally considered pro-government to those that define themselves as oppositional newspapers.

Some of the newspapers mentioned, such as *Hürriyet* and *Sabah*, have specific editions in Turkish language only available in Germany that are printed for the Turkish community living in Germany. The wording of these editions is about 90% the same as the Turkish editions published in Türkiye. As for the other 10%, the sparse editorial staff in Germany writes articles about the particular concerns of Turks living in Germany in consultation with the central editorial staff, which the Turkish editorial staff includes in the daily edition with German advertisements. This study does not include these mostly regional reports on Germany in these "special editions" in its observations because of their lack of quantity and relevance (e.g., sports news, weddings, shop openings, and other social topics). Most of the study corpus is published via the archives of the respective newspapers and is thus publicly accessible. Further characterization of the selected newspapers (mode of publication, reach, target group, distribution, political orientation) can be found in the appendix.

SELECTION CRITERIA FOR ARTICLES

The criterion for the selection of articles was that they contain the words "Germany," "Germans," "Merkel," "German-Turkish relations," or "Türkiye and Germany" at least once in their headline. Headlines were understood to include both subheadings and headlines.

During the survey period, 528 articles from the newspapers mentioned above were analyzed separately concerning their reporting on Germany. Of these, 260 articles (49%) were published in *Hürriyet*, 153 (29%) in *Sabah*, and 115 articles (22%) by other newspapers. In all phases of the study, *Hürriyet* and *Sabah* had the largest share of coverage. A large proportion of the articles deal with Germany as an essential partner in business, industry, and European policy, and as a country where over 3 million people from Türkiye live.

Articles, commentaries, and topics were selected in which Germany plays a primarily political and economic role in its relationship with Türkiye or as an actor with influence in Turkish politics—at least from the perspective of the Turkish press. General sports news was not a topic of the analysis with few exceptions such as coverage of the football player Mesut Özil, because his dispute with German officials developed into a political issue.

TOPICS AND REPORTING FORMATS

The first thing to note is that all newspapers cover the same topics about Germany, especially in the field of politics and economics. Germany plays a primary role in relation to Türkiye or as an actor influencing politics in Türkiye—at least from the perspective of the Turkish press.

Approximately 75% of all articles (395) deal with topics directly related to Türkiye. In 15% of the articles (82), Germany is presented as a subtopic of the main topic. Germany or the German context are merely mentioned in just under one in ten articles (51).

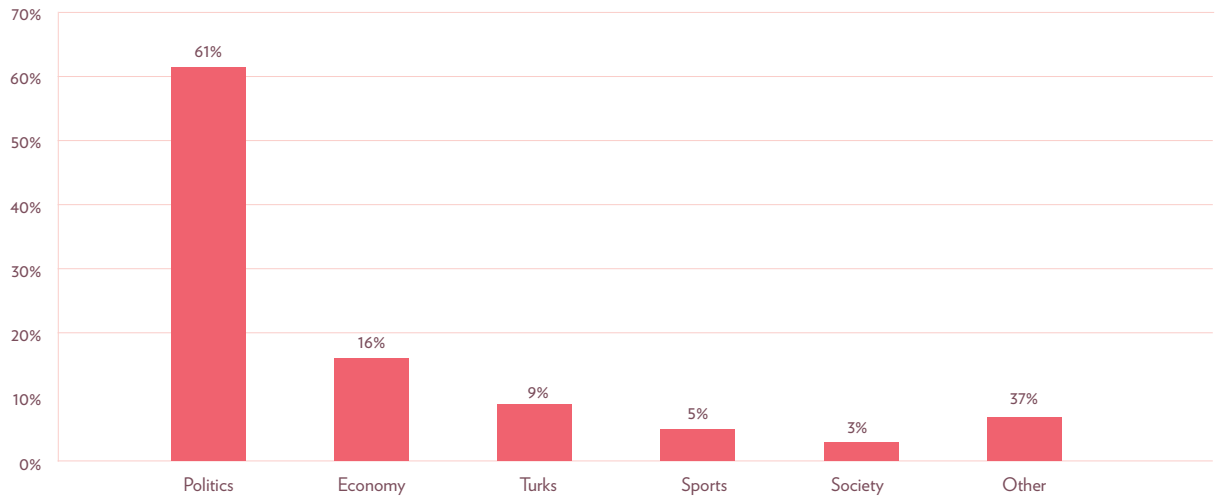
The topics of the reporting are also evaluated in this analysis. Political topics dominate reporting on Germany. A total of around 50 individual topics were surveyed during the study period. For better clarity, the topics were assigned to superordinate categories: Politics - Economy - Sports - Society.

In addition to these topics, Turkish newspapers, independent of German editions of individual newspapers, deal with the problems and concerns of emigrants of Turkish origin in Germany, mainly when anti-Turkish attacks occur or Germany passes laws that affect Turks in the country. This category was called "Turks in Germany." The topic "Other" includes "culture," "science and technology," and "entertainment/other."

As shown in Figure 5, political topics comprise 61.7% of the total coverage. Far behind was coverage of the economy (16%), followed by Turks in Germany. Sports, science, culture, and entertainment account for only a small share.

In general, fewer articles present Germany as an international issue, while those presenting Germany as a domestic Turkish issue are more frequent.

Figure 2: Thematic areas in overall reporting



This fact can be attributed to Germany's influence and perceived role as an actor in Türkiye's political events (after 2013); therefore, the Turkish press sees Germany not as an issue outside Türkiye but within Türkiye. It is striking that *Cumhuriyet, Evrensel,* and *Birgün*—in comparison to other media such as *Hürriyet* or *Sabah*—see Germany more as an international issue and less as an actor in the Turkish economy and politics than the other newspapers.

This is shown, on the one hand, by the percentage distribution of the editorial departments and, on the other, by the distinction between national and international editorial departments. The separation of these departments according to their preoccupation with international (no direct reference to Türkiye) or national (direct reference to Türkiye) topics is visible in the three aforementioned newspapers.

Major football events in which Germany participates, such as the World Cup (especially while Germany hosted the World Cup in 2006), led to a sharp increase in coverage of Germany. Similarly, Mesut Özil's resignation from the German national team after the 2018 World Cup became a major topic in Turkish newspapers; coverage of it took place not only on the sports pages but also in the politics section. At the same time, not just an interest in sports but also a general interest in Germany rose in Turkish newspapers—in all sections, not only in political opinion pieces.

All 11 newspapers followed the trend of increasing or decreasing contributions in certain phases in the Turkish press—meaning that if there is a specific event like a World Cup or general elections, there is more overall coverage on Germany in general.

Politics was the most covered subtopic in this analysis. In *Milliyet*, 66.1% of all analyzed articles fell under the politics category; in *Güneş*, this figure was 70% and in *Evrensel*, 75%. *Hürriyet* had the largest share of coverage on the second most frequent topic, "economy," 20% of all contributions. The smallest share of economic contributions appeared in *Yeni Akit* (8%).

Of all the newspapers, *Sabah*'s editorial staff gives the most space to sports (15%). *Evrensel* had the largest share of social issues in its coverage (38%). It is the only newspaper that drew attention to relevant events in Germany and informs readers about political culture, the rights and values of ethnic minorities, and LGBTQI+ in Germany. This newspaper's media interest in such topics is partly due to its "left-wing" editorial line.

In *Sözcü* and *Güneş*, most of the articles (apart from the politics section) are devoted to the topics of tourism and travel; they are primarily reports from tourist regions in Türkiye, where German tourists like to go on holiday. What is noticeable here is reporting on what can be called "taboos" from a conservative perspective, some of which can also be described as sexist; these reports in the mentioned newspapers almost always show German or Dutch women lying on the beach in bikinis.

The style of the articles analyzed for this study are predominantly (84.5%) news reports. Just under one-tenth of contributions (9.7%) are commentaries (op-eds). Interviews are rare (2.3%). Reports (2.3 %) and columns (1.1%) have very little representation within the newspapers overall. Only one feature is included in the coverage.

Almost one-third of the articles under the topic "Germany" were featured on the front page of these newspapers at the time of printing. The remaining articles were spread across the inside pages of the newspapers (business, comment corners, etc.). In 28 cases, Germany is the lead story, with *Sabah, Güneş,* and *Yeni Akit* reporting consistently negative content.

As far as the stylistic features of the reporting are concerned, a striking imbalance can be observed between the newspapers. While *Hürriyet, Milliyet, Cumhuriyet, Birgün,* and *Evrensel* frequently report on background information, the other five newspapers show clear tabloidization tendencies, in which case little background information is shared and strong personalization is used to cause consternation. Overall, the first five newspapers tend to report in a more factual and less personalized way. In other outlets, personalized articles focus on critical political decision-makers such as Angela Merkel or on Turkish citizens, whom they use to illustrate (often negative) living conditions in Germany. Also common is the utilization of stereotypes and prejudices in their reporting, such as the repeatedly mentioned topic of National Socialism and Hitler comparisons, through which Germany is negatively constructed.

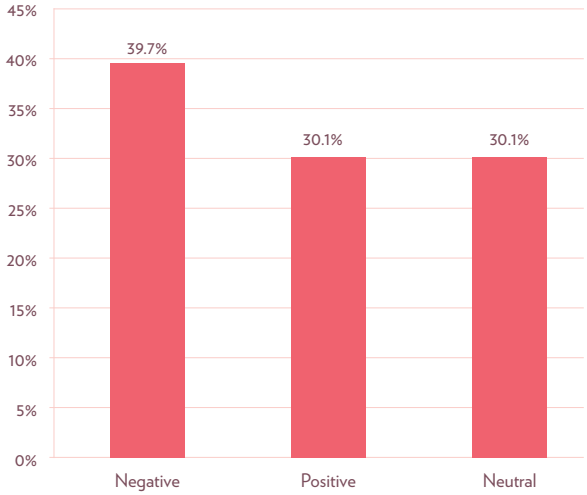
MOOD AND STEREOTYPES

The sentiment analysis is based on specific phrases and wordings that are either negative, positive, or neutral. The titles of the articles were used to determine the content and thus sentiment of the article. For example, if a headline states, "*Hitlerin varisi Merkel'den küstah Türkiye açıklaması* (Outrageous Türkiye Statement by Hitler Brood Merkel),"[7] this is clearly a "negative" sentiment. The wording of the headline mirrors the sentiment of the article overall.

All of the 528 selected articles were listed and then classified by the author and two research assistants from Istanbul Policy Center into either positive, neutral, or negative sentiment according to a) their title and b) their content. The researchers added comments on each article to help understand why it falls into one of the three categories.

When Turkish newspapers reported on Germany during the period under review, it was mostly articles about negative events. It was found that reporting on Germany is predominantly characterized by reports with a high conflict content. In the reports with a direct reference to Germany, there was relatively more coverage of negative than positive or neutral events. Almost 40% of the articles identified a conflictual relationship between Germany and Türkiye,[8] whereas only 30% of the articles were about positive or neutral events.[9] Negative reports thus dominated reporting about Germany.

Figure 3: Mood in reporting



Yeni Akit's preference for negative events stood out: 90% of its articles had a negative sentiment and only 10% had a positive one. The left-wing Kemalist *Sözcü* had 60% negative coverage vs. 40% positive coverage. Other leftist newspapers, on the other hand, were balanced: 51% of *Birgün*'s coverage and 42% of *Cumhuriyet*'s articles reflected negative sentiment; approximately 39% and 36%, respectively, reflected a positive sentiment, and 10% and 22%, respectively, had a neutral tone.

As a general principle, reporting in Türkiye always appeals to a general and collectively unifying state of mind of the Turkish society (e.g., "We have no friends," "Everyone is against us," "The others want to destabilize our country," etc.). This pattern of reporting was originally established in the 1940s by Turkish nationalists and its philosophical leader, Nihal Atsız.[10]

7 "Outrageous Türkiye Statement by Hitler Brood Merkel," *Yeni Akit*, March 12, 2018, p. 1.

8 For example: "Merkel'den Erdoğan'a davet yok," *Hürriyet*, March 19, 2007, https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/merkelden-erdogana-davet-yok-6154825.

9 For example: "Alman turist Türkiye tutkunu," *Sabah*, August 18, 2018, https://www.sabah.com.tr/avrupa/2018/08/12/alman-turist-turkiye-tutkunu.

10 For more on Atsız, see Metin Gülbay, *Türk'ün Türk'ten Başka Dostu Yoktur* (Istanbul: İthaki Yayınları, 2012).

In addition, Germany is seen as dominant by the Turkish press, not just in politics but also in other topics, especially in science and football. The large proportion of people of Turkish origin living in Germany is also an integral part of the image of Germany. The adjectives often attributed to Germany and German players are that they are powerful, influential, and recognized. This is expressed in articles and commentaries through expressions and metaphors that portray Germany as a "steamroller" or the "engine of Europe." However, the word "Nazi" also appears alongside these positive qualities and linguistic devices, associating Germany and its actors with the Hitler regime. This was seen especially after 2013 following Türkiye's accusations of alleged German interference in the Gezi movement.

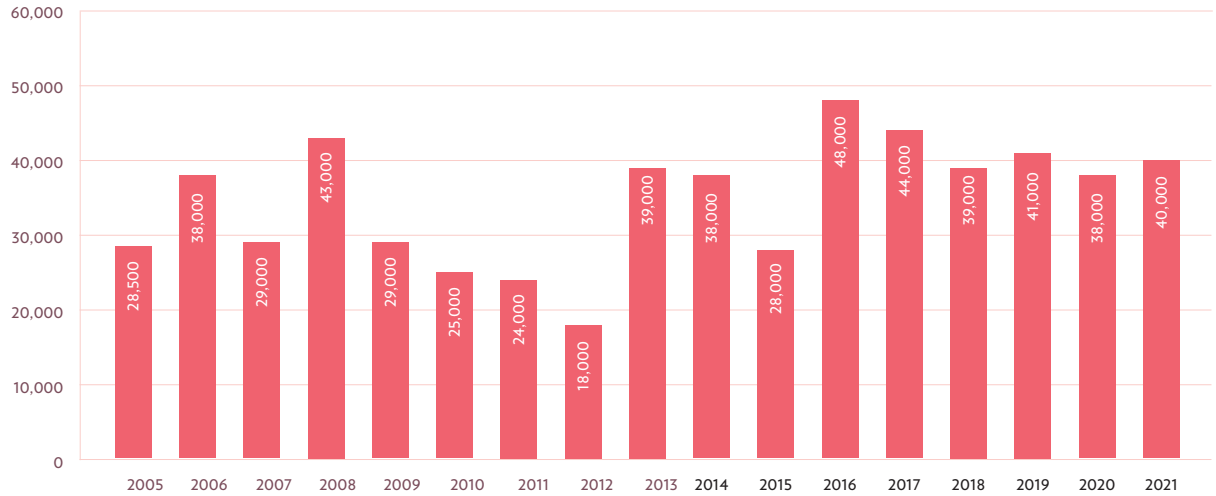
Even today, the "cliché of the arrogant German" who teaches the Turks lessons in democratization exists in many minds in Türkiye, including those of the opposition. Turkish journalists interviewed for this study admitted in the interviews that the Germans' image of Türkiye, just like the Turks' image of Germany, is shaped by clichés and prejudices and that the media deliberately cultivates stereotypes. There is a lack of differentiated reporting, and old prejudices are reactivated, leading to stereotypical and distorted reporting. The interviewee Murat Yetkin, a journalist, former chief columnist of *Hürriyet*, and currently editor-in-chief of the YetkinReport website, which publishes content in Turkish and English, describes the consequences of this representation as follows:

> Many of the grievances in Türkiye that are discussed in the media are real, but if these are presented over and over again, and there is no room at all for other positive facets in the reporting. This promotes the formation of generalized negative stereotypes.[11]

11 Murat Yetkin in discussion with the author, November 6, 2022.

DEVELOPMENT OF REPORTING ON GERMANY OVER TIME

Figure 4: Development of the number of contributions referencing Germany



Trends in the percentage of contributions referencing Germany in all newspapers from 2005 to 2021 show a gradual increase around 2008 and especially after 2013 (see Figure 4).

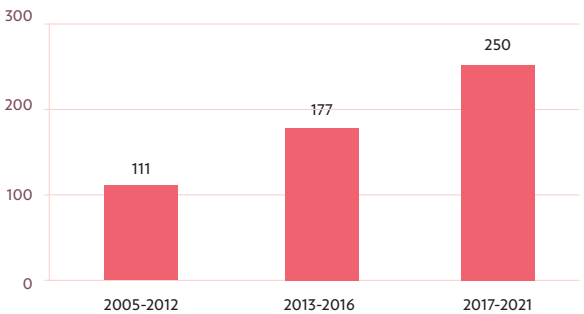
Overall, three different reporting phases can be distinguished (see Figure 5), which are discussed in more detail below: Phase 1 from 2005 to 2012, Phase 2 from 2013 to 2016, and Phase 3 from 2017 to 2021. If we break down the importance of Germany by phase (as in Figure 5), we can see that after 2013, the coverage of Germany-specific topics in all newspapers steadily increases, and the image takes on significantly more negative facets.

Phase 1: 2005–2012

On September 20, 2005, the respected *Hürriyet* columnist Mehmet Ali Birand wrote:

> It is certain that the old era of enthusiastic support from Berlin for Turkish-German relations is coming to an end. Ankara will not find Schröder's strong support for much longer. Merkel and the Christian Democrats will keep Türkiye out of the EU, be content with a special status and be cold toward Ankara. This will be reflected in day-to-day politics.[12]

Figure 5: Distribution of articles per phase



12 Mehmet Ali Birand, "Bu ayıbın altından kalkamazsınız," *Hürriyet*, September 9, 2005, https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/bu-ayibin-altindan-kalkamazsiniz-351337.

Between 2005 and 2012, despite initial skepticism toward Angela Merkel as reflected in the above citation, Turkish newspapers constructed generally positive reports and topics about Germany during the first phase. These were often reports about Angela Merkel and her role concerning Türkiye's possible EU accession.

Reporting on Germany in Turkish newspapers over the following years positioned Germany as an international subject in politics and economics or as an actor significantly involved in events that affect Germany and Türkiye.

Reporting in the following years places Germany either as an international subject in the field of politics and economics or as an actor significantly involved in events that affect Germany as well as Türkiye. The positive construction of the image of Germany in this period results not only from the selection of subject areas, but also from the implementation of the subject areas and actors in terms of content and language. In this sense, Germany's power and leading role in the European Union are interpreted positively, despite Merkel's negative stance on the issue.[13]

In this sense, most articles and commentaries during this period refer to the historical discourse of German-Turkish friendship, positioning Germany as an ally. In addition, positive qualities are directly attributed to German actors by characterizing them as reliable, meaningful, disciplined, and courageous.

In 2008, however, with the joint rejection of EU membership by Angela Merkel and Nicolas Sarkozy forming a high point in news coverage, we can also see this as the beginning of a more skeptical image of Germany, with increasingly negative elements. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, then Türkiye's prime minister, responded in July 2009 that the Turkish people would never accept the proposal of a "vaguely defined partnership," or what the EU has called a "privileged partnership," instead of full membership in the EU.[14]

Phase 2: 2013–2016

From 2013 onward, the image of Germany became increasingly negative. Germany is no longer considered an international issue (especially in the EU context) but an internal issue for Türkiye. Positive concepts such as Germany's power and leadership role in the EU are replaced with discussions of Germany's interference in internal affairs, attempts at domination, and asserting its interests. Even domestic German issues, such as the Bundestag elections, are presented as something that can decisively influence Türkiye, because Germany is now seen as an active player in Turkish politics.

This theory is subsequently taken up by newspapers close to the AKP. In an interview, AKP MP Burhan Kuzu reaches a new dimension in the conspiracy statements around Gezi. According to this, Germany wants to prevent the new Istanbul airport, which would compete with the Frankfurt hub:

> Gezi was completely planned by the Germans. I think they have a problem with our big infrastructure investments. Look, we are now building an airport in Istanbul. This airport is

13 Columnist Hasan Basrı Yalçın wrote in his farewell reflection on Merkel in *Sabah*, "We can say that Merkel inherited a generally moderate approach in relations with Turkey. It should be seen as a positive development that Merkel has come from a harsh anti-Turkey stance to a moderate line during all this time. Especially in recent days, she has tried to maintain her moderate and conciliatory line." Hasan Basri Yalçın, "Merkel'in ardından," *Sabah*, October 18, 2021, https://www.sabah.com.tr/yazarlar/hasan-basri-yalcin/2021/10/18/merkelin-ardindan.

14 Christiane Schlötzer, "Türkei lehnt 'privilegierte Partnerschaft' mit EU ab," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, May 19, 2010, https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/angela-merkel-stoesst-bei-besuch-auf-skepsis-tuerkei-lehnt-privilegierte-partnerschaft-mit-eu-ab-1.929509.

> big enough to become one of the three [leading] airports in the world.[15]

Germany's role in the Gezi protests was referenced in 100 of the 528 overall articles, making it a large topic and giving importance to this phase. The Erdoğan government's reaction to the Gezi protests, and the simultaneous pro-Gezi positioning of Germany, led to a verbally aggressive frontal attack on Germany from 2013 onward, which was spearheaded by pro-government media.

Journalist Yiğit Bulut took the conspiracy theories to the extreme: in June 2013 during the protests, he accused not only Germany of being behind the Gezi protests but also of targeting Erdoğan:

> To understand the Gezi protests, you must know the world's money markets. Türkiye grew by 3 percent in the last ten years. Germany shrank by 1 percent, and all other European countries shrank by 1 percent. That is why Prime Minister Erdoğan is targeted, and they are constantly working to kill him.[16]

The events surrounding Istanbul's Gezi Park in 2013 and Germany's role in them as suspected by Turkish politicians put increasing focus on Germany in the Turkish press. Three years later, in 2016, the refusal of German authorities to extradite suspected followers of the Islamic preacher Fethullah Gülen to Türkiye following the failed July 15 coup attempt, the arrest of German journalists in Türkiye (such as Deniz Yücel), and the ensuing diplomatic crisis renewed the Turkish press's focus on Germany.

The Böhmermann affair in March 2016 in which a German comedian deliberately insulted President Erdoğan with an experimental poem using prophane language,[17] the recognition of the Turkish "genocide" against the Armenians by the Federal Republic of Germany in June 2016, and the transformation of Türkiye under the AKP and Erdoğan into an Islamic conservative autocracy further deteriorated Germany-Türkiye relations.

The developments in Türkiye were criticized in German politics, as well, especially by the German media and "left-liberal friends of Türkiye who had to give up their ideal conceptions of a Türkiye according to the German ideal."[18] German media accused the Turkish political elite in this phase of leading the country "further and further away from the path of democratization of the early 1990s."[19]

During this period, Germany was portrayed as an enemy in the Turkish media. Turkish newspapers began to publish comparisons of the German authorities and the chancellor with the Nazis (see Figure 6) and accused Germany of being a haven for terrorists from Türkiye.

Figure 6: *Yeni Akit,* July 25, 2017 ("Worse than Hitler")



15 Burhan Kuzu quoted in, "Gezi'de Alman parmağı var," *Yeni Akit,* August 4, 2013, https://www.yeniakit.com.tr/haber/gezide-alman-parmagi-var-4607.html.

16 Yiğit Bulut, "#direnyiğitbulutundili," *Evrensel,* June 16, 2013, https://www.evrensel.net/haber/59573/direnyigitbulutundili.

17 "Staatsaffäre Böhmermann - die Fakten," *Der Spiegel*, April 15, 2016, https://www.spiegel.de/kultur/tv/jan-boehmermann-das-sind-die-fakten-der-staatsaffaere-a-1086571.html.

18 Prof. Hüseyin Bağcı in discussion with the author, November 11, 2022.

19 Murat Yetkin in discussion with the author, November 6, 2022.

When German politicians called for an end to the wave of arrests following the 2016 coup attempt in Türkiye, Turkish media accused Germany of lacking solidarity.

Following the attempted coup in Türkiye in July 2016, tensions between Türkiye and Germany increased. The Turkish government criticized Germany for granting political asylum to Turkish citizens, particularly members of the Gülen movement, which the Turkish government blamed for the coup attempt. The Turkish government accused Germany of supporting the coup plotters and not cooperating sufficiently with Türkiye in the fight against terrorism. The German government expressed concern about the wave of arrests, the restriction of press freedom, and the dismissal of tens of thousands of civil servants. The Turkish government considered this an interference in its internal affairs and accused Germany of conducting a negative opinion campaign against Türkiye.

Phase 3: 2017–2021

The articles from this period were examined comparatively to determine how much the portrayal of Germany in the Turkish press changed after the coup attempt. In the run-up to the 2017 constitutional referendum and the 2018 presidential elections, Turkish politicians were prevented from making campaign appearances in Germany. The Turkish government saw this as a violation of the right to freedom of expression and interference in its democratic processes. The Turkish-German journalist Deniz Yücel's imprisonment triggered a wave of indignation in Germany and intensified tensions between Berlin and Ankara. The Turkish authorities' accusations against the journalist had referred, among other things, to an interview with a leader of the banned Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Yücel was only released in February 2018 after a year in pre-trial detention. Skeptical and critical accounts of Germany prevailed more and more in the Turkish media following the culmination of these events. Columnists, both from AKP-friendly media as well as from the opposition, reacted to German criticism of Turkish conditions with increasing incomprehension and accused Germany of deliberately marginalizing not only Erdoğan but also Türkiye with its rhetoric. This is a remarkable development in Turkish politics and the press concerning the negative construction of Germany in the following years.

The Turkish press identified German politicians, first and foremost Chancellor Merkel as the central figure, and German institutions, especially foundations that are active in Türkiye, as the main actors moving against Türkiye. In 2017, German political foundations active in Türkiye were even defamed as "provocateurs and spies" in pro-government media.[20] Mostly, such accusations alleged support for the PKK or the Gülen movement. The Heinrich Böll Foundation was even accused of founding its own terrorist organization in Türkiye.[21]

Sabah called for action against these German foundations: "German foundations are behind every anti-Türkiye initiative. Most of the 22 foreign foundations officially operating in Türkiye belong to Germans, and it is noteworthy that these foundations are involved in many actions of terror groups."[22] In an editorial, *Yeni Şafak* called for the future of Germany-Türkiye relations to be reconsidered: "Germany, which lost the world war and did not realize its imperial goals, is today a sponsor of the PKK and PYD [Democratic Union Party]

20 Christian Buttkereit, "Deutsche Stiftungen am Pranger," Deutschlandfunk, May 23, 2017, https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/tuerkei-deutsche-stiftungen-am-pranger-102.html.

21 Harun Sekmen, "Alman vakıfları zehir saçıyor," *Yeni Akit,* September 9, 2018, https://www.yeniakit.com.tr/haber/genclerin-ahlaki-hedefte-alman-vakiflari-zehir-saciyor-520689.html.

22 Fatih Ulaş, "Alman vakıfları Gezi'ye finansal destek sağladı," *Sabah,* March 30, 2017, https://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2017/12/01/alman-vakiflari-geziye-finansal-destek-sagladi.

terrorist organizations. The country wants, above all, to have a say in world politics about a possible Kurdish satellite state."[23]

Through such reports, Germany was portrayed as the lead actor in shaping unfavorable circumstances in Türkiye. Adjectives and relative clauses attributed to Merkel and other German actors reflected an image of striving for power, interference in internal affairs, and active distancing from the German-Turkish friendship; stereotypical formulations with open or hidden allusions to the Third Reich were meant to underline Germany's grasp for power.

The relationship between Angela Merkel and Erdoğan is of particular interest during this period. During this phase, the former chancellor maintained a cool but relatively benevolent relationship with the Turkish president, not least to push through the refugee agreement between the EU and Türkiye that she developed. Despite her rejection of Türkiye's EU membership and personal attacks against her by the Turkish press, Merkel consistently argued that dialogue with Ankara could achieve more than economic pressure or political exclusion. When Merkel came to Istanbul for a farewell trip shortly before the end of her 16-year chancellorship on October 16, 2021, Erdoğan called her his "friend" at the joint press conference.

This positive change in the political elite's image of Germany or Merkel, in turn, led the press to likewise construct Merkel as a "friend" of Türkiye. In this sense, Merkel was described as the only leader in Europe, her political leadership as responsible and courageous, and her relations with Türkiye as loyal.[24]

In years (or even months) prior, these same newspapers had negatively characterized Merkel using corresponding attributes and predicates. A possible motive for this change in sentiment can be seen in the migration deal between the EU and Türkiye that supported the Turkish government with 6 billion euro to stop migrants travelling irregularly from Türkiye to the EU—a deal in which Merkel played a key role.

23 "FETÖ ve PKK Almanya'ya esir aldı," *Yeni Şafak*, July 23, 2017, https://www.yenisafak.com/dunya/feto-ve-pkk-almanyaya-esir-aldi-2761202.

24 Yalçın, "Merkel'in ardından."

A DUALISTIC PICTURE WITH STABLE AND FLEXIBLE DIMENSIONS

The positive image of Germany was initially constant until the 2000s: German products were in great demand because of their quality, the German economy was considered exemplary, and the German welfare state was praised, especially by Turkish leftists. The newly elected prime minister in 2002, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and large sections of the Turkish media were full of praise for German support on the road to the EU. In return, the German press regarded Türkiye as a model state, a country that unites democracy and Islam.

In this sense, there is a core image between the two countries that is stable even in times of crisis. This core is the part of the image that gives cohesion and structure to the German-Turkish context.

In all three phases identified, which show the change in mood and the changeability of the image, certain images remain stable over time and resist change. Germany's role in World War II, Germany as an economic power and as the engine of the EU, German discipline, and the subject areas of football and technology are universal features of the image of Germany in all the Turkish newspapers studied. In addition to these images, specific Turkish-German dimensions—e.g., 3.5 million Turks living in Germany, the historical and economic friendship between the countries going back more than 150 years to German Emperor William II, and more than 6 million Germans spending their yearly summer holidays in Türkiye—show a high degree of persistence over time and are rooted in the historical relationship between the countries. Even though Germany-Türkiye political relations over the last 20 years are "anything but tension-free," according to political scientist Prof. Hüseyin Bağcı in an interview with me, more than 200 years of shared history show that "one was not always an enemy, but also a good friend."

Notably, the analysis of the image of Germany confirmed two characteristics of stereotypical systems: their resistance to change and their changeability.

Further examples show that images have flexible variations, and variation is a central feature of the concept of images. These depend on the context and are determined by the parameters of time. The influencing factors for a possible image change are events of great importance in society. Variable image elements are thus always related to Germany's reactions to specific political events.

Between 2005 and 2012, Germany's policy in the European Union was assessed positively despite Merkel's distance from Türkiye; therefore, Germany is characterized in the Turkish press as a successful leader within the EU. In contrast, from 2013 onward as Türkiye's accession aspirations began to wane and Türkiye endured multiple crises, Germany has been characterized as an ethnocentric country that interferes in Turkish affairs and tries to destabilize Türkiye.

In times of crisis, political elites exaggerate the negative characteristics of the potential enemy to strengthen the internal solidarity of their nation, to blame their mistakes on the other nation, and thus to find a scapegoat. The negative construction of Germany by large sections of the Turkish press, most of which are closely linked to the political elite, should also be seen in this context.

FACTORS THAT DETERMINE THE DISCOURSE

Initially, one of the most important questions was what other factors might have contributed to the picture, especially a negative change. One factor that plays a role in the discourse is undoubtedly the solid economic concentration of the Turkish media landscape and its links with other actors and their economic interests—e.g., banking, power generation, mobile telephones, real estate, and construction.

Many of the newspapers analyzed in this study are linked to large shareholding companies such as Demirören Group, Doğuş Group, Turkuvaz Group, and Çalık Group. The largest media group is Demirören Media Holding, which owns important newspapers such as *Hürriyet* and *Milliyet*, as well as the television channels Kanal D and CNN-Türk.

In particular, the newspaper *Sabah* as well as TV channel CNN-Türk are considered close to the AKP; the senior presenters of CNN-Türk programs or the columnists of Sabah openly profess their sympathy for Erdoğan in broadcasts and articles. The formerly respected news channel NTV belongs to a group of companies that secured a port construction project in Istanbul for USD 700 million in 2015.

Almost all interviewees repeatedly mentioned the fact that around 90 percent of Turkish daily newspapers in circulation toe the president's line. According to the journalists and politicians spoken to, these "90 percent media" orient their editorial policy toward the political agenda and discourse set by Erdoğan. The "agenda-setting" of the media decides which issues are considered socially relevant. In Türkiye, the "agenda-setting" of Erdoğan or his party is essential. This is also the case in reporting on Germany. Journalist Bülent Mumay summarized the phenomenon of "agenda-setting" in Türkiye:

> When Erdoğan criticizes Germany, the next morning, there are identical headlines in almost all newspapers with malice and hatred about Germany. If he suddenly makes a U-turn and praises Germany because Merkel smiled at him, the next day the newspapers are full of praise about Germany.[25]

In the numerous interviews and conversations with journalists and politicians within the framework of this study, the evaluation and analyses of the newspaper articles were also discussed and reflected upon together. At the end of this study, while no solid evidence based on quantitative data showed a direct link between power and the media, there are clear indications that this is the case. This idea was backed up by the interviewees, though none of the interviewed partners was willing to openly point this out. Self-censorship occurs in media conglomerates that depend on the government's blessing for their ramified business interests. Many Turkish journalists admit they prefer to self-censor instead of risk their jobs.

To summarize the interviews, the interlocutors speak of an "overarching system" when they try to answer whether and by whom the media are controlled and who dictates the discourse. However, there is agreement that President Erdoğan does not give direct instructions on how newspapers should report or what titles should appear. A veteran journalist (referred to here as NN, "No Name") told of a long process of how pluralism in the media was dismantled "bit by bit" over time and how the influence of the AKP expanded. Interviewees described the establishment of the Communications Directorate in 2018 as the final step in this process. This agency reports to the president and

25 Bülent Mumay in discussion with the author, November 13, 2022.

is headed by Fahrettin Altun, a former think tank scholar and confidant of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. *The Times* describes Fahrettin Altun as "the second most powerful man in Türkiye."[26]

So, is Altun the man who determines the discourse? This investigation can only reflect on allegations, not whether they are right or wrong. This study would have liked to speak to the Director of Communications and ask him about the allegations. However, the interview request remains unanswered.

26 Hannah Lucinda Smith, "The rise and rise of Turkey's second most powerful man," *The Times,* June 19, 2019, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/fahrettin-altun-the-rise-and-rise-of-turkeys-second-most-powerful-man-pzntf29kp.

KEY FINDINGS

Seven key findings are identified in the media analysis and interviews undertaken:

1 | In the last 20 years, Türkiye's relationship with other countries has hardly been as full of contradictions as its relations with Germany. That is why Germany is a central topic in Turkish newspapers—much more than other countries.

2 | Even if the predominant format in Turkish newspapers is reporting (which in general tends to be more objective), the general mood toward Germany is more negative than neutral or positive.

3 | Overall, the amount of coverage on Germany has increased continuously over the period of analysis, in which three phases can be distinguished:

Phase 1 (2005–2012) was characterized by initial skepticism in the Turkish media toward Chancellor Angela Merkel; however, this quickly calmed down and was positive until the EU's rejection of Türkiye's admission to the bloc in 2006, when coverage began to turn more negative.

Phase 2 (2013–2016) was characterized by an increasingly negative tone in discussions on relations as the Turkish side accused Merkel and the German government of supporting the Gezi protests, the PKK, the 2016 failed coup attempt, and the Gülen movement; this lasted until the 2016 refugee agreement.

Phase 3 (2017–2021) was initially characterized by calmer tempers due to the recently implemented refugee deal and, again, the return of Merkel as a "friend" of Türkiye; this lasted until the end of Angela Merkel's chancellorship.

4 | Two variables determine the image of Germany: a stable core, which is based on globally held stereotypes of Germany as well as the historical friendship between Germany and Türkiye; flexible elements that change over time include political events such as the Gezi Park protests, the July 15 failed coup attempt, or new perceptions of formerly positive dimensions (striving for power = stability) in a new way (striving for power = dominance & interference). What was positively perceived in phase 1 (e.g., Germany is seen as a supporter on the way to EU membership) becomes something that is negatively perceived (e.g., Germany is interfering with Turkish politics.)

5 | Two different factors help determine the discourse and image, one structural and one individual:

First, as Turkish media organizations are closely linked to the government, the structural and ownership context determines the discourse. Large holding companies that also own media outlets have close ties with politics in regard to their many different economic interests, e.g., construction work for the government. If media outlets are part of a larger holding company that has very close ties to political institutions and are in close business relations with governing parties, they will, of course, not allow for a neutral tone and reporting within their media outlets. In turn, this coverage will have a positive impact on the holding companies' business overall. Second, for many interview partners, an additional critical body that pushes this agenda is the Communications Directorate, a department within the government with a direct link to the president. The loyalty of most media to the

dominant political and social role of the AKP encourages negative reporting.

6 | These reflections on the Turkish media's coverage of Germany make it necessary, in addition to the questions formulated above, to look at the media's control and norm-making functions. Through their massively one-sided reporting, the media creates scenarios that have a lasting influence on the population's perception and legitimizes political developments. They do not offer their readers a representation of reality but reveal a world of simulations in which they no longer produce news but reproduce political beliefs and images.

EPILOGUE

During my time in Istanbul as a 2022/23 Mercator-IPC Fellow, I got to know many people, especially journalists and media makers. I also got to know their world, which is full of worries and fears for the future. In a world where much money and politics are made through propaganda and disinformation and societies are increasingly influenced, journalism is more important than ever. Moreover, this is by no means only true for Türkiye. "There is no shortcut to good journalism," Arthur Gregg Sulzberger, the publisher of *The New York Times,* once said in an interview.[27]

The art of sifting, sorting, checking, selecting, and making one's work transparent, thoroughly researching and differentiating facts, rumors, and opinions must be practiced and cultivated. This attitude shapes my work as a journalist in Germany.

27 Isabell Hulsen and Marc Pitzke, "Interview with The New York Times Publisher A.G. Sulzberger: 'To Produce Good Journalism, There Are No Shortcuts,'" *Der Spiegel,* February 1, 2019, https://www.spiegel.de/international/new-york-times-publisher-a-g-sulzberger-about-journalism-and-trump-a-1251556.html.

INTERVIEWS

I conducted a total of 35 interviews for the research and in-depth study of my project. Only five interviewees wanted to be named:

- Prof. Hüseyin Bağcı (President, Foreign Policy Institute Ankara); Interview date: November 11, 2022
- Murat Yetkin (Journalist); Interview date: November 6, 2022
- Bülent Mumay (Journalist); Interview date: November 13, 2022
- Şükrü Küçükşahin (Journalist); Interview date: November 15, 2022
- Yücel Özdemir (Journalist); Interview date: November 7, 2022

The other interview partners did not want to be mentioned by name. This is not at all unusual in journalistic interviews; the information is then considered "among three" and may only be used as background information. What is said is therefore confidential. The journalist may therefore neither quote the information by name nor reveal its originator. Of course, I adhere to this professional ethical requirement.

APPENDIX

Hürriyet (= freedom) is a national daily newspaper first published in 1948. It has a circulation of around 210,000 copies daily (2021), making it the highest-circulated newspaper in Türkiye. Founded by Sedat Simavi, the newspaper was taken over by Aydın Doğan during the economic crisis in 1994. In 2009, Turkish authorities imposed a billion-dollar fine on the Doğan Group, whose media, led by *Hürriyet*, had shortly before reported on the donation fraud of an aid organization with links to the ruling AKP party; the Doğan Group did not recover from the fine and had to dissolve the media group. Since 2018, *Hürriyet* has been owned by Demirören Holding Group. The takeover has made the conglomerate Türkiye's largest media group, publishing several other Turkish dailies in addition to *Hürriyet*, including *Milliyet*. The company also operates the Turkish TV channels CNN Türk, Kanal D, and the pay-TV provider D-Smart and several smaller special interest channels. *Hürriyet* now describes itself as "liberal-conservative": most commentators openly or between the lines support Erdoğan and the AKP. With Ahmet Hakan as editor-in-chief and Abdülkadir Selvi as chief columnist, two of the most prominent Erdoğan supporters in the Turkish media scene work at *Hürriyet*.

Sabah (= morning), founded in 1985, is the second largest and second most circulated Turkish newspaper, distributing 203,000 papers daily (2020). It has been owned by the AKP-affiliated Çalık Holding since 2013 and is classified accordingly. Eurotopics, published by the German Federal Agency for Civic Education, describes *Sabah* as an "important mouthpiece of the Erdoğan government."[28] Sabah exemplifies the close intertwining of politics, economic interests, and media power. In 2007, the Merkez media group, to which *Sabah* belonged at the time, was seized by the state trust authority. The following year, Çalık Holding was the only bidder to take over the *Sabah* media company, including TV stations and magazines, for the equivalent of USD 1.1 billion. The purchase was partly financed with loans from the state-owned financial institutions Halkbank and Vakifbank. Çalık Holding operates nearly three dozen textile, construction, logistics, financial services, and energy companies. Group CEO Ahmet Çalık is considered close to the government. The group also has other close personal ties to the Erdogan family: a year before the takeover of *Sabah*, Berat Albayrak, a son-in-law of Erdogan, became CEO of Çalık Holding. After 2015, Albayrak was Minister of Energy for five years.

Like *Sabah*, the newspaper ***Güneş*** (= sun), which used to be close to the opposition, also swung over the government line. Founded in 1982, it was considered a left-leaning liberal publication for a long time. It has a daily circulation of 91,000 (2018). After the AKP came to power in 2002, the newspaper took an oppositional stance. After the Çukurova Group, which owned the newspaper, ran into financial difficulties and the authorities accused its boss, Karamehmet, of fraud, the group's media division was transferred to the state trust company TMSF in May 2013 to settle the group's debts. The latter, in turn, sold *Güneş* together with the newspaper *Akşam* and the TV channel Sky Türk 360 six months later to the self-confessed Erdoğan fan and entrepreneur Ethem Sancak.[29] The sale of the printed edition was discontinued on December

28 "Sabah," Eurotopics, accessed November 28, 2023, https://www.eurotopics.net/de/148776/sabah.

29 "I am in love with Erdoğan; it is a divine love. I would sacrifice my mother, father, wife and children to him," Sancak said on May 16, 2015. "Ethem Sancak: Erdoğan'ı gördükçe aşık oldum (Ich verliebte mich in Erdoğan)," T24, May 16, 2015, https://t24.com.tr/haber/ethem-sancak-erdogani-gordukce-asik-oldum-boyle-bir-ilahi-ask-iki-erkek-arasinda-olabiliyor,296777.

Figure 7: *Güneş*, March 17, 2017



31, 2019 for economic reasons. The online edition continues to be published. Out of the newspapers analyzed for this study, *Güneş* distinguished itself above all with its distinct attacks against Germany and Angela Merkel. On March 17, 2017, the newspaper pictured the then chancellor in an SS uniform and with a Hitler moustache on the front page. In the photomontage, Merkel holds a pistol in her right hand. Next to it was written in large letters: "Female Hitler" (see Figure 7).

Yeni Akit (= new contract) is an Islamic-conservative Turkish newspaper with a daily circulation of 50,000. The newspaper was founded in 2010 as the successor to *Anadolu'da Vakit* (The Time in Anatolia, 2001–2010) but later adopted the name *Yeni Akit*. It has an Islamist orientation and has been criticized for homophobia and hatred against LGBTQI+ people, Jews, Christians, and atheists. According to a report by the Hrant Dink Foundation, *Yeni Akit* is one of the three largest Turkish newspapers that spread hate speech.[30] The newspaper censors images of women in print and online editions by obscuring all uncovered skin. Sometimes, the women in the pictures have been made completely unrecognizable. One of the few exceptions seems to be Angela Merkel, pictured uncensored and with a swastika button on the cover of the July 25, 2017 edition. The corresponding headline reads, "She is Worse than Hitler." In the accompanying article, Merkel is accused of envying Erdoğan's Türkiye and governing worse than Hitler.

Figure 8: *Yeni Akit*, July 25, 2017



Yeni Akit can be classified in the camp of AKP-affiliated media, but many of the newspaper's columnists do not think the AKP's Islamic steps go far enough. In 2005, then Minister of the Interior, Otto Schily, banned the Hessian Yeni Akit GmbH, which published *Yeni Akit*'s predecessor, Anadolu Vakit. The newspaper described the Holocaust and the "so-called gas chambers" as "lies and nothing but Zionist music."[31] The assets of the GmbH were confiscated.

30 "Hate Speech and Discriminatory Discourse in the Media: 2019 Report," Hrant Dink Foundation, October 2020, https://hrantdink.org/attachments/article/2727/Hate-Speech-and-Discriminatory-Discourse-in-Media-2019.pdf.

31 Bülent Mumay, "Briefe aus Istanbul. Sexistisch, homophob, antisemitisch," FAZ, December 2, 2017, https://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/brief-aus-istanbul/brief-aus-istanbul-akit-verbreitet-hassnachrichten-in-der-tuerkei-15319657.html.

Yeni Şafak (= new morning) is a daily newspaper loyal to the government with an Islamic-conservative profile and a daily circulation of 103,000 (2020). It has been published since 1995, and in 1997 was sold to the Albayrak Holding conglomerate, i.e., the Albayrak family, which is considered close to the president. In its early days, the newspaper represented both Islamic and liberal opinions. It is now considered the intellectual hinterland of the AKP, as many academics and scientists write for the newspaper as columnists. Through it, one gets an insight into the world of thought of the government intelligentsia.

Milliyet (= nationality) is one of the oldest newspapers in the country, founded in 1950, with a daily circulation of 125,000 (2020). For a long time, it was considered center-left, but now Eurotopics has classified it as "near to government."[32] Like *Hürriyet*, the Doğan Group, which had run into financial difficulties due to back taxes, sold *Milliyet* to Demirören Holding in April 2011. The first dismissals of editors from the newsroom soon followed this. More attention was drawn to the cases involving better-known journalists and authors. Can Dündar, for example, was dismissed in 2014 after twelve years at *Milliyet*. The reason for his dismissal was his anti-government comments on the nationwide protests around Gezi Park.[33]

Takvim (= calendar), founded in 1994, is said to sell 100,000 copies a day (2018). It is a classic tabloid-style newspaper that usually reports on sports, justice, and the police. It positions itself as pro-AKP and pro-Erdoğan through its columns and lead stories.

Evrensel (= universal) is one of the few newspapers in Türkiye that is not owned by a large media group. It was founded in 1995 and is regarded as the unofficial organ of the Turkish radical left workers' party, EMEP. Its average circulation is 5,400 copies daily (2020). It has been banned several times, and its journalists have been arrested frequently. To circumvent bans, the newspaper has changed its name several times. Nevertheless, state reprisals have repeatedly hit it, not least when its right to advertise was revoked entirely on August 22, 2022.

BirGün (= one day), founded in 2002, is independent of large corporations like *Evrensel*, but for this very reason, often complains about difficulties in distribution and advertising. The newspaper is produced in Istanbul and is close to the Left Party (Sol Parti). It has a daily circulation of 7,300 (2020). In addition to well-known left-wing authors, journalists from larger media companies who could no longer work there for political reasons have repeatedly found shelter at *BirGün*. While its reporting is generally hostile to Erdoğan and the AKP, many of its articles also criticize the opposition.

Sözcü (= spokesman), founded in 2008 with a circulation of around 155,000 copies a day (2021), is Türkiye's third largest opposition newspaper and by far the one with the highest circulation. The newspaper's editor, Buray Akbay, lives in exile in Europe because he is being investigated for "armed rebellion against the government" as part of the operations against the Fethullah Gülen movement. *Sözcü* opposes Erdoğan but at the same time is itself a nationalist and partly racist newspaper, especially in its reporting on Syrian refugees in Türkiye as well as Armenians. After the German Bundestag's resolution on the Armenian genocide in June 2016 (see Figure 9), the paper ran the headline "Schämen Sie sich!" (Shame on you!) in German on June 3, 2016. The newspaper printed a photo montage of Angela Merkel in an SA uniform to accompany this.

32 "Milliyet," Eurotopics, accessed November 28, 2023, https://www.eurotopics.net/de/148720/milliyet.

33 "I was waiting it for a long time, it wasn't a surprise ... I'm not the first, and I won't be the last," Dündar said afterwards. See, "Can Dundar Dismissed from Daily Milliyet for Critical Gezi Stance," *Hurriyet Daily News*, August 2, 2013, https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/can-dundar-dismissed-from-daily-milliyet-for-critical-gezi-stance-51871.

Figure 9: *Sözcü*, June 3, 2016



Cumhuriyet (= republic) is the oldest daily newspaper in Türkiye; it was founded in 1924, shortly after the foundation of the Turkish Republic. It is considered strictly left-wing nationalist. At the same time, it is considered serious, intellectual, and investigative. In 2016, it received the "alternative Nobel Prize," the Right Livelihood Award, one award among many, for its "fearless investigative journalism" and the courage to express oneself freely. For years, *Cumhuriyet* has complained about various coercive state measures and repression. The paper has a daily circulation of 29,000 (2020).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

"Alman turist Türkiye tutkunu." *Sabah*, August 18, 2018. https://www.sabah.com.tr/avrupa/2018/08/12/alman-turist-turkiye-tutkunu.

Altmeppen, Klaus-Dieter. *Journalism and Media as Organisations: Performance, Structures and Management.* Wiesbaden, Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2006.

Arnold, Klaus. *Qualitätsjournalismus: Die Zeitung und ihr Publikum.* Konstanz: UVK, 2009.

Atasoy, Irem. *Die Darstellung Deutschlands in der türkischen Presse: Eine linguistische Mediendiskursanalyse am Beispiel der Nachrichten über Visumpraxis für Türken in ausgewählten Zeitungsnachrichten [The Representation of Germany in the Turkish Press: A linguistic media discourse analysis using the example of news about visa practices for Turks in selected newspaper reports].* Timișoara, Romania: Editura Mirton, 2020.

Ateş, Şeref. *German-Turkish relations in the Turkish press.* Würzburg, Germany, Königshausen & Neumann, 2011.

Baydar, Yavuz. "Kein freies Wort mehr." *Die Tageszeitung,* May 21, 2021. www.taz.de/Medienlandschaft-in-der-Tuerkei/!5773898/.

Beaufort, Maren. *Digital Media, Political Polarization and Challenges to Democracy.* Abingdon/New York: Routledge, 2019.

Beaufort, Maren, and Josef Seethaler. "Media Quality and Democracy: Claims and Reality. A Cross-media Study." Paper presented at the 2018 AEJMC Annual Conference, Washington, DC, 2018.

Birand, Mehmet Ali. "Bu ayıbın altından kalkamazsınız." *Hürriyet*, September 9, 2005. https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/bu-ayibin-altindan-kalkamazsiniz-351337.

Blumler, Jay G., and S. Coleman. *Democracy and the Media – Revisited.* Ljubljana: Javnost, 2015.

Breyton, Ricarda. "Fehlen nur die Gaskammern. Die gibt es bald bestimmt auch." *Die Welt,* April 6, 2017. www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article163489575/Fehlen-nur-die-Gaskammern-Die-gibt-es-bald-bestimmt-auch.html.

Bulut, Yiğit. "#direnyiğitbulutundili." *Evrensel*, June 16, 2013. https://www.evrensel.net/haber/59573/direnyigitbulutundili.

Buttkereit, Christian. "Deutsche Stiftungen am Pranger." Deutschlandfunk, May 23, 2017. https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/tuerkei-deutsche-stiftungen-am-pranger-102.html.

"Can Dundar Dismissed from Daily Milliyet for Critical Gezi Stance." *Hurriyet Daily News*, August 2, 2013. https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/can-dundar-dismissed-from-daily-milliyet-for-critical-gezi-stance-51871.

Dalaman, Cem. "Die Türkei in ihrer Modernisierungsphase als Fluchtland für Deutsche Exilanten [Türkiye in its Modernisation Phase as a Country of Flight for German Exiles]." PhD dissertation, Free University Berlin, 1998. https://refubium.fu-berlin.de/handle/fub188/4612.

Davis, Aeron. *Political Communication: A New Introduction for Crisis Times.* London: John Wiley and Sons, 2019.

"Ethem Sancak: Erdoğan'ı gördükçe aşık oldum (Ich verliebte mich in Erdoğan)." T24, May 16, 2015. https://t24.com.tr/haber/ethem-sancak-erdogani-gordukce-asik-oldum-boyle-bir-ilahi-ask-iki-erkek-arasinda-olabiliyor,296777.

Eurotopics. "Milliyet." Accessed November 28, 2023, https://www.eurotopics.net/de/148720/milliyet.

Eurotopics. "Sabah." Accessed November 28, 2023, https://www.eurotopics.net/de/148776/sabah.

"FETÖ ve PKK Almanya'ya esir aldı." *Yeni Şafak*, July 23, 2017. https://www.yenisafak.com/dunya/feto-ve-pkk-almanyaya-esir-aldi-2761202.

Foucault, Michel. *Dispositive der Macht*. Berlin: Merve, 1978.

Friedrichs, H.J. "Cool bleiben, nicht kalt." *Der Spiegel*, 13/1995. p. 112.

"Gezi'de Alman parmağı var." *Yeni Akit*, August 4, 2013. https://www.yeniakit.com.tr/haber/gezide-alman-parmagi-var-4607.html.

Gülbay, Metin. *Türk'ün Türk'ten Başka Dostu Yoktur*. Istanbul: İthaki Yayınları, 2012.

"Hate Speech and Discriminatory Discourse in the Media: 2019 Report." Hrant Dink Foundation, October 2020. https://hrantdink.org/attachments/article/2727/Hate-Speech-and-Discriminatory-Discourse-in-Media-2019.pdf.

Hulsen, Isabell, and Marc Pitzke. "Interview with The New York Times Publisher A.G. Sulzberger: 'To Produce Good Journalism, There Are No Shortcuts.'" *Der Spiegel*, February 1, 2019. https://www.spiegel.de/international/new-york-times-publisher-a-g-sulzberger-about-journalism-and-trump-a-1251556.html.

Lönnendonker, Julia. *Constructions of European Identity. Discourse Analysis of German Coverage of the Accession Negotiations with Türkiye 1959 to 2004*. Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2019. link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-658-25186-4_8.

"Merkel'den Erdoğan'a davet yok." *Hürriyet*, March 19, 2007. https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/merkelden-erdogana-davet-yok-6154825.

Mumay, Bülent. "Briefe aus Istanbul. Sexistisch, homophob, antisemitisch." FAZ, December 2, 2017. https://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/brief-aus-istanbul/brief-aus-istanbul-akit-verbreitet-hassnachrichten-in-der-tuerkei-15319657.html.

"Outrageous Türkiye Statement by Hitler Brood Merkel." *Yeni Akit*, March 12, 2018. p. 1.

Öztürk, Hakan. "Merkel'in Almanya'sı baskı ve nefrette Hitleri solladı." *Yeni Akit*, July 25, 2017. p. 1.

Schlötzer, Christiane. "Türkei lehnt 'privilegierte Partnerschaft' mit EU ab." *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, May 19, 2010. https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/angela-merkel-stoesst-bei-besuch-auf-skepsis-tuerkei-lehnt-privilegierte-partnerschaft-mit-eu-ab-1.929509.

Schweiger, Wolfgang. *The (un)informed citizen on the net: How social media change opinion formation*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2017.

Seethaler, Josef, and Maren Beaufort. *Monitoring media pluralism in Europe: Application of the Media Pluralism Monitor 2020 in the European Union, Albania and Türkiye*. Florence, European University Institute, 2020.

Sekmen, Harun. "Alman vakıfları zehir saçıyor." *Yeni Akit*, September 9, 2018. https://www.yeniakit.com.tr/haber/genclerin-ahlaki-hedefte-alman-vakiflari-zehir-saciyor-520689.html.

Smith, Hannah Lucinda. “The rise and rise of Turkey’s second most powerful man.” *The Times*, June 19, 2019. https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/fahrettin-altun-the-rise-and-rise-of-turkeys-second-most-powerful-man-pzntf29kp.

“Staatsaffäre Böhmermann - die Fakten.” *Der Spiegel,* April 15, 2016. https://www.spiegel.de/kultur/tv/jan-boehmermann-das-sind-die-fakten-der-staatsaffaere-a-1086571.html.

Ulaş, Fatih. “Alman vakıfları Gezi’ye finansal destek sağladı.” *Sabah*, March 30, 2017. https://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2017/12/01/alman-vakiflari-geziye-finansal-destek-sagladi.

Ward, Stephen J.A. *The Handbook of Journalism Studies*. New York: Routledge, 2020.

Wessler, Hartmut. *Habermas and the Media*. Cambridge: Polity, 2018.

Yalçın, Hasan Basri. “Merkelin Ardindan.” *Sabah*, October 18, 2021. https://www.sabah.com.tr/yazarlar/hasan-basri-yalcin/2021/10/18/merkelin-ardindan.

Yurdakul, Gökçe. *Media, Migrants and Politics: Comparative Study of Media Representations of Immigrants in Australia and Germany*. Förderer: Berliner Universitätsallianz (BUA), 2021. https://www.bim.hu-berlin.de/de/pers/leitung/yurdakul/goekce.

IPC | ISTANBUL POLICY CENTER
SABANCI UNIVERSITY
STIFTUNG MERCATOR INITIATIVE

ISBN: 978 625 695 625 4

Istanbul Policy Center
Bankalar Caddesi No: 2 Minerva Han 34420
Karaköy, İstanbul TURKEY
+90 212 292 49 39
+90 212 292 49 57
@ ipc@sabanciuniv.edu
w ipc.sabanciuniv.edu